

Site Details: Mixed-use development, 15 acres, 17,000 sf retail, 550 luxury apartments, 14 affordable units

Zoning: Multi-family residential in a non-residential zone area (BB-1)

Funding: Private developer

Date(s): Planning: 2001-2002; Design: 2001-2007; Construction: 2005-2007 for Phase 1; 2007-2009 for Phase 2

Goals: Revitalize site and increase tax base



Source: Pembroke Real Estate
Apartment entrance at Oak Grove Village, 2011.

Background

In 2001 Pembroke Real Estate, an international real estate advisor, took the initiative to propose a transit-oriented, mixed-use development of a large land parcel on the city lines of Malden and Melrose. The land was underutilized and had a great deal of upside potential, particularly with Pembroke's plan to develop the site using Smart Growth principles. Leases for an existing stock of outdated apartments on the property had all expired and were not renewed. For various reasons, a restaurant and corner convenience store were no longer conducting business on the site. However, the land was deemed prime real estate for development given its proximity to public transportation and two city centers, as well as its location across from a local park reserve.

Site Development

Although this development would be extremely beneficial for the tax bases of both cities, many residents in nearby neighborhoods were concerned about the scale and scope of the development as it would be the first of its kind in the area. A few citizens from both cities appealed the planning and zoning permits granted by the City of Melrose because of their concerns with traffic, noise, pollution and loss of neighborhood character. Pembroke and the City of Melrose worked to address these issues by allowing peer reviews, holding public meetings, and conducting multiple studies to dispel concerns about traffic, economic and environmental impacts. Furthermore, Pembroke scaled down its development from 575 to 550 apartment units and from 20,000 sf to 17,000 sf of retail space, and was granted a variance from the Melrose Zoning Board of Appeals to reduce parking from 2 to 1.6 spaces per unit. Pembroke also agreed to install updated traffic signal equipment at four nearby intersections in order to improve pedestrian and vehicle traffic patterns around the development and calm concerns about traffic overload on small residential streets.

The project was built in two phases to respond to the demand of housing needs and the market. Completed in 2007, Phase 1 included 349 of the 550 units, 14 of which were affordable units. This phase was extremely successful, achieving 90 percent occupancy in less than 18 months. The 201-unit second phase was completed in 2009 and improved upon the Phase 1 leasing pace by achieving 90 percent occupancy in approximately one year. The fully completed development now boasts 97 percent occupancy for its 550 loft and one- and two-bedroom apartments.



Source: Pembroke Real Estate
Aerial view of site before and after, 2011.



Source: Pembroke Real Estate
Bobby C's, an Italian Restaurant at the

Development Process

Pembroke's proposed site use—residential in a non-residential industrial zone (BB-1)—required additional permitting. The City of Melrose needed to grant Pembroke special permits for multi-family residential use (BA-1) for the portion of the site within Melrose. Under the Melrose Zoning Ordinance, the project had to meet dimensional and density regulations due to the requirements for the urban residential (UR-C) District.

This included requirements for frontage, lot width and depth, setbacks, and a minimum of 20 percent open space for the development. This density restriction limited the

project to 32 units per acre and a maximum height of three stories on the Melrose side of the site. The Malden side, on the other hand, allowed for denser and higher developments. The differences in planning and permitting from both cities is apparent when walking through Oak Grove Village and this variety of building heights and densities adds to the character of the entire property.

Oak Grove Village and MetroFuture Goals

Sustainable Growth Patterns

The success of this development has generated interest and inspired city officials and planners from both cities to invest in developments closer to transit. For example, after witnessing the success of Oak Grove Village, the City of Melrose is now supporting Stone Place Mill, a proposed redevelopment of an industrial area also near Oak Grove Station.

Transportation Choices

Because of the development's proximity to Oak Grove Station, Pembroke estimated that 20 to 30 percent of Oak Grove Village residents would utilize the train as a means of transportation. However, recent studies indicate that more than 60 percent of residents regularly use this public transportation. Additionally, Oak Grove Village offers two Zipcar options for residents and neighbors.

Contact Information

For more information about the development Oak Grove Village, contact former Melrose city planner Denise Gaffey at DGaffey@cityofmelrose.org.



Source: Pembroke Real Estate
Bridge built to connect MBTA Oak Grove Station and development (top). View of a walking path behind the development (bottom), 2011.

"We had a vision that this parcel of underutilized land used the right way could be a great asset to two communities," said Tom Walsh of Pembroke Real Estate. "It's satisfying to see that vision become reality and exceed expectations."

-Tom Walsh, Development Director, Pembroke Real Estate