

Rezoning Narrative for Juniper Hill Commons

A Proposed R-7 Medium Density Mixed Residential Planned Community in Harrisonburg, Virginia

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I. INTRODUCTION

Harrisonburg Cohousing, LLC (the applicant), herein referred to as ‘Juniper Hill Commons,’ was formed for the purpose of creating a planned residential cohousing community in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The identified site for this project is a 5.48 acre parcel situated at 650 Keezletown Road, Harrisonburg that is walkable to stores and restaurants. Our objective is to create a neighborhood that fosters a strong sense of community among its residents. Through the use of intelligently designed homes clustered around common spaces, we seek to create a community that is aesthetically appealing, economically approachable for a diverse population, safe and accessible for individuals of all ages and physical abilities, and environmentally friendly. To accomplish this goal, we propose rezoning the Keezletown Road property from R-1, Single-Family Residential District to R-7, Medium Density Mixed Residential Planned Community District. We believe the design of our development is consistent with the goals expressed in Harrisonburg’s R-7 zoning designation, as well as the Comprehensive Plan for the city of Harrisonburg.

The Juniper Hills project will contain private housing units with full amenities, a club house solely for community residents, as well as common gardens, a playground, and onsite parking.

The community will be comprised of a diverse range of housing options including single family, duplex, triplex, and apartment units. Apartments will constitute less than 30% of the total units and will be of universal design to provide workforce housing for disabled people and address aging-in-place issues. All dwellings will be constructed in a way that combines attractive, sustainable materials and design features to create a sense of harmony and welcome.

The existing 1940s Craftsman-style house on the site will be moved to a different location on the site and serve as one of the residences. In its place will be a two-story structure, referred to as the Common House, consisting of three apartment units, one of which is the Common House, along with common areas to be enjoyed by members of the community.

Parking for community residents will be relegated to the outer edges of the development to improve the visual character and safety of the community. From Keezletown Road, the aesthetic appeal of the land will be improved, with newly planted trees and landscaping designed to create a pleasant driving experience.

The compact and low impact design of this project will preserve and enhance open space and the natural environment. The overall design of the neighborhood will result in a pedestrian and bike-friendly community that provides safe and appealing areas for children, recreation, gardening and community gathering.

The design of Juniper Hill Commons is based on the concept of cohousing, which originated in Denmark in the late 1960’s. Cohousing homes are privately owned by the residents as in a typical HOA or Condo Association, with a club house (common house) and walkable design to foster community. With the first cohousing community built in the United States in the early 1990’s, the trend has since grown considerably in North America with more than 165 completed communities, as well as hundreds more in various stages of planning or development. Cohousing communities have excellent resale value and make an enduring positive contribution to the socioeconomic fabric of the locality. Emerson

Commons in Crozet, Virginia is an example of such a community developed by consultant Sheeflee LLC.

Other examples in Virginia can be seen in Blacksburg, Fairfax County, Loudon County and Abingdon. There are six cohousing neighborhoods in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area and eleven in and around Boulder, Colorado. By approving Juniper Hill Commons, the City of Harrisonburg would be recognizing a growing trend in the United States and Western Europe that promotes a happier, better-connected lifestyle.

II. BACKGROUND AND VISION

A group of citizens in Virginia joined to create a limited liability company, Harrisonburg Cohousing, LLC, in order to achieve the purchasing power to design and build their future home: a planned cohousing community in the City of Harrisonburg called Juniper Hill Commons.

Harrisonburg Cohousing is partnered with developer Sheeflee, LLC. Sheeflee developed, designed and constructed a nearby cohousing community, Emmerson Commons, in Crozet, Virginia. Its principal, Peter Lazar lives in Shadowlake Village Cohousing in Blacksburg, Virginia and is President of the Cohousing Association of the United States.

Juniper Hill Commons is designed to combine the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of shared resources and community living. The Juniper Hill neighborhood addresses the basic needs of today's households—safety, child care, transportation, social contact, aging in place, as well as economic and environmental efficiency—by combining the privacy of single-family housing with the desirability of community living.

The development involves an inclusive planning process, agreed-upon neighborhood design, shared facilities and resident management. We believe that our project will create a sustainable, diverse, cross-generational neighborhood that will support families, foster a sense of belonging, and build community. Residents of Juniper Hill Commons will be able to take full advantage of all the resources that Harrisonburg has to offer while still enjoying the benefits of a small-town community feel.

Juniper Hill Commons will further the Vision and Goals of the Harrisonburg Comprehensive Plan (2018), particularly Goals 4, 5 and 6, as noted below:

Goal 4. *To improve the quality of land use and development patterns.*

- With thoughtfully arranged housing units on half of the property clustered around common green spaces, Juniper Hill Commons will make efficient use of the available land while preserving half of the property for recreation and gardening. This allows density while preserving green spaces.

Goal 5. *To strengthen existing neighborhoods and promote the development of new neighborhoods that are quiet, safe, beautiful, walkable, enhance social interaction, and offer a balanced range of housing choices.*

- With minimal traffic through the neighborhood thanks to parking on the outskirts, residents will be able to safely enjoy interacting with their neighbors on the paths that will flow through the development.
- The cohousing neighborhood model is one *carefully constructed to enhance social interaction* compared to typical car-centric suburban neighborhoods.

Bits of conversation through the days and years builds social capital and connections with ones' neighbors. Homeowners are more likely to encounter their neighborhoods than in

typical subdivisions because they:

- share a beautiful club house (Common House)
 - walk to their homes rather than drive directly into their garages and sometimes meet neighbors along the way
 - collect their mail in a central mailbox in the Common House
 - manage their own homeowners association together rather than contract it out to a management company
 - may attend potlucks, community dinners and social events
 - may have collocated plots in the community gardens
- Juniper Hill Commons provides a *balanced range of housing choices* from small 800-sq.-foot single floor living condominiums to larger 2000+ square foot attached homes.

Goal 6. *To meet the current and future needs of residents for affordable housing.*

- With a combination of housing options accessible to individuals of various physical and economic means, Juniper Hill Commons will attract a diverse population. The dwellings at Juniper Hill Commons will not be less expensive per square foot than most other housing in the region. However, many of them will be smaller sized than in modern developments and thereby carry a lower price tag than a large suburban home. This will provide a cost-effective option for people who value community, convenience and lifestyle over size.

We believe that our objectives for this project align closely with the goals of the city of Harrisonburg and that zoning type R-7, Medium Density Mixed Residential Planned Community District, is the best mechanism to achieve these goals. Corresponding well with R-7, most of the Juniper Hill Commons homes are small-lot single family attached homes. While less than 30% will be categorized as “apartments” in that units are stacked above and below, 100% of the homes will have outdoor private space available to them as we have incorporated generous decks and porches into the design of each unit. In addition, most units in Juniper Hill Commons will have private backyards. The rest will have at least their own private outdoor spaces.

By clustering the homes, attractive green and open spaces can be enjoyed by all. The units are clustered on about half the property, which includes a central green for community events and a playground. Separated from the developed portion by a stream crossed by a footbridge, the other half is left fully green with a playfield, orchards and gardens.

The innovative cohousing model encourages and facilitates neighborhood cohesiveness, walkability, safety, as well as the retention of green spaces and existing trees, all goals of the R-7, Medium Density Mixed Residential Planned Community concept.

III. PROJECT GOALS

Economic

- Buy the land as a group to reduce individual lot cost and share the cost of infrastructure installation.
- Make group purchases when feasible to achieve economies of scale.
- Locate property walkable to shops and places of employment.
- Invite homeowners to contribute “sweat equity” in managing the property owner’s association to keep house maintenance costs down.
- Identify and secure affordable mortgage funding sources to encourage a mixed income community.

Environmental - Site

- Cluster housing to minimize site disturbance and protect natural habitats and waterways.
- Preserve and protect green space.
- Use green/sustainable building products and systems to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the community.
- Relegate parking to the outskirts of the community to reduce the impact of automobiles on residents, preserve pedestrian safety, and improve the quality of life.
- Share resources, such as tools, and lawn care equipment (for example, using three lawn mowers for the entire community instead of one for each home), thereby reducing the resultant pollution and reducing the carbon footprint of the community at large.
- Reduce harmful stormwater runoff by using eco-friendly gardening materials and prohibiting toxic fertilizers and pesticides.
- Choose outdoor lighting that reduces light pollution and conserves energy by directing light downward instead of upward.

Environmental - Homes

- Supply all units with standard solar panels. Juniper Hill Commons would be the second all-solar community in Virginia where every house has solar panels. This follows Juniper Hill in Crozet (also developed by Sheeflee).
- Utilize modular and panelized building to reduce waste of framing lumber without compromising the structural integrity of the home, while making it easier to properly insulate building corners, interstitial floor spaces and attics.
- Utilize R-19 insulation in floors and walls and R-38 insulated attics to ensure even temperatures throughout the house, less energy consumption and increased comfort.
- Install high-performance, energy-efficient windows to help keep heat in during winter and out during summer.
- Install air-sealed construction and ductwork to create a tight envelope to improve comfort and indoor air quality while reducing utility bills.

