



HISTORIC
SALEM INC

📍 Preservation at work

June 29, 2026

Salem City Hall
93 Washington Street
Salem, MA 01970

Dear [City Official],

Historic Salem Inc. (HSI) has been working since 1944 to ensure that the historic resources of Salem are preserved for future generations and that new developments complement Salem's existing scale and historic character.

As such, we are deeply concerned about the size and scope of the Shetland Park development project as currently proposed by the Prime Group. Because of your board's important role in Salem's development review process, we wanted to share HSI's principal concerns.

We are enclosing two documents which we hope will help you more fully evaluate the impact of the project.

- **HSI Shetland Project Overview**
- A **Comparable Redevelopment Projects** study we have done of major waterfront projects in Portland, ME, Quincy, MA, Portsmouth, NH, Newport, RI and Boston, MA. These projects offer valuable lessons for Salem.

The Shetland Park proposal is a large multi-phased project and difficult to summarize succinctly. As chair of one of Salem's appointed boards, aspects of this proposal may come before you and your fellow board members for review. We hope the enclosed information provides helpful context as the project moves through the City's review process.

Shetland Park will be the largest development project in Salem's 400-year history, as both a commercial and residential project. Its potential is positive, but the project, as currently designed, raises some serious concerns for HSI, that we are asking the developer and city leaders to address before it is approved. Our principal concerns relate to project scale and infrastructure impacts.

SCALE

The project's proposed scale and density are unprecedented in Salem:

The area of the proposed housing is 12.7 acres, and the proposed number of units is 1200 or **100 units** per residential acre. The Forest River Residences (FRR) 40R project is **much less dense**. (See information below. *) We urge that the Shetland Park 40R be more in line with the FRR density.

- The proposed height of the buildings must also be reduced. **We urge that any approvals granted for this project ensure residential buildings are no more than eight stories in height and include no more than 800 housing units, consistent with sound urban planning and good design practice.** This differs from the current plan. While Salem has four "high rises", the addition of 12- and 13-story buildings at Shetland would loom over the adjacent historic neighborhoods, visually wall off the Point from the harbor front and conflict with the rest of the historic Salem waterfront stretching from Derby Street to the historic Forest River.

IMPACTS

The project would have significant impacts on Salem's infrastructure and public services:

- **Traffic:** Comparably sized projects that contain both office and residential spaces produce between **19,000 and 22,000 vehicle trips daily.**** If, optimistically, even 50% of these people use public transportation, this project could still generate between **9,000 and 11,000 extra vehicle trips each day** in Salem, with no major roads to accept this increase in traffic. The impact on the adjacent historic Point neighborhood's narrow streets and Salem's downtown roads would be significant.
- **Water and Sewer:** Salem's wastewater treatment and sewage plant is already stressed, outdated and in need of an upgrade. At a January 2026 meeting of Salem's Sustainability, Energy and Resiliency Committee, South Essex Sewage District Executive Director David Michelsen reviewed plant operations, rising sludge disposal costs driven by PFAS restrictions, and a resiliency-focused 20-year capital plan. He recommended the need for roughly **\$400 million** in new investment dollars in the next 10 years to be shared by the five District communities.

Without this investment, the size of the proposed Shetland Park development would place additional strain on the existing system and could bring it to the breaking point.

- **Coastal flooding:** A 2019 National Park Service (NPS) study models Salem Sea Level rise through 2070. It projects a **2.4 ft rise by 2050** and a **4.2 ft rise by 2070**. These models do **NOT** include the storm surge conditions that already overtop existing waterfront structures.

The current proposal will elevate site grades and floors above the 2070 projected levels, but does not demonstrate site performance beyond 2070. This raises the question of whether the project reflects its likely life span. Presuming the project is completed by 2040, it will face major coastal flooding issues when it is only 30 years old.

** By way of comparison, the Harrison Road subdistrict, one of the city's other 40R developments, has more stringent restrictions to building heights and lot coverage. "The minimum lot areas range from 37 units per acre, in subzone 1, to 10 units per acre in subzone 3. Their maximum building height in subzone 2 is 50 feet; subzones 1 and 3 have a maximum building height of 70 feet. Subzones 1, 2 and 3 have a maximum lot coverage of 75% with minimum open space of 25%."*

*** Institute of Transportation (ITE) Trip Generation Manual (11th edition – 2021)*

We urge city officials to require the developer to provide the city with additional data on these issues as well as plans that remediate the project's negative impacts. We believe the project, as currently proposed, requires substantial refinement before advancing further through Salem's review and approval process.

Historic Salem Inc. is available to meet with you anytime to answer questions and discuss ways this project can become a successful redevelopment that is compatible with and respectful of Salem's historic architecture.

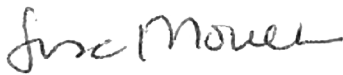
Sincerely,



Richard W. Lindeman
President



Vicky Sirianni
Co-Chair, Preservation Committee



Susan Moulton
Co-Chair, Preservation Committee