

To: Paul Harrington, Town Manager
Town of Winchester

From: William S. Voelker, FAICP
Alyssa Fleming
Goman+York Property Advisors

Date: March 2026

Re: Proposal Review for the Development of the Mountainside Drive/Wallens Hill Road
Property

Goman+York has reviewed the Request for Qualifications and Proposals (RFQ/RFP) for development of the Mountainside Drive/Wallens Hill Road property for evaluation by the Winchester Board of Selectmen. This property was formerly approved as a 108-lot subdivision in 2004, with the construction of some improvements through 2007. This project failed as the owner declared bankruptcy in 2008. Some infrastructure was installed, including service for municipal water, sewer, some drainage, and approximately a quarter mile of roadway leading into the site from Wallens Street. The Town of Winchester acquired the property through tax forfeiture in 2015 and is now seeking qualified developers for the site's development. It issued an RFP/RFQ on October 1, 2025, to which the Town has received three responses, which Goman+York was contracted to evaluate.

The property is zoned Rural Residential (RR), which requires a minimum lot area of 85,000 square feet (approximately 1.95 acres). The Winchester Zoning Regulations (Section 415-12) recognize that the RR districts, "make up a significant portion of the Town's land area," which are "characterized by rolling wooded hills with low-intensity agricultural uses and single-family estates". The regulation states that "maintaining the natural and low-density character of these areas is the focus of these districts," where "permitted land uses are limited, and density is purposefully low". There are wetland soils and watercourses within the site and any new development will require review by the Winchester Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, whose approval is required prior to any final action by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The 2021 Winchester Plan of Conservation and Development shows this property within the High-Density Residential District. It is also abutting the Northern and Eastern District, described as an area that "contains low-density single-family residential development, and has generally retained its overwhelmingly rural, wooded and agrarian feel. It is expected that natural resource constraints will ultimately decide development patterns and intensities." It is unclear what assumptions were used to determine why this property, which is zoned Rural Residential with nearly 2-acre lot minimums, was included in the High-Density District; however, that designation will be useful in the development of a text amendment and map amendment to support the development of the property with mixed density and housing types.

Recognition of the recommendations within the POCD is necessary as the Planning and Zoning Commission is required, under CGS Section 8-3(b), to consider the recommendations of the Plan to adopt any new zoning text or map amendments that may enable any new development on the subject property. The statute states that "in making its decision, the commission shall take into consideration the plan of conservation and development, prepared pursuant to Section [8-23](#), and shall state on the record its findings on consistency of the proposed establishment, change or repeal of such regulations and boundaries with such plan." No amendments to the POCD are expected to be necessary.

Public water and sewer will support the development of the property. The Mountainside Drive Infrastructure Assessment Report, commissioned by the Town in November 2025 to evaluate the existing utility infrastructure installed as part of the approved subdivision, was reviewed. This report evaluated drainage, sewer manholes, electrical and telecommunications equipment, water mains, and low-pressure sewer. The report finds that these utilities are generally in good condition and provides recommendations and supporting documentation for necessary improvements. The layouts of all three development proposals seek to take advantage of the existing utilities and road right-of-way locations of the former subdivision.

The RFP sets the stage for creative placemaking on the property. It seeks the creation of an appropriate, attractive community-style residential development using creative planning and development techniques. Specific project requirements to be included within proposals are listed therein and include:

1. A narrative response.
2. Graphic depictions of the proposed development.
3. Plans and elevations addressing the objective of the proposed development.
4. Product types, including attractive housing for a variety of age groups, including single-family, townhomes, cottage clusters, or multifamily dwellings, along with amenities such as a clubhouse, pool, walking trails, and other community spaces appropriate for the size, configuration, and scenic nature of the subject property.
5. Neighborhood context and character of development should be an attractive and vibrant residential community that will attract residents to the town. The RFP states that the “subject property is large enough to support several different development styles” with “appropriate buffering from existing uses, neighboring properties, and proposed uses within the...property should be incorporated into the design.” Proposals should also include walking trails and open areas for active and passive recreation.
6. Environmental responsibility is encouraged with the use of green building and low-impact development techniques referenced in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards and Article III, Section 415-16 of the Winchester Zoning Regulations.
7. Infrastructure will include roads that are designed and dedicated as town roads, and the town represents that there is sufficient capacity in the water and sewer systems, and some of the previously installed infrastructure may be used or improved for the new development. Though the town did have a study done of this infrastructure, respondents are still responsible for their own due diligence.
8. The selected bidders will be required to negotiate and enter into a Land Disposition Agreement with the town within 60 days of selection by the Board of Selectmen.