- Install properly-sized efficient heating and cooling equipment to use less energy, reduce indoor humidity, improve overall comfort of the home and require less maintenance than standard models due to increased durability.
- Select water conserving appliances and fixtures to reduce water use and sewer outflow.
- Promote a healthy living environment by using paints, primers, sealants, and composite wood products specified as low-volatile organic compounds (low VOC). Carpets meet the certification requirements of the Carpet and Rug Institute.
- Rigorously test each building at several stages during construction to verify that each system is performing as designed and specified.

Social

- Design and position units to promote a sense of community and visitability.
- Protect set-aside green space for leisure activities, gardening and children’s play areas.
- Maintain a club house for socializing and activities such as arts and crafts, music, community meals. Guest rooms available for use by guests of residents will be incorporated in the club house to facilitate the construction of smaller residential units. Common areas are wheelchair-accessible to create a more inclusive community.
- Include a playground
- Plan community events to increase social connectivity and cohesion.
- Invite diversity and encourage residents to participate in neighborhood decision-making to encourage a cooperative mentality in the community.

Safety

- Relegate parking away from houses to allow a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood where children can safely play.
- Improve safety as in an old-style town where everyone knows his/her neighbors and looks out for one another.
- Orient housing units toward shared areas so that parents and caretakers can easily look after children.

IV. DESIGN OBJECTIVES

(1) Mix of housing types and residential lot sizes

A mix of housing types and residential lot sizes and configurations is provided so as to offer a variety of housing opportunities, yet create a cohesive neighborhood that enhances social interaction.

- The site plan for Juniper Hill Commons incorporates five different building types arranged around a common area, making the development accessible for individuals and families of different economic and physical means. With shared porches, decks, and green spaces, the design of the community focuses heavily on creating an environment in which residents can build and maintain relationships.



(2) Clustering

Housing is clustered to preserve valuable environmental resources and provide usable recreational open space.

- The Juniper Hill Commons homes will be clustered in a manner that maximizes green space.

(3) Open space system

The open space system is as carefully designed as the housing area so as to offer usable parks, connected green spaces, and village greens and civic spaces visible from roadways and spatially defined by abutting building facades and/or landscape elements.

- The clustered design of the cohousing community maximizes available open space. The community includes a common green, a playground, orchard, gazebo, workshop and club house to be enjoyed equally by all residents. The common green and included playground (as shown on the development plan) is situated to provide good site supervision by caretakers inside the homes.



(4) Connected system of roads, sidewalks and/or trails

Vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle transportation is facilitated through a connected system of roads, sidewalks and/or trails so as to provide many choices with regard to mode and route.

- With its fully relegated parking and pedestrian pathways, the Juniper Hill Commons community is walkable by design. Trees between the street and the community will provide a natural buffer between Keezletown Road and the pedestrian-friendly paths within Juniper Hill. Juniper Hill Commons will feature a sidewalk/bike path along its frontage with Keezletown Road.
- Juniper Hill Commons will be conveniently located to a number of stores, restaurants, and most importantly, jobs. Its location on Keezletown Road lies in close proximity to the Valley Mall, the Spotswood Square Shopping Center, and Harrisonburg Crossing. It is also conveniently located near Interstate 81.

(5) Traffic calming techniques

Traffic calming techniques may be used to reduce vehicle speed and increase pedestrian and bicycle safety.

- With all parking areas placed on the outskirts of the development, children, pets, and adults can walk, play, and bike freely and safely.

(6) Principal building addresses the street

Principal buildings address the street, presenting front facades on the publicly visible side of the building.

- The existing house on the property currently presents a front façade to Keezletown Road. It will be moved to the east but continue to present this front façade to Keezletown Road.
- At the old location of the existing house will be the community building with a front façade facing Keezletown Road.

(7) Minimized visual impact of off-street parking

The visual impact of vehicular off-street parking and garages on public streetscape views is minimized through innovative site planning and building design including parking areas located to the rear of buildings, using architectural design elements such as massing, form, materials and fenestration to make garages visually compatible with inhabited buildings, and parking areas screened with landscape elements.

- The parking areas have been designed to blend with the natural surroundings and existing landform. The segregation of the parking is a key aspect of this project and enhances the aesthetics and safety of the community. Relegated parking areas will blend into the existing landscape contours and walkways will connect to individual dwellings. This design will also promote the physical and social well-being of the residents because walking back and forth to their cars will provide exercise and will increase the likelihood that individuals will stop to chat with neighbors, get to know the kids and pets, thus enhancing the sense of community that we all seek. Due to the slope of land from Keezletown Road, most of the parking will be hidden from passersby.



- Carefully selected and planted trees and landscaping will create a natural border between the community and Keezletown Road. Passersby will see mostly natural landscaping, along with an entrance designed to facilitate merging with traffic on Keezletown Road.

(8) Visually compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood.

Neighborhood support uses, such as neighborhood commercial areas, daycare facilities, community centers, churches and schools, are designed so as to be visually compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood and accessible by all transportation modes.

- The buildings that are designed for this project include will be two- and three-story construction that will be well-proportioned and in context with the existing structures on and off the land. The buildings will incorporate design principles that enhance the livability of the built environment, such as roof overhangs that create a “sheltered” environment. Deep front porches will be private yet connected to the public way. Dwelling units will have windows that provide parents and caretakers with the ability to maintain sight supervision of their children while they are in the play areas.

- Materials and finishes will be chosen to promote the sustainability and aesthetic appeal of all buildings. At least four units will feature universal design to accommodate those in wheelchairs and address “aging in place” issues.

APPENDIX A. CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT

Figure 1. Existing site

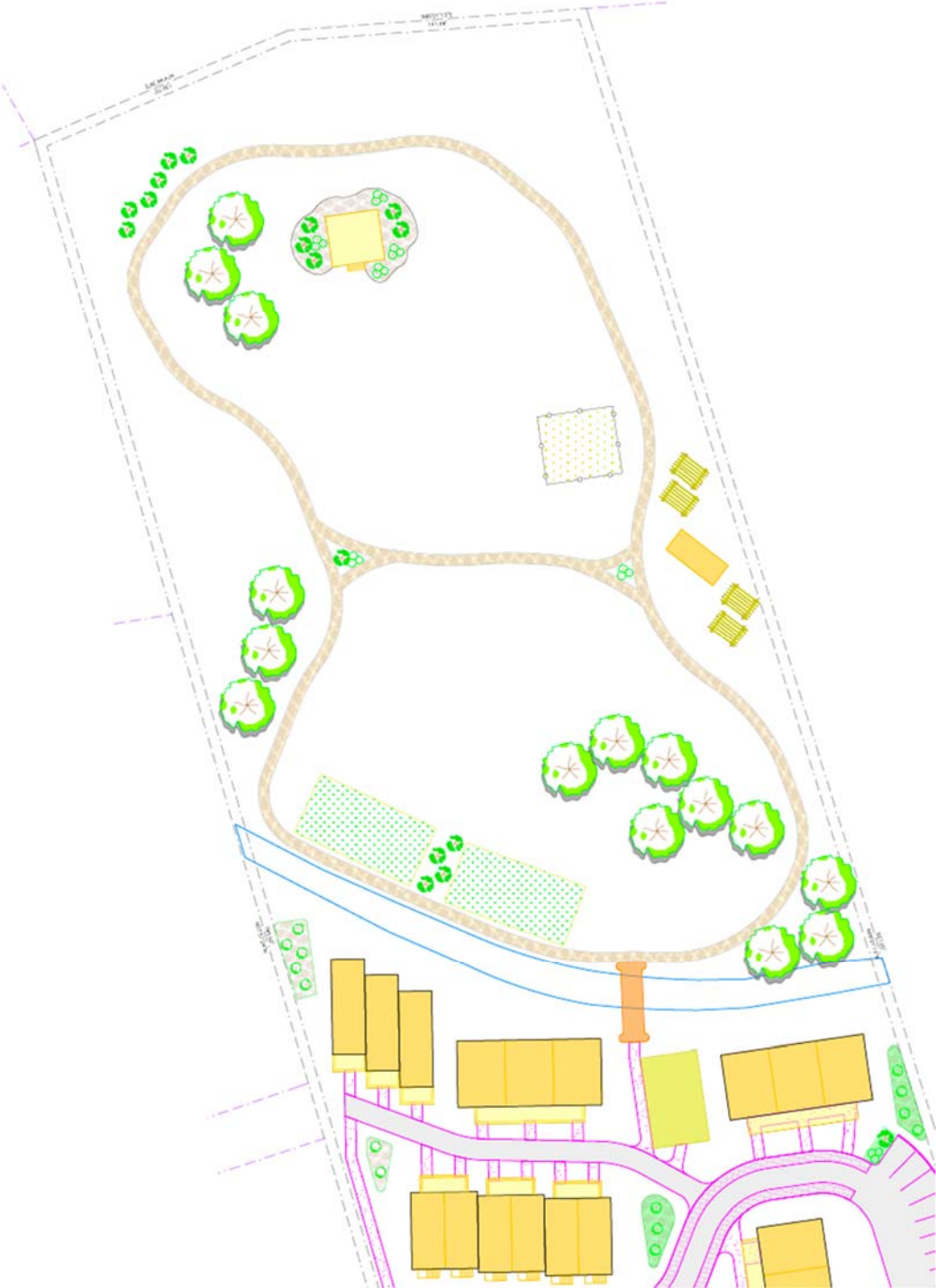


Figure 2. Conceptual Layout (Southern Part of Property)



Figure 3. Conceptual Landscaping Plan (Northern Part of Property).

