



DMS design, llc
Architectural Design Services
MA – NH – ME – CT** – RI** – SC – FL* – NJ**

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April 21, 2023

Town of Topsfield's Architectural Review Comments and DMS design, llc's Responses

Emerson Homes
Topsfield, MA

Building

1. *The building borders residential neighborhoods and the town's historic district. The building could reflect that context more effectively if the building's large scale were broken down with some modest detailing. This is especially an issue for the north and south elevations, and for the main roof which is particularly monolithic and imposing. There is some attempt at mitigating this with the four apartments at the end of each of the two wings of the building that are articulated with an offset on the north and south exterior facades and on the interior with a jog in the circulation corridor. Further articulation is achieved with gables. This really helps to reduce the massing of the two ends of the building. Some attempt at doing this with the main roof and elevations of the building would help the overall presentation.*

DMS Response: The massing at the middle of the building has been mitigated through the presence of large gable dormer placed perpendicular to the main gable roof. This cross dormer has a generous rake overhang and decorative wooden bracket at the gable end to highlight the depth and create a shadow line. The main gable roof on either side of the cross gable has been designed without decorative gables so as to maximize the area available for photovoltaic panels to create as much renewable energy as possible. As noted, the massing of the building has been scaled down at the East and West ends by offsetting the footprint of the building, lowering the eave height for the gable roof, and adding dormers.

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2. *What are the two roof cutouts on the back side of the building?*

DMS Response: The two cutouts on the back roof are areas to place HVAC equipment. The front edge of each area will receive a white railing to visually screen the HVAC equipment.

3. *What makes the roof areas on the front side of the building “solar ready?” Is there a plan for pursuit of a solar installation?*

DMS Response: There are four aspects to making the roof solar ready:

1. Provide a clear roof with enough open area to locate solar panels;
2. Design that roof to accommodate the dead load of the roof panels and the live loads associated with any predicted snow drifts;
3. Provide wall space in the main electrical room for a backboard and electric panels for the solar system; and
4. Provide an electrical conduit between the electrical room and the roof area for the solar panels.

During the creation of the construction documents and the preparation of construction pricing, our client will approach multiple solar panel vendors to obtain pricing. If the pricing and energy offset provided by the solar panels fits the budget, the panels will be installed at the tail end of the construction project, or right after the building opens. If not, the panels will likely be added within the first three to five years after the building opens.

4. *The attic appears to offer a lot of found space (or wasted space, depending on how one looks at it). Is there a plan for its use? Can second floor units be given higher ceilings?*

DMS Response: The second floor units have ample ceiling height of almost 9’-0”. Adding more height to the units is not needed.

5. *Is there an information that can be provided at this point related to energy efficiency?*

- *Heating and cooling*
- *Insulation*
- *Window specs*

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DMS Response: The building will meet MA Energy Code, which is fairly stringent, plus will have to meet the requirements of one of the three major sustainability certification organizations (LEED or Enterprise Green Communities or Passive House) per the funding source, which will require that the project outperform the energy code. The walls will have a minimum of R-19 fiberglass insulation in the wall cavity, plus 1.5” of continuous rigid insulation on the outside of the walls. The windows will have Low-e insulated double pane glazing. The heating and cooling systems will be all electrical VRF type systems, which are very energy efficient.

6. *Why don't first floor units have direct access to the outside? Wouldn't that be a desirable amenity? And even just a modest piece of hardscape for these units would allow a resident to have a grill and a couple of chairs.*

DMS Response: Individual patios for the first floor units will be prohibitively expensive to install for this project.

7. *Common Room – what sort of amenities will this space be provided with?*

DMS Response: This space has been designed as a multi-purpose gathering space. It has a country kitchen with cabinets and counter space, plus a refrigerator and a sink. There is ample floor space for multiple seating areas, and there are dedicated restrooms. The room is large enough that a portion of the room could be used for light exercise such as yoga or stretching classes.

8. *Nomenclature for identifying cross-sections on the drawings are inconsistent:*

- *Floorplans (sheets A1.01, A1.02) reference building sections with numbers 1, 2, and 3 on sheet A4.01, but sheet A4.01 uses both numbers and letters A, B, and C.*
- *Roof Plan (A1.03) has no section references.*
- *Sheet 1.01 indicates the longitudinal section starts in the center of the building near the Common Area and extends down each of the two wings and through the exterior wall at the end of each wing, while Sheet 1.02 starts the longitudinal section outside the exterior wall, not inside at the center of the building.*

DMS Response: Each section detail shown on sheet A4.01 has a circle with a number in the circle, this circle corresponds to the section references on the floor plans. The title of each section shown on sheet A4.01 has a letter as part of the name of the section, we find it makes it easier to reference using the letter during a verbal presentation.

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Site

9. *How feasible is expansion of EV charging stations if demand is greater than 2?*

DMS Response: Having the ability to expand the amount of EV charging stations in the future is a good for the owner, the residents, and the community. Therefore, the project's electrical system will be designed with the ability to add two (2) double headed chargers in the future. If further expansion is planned for prior to construction, adding additional charging stations is a fairly straightforward process, but at this early stage of design, the electrical design of the project is not advanced enough to definitively answer the question of how many charging stations could be added without system-wide upgrades.

10. *With the exception of the reference to a patio behind the building, site features are not delineated.*

- *Exterior building lighting (designed to avoid glare perceived from adjoining properties)*
- *Site lighting (designed to avoid glare perceived from adjoining properties)*
- *Signage*
- *Site amenities like benches and bicycle racks*

DMS Response: All other site features are delineated on the civil engineering and landscape architecture drawings.

11. *Can a community garden be provided?*

DMS Response: A Community Garden can be provided, if desired.

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Managing Principal

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