

To: The Sherborn Zoning Board of Appeals

From: The Sherborn Historical Commission

October 25, 2024

The Sherborn Historical Commission would like to suggest that significant issues need to be addressed during the hearing on the remanded and latest set of plans for the Pines Residences Comprehensive Permit at 41 N. Main Street, the historic Whitney Paul Tavern property.

The entire 5.8 acre property at 41 N. Main Street, **including the Whitney-Paul Tavern and its surrounding outbuildings**, is central to Sherborn's historic center and the anchor of the **Edward's Plain-Dowse's Corner National Register District**, an important Multiple Resource Area of 35 properties. Further, **the Tavern and its barn and outbuildings are listed on the Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places and are recommended for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.**

The property represents a rare 19th century tavern landscape that is fast disappearing in the region. According to the introductory narrative of the **1999 Sherborn Assets Survey update**, in the 18th and 19th century "taverns and stores constituted Sherborn's commercial architecture. The most significant example is the Whitney-Paul House at 41 North Main... An important objective of the local 1999 update was to survey complete " landscapes that possess historic outbuildings" such as this one. Four Assets Survey Forms , #94, 286, 285 and 287, attest to the importance of each of the buildings to the whole, including the 1819 two-story barn with an extra tall door thought to have been built to accommodate stage coaches. The Sherborn Assets Survey update was performed by professional historian Sanford Johnson following the process outlined by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The latest plans show only the main building remaining on the site plan with the notation "Historic building to be undisturbed". We do not believe that it will be undisturbed. No details are given about how the building will be stabilized or used during construction of the many proposed buildings and large shared septic system for both the Pine Residences and the Apple Hill Development. Further, it appears that major blasting of the site will be required. This will both likely destabilize the historic structure and potentially threaten the safety of the groundwater/drinking water for the 41 N. Main site, the Apple Hill Development and the modern Fireside Tavern restaurant that abut one another. Shown situated on a one acre parcel to be separated from the whole 5.8 acres but not yet before the Planning Board, the tavern building will be completely divorced from its historic context. The current small driveway hard by the building will become the primary two-way access/egress for the large number of homes proposed. No plans have been forthcoming about a future use. The only rendering the developer has produced does not show the historic tavern with the newly proposed modern buildings but only shows a single inappropriate new structure.

Carving up the historic 5.8 acre 41 N. Main property, listed in the State Register, and the planned demolition of most of the historic structures that make up the whole property (also included in the State Listing) supports our belief that the Pines Residences requires Massachusetts Historical Commission review. MA 950 CMR 71.05 a, b, and c, destruction of all or part of a historic property, isolation from its surrounding environment and the introduction of visual characteristics out of character with its surroundings are all defined as Criteria of Adverse Effect in the state statute and all are part of the proposed plans for The Pines Residences.

The concerns noted in the Project Eligibility Letter from Mass Housing dated April 30, 2020 regarding the size, scale and density have not been adequately addressed by the proposed changes since then. The current iteration is still, as noted in that document, out of character with the surrounding neighborhood and the rest of Sherborn. The Commission believes that the proposed development would adversely alter the historic value of the entire property at 41 N. Main and the very central Multiple Resource Area neighborhood it occupies in Sherborn center and we urge you to deny the remanded proposal.

Susie Wheelwright, Chair
Sherborn Historical Commission