This is a conceptual drawing for landscaping the Northern Part of the Property



APPENDIX B. THE COHOUSING CONCEPT

The following definition of Cohousing (from cohousing.org) describes the housing concept:

Definition of Cohousing

Cohousing is an intentional community of private homes clustered around shared space. Each attached or single-family home has traditional amenities, including a private kitchen. Shared spaces typically feature a common house, which may include a large kitchen and dining area, laundry, and recreational spaces. Shared outdoor space may include parking, walkways, open space, and gardens. Neighbors also typically share resources like tools and lawnmowers.

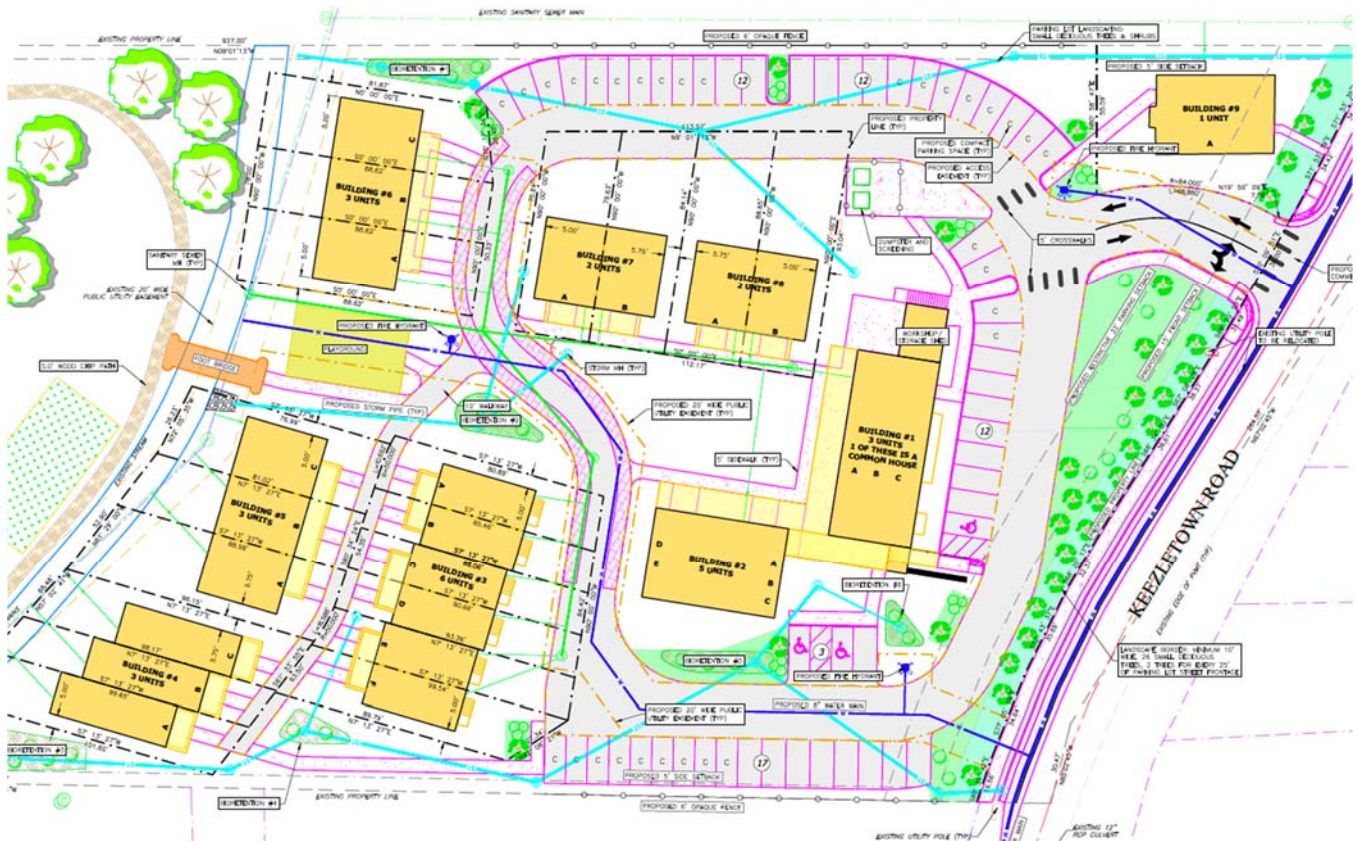
Households have independent incomes and private lives, but neighbors collaboratively plan and manage community activities and shared spaces. The legal structure is typically an HOA, Condo Association, or Housing Cooperative. Community activities feature regularly-scheduled shared meals, meetings, and workdays. Neighbors typically gather for parties, games, movies, or other events. Cohousing makes it easy to form clubs, organize child and elder care, and carpool.

In summary, Juniper Hill Commons will be legally and functionally a property owner's association with privately-owned traditional homes; however, there are features that facilitate neighborhood interaction.

APPENDIX C. CONCEPTUAL ELEVATIONS AND RENDERINGS

Location of Units

The site plan below provides the locations and Unit numbers of all the planned Units, including common elements, after all phases are complete. Please note that the site plan below includes only the section of the property that will have units constructed. The portion of the property featuring gardens, orchards, and other common green elements, is not included in the closeup below. Juniper Hill Commons will include 28 total housing units, with several different configurations, outlined in the table below the site plan.



Home Types

Juniper Hill Commons plans to include 5 separate housing types, along with the Common House and the existing 1940's Craftsman style home. Potential housing types are outlined below, along with floor plans and renderings of the proposed buildings. City of Harrisonburg Zoning Ordinance terminology is provided in italics.

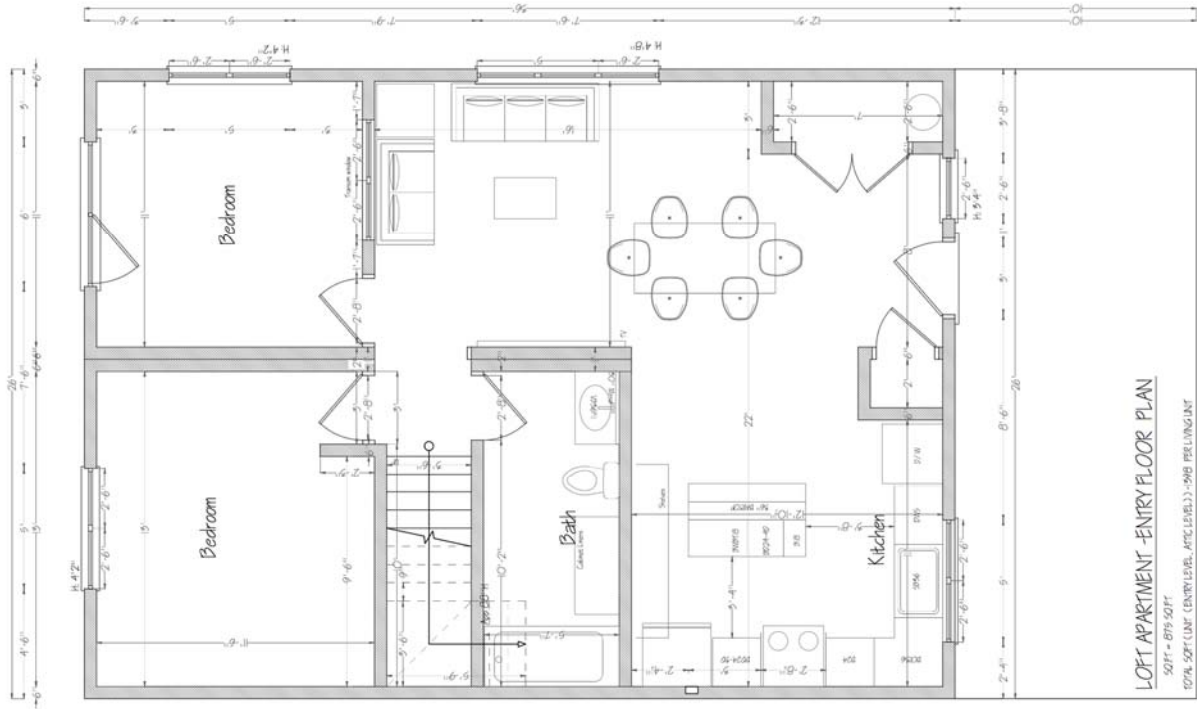
Unit Type	Number of Dwelling Units (28 Total)	Building Number
Type A- Condo (<i>Multiple-family dwellings</i>)	5	2
Type B- Townhouse (<i>Single-family attached dwelling or townhouse</i>)	6	3
Type C- Triplex (<i>Single-family attached dwelling or townhouse</i>)	6	5, 6
Type D - Staggered Triplex (<i>Single-family attached dwelling or townhouse</i>)	3	4
Type E – Duplex (<i>Single-family attached dwelling or townhouse</i>)	4	7, 8
Common House (apartments and shared spaces) (<i>Community building and multiple family dwellings</i>)	3	1
Existing House (<i>Single-family detached dwelling</i>)	1	9

