

Andover Town Yard  
Special Permit Application  
Project Narrative

History of the Andover Town Yard Project

In March 2021, the Town of Andover advertised a Request for Proposals for a qualified developer to acquire and redevelop the former Town Yard (Dept. of Public Works) site in the heart of the Historic Mill District (HMD). On April 22, 2021, Minco submitted an initial proposal consisting of:

- 136 residential rental units of 1,2, and 3 bedrooms with 15% affordable units;
- Lobby area and indoor amenity space of 11,193 sq.ft.;
- Commercial area of 4,850 sq.ft.;
- Roof decks of 30,000 sq.ft.;
- Parking of 265-300 spaces;
- Total building size of 178,443 sq.ft.
- Community building of 2,160 SF and adjacent ground level plaza; and
- Passive recreation area.

The land area of the Town Yard site as described in the RFP was described as 3.4 acres ± and is shown in an aerial photograph below:

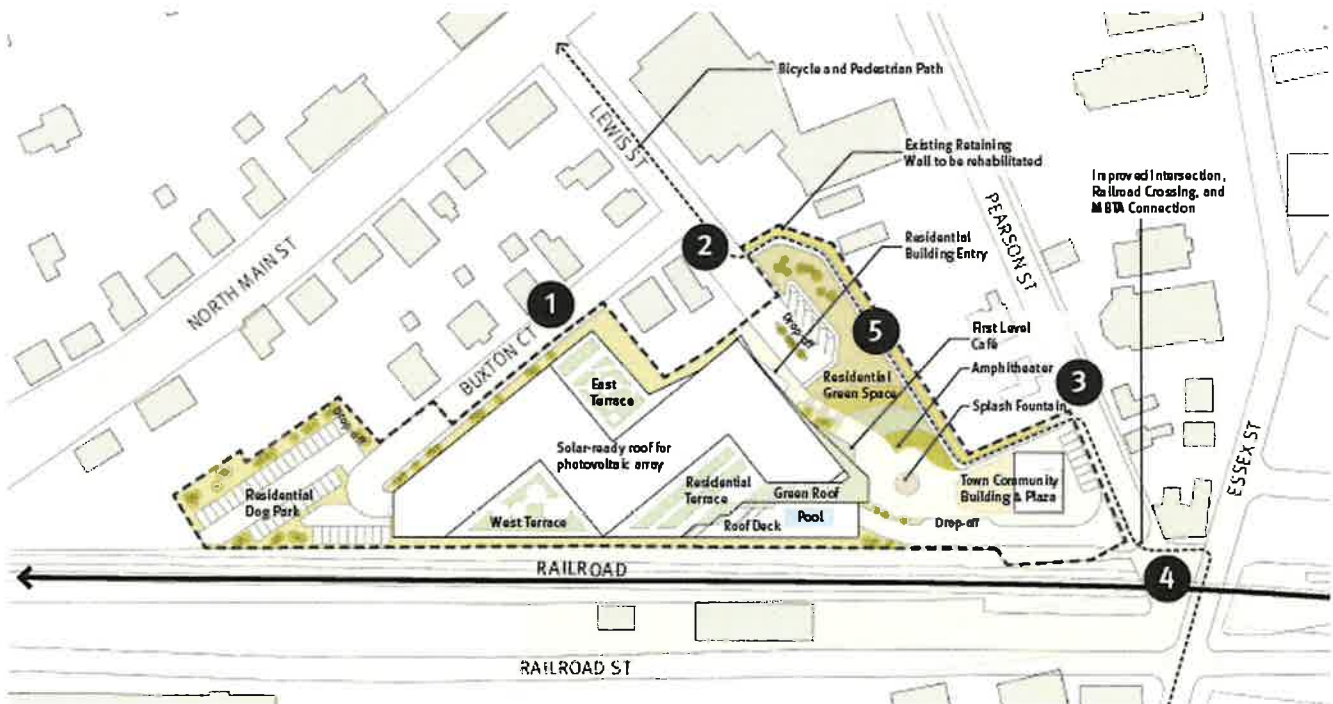


On May 24<sup>th</sup>, we were notified that our proposal had been short-listed by the Selection Committee and we were invited to submit a final proposal on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Our final proposal consisted of:

- 136 residential rental units of 1,2, and 3 bedrooms with 15% affordable units;
- Lobby area and indoor amenity space of 8,400 sq.ft.;
- Roof decks of 30,000 sq.ft.;
- Parking of 222 spaces;
- Total building size of 170,800 sq.ft.
- Community building of 2,160 SF and adjacent ground level plaza; and
- Publicly accessible dog park.

The concept site plan submitted with the final proposal is shown below:

## Concept Plan - Site Plan



In September, the Selection Committee voted to rank Minco's proposal first. We met several times in November and December with both the Selection Committee and the Select Board, and on December 13, 2021, the Select Board voted their final approval of Minco as the designated developer of the Town Yard project.

### Project Team Members

See attached list.

### Single Purpose Entity

We have created a single purpose entity for the permitting and ownership of the Town Yard property. It is Andover Town Yard, LLC, Minco Development Corporation, Manager, Louis P. Minicucci, Jr., its President.

### Acquisition of Adjacent Properties

In order to fulfill the RFP's stated goal to "replace a tired industrial use . . . with a vibrant, attractive development that links downtown to the [MBTA] station and provides a vital anchor for a revitalized Historic Mill District" and "for the anticipated redevelopment of the former Town Yard to be truly successful, it should . . . facilitate district-wide improvements", we have purchased four properties adjacent to the Town Yard site and incorporated them into the overall design of the project:

- 122 North Main Street is a single-family house; both the house and the land area of approximately 0.226 acres are incorporated in the project site, the house representing one unit;
- 2-4 Buxton Court is a 2-family house that will be demolished and its land area of approximately 0.108 acres will be incorporated in the project site;
- 7-9 Lewis St. is a 2-family house that will be demolished and its land area of approximately 0.115 acres will be incorporated in the project site; and
- 35 Pearson Street is a single-family house that will be demolished and its land area of approximately 0.183 acres will be incorporated in the project site.

### Historic Preservation

#### Andover Preservation Commission

On June 30, 2022, we submitted applications to the Andover Preservation Commission for the demolition of 2-4 Buxton Court, 7-9 Lewis Street, and 35 Pearson Street. The public hearings for these applications were held on November 15<sup>th</sup>, at which time the Preservation Commission voted to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for each and to waive the demolition delay. No appeals were received.

#### Massachusetts Historical Commission

On May 1, 2023, we submitted a Project Notification Form to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) for 11-15 Lewis Street (the Town Yard), 2-4 Buxton Court, 7-9 Lewis Street, and 35 Pearson Street. Their jurisdiction was a result of the requirement of two licenses from the MBTA. MHC did not determine that there would be any adverse effect as a result of the demolition of these properties.

### Land Disposition Agreement

One of the requirements of the Request for Proposals was that the selected developer would be required to negotiate and enter into a Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) with the Town.

The purpose of the LDA is to describe the terms and conditions of the purchase and development of the Town Yard property.

Negotiations were held during 2022 and 2023, and the LDA was executed on August 15, 2023.

#### Meetings Held

On July 18, 2023, we participated in an advisory committees (inter-departmental) meeting.

On July 25, 2023, we participated in a pre-application review meeting with the Andover Planning Board.

On that same day, we also participated in an interdepartmental review meeting.

#### Title Issues

Since December 2021, we have worked with the Town to clear outstanding title issues.

#### Special Permit Criteria

The Andover Planning Board is the Special Permit Granting Authority designated to hear Special Permit applications for projects in the Historic Mill District Overlay District.

