



RURAL LAND FOUNDATION

145 Lincoln Road, Suite 102A
P.O. Box 10
Lincoln, MA 01773
Telephone: (781) 259-9250
e-mail: McGean.RLF@LincolnConservation.org

TRUSTEES:

Susan Allen, Vice-Chair

Michelle Barnes, Chair

Kenneth Bassett

William G. Constable

Daniel England

Andy Falender

Andrew Gnazzo,
Vice-Treasurer

James Henderson

Weston Howland, III

Diana Jong

Gwyneth Loud

Robert Mason

Ellen Meadors,
Treasurer

Paul Shorb

Nancy Soulette,
Secretary

Andrew Stevenson

Susan Welsh

STAFF:

Geoff McGean,
Executive Director

Bryn Gingrich
Outreach Director

Sara Lupkas
Stewardship Director

November 30, 2023

Dear Lincoln Residents,

As the December 2nd Town Meeting approaches, we thought it would be helpful to briefly remind you of who we are, why we think our preliminary proposal to redevelop the Mall with by-right mixed-use zoning is in the best interest of Lincoln, and our current thinking of the HCA Options.

The RLF and its mission

The Rural Land Foundation (RLF) is a non-profit land conservation organization whose central mission, along with our sister organization the Lincoln Land Conservation Trust (LLCT), is to help protect the rural character of Lincoln. The RLF Board, made up of 17 Lincoln residents and its 3 Lincoln resident staff members all care deeply about this town.

While our primary goal is to help the town conserve land through acquisition, creative planning, and limited development, we also own and operate the Mall for the benefit of Lincoln residents. Proceeds from operating the Mall fund our land conservation activities in Lincoln. Through the years, RLF's creative model has helped us work with the Town to conserve more than 2500 acres of land and create over 80 miles of interconnected trails. Whether it is protecting most of the 100+acre Wheeler Farm back in the early 1960s with a limited development model, or more recently conserving much of the Wang property and providing an opportunity for the town to create a much-needed athletic field, our goals and commitment are to help the town meet its needs and preserve its rural character.

RLF's preferred option

At the December 2nd Special Town Meeting, the Town is asking Lincoln residents to vote on a preferred zoning warrant article that meets the requirements of the Housing Choice Act (HCA). Four of the zoning options (C, D-1, D-2 and D-3) allow the Town to take credit for the Mall rezoning towards the total number of units the state requires for Lincoln to comply with the HCA. We think all four of these particular options make sense for the town to take credit for housing units zoned at the Mall. It is our belief that Option C creates the best opportunity to

- Create new multi-family housing near public transportation
- Provide economically diverse housing options and create affordable housing that may actually be built

- Help the Mall's valued tenants in an otherwise struggling retail environment
- Minimize climate change impacts

We see this as an exciting opportunity to work with town residents and officials to revitalize our small commercial area and create a sustainable and vibrant town center. For any potential redevelopment that is considered at the Mall, we are committed to help the Town ensure a commercial-based town center for the long term.

Why by-right zoning is best for redeveloping the Mall

We are asking for the by-right mixed-use zoning for the Mall versus the Town Meeting process because we believe it:

- Provides the most financial flexibility
- Creates site planning clarity for RLF and a future developer
- Allows the Mall to be on the same competitive playing field for developers as other HCA by-right zoned areas within Lincoln and surrounding towns
- More likely to attract essential outside capital for much needed reinvestment in the Mall
- Still preserves our commercial center and is more likely to create a vibrant and sustainable town center

Public process

RLF is fully committed to a public process that, in addition to Planning Board site plan review, includes numerous feedback sessions with town residents and many other opportunities to let us know what you like and what you don't like. Our last redevelopment project at the Mall in the early 2000s, where we saved the Post Office and Donelan's from leaving, involved a process that included Town Meeting and nearly 7 years of listening and public feedback, much of which we tried to incorporate. The uncertainty, cost and length of that process almost resulted in the project not coming to fruition.

We know many residents are very concerned about the future of the commercial center and we appreciate that interest. The RLF Board and staff have worked hard over the years to maintain a commercial center for Lincoln and we hope to ensure a vibrant and sustainable center for the future. It is our belief that a well thought out "Lincoln-scale" redevelopment project will help our valued tenants at the Mall continue to thrive. However, ultimately *Lincoln residents control the future of our commercial center by either shopping there and using the services or not.*

Trust and support

As we have done for decades with our conservation projects, we are respectfully asking you for your trust and support. RLF has a track record across decades of being a thoughtful steward for the Town. We are asking the citizens of Lincoln to trust our organization to do what's best for the community at the Mall, consistent

with our non-profit mission, and we seek more flexibility in achieving these goals. We want to continue to partner with the Town to improve its socioeconomic diversity while maintaining its rural character, thriving agriculture and open space for enjoyment by all.

With Thanks and Gratitude,

Susan Allen, Vice-chair
Michelle Barnes, Chair
Kenneth Bassett
William G. Constable
Daniel England
Andy Falender
Andrew Gnazzo, Vice-Treasurer
James Henderson
Weston Howland, III
Diana Jong
Gwyneth Loud
Robert Mason
Ellen Meadors, Treasurer
Paul Shorb
Nancy Soulette, Secretary
Andrew Stevenson
Susan Welsh

P.S.: We know that there have been a lot of specific questions about the project and RLF. We will continue to try to answer those questions through the FAQs on our website and the HCAWG Website.