



September 12, 2016

Matthew Seadale
Department of Housing and Community Development
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 300
Boston, MA 02114

Sent via email to: matthew.seadale@state.ma.us; selectboard@amherstma.gov;
malloyn@amherstma.gov

Dear Mr. Seadale:

As President of the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, I am writing this letter to support Beacon Communities, *North Square at The Mill District* development in North Amherst.

This type of smart growth exemplified by the North Square at The Mill District development is exactly what is needed now in Amherst to ensure a viable and vibrant economy into the future.

New business development cannot happen in Amherst without new housing development. The lack of significant new housing development in Amherst over the past 40 years has fostered an economy with a severe lack of supply in diverse, housing options and has stifled new business growth. Businesses locate and expand where their employees can live. North Square at The Mill District will provide 130, new apartments targeting young professionals, families and empty-nesters at a range of income levels.

Working professionals looking for apartment housing, demand high caliber, well-maintained new developments. Most of Amherst's rental housing stock is aging and is targeted to the student market. Professionals, families, and those looking to downsize prefer not to live in student-dominated complexes. North Square at The Mill District will meet this demand.

Affordable housing is a critical factor to our businesses maintaining and attracting a viable work force. Twenty percent of the units at North Square at The Mill District will be restricted to those earning below 50% of the area median income – the income level of a large number of workers in the Amherst area.

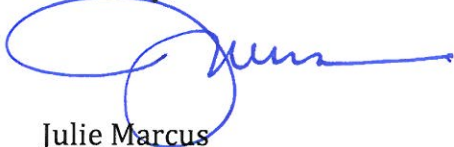
North Square at The Mill District will increase the tax revenue to the Town of Amherst and create new jobs. The lack of new commercial development has placed the tax burden on Amherst's residential property owners with 90% of the town's property tax revenues come from residential property assessments. This \$40 million project is located on a former industrial site that is currently paying very little in property taxes. Over the next 10 years, this development will contribute millions of dollars in tax revenue to Amherst.

Those aged 55 and over represent the fastest growing segment of the Amherst population. Amherst needs to increase its population of young families and professionals to grow the tax base, support existing businesses, attract new businesses and maintain the quality of the school system. This development offers an opportunity for those seeking affordability, quality housing and those wishing to down-size their homes to remain in Amherst in a well-designed, walkable and transit oriented development.

Since 58.0% of Amherst's land is either permanently protected, partially protected, or institutionally owned, there are few appropriate areas left in Amherst to develop that offer similar access to services, transportation, and recreation to create the growth necessary to ensure Amherst's economic future.

New development will increase the housing and business opportunities available to young professionals and families that are desperately needed to ensure the future sustainability of our community. I hope that the Department of Housing and Community Development will approve the Site Eligibility for this project.

Sincerely,



Julie Marcus

Cc: Town of Amherst Select Board
Town of Amherst Department of Conservation and Development