

To: Esteemed Planning Board Members - City of Gardiner  
From: Auta Main and Marianne Roth, 139 Dresden Ave, Gardiner  
RE: Dresden Avenue Development /Gardiner Green

Dear Planning Board - Chair Deb Willis and Planning Board Members,

The July 13th PB meeting is fast approaching and, as you are aware, the Dresden Avenue Development is on the agenda - yet again, Please accept our thanks for your time, energy and commitment to our community (so many late night meetings!)! Thank-you. We also want to reiterate our concerns about the Dresden Avenue Development/Gardiner Green.

In the past year, we have heard several planning board members state that they sympathize with the neighborhood and understand how adding 50+ apartment units and condos at the old hospital site will change the feeling of the neighborhood. At the same time, these same planning board members have indicated that because they are asked to follow the ordinances they can't consider the "change in the feel of the neighborhood"(although they can clearly see there is a huge one!) because they are tied to decision making based on ordinances only. In light of that, we wanted to share this subsection, found by one of our neighbors in the local ordinance. It seemed important to point this out, as perhaps it can open the door to broader thinking around character of neighborhood and density bonus.

*14.4.9 The proposed subdivision conforms to all of the applicable standards and requirements of this Ordinance, the Comprehensive Plan and other local ordinances. In making this determination, the Planning Board may interpret these ordinances and plans.*

There are several other opportunities for planning board members to reconsider this application, even when referring to "ordinances only." By this letter, we are highlighting these again, as possible areas for additional review as you get closer to a final vote on several of these issues.

- The Flag Lot .The developer acquired this lot separately in an effort to meet the minimum requirement to build the number of units he was looking for. The lot itself is extremely odd shaped / narrow strips are joined (see attached sketch). We still do not understand how the planning board so easily jumped past this and voted (unofficially) that this is not a flag lot. Please indicate with clear findings of fact how you arrived at your decision, if indeed you continue to vote that it is NOT a flag lot.

*Section 8.1.4 of the General Performance Standards of the Gardiner LUO states that "Flag lots and other odd-shaped lots in which narrow strips are joined to other parcels to meet minimum lot-size requirements are prohibited except for rear lots meeting the requirements of 8.3."*

- Financial capacity of developer. We have shared story after story of this developer's failed projects – some 10+ years in the making and still no next steps have been taken. The newest letter of support from Skowhegan Savings Bank is lame to say the least. At this point, the developer clearly does not have a financial plan in place to begin development of the Gardiner Green project. Please indicate with clear findings of fact how you arrive at your decision.

- Density Bonus Units. The density bonus for provision of low-income units is not a given. It must also be approved by the City Manager. It is clear that the only reason the developer has added low-income units is to take advantage of the density bonus. There is no sensitivity to assisting low income renters in his plan or his philosophy. Here is an area where the PB could disapprove (or decrease) the density bonus units (in part because there is no real effort or plan for the low-income units) and drop the total possible units to 47 (assuming the PB is still considering the flag lot NOT a flag lot) because (of course) the number of units would be even smaller if the flag lot was deemed a flag lot (which it clearly is in our eyes). If you take away the density bonus we're back to 47 units (if no flag lot). This would be a much more agreeable number to the neighborhood. Please consider compromising here for the neighborhood, too, not just for the developer. Please indicate with clear findings of fact how you arrive at your decision.

- Character of neighborhood. This needs to be considered more broadly. Not sure if PB members are familiar with this section (above 14.4.9). The hospital was a "community health facility" for Gardiner and neighboring towns - an eyesore it was/is but it provided a valuable service to everyone in our community. Housing is a need but 50+ additional units totally changes the feeling of our neighborhood (as many of you have stated, as well). Unlike the hospital, the housing units are not providing a service to everyone in our neighborhood or community. Yes we need housing (all over Maine), but there are many other areas of Gardiner (and elsewhere) where a housing complex THIS BIG would be a better fit. We appreciate that PB members are advocating for housing design and architecture that fits better with our neighborhood. Thank-you. That said, as you know, it's the number of units that is the big issue here. If the number of units approved was smaller, while it would be a compromise (all around) we could embrace this project and work with the developer to take next steps. We CAN ALL WIN here. We all desire to repurpose the old hospital and we could work with this developer if he would compromise, too, on the sheer size. Please indicate with clear findings of fact how you arrive at your decision.

- Pictures and cost of phase 1, 2 and 3 apartments and condos. We still don't know exactly what these apartments and condos will look like. What is the estimated cost to build them out? With the new apartments and condos in neighboring communities, these details are shared in advance of any final approval. Please indicate with clear findings of fact how you arrive at your decision for approving each proposed phase of construction.

Thank-you, again, for your consideration and hard work. We are still hopeful that a mutually beneficial outcome is possible for Gardiner Green.

Warm Regards,  
Auta & Marianne