Pre-decisional DRAFT

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Solicitation of Public Comment for Project-Specific Build America, Buy America Nonavailability Waiver Proposal

SUBJECT: Under Evaluation: Project-Specific Nonavailability Waiver of Build America Buy America Act (BABA) Requirements to the the Colony on Grove – Apple & Beech for VRF Systems and Heat Pumps (HUD Waiver #W-0000476)

Introduction

This solicitation of public comment by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is to evaluate a BABA waiver request submitted by an assistance recipient based on nonavailability of a single product for a single project.

This solicitation of public comment does not represent a final agency decision. The purpose of this proposal is to inquire whether potential alternative domestic products may be available that were not identified by the assistance recipient or through HUD's domestic product research efforts, and whether other factors should be considered in the evaluation of a waiver.

HUD has completed its market research efforts and was unable to identify alternative domestic products meeting the technical specifications of the project, in sufficient and reasonably available quantities and of a satisfactory quality. Through this public comment period, commenters may provide information that indicates a waiver may not be needed. For example, if a specified item is found to be domestically available, HUD would not issue a final waiver.

Solicitation of Public Comment

The proposed waiver will be posted on HUD's public facing webpage and a notice of the proposed waiver will also be posted to the Made in America website, to satisfy the requirement to publish any BABA project waiver and provide the public with fifteen (15) days to submit comments. HUD is seeking public and industry comments from all interested parties and encouraging current manufacturers of the subject products to submit comments regarding potential availability. Public comments on this waiver should be submitted to BuildAmericaBuyAmerica@hud.gov. Please reference HUD Waiver #W-0000476 in the subject line.

Background

The Buy America Preference set forth in section 70914 of BABA included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Pub. L. No. 117-58), requires that all iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used for infrastructure projects under Federal financial assistance awards be produced in the United States.

Under section 70914(b), HUD may waive the application of the Buy America Preference (BAP), in any case in which it finds that: applying the domestic content procurement preference would be inconsistent with the public interest; types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction

materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality; or the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States would increase the cost of the overall project by more than twenty-five (25) percent. All waivers must have a written explanation for the proposed determination; provide a period of not less than fifteen (15) days for public comment on the waiver; and be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Made in America Office for review to determine if the waiver is consistent with policy.

Summary

Proposed Waiver: HUD is soliciting comments regarding whether to issue a project waiver of the requirements of section 70914 of BABA included in the IIJA, for a single product in an infrastructure project funded through the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME).

Waiver Type: Nonavailability of domestic products in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality.

Waiver Level and Scope: Project-level waiver for a single product for a single project. No other project will utilize the waiver.

Proposed Waiver Description: Project-specific nonavailability waiver of BABA requirements to the Colony on Grove – Apple & Beach affordable housing project in Worchester, Massachusetts for a single product.

Project Summary: The project is in Worchester, Massachusetts. The project consists of the construction of 93 affordable one-bedroom units across two buildings for low income and extremely low income senior residents.

Length of the Waiver: From the effective date of the final waiver until the completion of the project, which is anticipated to be July 31, 2027.

Items Covered in Waiver: The City of Worchester is seeking a waiver for VRF Systems and Heat Pumps, as described in detail below:

- **Name of Product 1:** VRF Systems and Heat Pumps
  - **NAICS:** 333415
  - **PSC:** 4120
  - **Technical Specifications:**
    - The variable capacity, heat pump air conditioning system shall be Variable Refrigerant Volume Series (heat/cool model) split system. The system shall consist of multiple evaporators using PID control. The unit shall be direct expansion (DX), air-cooled heat pump air-conditioning system, variable speed driven compressor multi zone split system, using R410A refrigerant. All indoor units are each capable of operating separately with individual temperature control.

- The outdoor unit shall be interconnected to indoor unit models as shown on the construction document. The indoor units shall be connected to the outdoor as recommended by the manufacturer and shall utilize specified piping joints and headers. System shall be capable of changing mode (cooling to heating or visa versa) with no interruption to system.

Description of Efforts Made to Avoid the Need for a Waiver

Both the grantee and HUD made every effort to obtain a domestically produced VRF Systems and Heat Pumps.

The grantee completed market research between February to June 2026 which consisted of outreach to three (3) manufacturers or suppliers of VRF Systems and Heat Pumps. None of the manufacturers or suppliers were able to provide BABA-compliant products that met the technical specifications of the project.

HUD conducted an online search of manufacturers and suppliers and did not locate any manufacturers or suppliers that could provide BABA-compliant products.

Anticipated Impact if No Waiver is Issued

Failure to grant a waiver for this project would result in the inability of the developer to install the required VRF Systems and Heat Pumps.

Assessment of Cost Advantage of a Foreign-Sourced Product Under OMB M-24-02, agencies are expected to assess "whether a significant portion of any cost advantage of a foreign-sourced product is the result of the use of dumped steel, iron, or manufactured products or the use of injuriously subsidized steel, iron, or manufactured products" as appropriate before granting a public interest waiver. HUD has concluded that this assessment is not applicable to this waiver as this waiver is not based on the cost of foreign-sourced products.

Description of Award

Agency: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Common Governmentwide Accounting Classification (CGAC) Code: 086

Title of Project: Colony on Grove – Apple & Beech

Recipient Name: City of Worchester

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI): ZDFNGC6F65L3

Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN): M-24-MC-25-0210

Financial Assistance Listing Name: HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)

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Assistance Listing Number: 14.239

Federal Financial Assistance Funding Amount: $3,275,000

Total Estimated Infrastructure Expenditures: $70,557,271

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