Emma's Court
Impact Statement
Housing Corporation of Arlington

Project Summary:

In September 2025, HCA acquired three properties in Arlington: 840 Mass Ave (26 units), 846 Mass Ave (31 units), and 17 Newman Way (2 units). In addition to preserving the buildings at 840 and 846 Mass Ave, Housing Corporation of Arlington (HCA) is proposing to redevelop 17 Newman Way and the vacant front lawn of 840 Mass Ave into 40 new affordable units within two new buildings, known as Emma's Court. HCA will construct a new building (Building 1) on the 840 Mass Ave lawn that will consist of 28 units, 6 stories, and street level commercial space. HCA will also demolish 17 Newman Way and construct a second building (Building 2) with 12 units, 3 stories, and 11 surface parking spaces.

Overall, the project will form a new campus with 57 existing units in the 840-846 Mass Ave buildings and 40 units created by Emma's Court, for a total of 97 affordable units. The campus will be served by the existing parking lot behind 846 Mass Ave (35 spaces), 2 spaces behind 840 Mass Ave, and 11 new spaces developed as part of Emma's Court, for a total of 48 parking spaces (0.495 ratio).

A. Preservation of Landscape

The Emma's Court proposal preserves and enhances the landscape of the campus. The two new construction buildings will be sited on (in the case of 17 Newman Way) a previously developed lot and (in the case of 840 Mass Ave) a large vacant lawn. The landscape plan will reinforce the continuity of the urban streetscape on Mass Ave and Newman Way by adding plantings and enhancing the tree canopy and landscape features along the sidewalk and street.

Grade changes and tree and soil removal will be minimized where possible. Neither of the proposed buildings' designs includes a basement. Most of the existing trees in the southwest corner of 17 Newman Way can likely be preserved despite changes in parking and will continue to screen 23 Newman Way.

The project will create a new courtyard between the existing building at 840 Mass Ave and Building 1. The courtyard will include native plantings along with benches and tables to provide residents with informal seating. The project will also reconfigure the existing circulation paths on the site, connecting the paths directly to the crosswalk at Mass Ave and the sidewalk towards the Route 77 bus.

The site plan is designed to maintain the character of the existing properties, expand landscaping and introduce native plants, and improve the existing pedestrian experience, while introducing thoughtfully programmed green and open spaces.

B. Relation of Buildings to Environment

The project comprises two buildings of different designs on either side of the existing brick apartment building at 840 Massachusetts Ave. Building 1 is proposed to be located on the lawn at the corner of Mass Ave and Newman Way, and Building 2 is proposed to replace the existing two-family structure at 17 Newman Way. The buildings differ in scale and material palettes in response to their different street frontages and the scale and style of the buildings adjacent to them.

Building 1 responds to its prominent corner location on the Mass Ave commercial corridor by rising

to 6 stories, comprising 5 stories with 28 affordable residential units over a ground level with commercial office frontage along the full length of Mass Ave. Building entries are called out with recesses in the façades with shallow canopies above. The building is clad in brick to respond to and continue the material pattern typical in the neighborhood for brick buildings to front Mass Ave, with clapboard buildings on the residential streets behind. The commercial frontage is articulated with precast concrete elements in a complementary tone to differentiate it from the residential levels above and provides an active and transparent facade on Mass Ave through the use of storefront glazing. Building 1 is separated from the existing apartment building by a lushly planted courtyard featuring flexible landscape and hardscape areas for the use of tenants of both the existing and proposed buildings. Wide passages between the buildings provide pedestrian access and preserve visual access to the existing building from either street. Building 1 is to the northwest of the existing apartment so it will typically not overshadow it throughout the course of the day or year; shadows are only anticipated to be cast in the early mornings on the northern end of the existing building. Finally, Building 1 features a step back above the fourth story to better blend its height in with its neighbors.