Item 7, Submission Requirements, on page 7 of the RFP/RFQ outlines the specific materials required in each proposal. These requirements are listed below, and the evaluation of each proposal begins with an assessment of compliance with these provisions.

1. Bidder qualifications with contact information, a firm overview, experience, references, and a verification of financial viability.

2. Bidders should list examples of successful developments in the recent past with properties of similar size in Connecticut or regionally in New England, New York, or surrounding areas.
3. Proposal that includes a narrative description with a conceptual site plan based on the narrative description.
4. A proposal for disposition of the subject property, which includes a short description of the preferred methods for structuring the financial and ownership arrangement between the bidder and the town. The proposal should include a description of any relevant prior experience negotiating similar private/public land disposition or development agreements.

Stoneleaf Construction

The Stoneleaf proposal does not contain any contact information, firm overview, references, a list of any similar projects, or a statement and worksheet demonstrating financial viability as listed under Section 7(a) of the RFP/RFQ. It does provide the address for their website, which states that Stoneleaf Construction is in Amenia, New York, and is involved in single and multifamily construction, mixed-use, equestrian, and hospitality projects. The website provides photographs of different projects, but does not list the location of any of these or any reference information.

Their proposal for Wallens Hill Road is an Active Adult community with 80% of the units to be age-restricted for people who are 55 and over, with a total of 100 residences and 5 guest cabins. The unit mix will include 76 single-family detached homes with three models. The site plan indicates that 10 of the single-family units will have 2 bedrooms, and the remaining 66 will have 3 bedrooms. The proposal states that there will also be 24 cottage-style duplexes of 3 bedrooms each and 5 guest cabins that will be for short-term rent and designed to accommodate guests and visiting family members.

The master site plan shows primary access from Wallens Hill Road and a secondary entry from Wallens Street. The road pattern is the same as the originally approved subdivision to take advantage of the location of the utility infrastructure already in place. Single-family units are dispersed through the site along a road pattern that follows that of the original subdivision approval. The duplex units are clustered inside the looping road in the northerly portion of the site. There are recreational amenities located within the center portion of the development, including a community center with fitness facilities, a community garden, a tennis court, pickleball courts, a covered pavilion, accessory parking, and walking trails through some of the perimeter areas of the site. Architectural renderings and floor plans are provided for all unit types.

They have included a proposal for the disposition of the property in which they propose paying \$1,000 to close on the land, with a provision in the contract to pay a 0.5% fee to Winchester when each home in the community legally transfers title to an owner in the future. This 0.5% fee is to be applied to the base sales price of the homes sold. Another clause is proposed to provide an additional 1.5% due to the town for sales revenue above the target sales price. They include an example where the 100 units are sold at a target average sales price of \$450,000 with a total sales revenue of \$45,000,000, resulting in a transfer of \$225,000 to the town ($\$45,000,000 \times 0.5\%$). The example calculates an additional potential payment of \$75,000 if actual sales revenue is up to \$50,000,000. The total transfer to the town would be \$300,000 in this example. No revenue share or management responsibility to the Town is proposed for the rentals of the 5 guest cabins.

Stoneleaf also requests the following property tax deferrals:

1. Sales tax on each home will not be due until each home closes title and the title is transferred from the developer to the home buyer.
2. Undeveloped lots will not be subject to sales tax.
3. Raw land not subdivided will not be subject to property tax.
4. Unsold completed homes, including model homes, will not be subject to sales tax until title is transferred to a buyer of the home.
5. Common areas will be taxed only after delivery of the first home to be occupied.
6. All state tax laws for active adult communities will be followed.

Stoneleaf states that they have reviewed the “Mountainside Drive Infrastructure Assessment Report” commissioned by the Town and finds that the infrastructure installed for the previously approved development will need some improvements based upon their condition, but they will evaluate and use what may be possible. They do not make any reference to using low-impact development or green building techniques referenced in the RFP/RFQ.

