

CITY OF GARDNER

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

September 26, 2018

President Scott J. Graves, Esq.
Gardner City Council
c/o Alan Agnelli
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440



RE: Report of Findings and Recommendation for the MGL Chapter 121A Application of NewVue Liabilities to Asset, Inc. Project

Dear President Graves,

On September 17, 2018, a joint public hearing of the Gardner Planning Board and Gardner City Council was held at 6:30 PM in the City Council Chamber, City Hall, 95 Pleasant Street, Gardner MA to consider the application for approval of the NewVue Liabilities to Assets, Inc. Project, as described "herein" ("Project") under Chapter 121A of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, and the provisions of 760 CMR 25 (collectively, "Chapter 121A"). The Gardner Planning Board deliberated this application at its meeting on September 25, 2018 and considered the testimony presented at the previously mentioned Joint Public Hearing. In consideration of the findings below, the Gardner Planning Board voted unanimously, 5-0, to approve the application as presented at the hearing and recommends approval by the City Council and Mayor for submission to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Housing and Community Development.

Pursuant to M.G.L. Ch. 121A §6, the Gardner Planning Board, after careful consideration of the evidence presented at the public hearing, and after thorough review of the application submitted, makes the following findings relative to the Project:

The Project is contained in the M.G.L. c.121A application submitted by NewVue Liabilities to Assets (NVLTA) located at 470 Main Street, Fitchburg MA. NVLTA is a Chapter 180 nonprofit corporation formed to facilitate the redevelopment of primarily one and two family properties in five participating communities that will be or have been vacant for 3 years, are deteriorated or contribute to blight conditions, and have a negative impact on their surrounding neighborhoods. Ninety-one properties have been identified in the five participating communities. The following Gardner properties have been included in the NVLTA application and may be redeveloped as part of this project: 58 Osgood St, 69 Oak St, 142 Pleasant St, 60 Walnut St, 261 Main St, 56 Baker St, 165 Baker St, 27 Rich St, 27 Green St, 4 Wright St, 41 Greenwood Pl, 127 West St, & 12 Water Street.

- 1. The proposed project area is qualified under the statutory definition of a "blighted open," "decadent" or "substandard" area established in Section 1 of MGL Chapter 121A.**

The Gardner Planning Board has determined that the properties included in the NewVue Liabilities to Assets, Inc. Project, herein NewVue LTA application, located in the two target areas in Gardner are eligible for participation in the 121A program because they meet the statutory definition of blighted, open, decadent or substandard and further, that they contribute to the blighted or decadent conditions in the target areas where they are located. At selection, all properties were initially visually inspected by either the Director of Community Development and Planning, Building Commissioner, or Director of

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Public Health and further, determined by the Planning Board, pursuant to Attachment 3 in the application to have at least two of the following conditions:

- Multiple boarded, missing, or broken windows.
- A structure that is or appears structurally unsound or has another condition that presents a potential hazard or danger to the safety of persons.
- Property is physically deteriorated and has significantly peeling paint, damaged siding and or damaged or broken doors.
- Property has significantly damaged walkways, driveways, walls, or other access barriers.
- Property has significant presence of overgrown or dead vegetation.
- Property has an accumulation of trash, refuse, or other debris.
- Property has been taken for foreclosure of mortgage.

These two target areas represent clusters of properties within a half mile radius of each other, both with concentrations of long vacant and blighting properties that have not been resolved through normal housing market conditions. These concentrated clusters are not seen elsewhere in Gardner to the same degree.

2. Accordingly, the Planning Board finds that the project is not in contravention of any zoning, subdivision, health or building code or rules and regulations of the City.

For a property to be selected for redevelopment in Gardner as part of the NewVue Liabilities to Assets Project it will have to be consistent with zoning, subdivision, health/building codes and rules and regulations of Gardner. The Gardner Planning Board finds that the Project is not in contravention with any zoning, subdivision, health/building codes, and rules and regulations of the City.

The Gardner Planning Board further finds that the Project is in keeping with zoning codes which are enacted for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the present and future inhabitants of Gardner including, lessening congestion on streets, securing safety from fire, flood, panic and other dangers, provide adequate light and air, prevent overcrowding of land, avoid undue concentration of population, encourage housing for persons of all income levels, and facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, water supply, drainage, sewerage, schools, parks, open space and other public requirements, conserve the value of land and buildings, including the conservation of natural resources and the prevention of blight and pollution of the environment, encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the city, preserve and increase amenities by the promulgation of regulations to fulfill said objectives, facilitate the safe, convenient and meaningful provision of adequate vehicular and utility access to all lots intended for building purposes in Gardner.

3. The project does not conflict with the City's Master Plan, or if there is no master plan, with a local or regional plan, as appropriate;

The Gardner Planning Board finds the project is consistent with the City's Community Development Strategy, which identifies the need to expand housing opportunities in appropriate locations to meet the needs of Gardner's population. Gardner partners with private developers, local and regional non-profit organizations and the Attorney General's Office to rehabilitate properties and repair dilapidated buildings to create safe, affordable housing. Many of the properties identified for the LTA Program are located in and around the Downtown Urban Renewal Area (DURA) and continue to add to the slum and blight, and decadent conditions in these neighborhoods. The project will assist in alleviating these conditions.

4. The project is not detrimental to:

- a. the best interests of the public or the City; or
- b. the best interests of public safety and convenience;

The Gardner Planning Board finds that the redevelopment of these vacant/blighted properties for long-term homeownership is in the best interest of the citizens of Gardner. Redeveloping vacant deteriorated buildings, that may be a magnet for criminal activities, will increase public safety and improve property values. Turning a blighted property into a home will be a positive contribution to the immediate neighborhood and help to stabilize the community.

5. The project is consistent with the most suitable development of the City;

The Gardner Planning Board finds that the Project objective, to turnaround troubled properties and redevelop them as renovated homes for owner occupant purchasers, is consistent with Gardner's long-term goals of neighborhood stability and community building by increasing the available housing stock, eliminating blight and furthering neighborhood investment.

6. The project constitutes a public use and benefit.

The Gardner Planning Board finds that the removal of blight through the rehabilitation of deteriorated, vacant properties proposed by the NewVue LTA Project is a public use and benefit to Gardner, both through the removal of an unattractive nuisance and possible safety hazard and the increase in property values to the City.

7. The method of relocation is feasible, where applicable, and housing is available for displaced occupants.

The Gardner Planning Board understands that the properties included in the NewVue LTA Project are believed to be vacant. Only vacant properties will be selected for redevelopment in Gardner and therefore there will be no relocation.

Please do not hesitate to contact Trevor Beauregard, Director of Community Development and Planning, if you have any questions or need additional information regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



Allen Gross
Chairman

Cc: Trevor M. Beauregard, Director
Mark Hawke, Mayor
Marc Dohan, Executive Director NewVue Communities
Jennifer Constable, Department of Housing and Community Development