Type A - Stacked Units

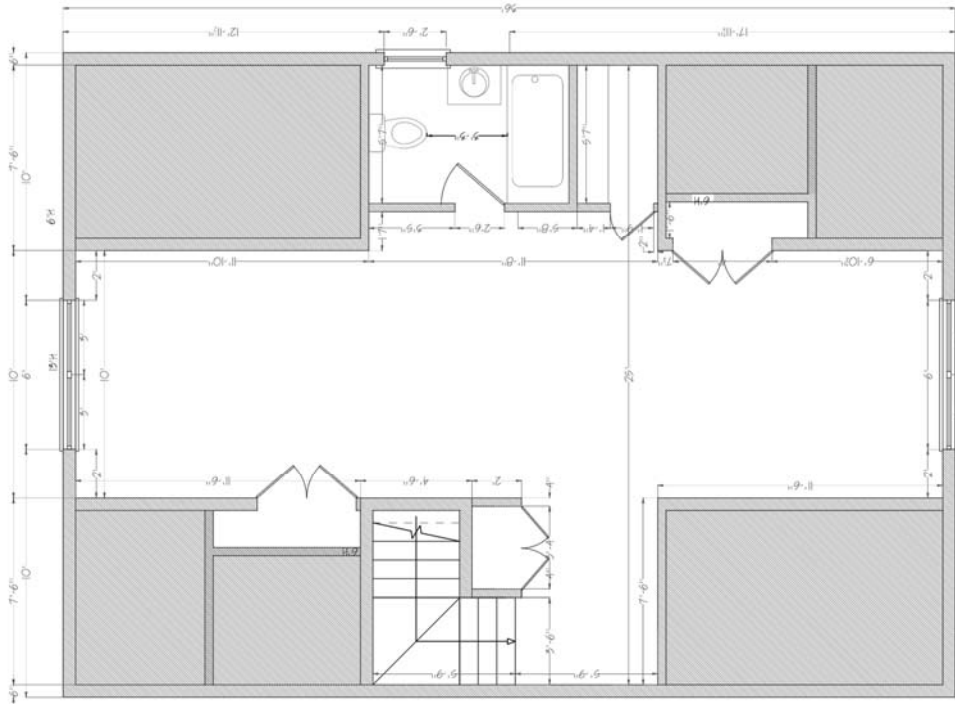
The Type A units in building #2 are stacked condo units featuring 875 sq. ft. of livable space on the ground floor.



Type A Floor Plan: Entry Level



Type A Attic Level:



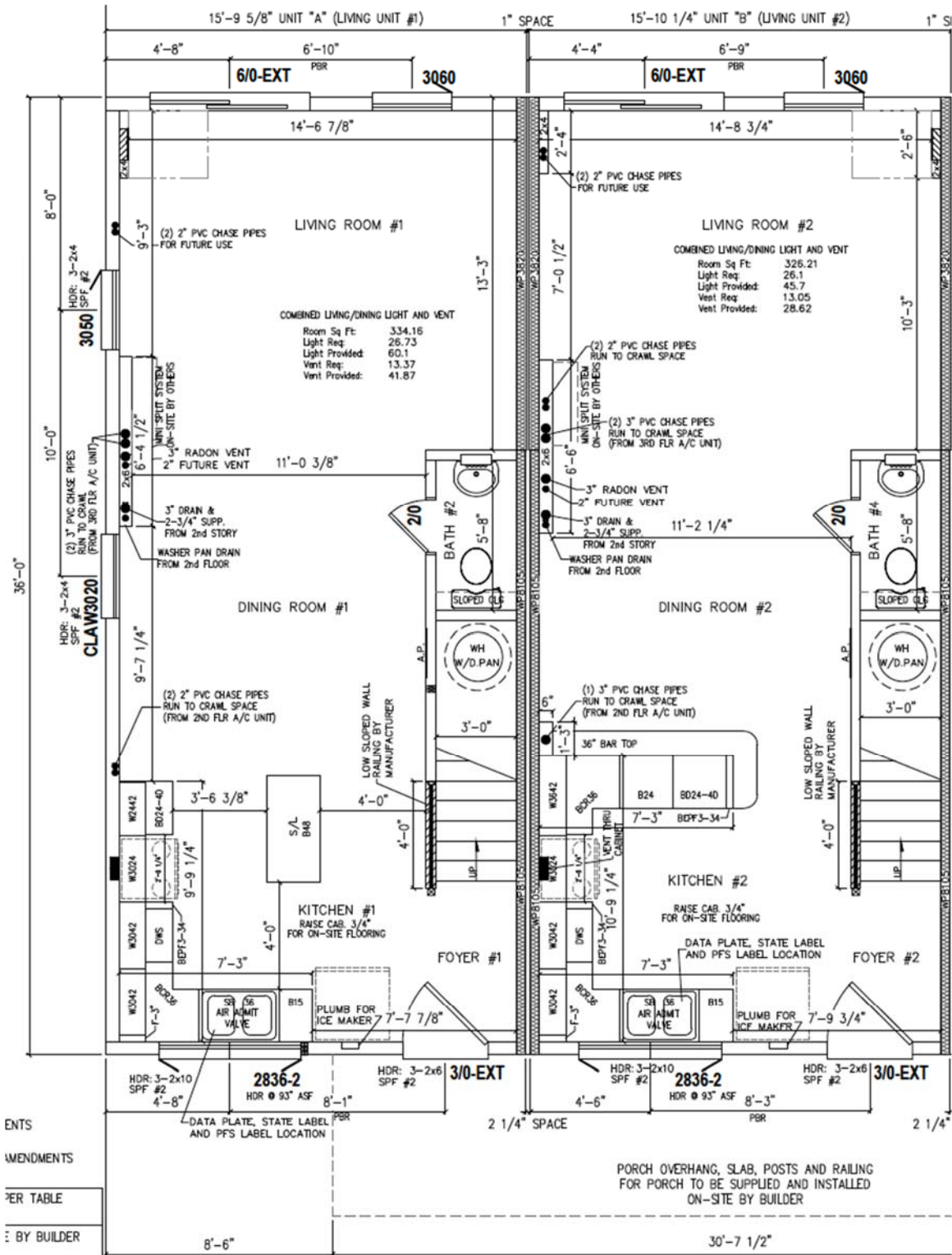
LOFT APARTMENT - ATTIC FLOOR PLAN
SOFFIT = 525 SOFFIT
TOP OF SOFFIT (UNIT 1 ENVELOPE, ATTIC LEVEL) = 598 PEBBLING UNIT

