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Gary Christenson, Mayor

July 24, 2024

Members of the Malden Planning Board and
City Council Ordinance Committee
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

**RE: Zoning Amendments: Joint Public Hearing w/City Council Ordinance Committee/
§12.32.050.A, Title 12, Code of City of Malden (MCC).**

1) CCP 286/2024. To amend use regulations, dimensional regulations, parking requirements and general requirements for Rowe's Quarry Reclamation & Redevelopment District (RQRRD)/§12.28.140, subsections C, D, F, J, MCC.

Dear Members of the Malden Planning Board and City Council Ordinance Committee:

I write to convey my wholehearted support for the proposal to rezone the remaining parcel at Overlook Ridge that will unlock hundreds of new affordable housing opportunities for our residents and pave the way for the much-needed expansion of our commercial tax base.

The Overlook Ridge project, a master planned community that dates its origins to 2001, has already transformed a former rock quarry located between our city's border with Revere, into a sizeable residential development. This final phase of development, proposed under the rezoning package before you this evening, would include upwards of 420 units of mixed income housing (affordable, workforce, 55-plus and market rate) and up to 70,000 sf of commercial space. Winn Development would build the residential component, while Veris Residential would construct the commercial piece.

This final phase will be the first to provide hundreds of affordable units including rental, homeownership and 55 plus at the Overlook Ridge site. To date all the residential units built there have been market rate rental. As most of you are aware, Malden has a growing and dire need for more affordable housing. This proposal at Overlook Ridge represents a generational opportunity to advance Malden's affordable housing goals at a scale that is hard to achieve at other sites within the city. An added plus is that 70 percent of the affordable housing units will have a City of Malden resident preference.

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Strong Past...Proud Future

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City staff including Ron Hogan, Nelson Miller and Deborah Burke have been working tirelessly with Winn Development over the past year and a half to reach consensus on a build-out plan that satisfies both the city's housing and commercial needs. During this process several tweaks to the development plan were made along the way. For example, the number of affordable housing units in the development will far exceed the 15 percent inclusionary zoning ordinance requirement and after give and take between the developer and the city, today's development plans call for upwards of 100 affordable homeownership opportunities versus the original all rental housing development plan. There is also a commitment to develop the commercial space once the ramp connections are made to Route One. The project has already received a \$4 million state MassWorks grant to help with traffic signal and internal roadway improvements and another \$8 million application has been filed with the state to facilitate the construction of the on and off Route One North ramps.

I expect that there will be some discussion this evening around the changes proposed to both parking requirements and allowance for three-bedroom homes. Our team spent quite a bit of time understanding the drivers behind these asks. Relative to parking, it's important to factor in that this development is unique and almost a mini community unto itself. The existence of a shuttle bus from Overlook Ridge to and from Malden Center and Boston is unique and supports a reduction in parking at the site. Winn will be the gatekeeper to make sure it rents to only those whose parking needs can be met on site and any parking challenges will be contained within this community with no spill over into neighborhoods. Reduced parking requirements are necessary for the developer to maximize the affordable housing component in today's costly development environment. The ask for three-bedroom homes as part of the development is an absolute requirement to access the state funding sources that are critical to having this project move forward and become a reality.

The project will rely on state financial support to build the housing components. The developer plans to apply for low-income housing tax credits and funds through the Commonwealth Builder program which allows low-income persons the opportunity to gain generational wealth through homeownership.

In closing, I urge your favorable action on this zoning amendment as it will afford the opportunity for a significant amount of critically needed affordable housing.

Sincerely,



GARY CHRISTENSON
Mayor, City of Malden