Fronting on to a residential area on the other side of the existing apartment, Building 2 also continues the neighborhood's material pattern in featuring horizontal lap siding and pitched roof forms. The building is 3 stories high and houses 12 units around a central stair. To blend its size into the surrounding single- and two-family residential fabric, the building massing is articulated as two distinct pitched roof forms separated by the main entry, which is clad in a vertically oriented material of a different tone. It is proposed to continue use of the existing curb cuts on either side of the building to provide more off-street parking with an efficient one-way circulation path, while eliminating the existing use of tandem parking spaces.

C. Open Space

The combined campus will have multiple types of usable open space to enhance residents' quality of life, create an interconnected community between the buildings, and provide pleasing views from the sidewalk and street.

The courtyard between Building 1 and the existing apartment building at 840 Mass Ave is the primary landscaped space in the project. Wide landscaped passages between the existing and proposed buildings include paths to the central space and provide visual access for passersby into the courtyard. The planted areas are designed to feature a mixed planting palette of majority-native trees and shrubs selected for shade tolerance, given that much of the site will be shaded by buildings. The courtyard is approximately equally divided into flexible landscape and hardscape areas for residents to use as they wish. The landscape area features a mounded planted area with a grove of trees and boulders that could be seen as an informal play opportunity, and the hardscape area features flexible seating in the center and fixed benches at the periphery.

The central courtyard will serve both new and existing buildings. The shared space also creates a visual connection between the two buildings—large windows in the common hallway corridors of Building 1 will allow residents to look down onto the courtyard and the façade of the existing building at 840 Mass Ave.

The project will enhance the pedestrian experience throughout the campus and connect paths directly to the existing crosswalk at Mass Ave. The landscaped street lawns on Mass Ave and

Newman Way will provide more space for residents waiting for transit at the Route 77 bus stop on the corner of the site.

The public will benefit from increased plantings along the sidewalk, enhancing the pedestrian experience. The priority for native plantings will minimize maintenance needs, helping to ensure the plantings remain attractive over time.

D. Circulation

The project proposes a safe, efficient, and clearly organized circulation system for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

The campus will be served by 35 existing parking spaces behind 846 Mass Ave, 2 existing parking spaces behind 840 Mass Ave, and 11 new surface parking spaces at Building 2, for a total of 48 spaces. Residents with cars will access the existing lot behind 846 Mass Ave via Churchill Ave and they will access the new parking at Building 2 via Newman Way. Cars enter and exit the site around Building 2 via existing curb cuts. Car circulation is one-way to maximize off-street parking through the use of angled parking spaces at the rear of Building 2.

Direct pedestrian access is provided via recessed entries for the Building 1 commercial space from Mass Ave and for Building 1 residences from Newman Way. Building 1 also includes a secondary door for tenants at the courtyard. A canopied porch provides access to Building 2 from Newman Way. Pedestrian paths lead from either street into and out of the central courtyard.

The project will reconfigure the existing pathways that connect 840-846 Mass Ave by creating new pathways to connect Building 1 and Building 2 with the rest of the campus, creating a unified, visible and safe pedestrian experience. These paths will connect directly to the Mass Ave crosswalk which will enhance pedestrian flow to transit and encourage pedestrians to cross Mass Ave only at the designated crossing, improving safety for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

Secure and accessible indoor and outdoor bike parking is located in areas to allow for safe access when cyclists are arriving to, or leaving from, the site. The project will include 62 sheltered spaces for long-term bike storage. In Building 1, there will be a ground floor, indoor bike storage room with 40 spaces. The bike room will be easily accessible to cyclists entering or exiting the building from the inner courtyard or through the main entrance of the building on Newman Way. Outside of Building 2, there will be a fully enclosed, standalone structure with long-term parking spaces for 22 bikes. This structure is adjacent to walking paths that take residents directly to the bike lane on Mass Ave. Short-term bike hitches are located at each building street entry.