We believe that the Planning Board will be able to find that our proposed uses will not be unreasonably detrimental to the established or future character of the neighborhood and Town and are in harmony with the general purpose and intent of this By-law and that:

- Social, economic or community needs are served by this proposal;
- Traffic flow and safety, including parking and loading, have been taken into consideration;
- Utilities and other public services are adequate; and
- Impacts on the environment, including but not limited to air and water pollution, noise, stormwater runoff, and aesthetics have been adequately addressed.

Our proposed project will create a positive economic benefit to the Town through the payment of building permit fees, and real estate and excise taxes. Indirect economic benefits will be the result of the spending power of 200 to 300 new residents through the increase in the use of goods and services.

Additionally, our proposed project is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Master Plan, as it directly relates to the stated goal to grow the Town's economy and attract new residents; to create neighborhoods that combat sprawl; to create new housing opportunities; to encourage Transit Oriented Development; to create housing for older adults; to add additional green space to create an interconnected greenway featuring transit, bike, and trail infrastructure; to connect active commercial spaces to the commuter rail; and to create a safe pedestrian and bike network.

Our proposed project fulfills the stated objectives of the Master Plan as described above and achieves the goals of the Historical Mill District Overlay District.

Proposed Town Yard Project

Description

During the time between our initial proposal in April 2021 and today, we have worked with our Team to fine tune the project design based on our interaction with Town Boards, opinions expressed by members of the public, and the information we gathered during the due diligence process, including site conditions, the results of clearing title issues, the Lewis Street taking, and the acquisition of four adjacent properties. Our design has been adapted to the increased acreage, the need for additional commercial space, and changing market conditions. A summary description of the proposed project is as follows:

Acreage

The site acreage is 179,691 square feet or 4.125 acres of land, more or less, which includes the Town Yard site, the four adjacent parcels, and 4,146 square feet of land on Lewis Street, which will be taken by the Town by eminent domain and sold to the Applicant at closing.

For a breakdown of square footage areas in the structures, see the chart below:

Apartment Count

There are a total of 165 residential rental units proposed (164 in the new building and 1 at 122 No. Main Street, an existing single-family house):

Units		Units	Parking	Spaces
Studio		24	Garage Spaces (enclosed)	177
One Bedroom		65	Surface Spaces	
Two Bedroom		47	Private	57
Three Bedroom		28	Public	19
122 No. Main St.		1	122 No. Main Street	2
Total		165	Total	255
			Overall Parking Ratio	1.55
			Private Parking Ratio	1.42
<b>Square Footage</b>				
Residential (main building)		GSF	Ancillary	GSF
Level 1 (parking garage)		58,000	Community Building	2,160
Level 1(lobby)		7,000	Café	800
Level 2 (residential level 1)		44,000	Retail/Commercial/Co-Working	1,700
Level 3 (residential level 2)		44,000	Retail/Commercial/Gym	2,500
Level 4 (residential level 3)		44,000	Total Ancillary	7,160
Level 5 (residential level 4)		43,500		
Total Main Building		240,500		
Overall Total Square Footage		247,660		
122 No. Main Street		1,128		
Overall Gross Square Footage		248,788		

## Design

### Architecture

Located within the Historic Mill District (HMD) between Main Street and the MBTA commuter rail corridor, the 4.12-acre Andover Town Yard project will provide 165 new residential units (including 25 affordable units). The new residential building is designed with outdoor amenity courtyards, setbacks, and integrated site elements to contextualize with the existing residential neighborhood. A single floor of ground floor structured parking is set into the Buxton St. slope and the single garage entrance faces the MBTA tracks to minimize vehicular traffic through the Buxton Ct. neighborhood. The service entry and garage doors on the west elevation of the garage are designed to reflect proportions like those found on nearby mill buildings within the HMD.

The development includes parks and open spaces across the site to maximize community access, permeability and to allow for pedestrian connections to adjacent sites. Also included is a signature new community building and adjacent public plaza, which will become a memorable and character-defining urban space of the project. These spaces are designed to support a wide variety of programmed events, including music, art shows, farmers' markets, train watching, food trucks, and various historical, cultural, and seasonal events. Retail and café space adjacent to the plaza will also help activate this publicly accessible space. A new publicly accessible dog park is located on a quiet corner at the north end of the site.

