



The General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Boston, MA 02133-1053

December 27, 2021

Dan Rivera, President and CEO
MassDevelopment
99 High Street
Boston, MA 02110

Re: Our support for MassDevelopment building more housing in Devens

Dear Mr. Rivera,

Thank you very much for meeting with us on October 26, 2021 to discuss the creation of more housing at Devens, including at Vicksburg Square. We appreciate the time you have taken to discuss opportunities to create a range of housing at Devens, as well as your leadership as the President and CEO of MassDevelopment. By collectively representing the towns of Ayer, Harvard and Shirley, we represent all of the planned community of Devens. We are proud of the place that continues to be a leader statewide for economic development, critical non-profit organizations, support for Massachusetts veterans, provider of critical social safety net services for people living in the shadows of life, and a growing residential community.

We write to express our strong support for MassDevelopment playing a leadership role in developing a diversity of housing at Devens. We believe that as a quasi-public state agency, MassDevelopment should be a leader in housing production. We were proud to work closely last session with Governor Baker's Secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development Mike Kennealy to support and vote for the so-called "Housing Choice" zoning reforms, in the spirit of Governor Baker's call to dramatically increase housing production in communities across Massachusetts. Given Secretary Kennealy's role as the Chair of the Board of Directors of MassDevelopment, we believe it is critical that MassDevelopment leads by example on housing production to send a strong message to all communities of the need to build more housing.

In addition, given the impressive economic development at Devens, we believe it is important that Devens is home to workforce housing to provide an option for an increasing number of Massachusetts residents who are working at or near Devens. Secondly, recognizing that the housing crisis has hit the Nashoba Valley area and the core mission of the reuse of Devens according to Chapter 498 of the Acts of 1993, MassDevelopment plays a key role in reducing the challenges of housing stability for the region.

That is why, first and foremost, we want to express our public support for MassDevelopment having conversations with the towns and municipal officials of Ayer,

Harvard and Shirley, and the resident committees and residents of Devens to discuss turning Vicksburg Square buildings into housing. We recognize the history of these efforts in the past by MassDevelopment, which is why we believe these conversations should be happening sooner rather than later.

Related to that, we also want to express our strong support for MassDevelopment providing the three towns with financial support to conduct independent studies on the future of Devens, a subject of which we are hearing more and more about. It is absolutely critical that MassDevelopment is providing very specific contributions, and value to the three towns that have their political boundaries run through Devens.

Finally, on the subject of Vicksburg Square, we want to express our public support that in the spirit of the Chapter 40B affordable housing law that at least 25% of housing build at Vicksburg Square is affordable with a significant amount of that affordable housing reserved for Massachusetts residents at 30% to 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) of the North Central Massachusetts housing region, with a local preference for Nashoba Valley residents.

Regarding affordable housing, including both subsidized housing and market rate multifamily housing, we want to express our hope that MassDevelopment will now look to more aggressively ensure that any additional housing allowed under the housing cap be truly affordable to working families. Specifically, our requests include:

1. With the completion of the second phase of the Emerson Green market rate single family homes, we hope that MassDevelopment will now be pushing the developer to construct the long-promised apartment building to ensure that new multifamily housing is part of the housing options available at Devens. We can't help but notice that the multifamily housing is the last housing to be built as part of the Emerson Green development, which raises serious questions about the commitment by MassDevelopment to ensure that a diversity of housing stock is created at Devens.
2. With a remaining 14 units of homes left to be built under the housing cap, we urge MassDevelopment to require that all of those units be affordable, between 30% and 80% of AMI. We specifically want to note that during our October 26th meeting you spoke about these housing units being affordable.
3. Given the interest of Clear Path for Veterans New England to build supportive housing for senior veterans, we urge MassDevelopment to sell at least one property at Devens to Clear Path for a below-market price. As a quasi-public state agency administering state-owned land, we believe that MassDevelopment has an obligation to provide financial incentives to non-profit organizations that are providing social safety net services to vulnerable populations, including veterans. There are plenty of precedents for this, including MassDevelopment selling a building to the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry for \$1.00 over a decade ago.

Again, thank you very much for meeting with us on October 26th. We want to reiterate that given that MassDevelopment plays a key role in the Baker-Polito Administration to build housing, we believe it is critical that MassDevelopment lead the way to build housing at Devens and that any Massachusetts governing body that owns or oversees public land should prioritize the creation of truly affordable housing. If MassDevelopment is not going to lead on housing production at Devens, why would other communities or community leaders build affordable housing?

Sincerely,



James B. Eldridge
State Senator
Middlesex & Worcester District



Sheila C. Harrington
State Representative
1st Middlesex District



Danillo A. Sena
State Representative
37th Middlesex District

CC: Mike Kennealy, Secretary, EOHEd
Jessica Strunkin, Executive Vice President Devens, MassDevelopment
Board of Directors, MassDevelopment
Board of Directors, Devens Enterprise Commission
Robert A. Pontbriand, Ayer Town Manager
Timothy P. Bragan, Harvard Town Administrator
Michael McGovern, Shirley Town Administrator