E. Surface Water Drainage

Stormwater management improvements will meet or exceed local requirements. The landscape plan incorporates swales, plantings, and permeable surfaces to reduce runoff and facilitate on-site infiltration. The project will reconfigure paved areas—particularly around the new courtyard and Building 2—to minimize impervious surface and improve drainage patterns. Surface water will be directed to catch basins sized to prevent puddling and obstruction of pedestrian and vehicle routes. The site plan also minimizes the need for regrading by building on a previously developed footprint at 17 Newman Way. These strategies align with Best Management Practices outlined in the Impact Statement Requirements.

Please also refer to the attached document entitled “Civil Infrastructure Impact Narrative.” Note that a separate attached document, entitled “Stormwater Management During Construction Narrative”, addresses surface water drainage during construction.

F. Utility Service

Utility improvements will support the two new buildings without adverse impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. All electric, telephone, and cable service will be placed underground, consistent with bylaw requirements. The project connects to existing Town sanitary sewer and water systems. Solid waste will be managed using an updated, screened dumpster enclosure shown in the Site Plan.

Please also refer to the attached document entitled, “Civil Infrastructure Impact Narrative”.

G. Advertising Features

The project will include minimal signage. There will be one modestly scaled sign associated with the ground-floor commercial space in Building 1. All signs will comply with Section 6.2 of the Zoning Bylaw.

H. Special Features

Service and utility areas are designed to minimize visibility and noise. The project includes a standalone bike enclosure and proposes replacing and screening the current dumpster enclosure. Both of these are centrally located on the site and not along a property line abutting an adjacent property. The mechanical equipment will be roof-mounted to minimize visibility.

I. Safety

The buildings and open spaces are designed with safety as a top priority. The clear organization of paths and building entries supports safe circulation for residents and visitors. The entrances to the residential buildings and the commercial space face public streets or the shared courtyard, enhancing natural surveillance. The courtyard faces of the ground floor of Building 1 have been designed to minimize recesses and other nooks that could present safety concerns. The rear of Building 1, along two sides of the courtyard, includes corridors that will be lined with windows facing the courtyard, as well as some unit windows, that also provide natural surveillance. Exterior lighting will provide consistent illumination along paths, entrances, and the courtyard without spilling into neighboring properties. The walking pathways align with accessibility standards and all building systems will comply fully with local fire and life safety codes.

J. Heritage

The existing building at 840 Mass Ave is listed on the Arlington Historical Commission’s local inventory of significant buildings. A smaller portion of the current building, originally known as Lockeland Court, was built in 1927 and later expanded with an addition in the 1940s. The building has a handsome brick exterior and L-shaped footprint.

The project will not involve any demolition or alteration to the existing building at 840 Mass Ave. The existing building at 17 Newman Way, which will be demolished, is not listed in the local or state inventory as a historically significant building.

K. Microclimate

The design incorporates measures to mitigate microclimate impacts related to light, wind, heat, and noise. Building 1 will have a step back above the fourth floor, reducing shadows on the street and adjacent buildings. The landscaped areas and new street tree plantings will moderate heat gain, create more shaded and cool spaces in the summer, and improve air quality. The courtyard design allows air circulation and natural light into both existing and new buildings. The mechanical systems will be selected to minimize noise and emissions. The landscape of the courtyard will be designed to manage stormwater from typical rainfall events on site. Please refer to the "Civil Infrastructure Impact Narrative" for more information.

L. Sustainable Building and Site Design

Emma's Court is being designed to meet both Passive House standards, in compliance with the Town's Stretch Energy Code, and Enterprise Green Communities, required by the MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities for affordable housing projects. Both buildings will have energy-efficient systems, high-performance envelopes, and optimized solar orientation.

The site design minimizes impervious surfaces and maximizes planting areas. The landscape plan will include native plantings, which reduce the need for irrigation and support ecological health.

Please also refer to the attached document entitled "LEED Narrative" with accompanying LEED v5 scorecard.