

MEMORANDUM

To: City of Burlington, Department of Planning and Zoning
From: Birchwood Terrace/Civil Engineering Associates, Inc.
Date: April 8, 2022
Re: Birchwood Terrace Senior Housing Bonus/Site Plan Approval Request

Introduction:

Birchwood Terrace (“Birchwood”), a convalescent home in Burlington’s New North End, seeks approval of a senior housing bonus and related site plan to allow for the continued and effective operation of its skilled nursing facility – a vital community resource. Birchwood is located at 43 Starr Farm Road (tax lot number: 023-4-026-001). Birchwood was built in 1965 and has operated at this site since construction (on a lot of approximately 6.03 acres).

Brief Parking History:

In roughly 2016, the City restricted parking along Starr Farm Road for safety reasons (chiefly proximity to an adjacent public elementary school). This substantially limited Birchwood’s off-site parking. Birchwood was subsequently issued a Notice of Violation for expanding the area used for parking without obtaining zoning approval. In January 2018, the City and Birchwood entered into a stipulation to allow for sufficient time to address the violation. In addressing parking issues, Birchwood first attempted to address its needs by increasing off-site parking on nearby public streets, including Grey Meadow Drive, but this met with substantial neighborhood opposition. The lack of on-street parking led to a substantial investment in exploring options on the lot for bringing the property into compliance with existing zoning while still allowing the site to function and provide the level of care its residents require. Since this time, Birchwood has worked with the City to develop a plan to provide the additional parking needed for its operation on the property. In November of 2020, the City Council approved a zoning change that altered the senior housing bonus to increase the maximum lot coverage from 40% to 44% in the RL zoning district (matching the maximum lot coverage available for an inclusionary housing bonus in the RL zoning district).

Lot Coverage – Senior Housing Bonus:

Given the level of staffing required to operate this site under current federal and state requirements and to provide for visitation, Birchwood’s current parking capacity does not meet its operational needs. Birchwood commissioned a parking demand study (previously submitted to the City) indicating a need for at least 96 parking spaces to accommodate its existing uses and level of care. Birchwood’s current maximum lot coverage, however, is capped at 40%. At 40% lot coverage,

Birchwood may only have approximately 75 parking spots and there are not viable parking spaces available on nearby public streets to make up the difference.

Per Section 4.4.5(d)(A)(iv) of the City's Comprehensive Development Ordinance, the City's Development Review Board has the discretion to grant a senior housing bonus and increase the maximum lot coverage of Birchwood's lot from 40% to 44%. If the DRB approves such a senior housing bonus, then Birchwood could cover its parking needs on site and would plan to add parking capacity so that its property contained 89 general parking spaces, 5 carpool/vanpool spaces, 4 accessible parking spaces, and 2 motorcycle parking spaces.

Conclusion:

In sum, Birchwood respectfully requests approval of the site plan submitted in connection with this application and DRB approval of a senior housing bonus to allow for up to 44% lot coverage and 89 general parking spaces, 5 carpool/vanpool spaces, 4 accessible parking spaces, and 2 motorcycle parking spaces at its facility. Birchwood remains committed to providing quality care to City residents.

Attachments:

- Zoning Permit Application
- Property Owner Consent Form
- COA Level II Checklist
- Standard EPSC Form
- Civil Plan Set
- Landscaping and Lighting Plans
- Existing Conditions Photos