Type B - Townhouse

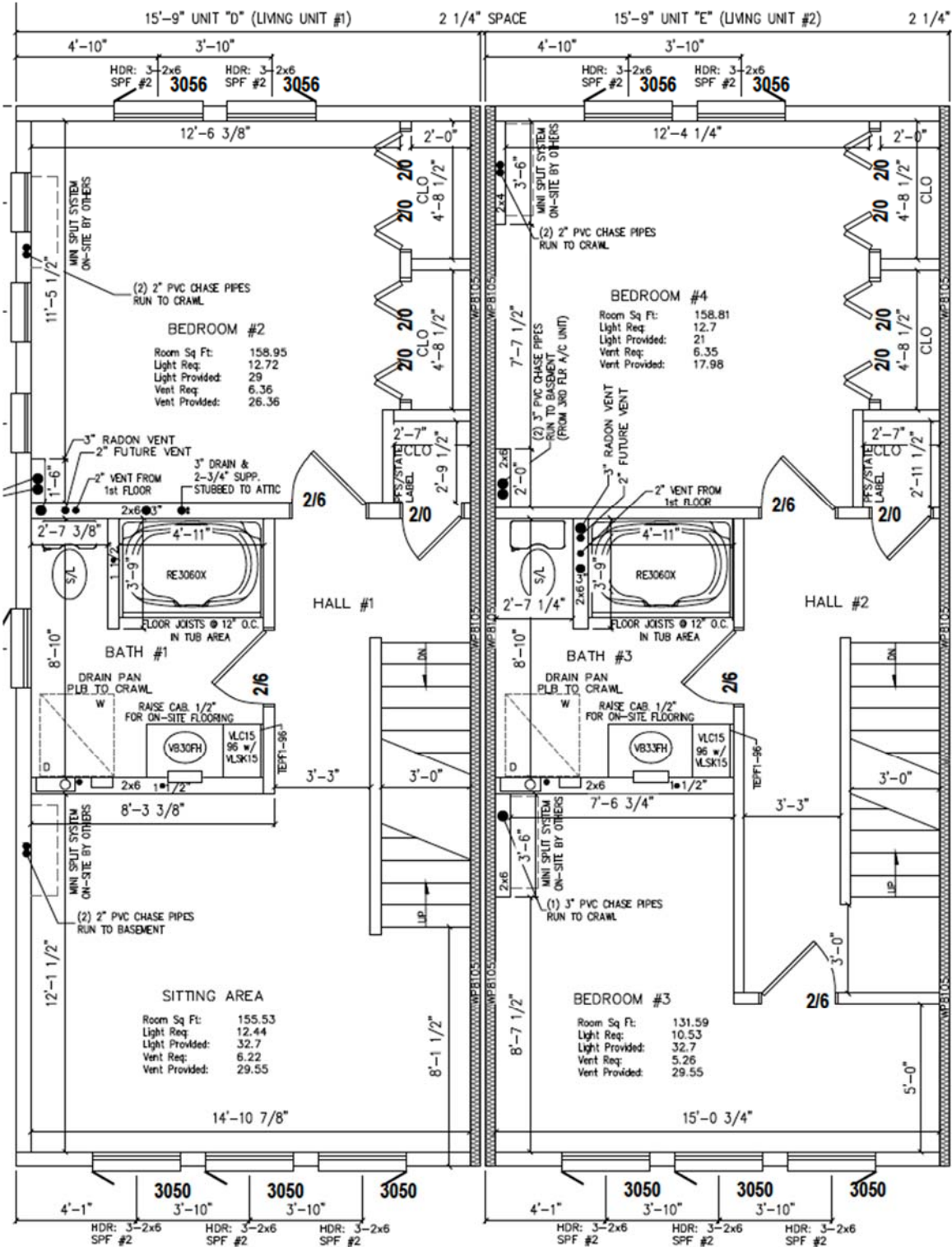


The Type B Units are side-by-side townhomes. Two are shown above. The level of basement finish, if any, is determined by buyer and also impacts the total finished square footage. Floor plans are summarized below.

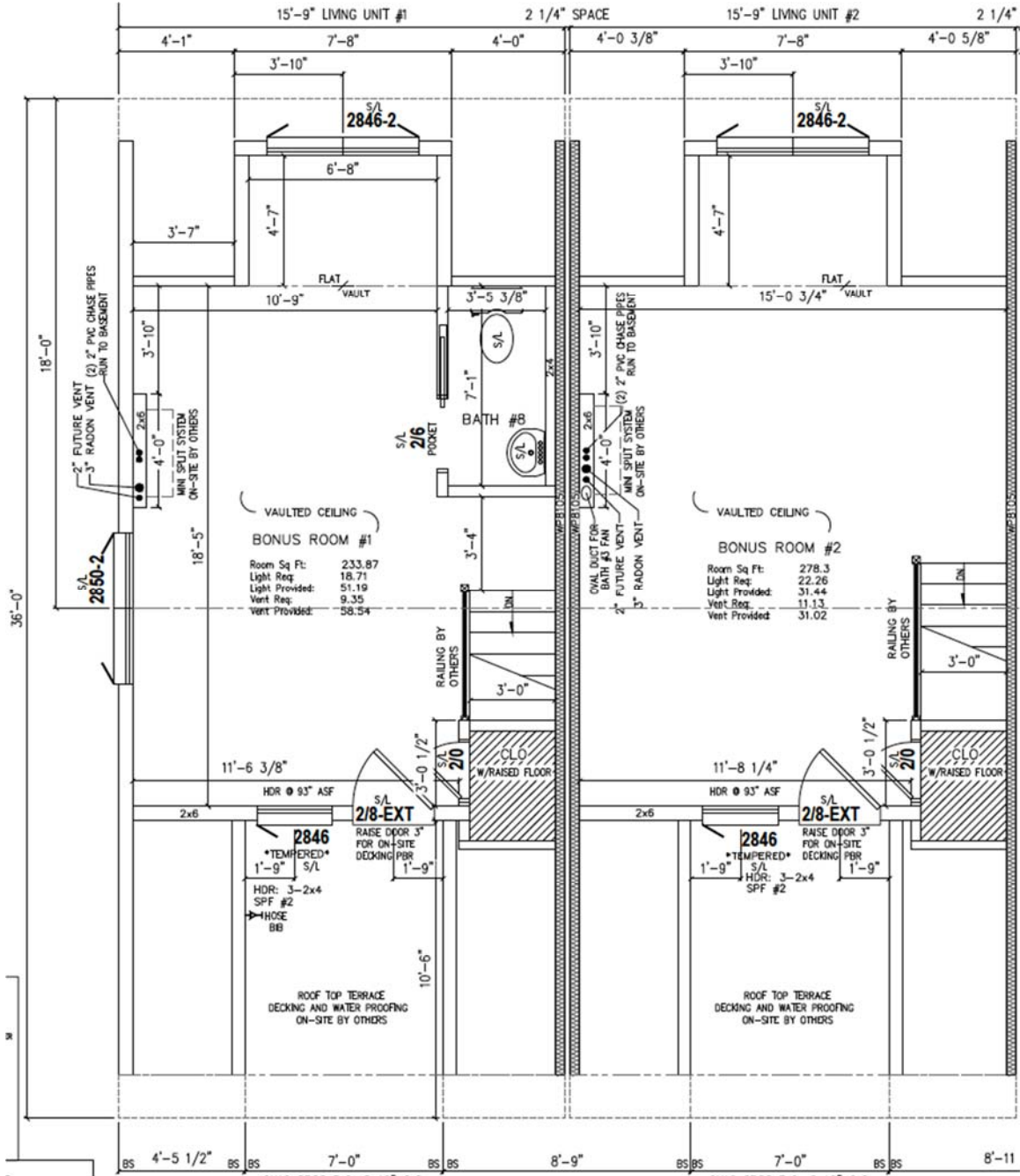
Type B Entry Level (2 Units shown)



Type B Second Floor (2 units shown)



Type B Attic (2 units shown)



