2April 4, 2023

Emily Prescott, Saco City Planner
Alysa Bouthot, Chairperson, Saco Planning Board
Members of Planning Board
Saco City Hall
300 Main Street
Saco, ME 04072

RE: Lincoln Village located at 321 Lincoln Street, Saco

Dear Ms. Prescott, Chairperson Bouthot and Members of the Planning Board:
The following is a summary of the positions taken by many of the neighbors who are opposed to Lincoln Village as proposed. We are cognizant of the volume of documents each member of the Planning Board must review associated with a project of this unprecedented size and complexity, and we hope this summary will be helpful.

1. The applicant has failed to comply with the submission requirements of Section 188-602 by failing to provide adequate proof of financial and technical capacity to fund the entire project (See Attorney Murphy's opinion). The letter provided by Gorham Savings is inadequate to provide the required information and the applicant cannot establish its ability to maintain the development and its sophisticated drainage system after it is turned over to a volunteer run condominium association.

2. Lincoln Village includes 332 total units. The prior Flatley project was a proposal to construct 336 units with 61 less parking spaces than Lincoln Village on the property. The two projects are essentially the same, and nothing has changed about the property or the areas surrounding that property other than nearby developments in Biddeford will only intensify traffic on the small streets near the proposed development. This Planning Board rejected the Flatley project because of the traffic it would generate and because it was not compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Lincoln Village will create equivalent, if not greater traffic, and it is as incompatible with the area as the Flatley project, and as a result, approval of Lincoln Village must also be denied in its present configuration.

3. A number of the draft findings of the staff related to the Lincoln Village are premature and not supported by the record, and maintaining them is prejudicial to the process. Such findings include:

    a. The proposed subdivision will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area, aesthetics, historic sites, significant wildlife habitat, or rare and irreplaceable natural areas or any public rights for physical or visual access to the shoreline. Staff's proposed finding essentially says that the developments meets the zoning requirement so no such undue adverse effects will occur. Such a finding ignores the fact that this approval element is an independent approval criteria and not one calling for affirmation that the project meets the zoning minimums. It also ignores the testimony of members of the City's own Conservation Commission who identified the forest which will be destroyed by this project as a "significant" forest lot; one with "greater longevity and quite big diversity" compared to other typical land parcels in Maine that have been routinely harvested. This one has not. Professor Tom Klak directly stated to the planning board on 3/21 that the key factor for the decline of important birds like the rapidly declining Wood Thrush and amphibians is caused when mature forests "get parceled, cleared, and cut

down." The project ignores the wetlands in the forest which will be replaced with condominiums and parking lots. The finding also concludes that the proposed development is compatible with nearby uses because they are all residential. Such a finding of compatibility fails to take into consideration the gigantic, unprecedented size of the proposed multi-unit large building development as compared to surrounding single family and two family homes in established quiet neighborhoods. This small city of a project will replace trees with buildings, parking lots, and a maze of high-glare LED lights where large pines, undergrowth and darkness now prevail.

b. The findings under subdivision Design Standards analyzed this project under the 2018 and 2022 Comprehensive Plans. The Staff's ultimate proposed finding related to the 2022 Comprehensive Plan is: "The proposed mix of housing types in close proximity to downtown helps assure that existing neighborhoods surrounding downtown remain desirable places to live by providing housing to a wider variety of residents, as encouraged by housing policies." However, a complete review of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan shows that this project is not completely compatible with the directives of the new Comprehensive Plan including, but not limited to, the lack of affordable housing, the failure to address traffic issues to be generated by the hundreds of cars from this development located in an area which will also be impacted by 100's of new units just over the river in Biddeford, the destruction of forests and wetlands by this project instead of the preservation thereof, the failure of this project to facilitate pedestrian and cycling resources.

c. Conditional Use Review finding Number 4 states: "Will not have a significant detrimental effect on abutting properties" and the staff finding that this criteria is satisfied because the project meets the zoning requirements. Such logic ignores the fact that the Conditional Use Standard in question is itself a separate standard to be satisfied. The draft finding ignores the fact that this proposed use includes dropping 332 units and over 700 parking spaces into the middle of established residential neighborhoods comprised of single and two family homes, 332 units, 228 of which will be located in large multi-unit buildings. This small city is being constructed on an exceptionally wet parcel of land that is so wet it prevented the City from constructing a new school there in 2015. The 332 units will feed about 700 cars onto exceptionally small streets leading into areas already congested with traffic. This finding must be based on more than the fact that this project meets some other zoning standards.

d. Conditional Use Review finding Number 5 states: "Will not have a significant detrimental effect on value of adjacent properties". The conclusory staff finding is that the project will not have such a detrimental impact. No such evidence is contained within the submissions. Vastly increasing the density of the area, adding 700 cars to a small neighborhood with already busy streets, changing the nature of the area by constructing a huge condominium project, eliminating an enormous natural drainage area serving the entire proximity, and flooding the area with harmful LED light pollution can and will have a detrimental effect on the value of adjacent properties.