Goman+York has evaluated the potential fiscal impacts, including school enrollments, from this proposal. All public utilities will be owned and maintained by the Town, the costs for which will come from municipal property taxes. The one variable impact comes from school enrollments, which we can estimate based on the unit types and bedroom counts within the project. Stoneleaf is proposing that 80 percent of the units will be age-restricted.

The Carabetta Team

The Carabetta Team proposal does not include references, a list of comparable projects, or a financial viability statement and worksheet, as required under Section 7(a) of the RFP/RFQ. A review of the firm’s website indicates that, while company history and services are described, no specific projects comparable to those contemplated in the RFP/RFQ are identified. The firm is based in Meriden, Connecticut.

The proposed development includes a total of 90 units, consisting of 18 single-family homes, 32 townhouse-style condominium units, and 40 multifamily rental units. Each single-family home will contain three bedrooms. The townhouse units will be arranged across four buildings with 8 units per building. Each building will include one 1-bedroom end unit, one 3-bedroom unit, and the remaining units as 2-bedrooms, for a total of 52 bedrooms across all townhouse units. The multifamily component will consist of a single building containing 40 rental units, including sixteen 1-bedroom units, sixteen 2-bedroom units, and eight 3-bedroom units for a total of 72 bedrooms. The single-family and townhouse units would be sold as fee-simple ownership, while the multifamily units would be rented.

The narrative for this proposal speaks to providing community amenities, including playgrounds, gathering spaces, and recreational facilities, to be integrated within walking distance of the residential units. The site plan shows what appears to be a clubhouse with some accessory parking near the primary entry coming in from Wallens Hill Road, but no other amenities throughout the remaining portions of the property. The road follows some of the right-of-way originally planned for the original subdivision to take advantage of the utility infrastructure already in place.

This plan also shows secondary access from Wallens Street. Units are distributed along the primary road beginning with the 40-unit multifamily building, followed by the 18 single-family homes, and ending with four townhouse structures. The plan shows the construction of a cul-de-sac past the townhouses from which secondary access to Wallens Street proceeds. The road appears to include public sidewalks on both sides. Gated access could potentially be provided there to limit through-traffic. Architectural renderings and floor plans are provided for all unit types.

This proposal does not include any specific monetary offer for the property. It does discuss funding sources to include a combination of private equity, conventional debt, and public resources, including tax credits, grants, or subordinate financing, as applicable. It does list community benefits that will include an expanded tax base, job creation, enhanced community amenities, and increased housing diversity. A project budget is included for the construction of the housing, but not for infrastructure or any community amenities, including the assumed clubhouse shown along the access road. There is no specific mention of the infrastructure study commissioned by the town or any low-impact development and green building techniques referenced in the RFP/RFQ.

This proposal suggests the use of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) strategy to pay off the cost of site improvements. TIF programs use a portion of the taxes realized from the project to pay off a municipal bond that was used to finance the improvements. The Connecticut General Statutes permit municipalities to create designated TIF Districts and, rather than going to the general fund, use a portion of the increased tax revenue from new development to fund project-related costs. The Board of Selectmen would have to create a TIF District that includes this property to use this technique to fund infrastructure improvements. This proposal also requests consideration of a temporary tax abatement during the development and construction period to reduce carrying costs, along with a short-term, sliding-scale tax abatement for home buyers as an incentive to increase sales.

An evaluation of the potential fiscal impacts, including school enrollments, has been conducted. All public utilities will be owned and maintained by the town, the costs for which will come from municipal property taxes. The one variable impact comes from school enrollments, which we can estimate based on the unit types and bedroom counts within the project.

Garamil Development Group

The Garamil Development proposal does not include references, a list of comparable projects, or a financial viability statement and worksheet, as required under Section 7(a) of the RFP/RFQ. A review of the firm's website indicates that, while company history and services are described, no projects comparable to those contemplated in the RFP/RFQ are identified. The firm is based in Winchester and is currently undertaking the redevelopment of the Hope Building at 508 Main Street in downtown Winchester.

