CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Community Development Department

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director Chief of Administration

MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust
From: Christopher Cotter, Housing Director
Linda Prosnitz, Housing Planner
Date: January 31, 2018
Re: Mass & Main Inclusionary Unit Selection

Mass & Main is a 285-unit rental project in Central Square being developed by Twining Properties. An Inclusionary Covenant has been recorded Covenant for 58 units – 49 low/moderate (under 80% AMI) and 9 middle (80-120% AMI) income units. Mass & Main is subject to special zoning provisions which require 17% low- and moderate-income units and 3% middle-income units. While we have approved the inclusionary housing component for this development, we are still reviewing whether we might modify the component to increase the number of family-size units under an alternate inclusionary scenario we are discussing with the developer.

The developer proposed two different scenarios for the distribution of the inclusionary units. The Inclusionary Housing Covenant, which has been recorded, proportionately distributes the affordable units among unit types and throughout the buildings. However, the developer has also suggested an alternate scenario. This alternative is a "disproportionate" distribution of units with more family-sized units and fewer studios. The tradeoff is that units would be located lower in the high-rise building with fewer units on higher floors and no units on some of the highest floors.

The Mass + Main development is subject to the former inclusionary zoning provisions and the Mass + Main zoning which increased the set-aside ratio and required middle-income units. These provisions call for the inclusionary units to mirror the market rate units. The alternative proposal, a disproportionate distribution of the affordable units, addresses policy objectives which are embedded in the revised inclusionary provisions – the provision of more family sized units. While we are reviewing the policy and programmatic implications, we are also considering whether we could approve this disproportionate distribution under this zoning. Nonetheless this development highlights tradeoffs we expect to see in developments subject to the 2017 inclusionary housing provisions which would allow such disproportionate distribution of unit types. Hearing the perspective of the Trust on how units are located in buildings, especially when forgoing higher value units would result in an increase the number of family-size units, will help us in implementing the new provisions.

344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139
Voice: 617 349-4600
Fax: 617 349-4669
TTY: 617 349-4621
www.cambridgema.gov

Since the developer is willing to provide more three-bedroom units than proportionately required, staff felt it important to review this alternative approach. While we have approved the development with the standard distribution of affordable units, we have left open the possibility of revising this distribution after we further review the impact and implications of an alternate distribution. The perspective of the Trust will help as we consider this alternative.

The development consists of two buildings: a 225-unit building with 18 residential floors and a 60-unit building with 5 residential floors. There are a total of 88 studios (31% of all the units) and 41 three-bedroom units (14% of all the units). Under the even scenario, there are 18 affordable studios and 9 affordable three-bedroom units. The units are distributed proportionately on all floors.

Compared to the proportional distribution, the developer's proposal for an alternate distribution has three fewer studios, one additional two-bedroom unit and two additional three-bedroom units. In the 18-story tower, no affordable units would be located on the top 4 floors (floors 16-19), one affordable unit per floor on the two floors (floors 14-15) below that. Sixty-nine percent of all units are located on the first 10 residential floors; under the disproportionate distribution proposal 91% of all affordable units would be located on the first 10 floors. In a second, smaller building with five residential floors, there would be no affordable unit on the top floor and only one on the fourth residential floor.

We would appreciate the perspective of the Trust on this proposed alternative distribution. If Trust members agree that that we should explore an alternate distribution to create more three-bedroom units, we will continue to work to determine how we might approve this alternative. We will work, with the developer to refine the proposal with the goal of achieving additional three-bedroom units and fewer studios, albeit with few or no affordable units on the top floors of the building. If we move forward with this, the Inclusionary Housing Covenant would then be amended to reflect the alternative unit selection.