e. Conditional Use Review Finding Number 8 states: "Will not have an adverse impact on significant scenic vistas or wildlife habitat." Staff sited the Natural Resources Protection Act

Permit and some unidentified site location of development review responses in concluding: "No adverse impact on significant scenic vistas or wildlife habitat have been identified. " Such a finding ignores the testimony of the Conservation Commission members.

f. Under the Site Plan Review Approval Criteria related to "Compatibility with Neighboring Buildings. The bulk, location and height of proposed structures are compatible with neighboring properties". Staff wrote: "The proposed building designs comply with dimensional standards of MDR Zoning. Compatibility with neighboring properties is achieved by limiting the height and bulk of proposed buildings, spacing buildings apart throughout the developed area of the site, and separating buildings from neighboring properties." Simply because buildings meet zoning specifications does not make a project compatible. That is why there is this separate Approval Criteria. Compatibility is also determined by the overall size and bulk of the whole project. Nothing about this small city is compatible with and consistent with the surrounding properties and the buildings thereon. The lack of compatibility was one of the primary reasons why the substantially similar Flatley proposal on this same parcel was rejected.

4. This development fails to meet the standard in City Code Site Plan Review §179-6.01 Q Criteria for Site Plan Approval's "minimum requirements for approval" that the "proposed development will not cause safety hazards and will be consistent with generally accepted Complete Streets standards." Other approval conditions related to Complete Streets since 2017 in Saco include the use of many design objectives including sidewalk expansions, traffic signals, street trees, bicycle lanes, pedestrian crossings, pedestrian refuges, streetscape aesthetics, bus stops, and lighting.

    a. Complete Streets is the planning, designing, and building of streets that enables safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. This approach also emphasizes the needs of those who have experienced systemic underinvestment, or those whose needs have not been met through a traditional transportation approach. *(National Complete Streets Coalition).*

    b. In ongoing discussions with various City leaders since at least April 2022, community members and the City's own survey results have demonstrated current traffic conditions on rights-of-way surrounding this project and throughout the City for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians and other ROW users as unsafe and unnavigable for current residents, discouraging residents of and visitors to Saco from enjoying the outdoors or accessing needed services via transport other than personal vehicle.

    c. The roadway design and engineering around this proposed development site, including developer's proposed offsite improvements, is inadequate and therefore unsafe. The introduction of thousands of more trips per day by this proposed development's scale, without significant and immediate roadway design upgrades and regardless of the proposed partial offsite improvements by the developer, would be negligent by the City if allowed to go forward. Even if the development did not go forward, the current roadway conditions are unsafe and not in line with the Complete Streets framework.

    d. Under its own code, the City *must not* allow this development's Site Plan Review to go forward until it can be ensure proactive and comprehensive Complete Streets design metrics for additional traffic impacts related to this and other developments, particularly

the thousands of new units being built just 3,400 feet away in Biddeford, whose new residents will seek to access the Turnpike through Ward 5.

e. Maine Department of Transportation has encouraged the City of Saco and its third-party engineering firm to consider the Traffic Movement Plan as the "*minimum mitigation for traffic safety and mobility*." The Traffic Impact Study and its subsequent analysis, as well as the Traffic Movement Permit does not meet the City's codified criteria for site plan approval of the Complete Streets standards. Maine Department of Transportation and the current third-party engineering firm have admitted to utilizing outdated methodologies in the analysis of traffic – methodologies which do not include updated quality of service and level of service for multimodal roadway users such as walkers, runners, cyclists, and individuals with accessibility needs such as those using wheeled mobility devices or other assistive devices. In this developer's application and subsequent Traffic Impact Study, the only right-of-way users considered in any capacity were vehicles. In other words, the City has a responsibility to look beyond the bare minimum that our citizens deserve, and follow its own City Code and Comprehensive Plan to ensure safety and quality of life on our neighborhood streets for all. This Site Plan does not satisfy these requirements.

The complete submissions and oral testimony of the residents of Saco who do not support the approval of Lincoln Village because of its size and impacts on the area contain more detail regarding our positions, and we urge you to consider all of that information in your deliberations. We live in the homes that surround this property. We use the streets and sidewalks where they exist. We worry about our children, grandchildren and pets as cars and trucks speed by on our narrow streets. We very much value this beautiful piece of land and worry about its impacts on the area from traffic, to stormwater, to detrimental light pollution and the addition of large buildings which simply are not compatible with what exists there today.

While unfortunate, we recognize that some form of development may occur on this property. We hope, however, that it will be more commensurate with our neighbors, streets and infrastructure then the 332 unit proposal before you.

Sincerely,

Save Saco's Neighborhoods

"Smart Growth Together"