They propose to construct 130 homes in what they describe as a "multigenerational community", including townhomes, paired homes, and single-family homes. They express a desire to build a village where neighbors will engage with each other and participate in a visible and active community life. The site development plan shows the development of 5 distinct neighborhood development areas, each having its own building types and recreational amenities in spaces between each neighborhood, all linked together with pedestrian trails. The recreational amenities listed include walking trails, dog parks, pickleball courts, water features, a community garden, a pavilion, a fire pit, a clubhouse, and a lodge. Streets will be tree-lined and have public sidewalks on both sides. The road pattern is the same as the original approved subdivision to take advantage of the placement of the utility infrastructure already in place. There is no specific mention of the infrastructure study

commissioned by the town or any low-impact development and green building techniques referenced in the RFP/RFQ.

The proposed development organizes single-family, semi-attached, and cottage homes along the perimeter roadways within the Ridge, Meadow, Knoll, and Glen neighborhood areas. Townhomes are centrally located in the Ledge neighborhood. The unit mix includes 42 townhomes with 2- and 3-bedroom units, 34 semi-attached units with 3 bedrooms each, 44 single-family homes with 3- and 4-bedrooms, and ten 2-bedroom cottages. In total, the development includes up to 424 bedrooms sitewide. Building elevations and neighborhood renderings are included in the proposal. A service drive is proposed to the rear of the townhomes located on the easterly side of the site drive, intended to minimize curb cuts and improve fire access for these buildings. Secondary access to the site is also proposed via Wallens Street.

The proposal provides a brief overview of the market demand and community need, stating a need for housing that supports aging in place. They express an intention to construct for “families and older residents wishing to downsize while remaining in their community, and individuals seeking socially connected living arrangements.”

This proposal includes an offer of \$1,180,000 for the purchase of the property, including a tax abatement program to be negotiated prior to the closing. No other terms are included.

An evaluation of the potential fiscal impacts, including school enrollments, has been conducted. All public utilities will be owned and maintained by the town, the costs for which will come from municipal property taxes. The one variable impact comes from school enrollments, which we can estimate based on the unit types and bedroom counts within the project.

Summary of Proposed Developments

Unit Mix by Development

Stoneleaf Construction	1 BR	2 BR	3+ BR	Total Units	AR %
Single-Family	0	10	66	76	80%
Townhome	0	0	24	24	80%
Multifamily	0	0	0	0	80%
Total	0	10	90	100	80%

Carabetta Team	1 BR	2 BR	3+ BR	Total Units	AR %
Single-Family	0	0	18	18	0%
Townhome	4	24	4	32	0%
Multifamily	16	16	8	40	0%
Total	20	40	30	90	0%

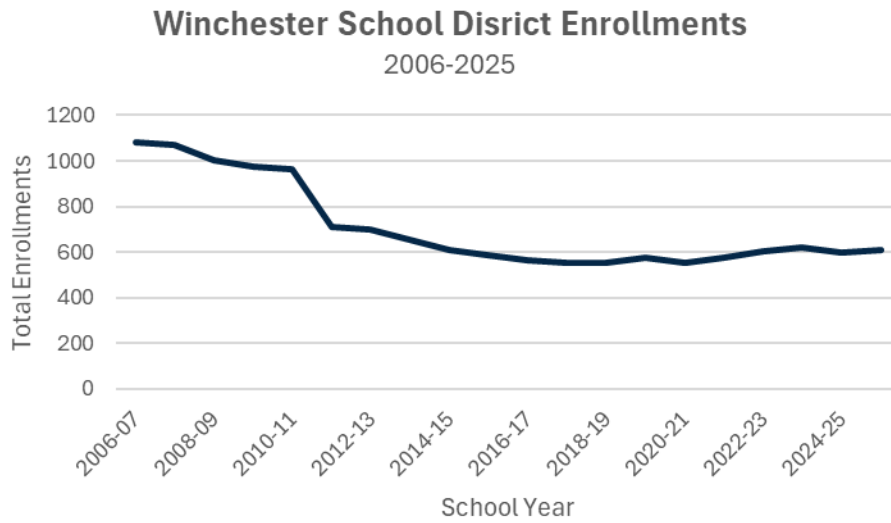
Garamil Development Group	1 BR	2 BR	3+ BR	Total Units	AR %
Single-Family	0	10	44	54	0%
Townhome	0	25	51	76	0%
Multifamily	0	0	0	0	0%
Total	0	35	95	130	0%