Type C - Triplex

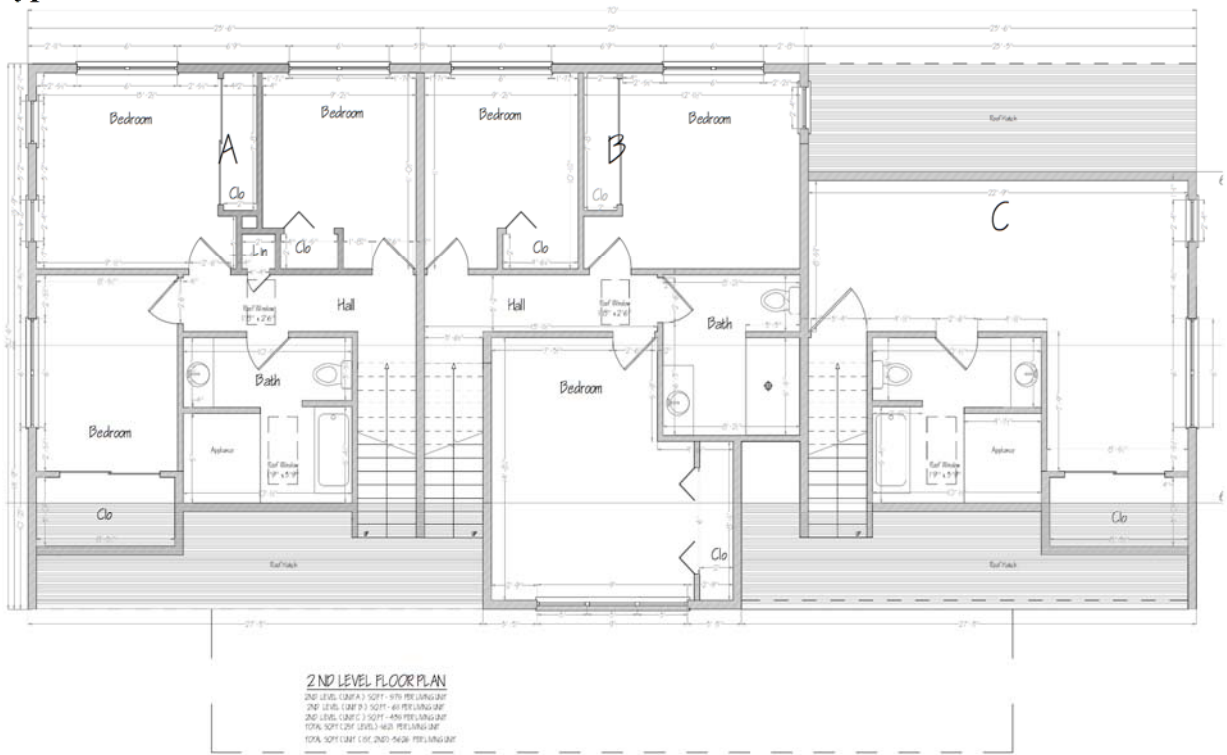


The Type C involves three attached homes. At this time, two such buildings are planned for Juniper Hill Commons: Building #5 and Building#6. #5 has a basement and #6 does not. The level of basement finish is determined by buyer and also impacts the total finished square footage. The floor plans are outlined below.

Type C Ground Floor:



Type C Second Level:

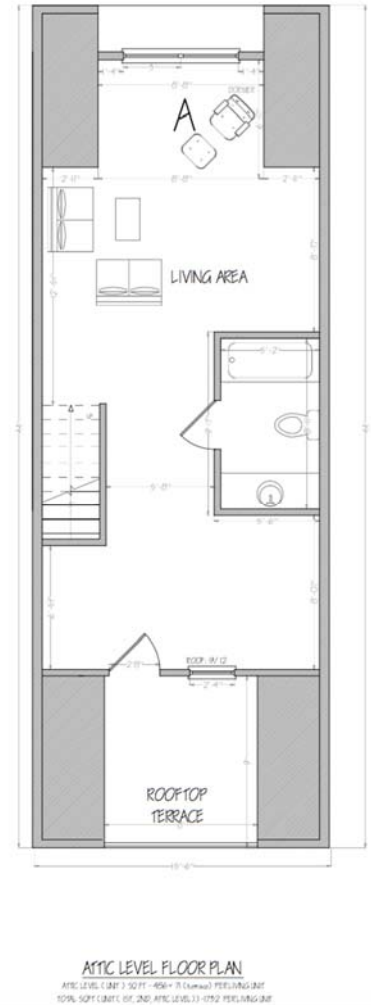
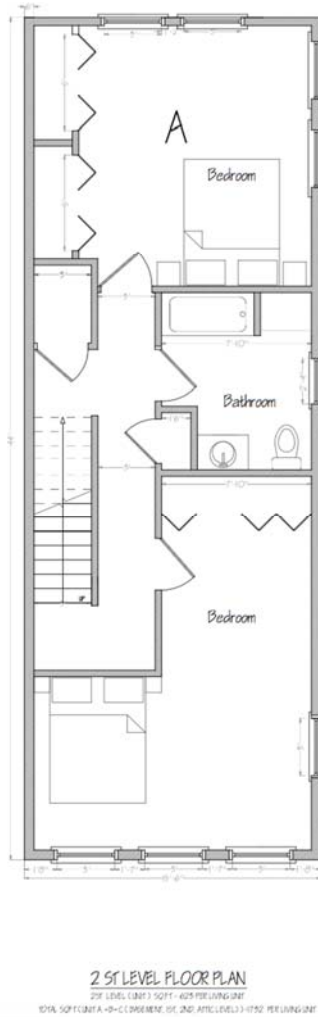
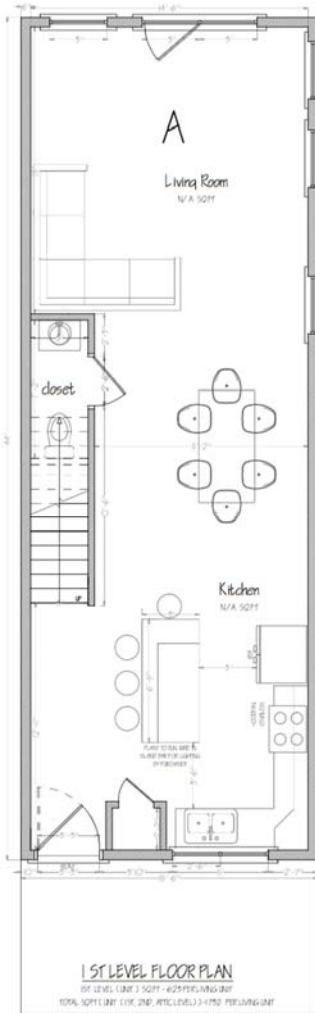


Type D - Triplex



The Type D triplex features three homes adjacent to one another in a staggered row. Building 4 in Juniper Hill will be Type D. At this time, Building 4 is planned to have a walkout basement. Floor plans are summarized below:

Type D Single Unit (Ground, Second, and Top Level shown in sequence):

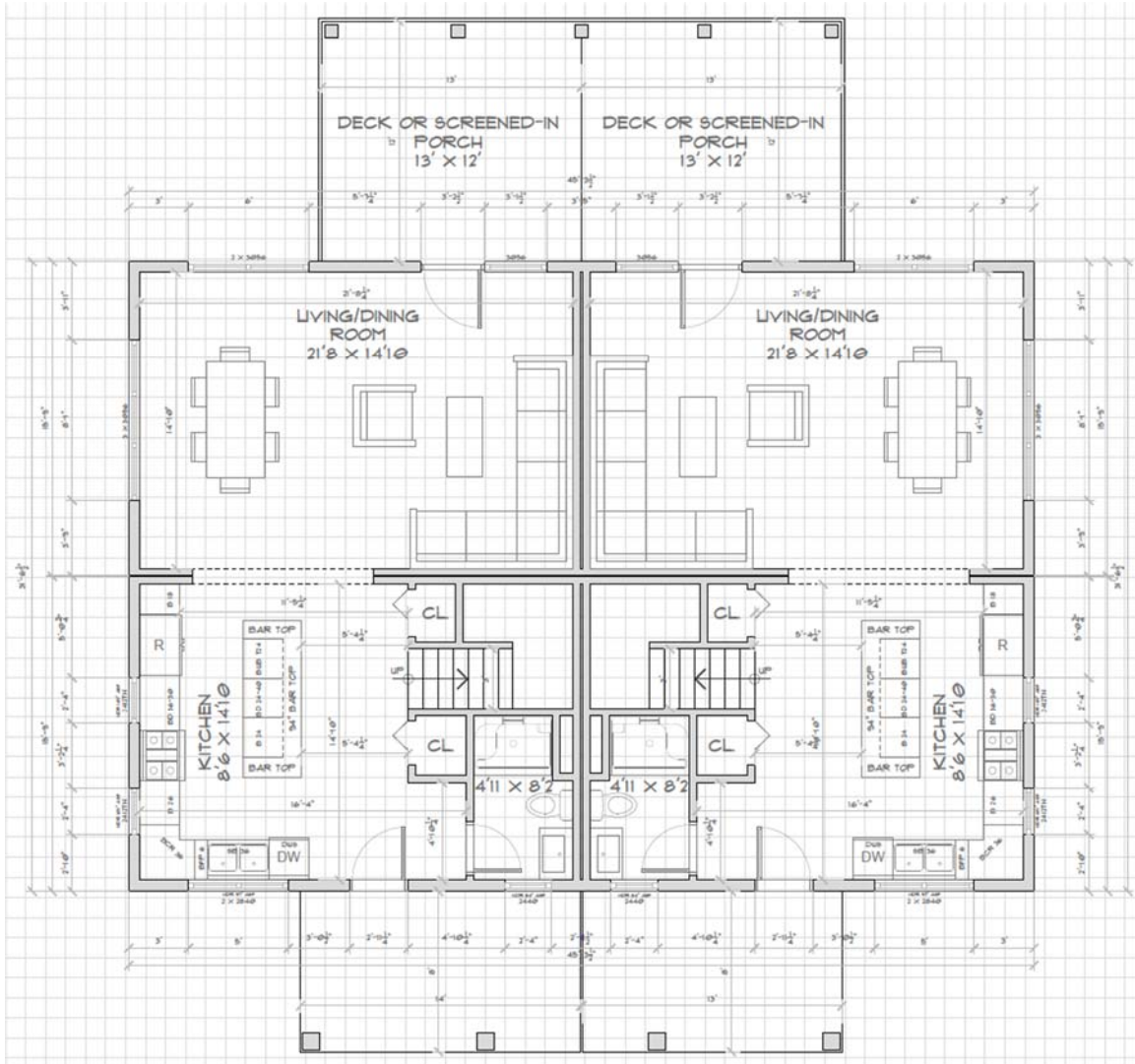


Type E - Duplex



The Type E homes are duplexes. At this time, Building 7 and Building 8 at Juniper Hill Commons are planned to be Type E and neither would have a basement. Type E Floor plans are outlined on the next page.

