

May 19, 2006

Ms. Nancy Owens
Housing Vermont
123 St. Paul St.
Burlington VT 05401

Re: Grange Hill Design Review

Dear Ms. Owens,

The Upper Valley Housing Coalition is a local nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote an increase in the supply of workforce housing in the Upper Valley. In many Upper Valley towns, employees cannot afford to live in, or near the town where they work. This causes long commutes, strains family budgets and makes it difficult for businesses to compete because of high turnover and recruitment costs. One of our efforts to encourage construction of housing for local employees is the Design Review Process. This process uses guidelines we have developed to rate proposed developments on affordability for working families and land use criteria. Housing Vermont has applied for endorsement of its Grange Hill project in Woodstock. A copy of the Housing Coalition's Endorsement Guidelines is attached for your reference.

An Upper Valley Housing Coalition Design Review Team consisting of Greg Kennedy (Chair), Len Cadwallader, and Don Derrick, has reviewed the Application for Support for the construction of 36 units of housing at Grange Hill in West Woodstock. Based on the materials presented, the presentation of Peter Scarpignato and further discussions, the Committee has concluded that **the Grange Hill project is worthy of the Coalitions highest rating and is "Highly Consistent" with the Coalition's Project Endorsement Guidelines.** A summary of the Findings of the Design Review Team is as follows;

Affordability:

The proposal includes a total of 36 units, 26 rentals with rents of a maximum of approximately \$740 for a three bedroom apartment and 10 homeownership units. Six home ownership units will be priced below market rate at approximately \$155,000 and will be subject to covenants to preserve long term affordability. As these prices are clearly within the Coalitions' affordability criteria, the proposed project is highly consistent in this area.

Site Selection:

The proposed project is served by public water and sewer and is on a major transportation route. It is also accessible to schools and located adjacent to an existing town center. It puts housing near transportation and jobs, not in undeveloped areas far from town centers. Therefore the proposed project is highly consistent with the site selection criteria.

Site Use:

The proposal offers a mix of housing, with some rental units affordable to households with incomes in the range of 60% of area median income. Six ownership units are priced under \$175,000, and will be subject to restrictions to maintain their long term affordability. Several of the rental units are ground floor handicapped accessible making them accessible for elderly and disabled individuals. The project is therefore highly consistent with the site use criteria.

Project Design:

The Grange Hill Project clusters units on approximately four acres on the seven and a half acre site. The density in this area is roughly 9 units per acre and preserves open space in the steeper and more wooded area to the rear of the site. The building height and density of the clustered area are consistent with building sizes and density in the surrounding neighborhood. The units will be from 800 sq. feet to 1,300 sq. feet and will be built to energy efficiency standards. Green space at the center and the perimeter of the project offer potential for garden plots and play areas. Sidewalks will provide pedestrian access and movement within the development and link to trails on the part of the parcel reserved for open space. The project is therefore highly consistent with the project design criteria.

In summary, the Review team concluded that the project will provide greatly needed workforce housing close to job centers and on a major transportation route. It utilizes existing infrastructure and represents infill housing in an existing neighborhood which makes it an anti-sprawl project. The developer has modified the proposal to improve the aesthetics of the project so that the buildings are in scale with the existing neighborhood. The scale of the proposed buildings is similar to that of the neighborhood and in a traditional style suitable for the neighborhood. Based upon the above findings the Upper Valley Housing Coalition rates the Grange Hill development as Highly Consistent with the Endorsement Guidelines.

Sincerely,

Anne S. Duncan Cooley
Executive Director
Upper Valley Housing Coalition