Development Proposal Comparison & Key Characteristics

Development Characteristics	Stoneleaf Construction	Carabetta Team	Garamil Development Group
Total Units	100 units + 5 guest cabins	90 units	130 units
Demographic	Active adult (80% age-restricted 55+)	Mixed-tenure	Multigenerational community
Unit Mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 76 single-family (2–3 BR) • 24 duplex cottages (3 BR) • 5 guest cabins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 single-family (3 BR) • 32 townhomes (1–3 BR) • 40 multifamily units (1–3 BR) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 single-family (3–4 BR) • 34 semi-attached (3 BR) • 42 townhomes (2–3 BR) • 10 cottages (2 BR)
Total Bedrooms (est.)	~290+ bedrooms	~142 bedrooms (TH) + 72 (MF) + 54 (SF) ≈ 268 total	Up to 424 bedrooms
Tenure	Primarily ownership with short-term cabin rentals	Mixed: ownership (SF + TH) + rental (MF)	Likely ownership (not explicitly stated)
Target Market	Age-restricted / downsizing households	Mixed households (including smaller units)	Families + downsizers (“aging in place”)
Amenities	Clubhouse, fitness, garden, tennis, pickleball, pavilion, trails	Playground, gathering spaces, possible clubhouse	Trails, dog parks, pickleball, water features, clubhouse, lodge, garden, firepit
Site Design	Conventional subdivision w/ clustered duplexes	Clustered units with a cul-de-sac along the main road	5 “neighborhood” clusters w/ integrated open space
Use Existing Infrastructure	Yes	Yes	Yes
Purchase Offer	\$1,000 upfront + revenue share	Not specified	\$1,180,000 upfront
Revenue to Town	0.5% of sales revenue +1.5% above target pricing Est. ~\$225K–\$300K total	Indirect via TIF + tax base growth	Direct land sale + future tax base
Tax Requests / Incentives	Extensive deferrals (property + sales timing)	TIF district + abatements (dev + buyers)	Tax abatement (unspecified)
Fiscal Impact Profile	Likely low school impact due to age restriction	Moderate (mix of unit types)	Highest school impact (largest + family-oriented mix)
Requires Zoning Change	Yes	Yes	Yes
Submission Completeness	Missing qualifications, references, financials	Missing qualifications, references, financials	Missing qualifications, references, financials
Notable Strengths	Lower school burden, amenity-rich	Diverse housing types, smaller units	Highest land value, placemaking, community design
Notable Risks	Heavy tax concessions, limited upfront value	No purchase price, reliance on TIF	Highest infrastructure, school cost exposure

Winchester School District Enrollment Projections

1



The *Winchester School District Enrollments* graph illustrates a sustained decline in enrollment within the district since 2006, reflecting broader demographic trends such as an aging population and fewer school-aged households. While the proposed developments would introduce new students, their impact should be considered in the context of this longer-term downward trend.

School-Aged Children Multiplier per Unit by Structure Type ²

Structure Type	1 BR	2 BR	3+ BR	AR Units
Single-Family	0.03	0.13	0.39	0.00
Townhome	0.03	0.13	0.36	0.00
Multifamily	0.03	0.28	0.83	0.00

¹ *Enrollment Dashboard*. (n.d.). CT.gov. <https://public-edsight.ct.gov/students/enrollment-dashboard>

² Holzschuh, C. & Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University. (2020). *Residential Demographic Multipliers in Connecticut (2016 data update)*. <https://secogct.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CT-Demographic-Multipliers-2016.pdf>

Projected School-Aged Children and New-to-District Enrollment

Stoneleaf Construction	1 BR	2 BR	3+ BR	SAC	AR Adj. SAC	NTD
Single-Family	0.0	1.4	28.4	29.8	6.0	3.0
Townhome	0.0	0.0	22.3	22.3	4.5	2.2
Multifamily	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	0.0	1.4	50.7	52.1	10.4	5.2

Carabetta Team	1 BR	2 BR	3+ BR	SAC	AR Adj. SAC	NTD
Single-Family	0.0	0.0	7.7	7.7	7.7	3.9
Townhome	0.1	8.4	3.7	12.2	12.2	6.1
Multifamily	0.5	4.5	6.9	11.8	11.8	5.9
Total	0.6	12.9	18.3	31.8	31.8	15.9