Building materials that reflect both the historic mill buildings and the residential neighborhood will be incorporated on the building facades. Proposed building materials include brick, fiber cement plank siding, metal panels, steel balconies and triple pane windows.

### Landscape Architecture

The landscape design approach for the Town Yard Redevelopment is focused on knitting the site into the Historic Mill District neighborhood while providing new open space programs and connectivity reflecting this as a walkable, bikeable transit-oriented community convenient and accessible to downtown.

**Buxton Street** will become a two-sided pedestrian scale residential street, sympathetic to the single-family residents across the street, with deciduous street trees, pedestrian lighting, new sidewalks and supplemental plantings to scale the building to the street.

**Buxton Street Courtyard** is accessible and inviting from Buxton Street and provides a contemplative, passive recreational, east facing open space with seating and plantings supplemented by several seating niches to encourage gathering and socializing.

**Lewis Street Green Space** creates a new fully accessible visual and physical connection between Lewis Street and Pearson Street. Significant topographic change across the site is integrated into a series of public gathering terraces and site amenities culminating in a Civic Plaza highlighted by a Community Building and family friendly water feature. The plaza will serve as a focal point for the community with a variety of programmatic opportunities for residents and visitors.

**Railroad Avenue** will be transformed into a new pedestrian scaled street which creates a new pedestrian and bicycle connection between Buxton Street and Pearson Street. Enhancements include a sidewalk and planted buffer on the east side of the street and continuous regularly spaced deciduous trees and decorative streetlights on the railroad side of the street to the west. At the intersection of Buxton St and Railroad Avenue, a public dog park creates a new amenity for residents from the site and the neighborhood.

**General Landscape Approach and Design Principles:** The Town Yard landscape design is based on a bold naturalized plant palette which is sympathetic with the neighborhood identity and wooded character of Andover. The design proposes a variety of plants including deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs, ornamental (flowering) trees, ornamental grasses, perennials, and seed mixes to create an attractive and sustainable landscape.

**Planting Areas:** We propose a variety of lawn, groundcovers and ornamental grasses and will specify mulch under plantings to preserve moisture. Plantings will be designed to be in masses or drifts that emphasize colors, forms, and textures. Trees will be planted a minimum of 5' from roadway, driveways, and parking areas. Planting placements will preserve appropriate heights and spacing to maintain open sight lines. The planting design approach will separate parking lots from the street with plantings, earth berms, walls, and other landscape elements.

**Streetscape and Parking Lot Landscaping:** We specify low maintenance, urban tolerant trees and maintain a clear height to tree limbs abutting walkways. In areas of snow storage plants will be specified, which are salt tolerant and flexibly respond to such seasonal activity.

**Tree Selection and Plantings:** We specify a variety of trees that are resistant to insect, drought, disease, salt, and auto emissions, appropriate for use within their landscape setting, to prevent the spread of disease caused by the overuse of one species monoculture.

**Shrubs and Ornamental Plantings:** our approach integrates a select variety of shrubs, ornamental grasses, and perennials in addition to trees. in masses or drifts that create contrast and seasonal interest through varying deciduous and evergreen species, colors, forms, and textures. Our sustainable approaches focused on environmental sensitivity and natural systems focus on selecting plant materials that are indigenous and drought tolerant, to conserve the water resources.

**Irrigation:** We selectively employ highly efficient irrigation systems to aid plant establishment, to reduce ongoing maintenance and maximize plant vitality and longevity.

**Screening:** Landscape Screening of parking areas, mechanical equipment and loading docks is achieved via a combination of decorative wood and metal screening in combination with deciduous and evergreen tree and shrub plant massing to adequately screen these areas from view within the public way.

