



Owner: Civico Development | Location: Sherborn, MA | Completion Date: 2017  
Programs Achieved: Energy Star, Gold PRISM Award, Silver PRISM Award

## Community-Focused Real Estate Investment and Development

### Abbey Road Townhomes: An Award-winning Pocket Neighborhood For People 55+

The Abbey Road neighborhood sits in downtown Sherborn, Massachusetts—a bedroom community of the Greater Boston region and its vibrant cities. Because of its prime location and great quality of life, many people raise families here and call Sherborn home throughout their careers.

However, in recent years, many older Sherborn residents have had to make a difficult decision: Move out of town to a retirement community that better suits their needs, or stay in the place they know and love, close to friends and family.



The team of Rubicon Builders, Civico Development, and green building verification consultant Sustainable Comfort, Inc., addressed this issue head-on with the Abbey Road Townhomes project. Today, this upscale pocket neighborhood allows people 55 and older to age in place while they continue to enjoy the comfortable, safe, and social life they're accustomed to

### Not Too Big, Not Too Small, Just Right for Independence, Mental Well-Being, and Sustainability

When designing Abbey Road, the team prioritized communal living and socialization. That's why the lead architect and owner of Civico Development, Andrew Consigli, says his organization chose to build a planned community that consists of groups of smaller residences, often around a courtyard or common garden, and that's designed to promote a sense of close-knit community and neighborliness with an increased level of contact.

Consigli explains, "An ideal pocket neighborhood is between six and twenty homes—not too small and not too big where you lose the community element."

*"One of our main visions when designing this project was the idea of a front porch community, where open common spaces are the focus."*

Andrew Consigli, Lead Architect &  
Owner of Civico Development



Building a pocket neighborhood benefits residents and greater Sherborn in more ways than one. First, a feeling of togetherness combats two common issues among older adults: loneliness and depression.

***“These types of communities allow for independent living while encouraging interaction, to foster a sense of belonging and relationship-building.”***

— James Moriarty, Vice President, Sustainable Comfort, Inc.

The architecture of Abbey Road is inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement of the early 20th century, which revived traditional artistic craftsmanship and used nature as a muse, incorporating themes of simplicity, honesty, and function.

Closely grouped homes benefit the environment too, preserving and protecting natural lands by building within a smaller footprint. Moriarty explains, “The forest preservation and landscaping were really well-thought-out features of this project. Working with Wes Wirth, a landscape architect, the project included many aspects of a self-sufficient and sustainable permaculture garden, including food production that was integrated into the landscape, drought-tolerant plants, native plants rather than the typical energy-intensive grass lawn, and the protection of existing natural areas.”

Although the community element is important, the team also built with privacy in mind to give residents independence. Consigli says, “We created three layers of privacy—one being the community courtyard, which is private to residents; the second being the front porch, which is semi-private; and the third being the inside of the residence, which is completely private. The porch and landscaping become the buffer between private and public. The buildings are also designed so that windows don’t face one another and porches are staggered.”



Now, residents can mingle with neighbors when they want to and enjoy solitude and independent living as they wish, too.

### **Modernizing a Historic Landmark While Preserving a Legacy**

Years ago, Abbey Road was a popular retreat for many celebrities, including the Dalai Lama and Margaret Thatcher, as well as speakers from Harvard. During Abbey Road’s upgrade, its historic roots were celebrated and elevated.

The site and existing buildings, rich in history, informed the architecture of the newly constructed homes. The Dowse Memorial Building, built in 1914 in the Jacobean style, originally housed Sherborn’s library. Next door, the originally named Coolidge House [also built in 1914] is a remarkable example of Edwardian architecture, reminiscent of the work of English architect Sir Edwin Lutyens.

Consigli says, “Preserving history was a sensitive subject with the town residents, as they cherish their historic buildings and do not want to see the existing character of the town’s center changed. We needed a majority town-meeting vote to rezone the land and had to assure them that great care would be taken to preserve historical integrity. By working together with Sustainable Comfort and the talented Rubicon Builders construction team, stakeholders blended new construction seamlessly with surrounding historical buildings.”

The finished residential community includes 18 homes centered around a common green. Each home features an open floor plan, a porch that overlooks community gardens and the surrounding natural areas, an attached garage, and 20th-century Arts and Crafts-style architecture. The 1914 originals of the Dowse Library and the Coolidge House could not be safely salvaged, but exact replicas were built to keep the historic integrity of the neighborhood intact.





The project was completed in 2017, and all condo units were sold by the end of 2018. The finished Abbey Road Townhomes community marries a New England farm town's history with modern, accessible convenience. Energy-saving elements include:

- Energy Star appliances and light fixtures
- Pella Proline Low-E windows that meet or exceed Energy Star standards
- High-efficiency heat pumps and hot water heaters
- High-efficiency furnaces
- Use of non-toxic products, such as no- or low-VOC paints, caulking, sealants, and adhesives
- Blown-in cellulose insulation: walls=R21 / ceilings=R38 / floors=R21

The homes are also aesthetically pleasing and functional for older adults. Upgrades include large windows with plenty of natural light, outdoor patio spaces, ample parking, and a custom elevator option for residents with accessibility considerations.

### The Team and Its Awards

Sustainable Comfort, Inc., served as the green building consultant for the project, working closely with architect Andrew Consigli of Civico Development, investor Bob Murchison of Fenix Partners, and Rubicon Builders to ensure energy-efficient and green housing.

Bob Murchison, Fenix Partners owner and a lifelong Sherborn resident, whose mother now lives in the Abbey Road community, was excited to invest in the success of the project. Murchison says, "Andrew Consigli and I are both committed to more-sustainable development practices. We knew our buyers cared about these issues, so we anticipated that the pocket neighborhood concept would be a huge selling point."

*"The Sustainable Comfort folks were a great help in understanding the challenges of sustainability and in maximizing our impact for dollars spent."*

— Bob Murchison, Fenix Partners Owner

Since Abbey Road's completion in 2017, the community has won two PRISM Awards—one Gold award for best 55+ community and one Silver award for best-attached home over 1,800 square feet—from the Builders and Remodelers Association of Greater Boston. The project took home platinum for the multifamily category in the 2018 National Association of Home Builders Best of American Living Awards.

President of Sustainable Comfort, Albert LaValley, remarked, "This project has been particularly rewarding because it has allowed us to keep people in their beloved community while bridging old with new—history with modern sustainability upgrades."

CIVICO Development is owned by our development team partner, Andrew Consigli. CIVICO is a community-focused real estate investment and development group with a commitment to quality design, historic preservation, and neighborhood-oriented infill development. They strive to incorporate innovative design and civic spirit into all of our projects.

Their mission is to design and construct high quality buildings, streetscapes, and neighborhoods that significantly enhance the social livability and environmental sustainability of communities. CIVICO's work includes projects of all scales, focused on walkability and human scale development.