Garamil Development Group	1 BR	2 BR	3+ BR	SAC	AR Adj. SAC	NTD
Single-Family	0.0	1.4	18.9	20.3	20.3	10.2
Townhome	0.0	8.8	47.4	56.2	56.2	28.1
Multifamily	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	0.0	10.2	66.4	76.5	76.5	38.3

Notes:

- Age-restricted units (80%) for Stoneleaf are assumed to be proportionally distributed across all unit types, as no unit-specific breakdown is provided.
- Townhome units for Garamil are described as 2–3 bedrooms; in the absence of a specified unit mix, 25% are assumed to be 2-bedroom units and 75% are assumed to be 3-bedroom units.
- School-Aged Children (SAC) represents the estimated student population and is calculated using the ratios provided in the previous table, ‘*School-Aged Children Multiplier per Unit by Structure Type*’.
- New-to-district (NTD) enrollment is estimated at 50% of total school-aged children (SAC), representing a conservative assumption that a portion of students generated by new housing would already reside within the district.

New-to-district (NTD) enrollment was estimated using a step-by-step approach based on the type and size of housing proposed in each development. First, each proposal’s unit mix was broken down by housing type and number of bedrooms (i.e., single-family homes, townhomes, or multifamily housing, and 1-, 2-, or 3-bedroom units).

Next, the number of school-aged children (SAC) likely to be generated by each development was estimated. This was done using standard multipliers from the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University, which estimates how many public-school students are typically associated with different types of housing. The number of units in each category was multiplied by these rates and then summed up to produce a total SAC estimate for each proposal.

Adjustments were then made for age-restricted units. The Stoneleaf proposal includes 80% age-restricted housing; therefore, those units were assumed not to generate school-aged children. The remaining two proposals do not include age-restricted units, so no adjustment was applied to their SAC.

Finally, the number of new students entering the district (NTD) was estimated. It was assumed that half of the school-aged children generated by new housing would be new to the district, while the

remainder would already live in town and are simply relocating. Total new-to-district students was calculated as $NTD = SAC \times 0.50$.

Based on the projected school-aged children (SAC) and new-to-district (NTD) enrollment estimates, the Stoneleaf proposal is expected to generate the lowest enrollment impact, with approximately 5 new students (a 0.8% increase to current enrollments), due to its age-restricted component. The Carabetta proposal would result in a moderate impact, with an estimated 16 new students (a 2.6% increase to current enrollments), reflecting its mix of unit types and inclusion of multifamily housing. The Garamil proposal is projected to generate the highest enrollment impact, with approximately 38 new students (a 6.3% increase to current enrollments), driven by its larger scale and concentration of family-oriented housing.

Additional Planning Issues

The Winchester Zoning Regulations will need to be amended to enable any of these proposals. Creation of a residential design district is recommended to allow the range of housing types proposed, along with the community amenities needed to support the new neighborhood. A period of 3 to 6 months is anticipated for the drafting, review, and approval of this regulation. The town can proceed immediately to rezone the property on its own or leave that to be proposed by the selected developer. Said regulation will detail the entitlement process, which will likely be by Special Permit and require a public hearing in accordance with the schedule set forth in CGS Section 8-7d. The regulation change and special permit process can proceed concurrently; however, this approach may add complexity to the procedure, as the regulations have not been adopted, are subject to amendment through the hearing process, and are subject to an appeal period following their adoption.

The town must also refer to the Planning and Zoning Commission its intent to sell the property in accordance with CGS Section 8-24. This referral is not tied to any permitting, entitlement, or plan review by the Commission but is required as a matter of form.

Information regarding references, finances, and similar project experience was lacking in all the proposals. Accordingly, a thorough screening process is recommended before selecting or agreeing on any developer. This process should include the following:

- a. Town should get additional information on the proposed developer: i.e., references, similar projects, and financial capacity, before making a final selection.
- b. Town should conduct a detailed assessment of each proposed developer to identify any legal, financial, or project issues that could impact the town's decision.
- c. If the Town moves forward and selects a developer, the Town should engage legal and development advisors who have direct experience negotiating agreement(s) involving the sale and/or development of the subject properties. The agreements should include language that clearly safeguards the Town and identifies potential issues and remedies for default.
- d. The Town's related expenses should be recoverable with the sales process.