Type E Ground Floor:



Second Floor:



Existing House

At this time, the existing 1940s house on the property is planned to be moved over to the location shown as Unit 9 on the site plan. It will be placed over a nice tall modern basement and renovated. We do not currently have a floor plan for this existing building but have the following exterior elevations:



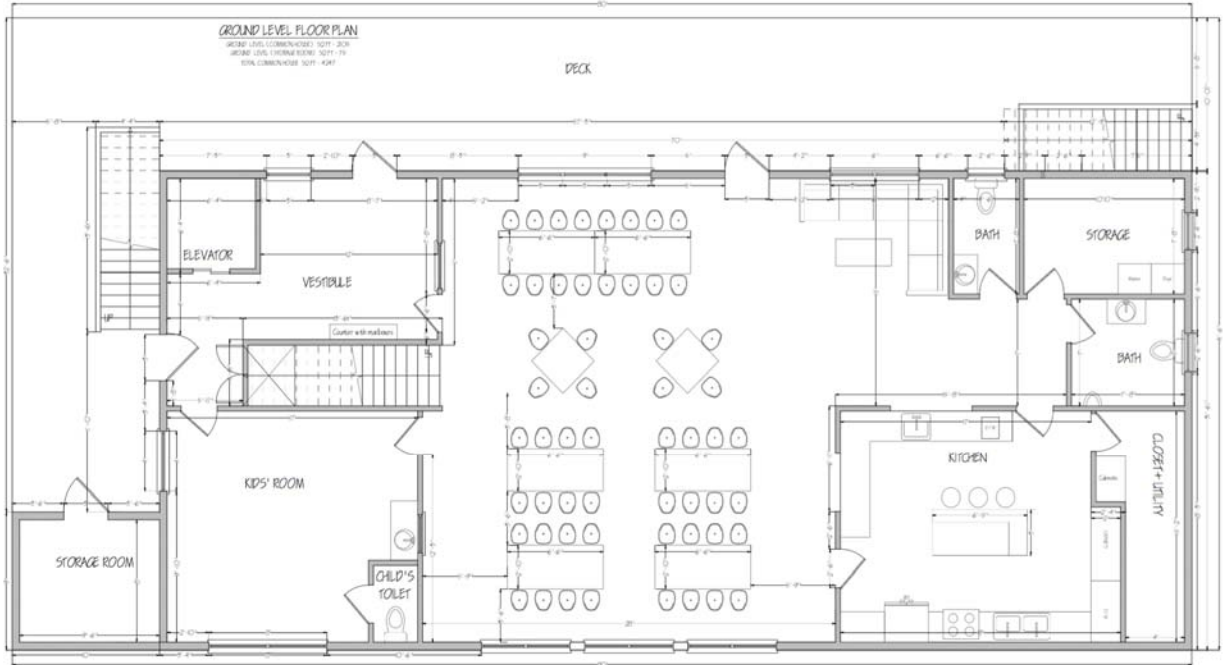


Units 1A, Unit 1B and the Building 1 Common Areas (Common House)

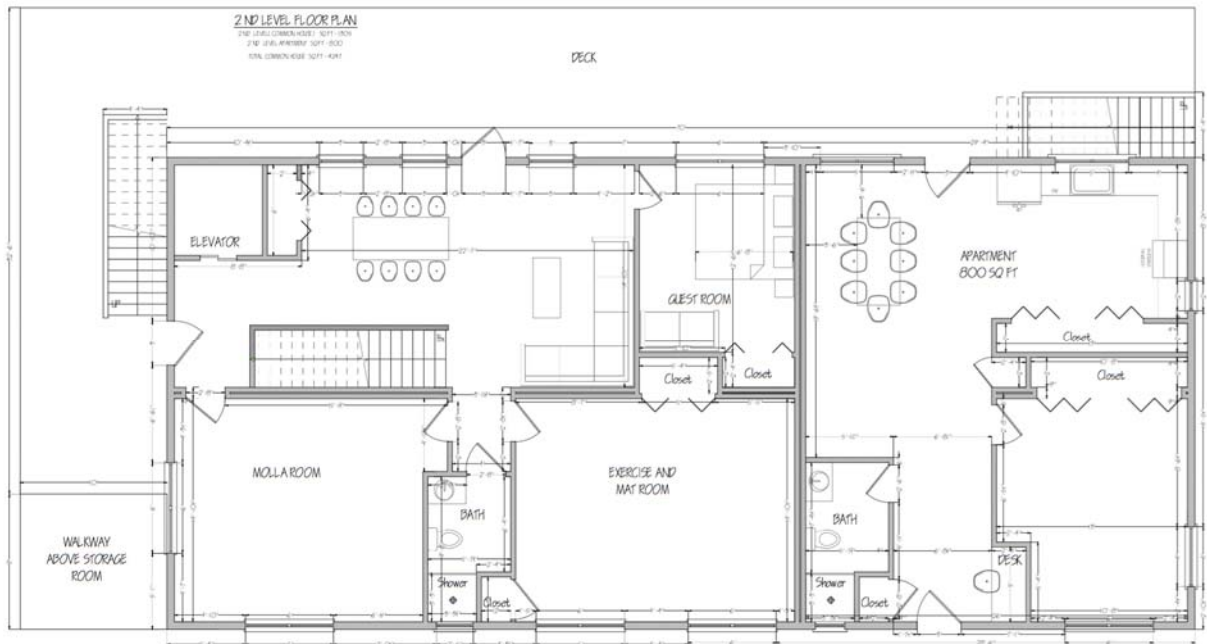


The Common House (Building #1) is planned to consist of two residential apartments as depicted in the below plans along with common space shared by those apartments as well as for use by the community at large. Unit 1A is on the second floor and accessible from the street facing side of the building as well as the rear deck. Unit 1B is on the third floor of the building and accessible via stairs and elevator. The common areas, which include guest bedrooms and a kitchen, will be considered a Unit but is reserved for common use. Floor plans are outlined on the following pages.