**Site Lighting:** Exterior site lighting is composed of decorative pedestrian and vehicular pole mounted streetlights to provide appropriate illumination to the roadways and public areas while being mindful to prevent glare or overspill from the light source onto adjacent property or into any public way.

## Traffic

A Transportation Impact Assessment (TIA) was prepared to identify traffic impacts associated with the proposed project. The purpose of this assessment is to review existing and future traffic conditions in the vicinity of the site, determine the traffic impact of the proposed project at key intersections expected to experience increased traffic levels from the project, and review the need for improvements to mitigate the project's traffic impact.

The project's location adjacent to the MBTA Andover commuter rail station is expected to encourage the use of public transportation and reduce the need for parking and also reduce the number of peak-hour commuting vehicle trips made by the project residents. The café, retail, and gym uses are expected to draw from the existing neighborhood and area activity centers which would further reduce the vehicle traffic generation and reliance on parking. The traffic analysis indicates that the project has minimal impact with no changes to vehicle level-of-service at 7 of the 8 intersections studied. With the proposed pedestrian courtyards and sidewalk links to existing pedestrian facilities, pedestrian connectivity will be strengthened through this area of Andover as a result of the project.

## Affordable Housing

The Applicant will propose an affordable housing plan that meets the requirements of the Historic Mill District Zoning Bylaw after meeting with the Housing Trust Fund Board on November 28<sup>th</sup> and meeting with the Planning Board during the public hearing process.

## Massworks Grant

With the support of Minco Development Corporation, the Town of Andover submitted an application in the summer of 2023 to the Massworks Infrastructure Program for infrastructure improvements to the Essex Street Corridor. In October, the Town was notified that it had been approved for a \$3,300,000 grant to support roadway and sidewalk improvements.

According to the Town's website:

*"The funding will enable the Town to improve municipal infrastructure along and adjacent to Essex Street, which runs from Elm Square to Red Spring Road. It also serves as a major connector road, or "spine," of the mixed-use corridor west of Main Street. The anticipated improvements will aim to make the corridor more walkable, improve the safety of intersections along the route for all users, strengthen the connectivity between Downtown Andover and key destinations including the MBTA commuter rail station and Historic Mill District, and support future housing development.*

*Planned improvements include widening the sidewalk on the northern side of Essex Street to enhance pedestrian safety, the addition of bicycle accommodations, and upgrades to water and drainage systems serving the corridor. Additionally, the funding will enable the Town to implement multimodal safety improvements to three key intersections:*

- *Essex Street at Pearson Street/Railroad Avenue*
- *Essex Street at School Street*
- *Essex Street at Ridge Street/Brook Street*

*These intersections were identified as needing improvement in a Circulation and Street Design Study for the Historic Mill District completed by the Town of Andover in 2019. The intersection of Essex Street at Pearson Street and Railroad Avenue features five vehicle approaches and an active railroad crossing, making it particularly challenging to traverse for pedestrians, motorists, and bicyclists. Improvements to this intersection are imperative to proposed and future development in the corridor, and overall public safety.*

*Critically, the infrastructure improvements enabled through the MassWorks grant will support the development of the Old Town Yard site, a three-acre plus parcel located at 11 Lewis Street. In June, the Town of Andover finalized a Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) with Minco Development Corporation (Minco) for the site. Minco's proposed development includes 163 [sic] residential units, community amenities, and commercial/retail space, and represents an initial investment of approximately \$70 million. Under the terms of the LDA, construction of the development must begin by 2026 and reach completion by 2029, if not sooner."*

### MBTA

According to the MBTA, one permit and two licenses are required:

- Chap. 40 Sec. 54A permit – because the MBTA is in the chain of title.
- Licenses
  - Zone of Influence License – because the project site is within 30 feet of MBTA Right of Way; and
  - License of Entry (aka License Agreement) – because there are two utility lines (storm sewer and sanitary sewer) that cross under the tracks.

Also required is an easement between the MBTA and the Town of Andover for the existing storm sewer and sanitary sewer lines that are sited under the tracks for which none currently exists.