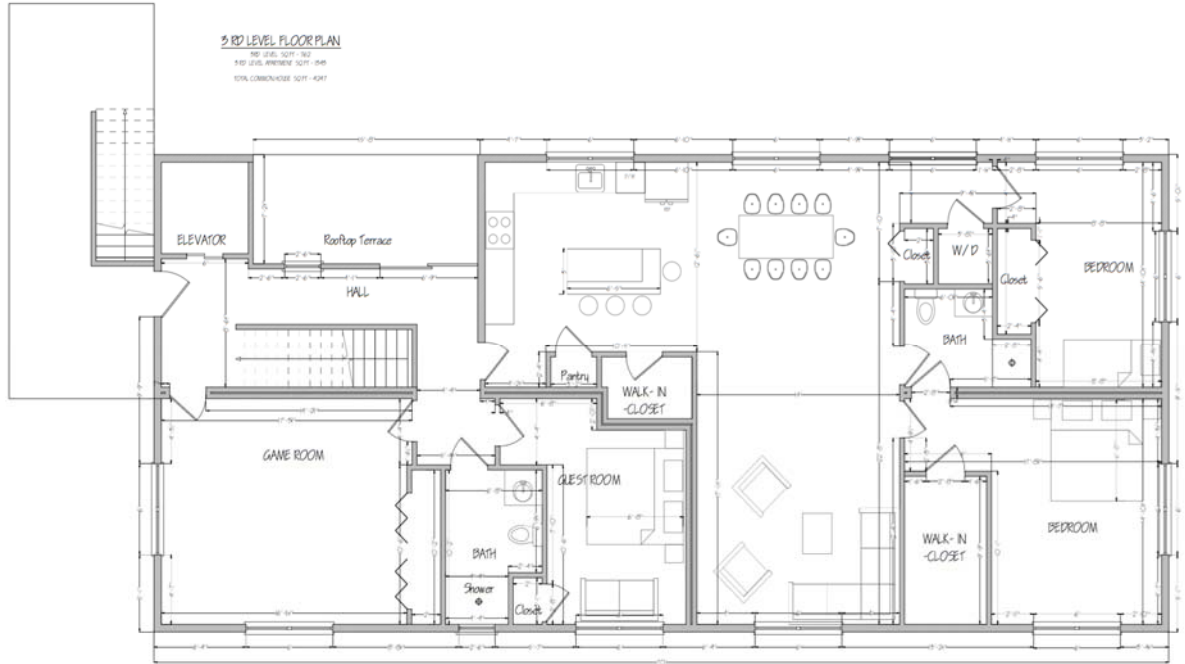
**Ground Floor:
All Common Area**



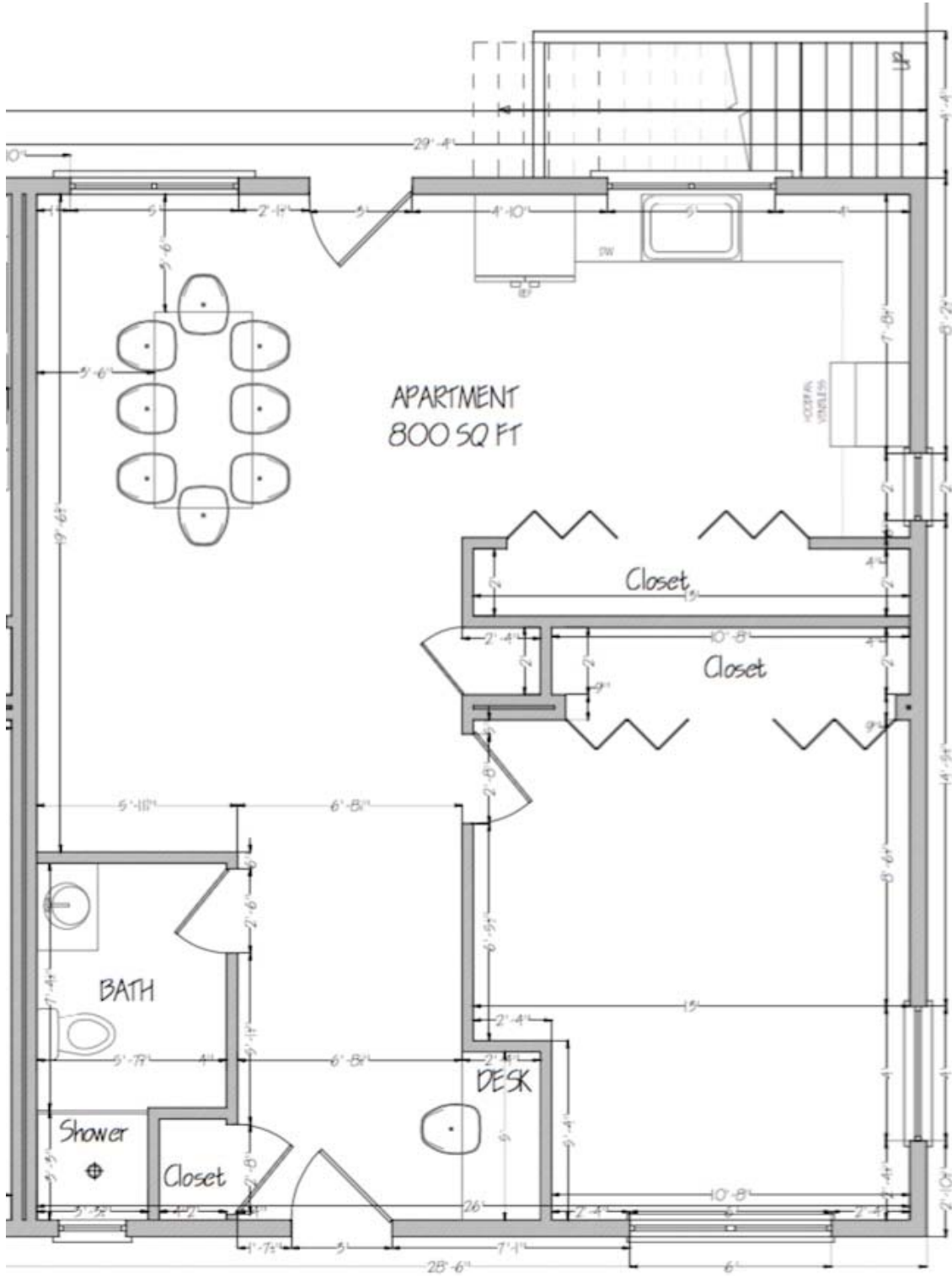
**Second Floor:
Common Area and Unit 1A**



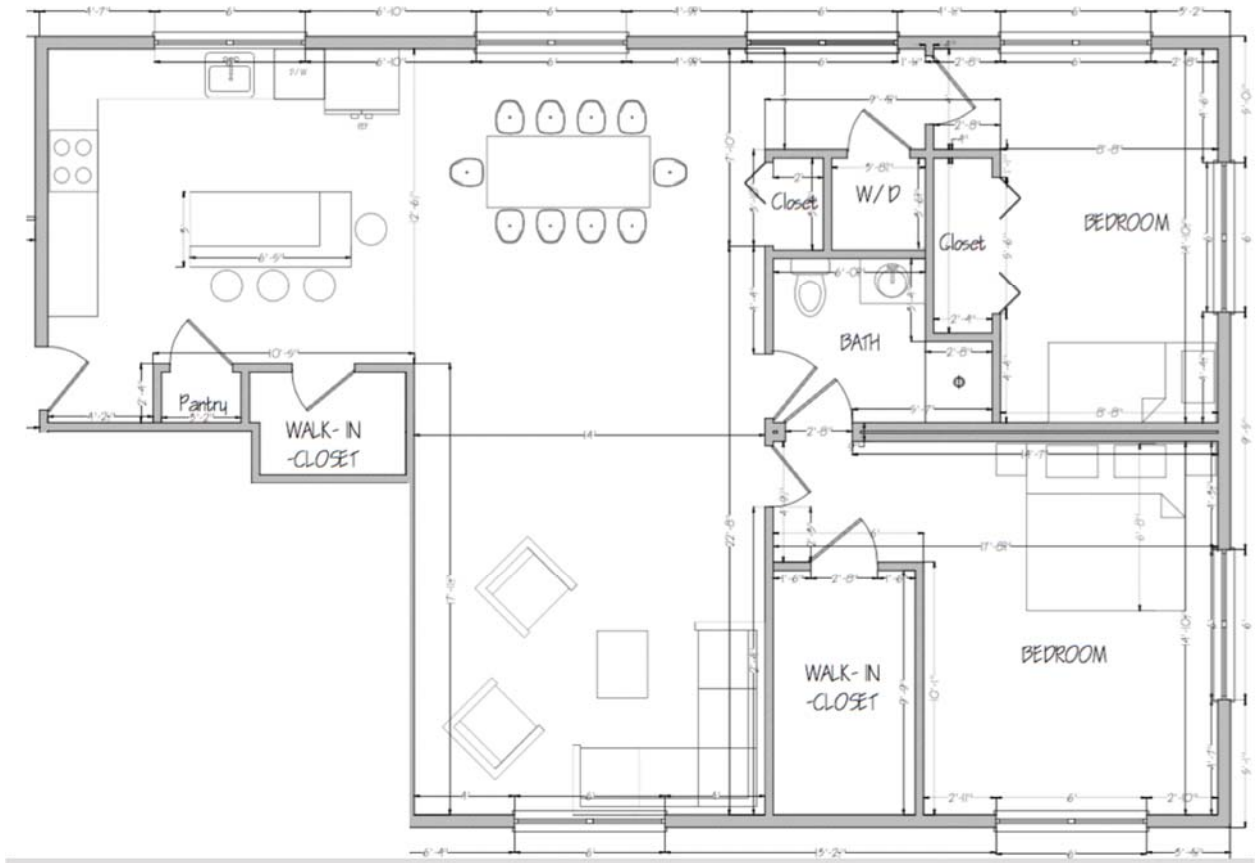
**Third Floor:
Common Area and Unit 1B**



Unit 1A Floor plan (Second Floor Apartment)



Unit 1B (Third Floor Apartment) Floor Plan



APPENDIX D. COMMON ELEMENTS

The site plan depicts the following common elements on the property:

- 1 Common House
- 2 Workshop
- 3 Parking Areas
- 4 Playground
- 5 Walking Paths
- 6 Foot bridge
- 7 Common Green
- 8 Orchard/ Gardens on the other side of the footbridge

About the club house (Common House)



The Common House is designed to create a space for residents to build community. It is planned that the building will feature a kitchen and dining area, a playroom for children, guest rooms, an exercise room, as well as storage space for shared tools and equipment. At this time, the Common House will feature an elevator, making each floor wheelchair accessible, and will include a wraparound porch overlooking a common green for residents to enjoy. The common house would also include two private apartments.

APPENDIX E. PROPERTY OWNERS' COVENANTS, CONDITIONS, AND RIGHTS

The Juniper Hill Commons units will be part of a Homeowners Association and/or Condominium Association (Unit Owner's Association).