

August 27, 2016

Board of Selectmen  
Brookline Town Hall  
333 Washington Street  
Brookline, MA 02445  
(VIA EMAIL)

RE: Safety & Community Concerns – 1299 Beacon Street 40B Project as Proposed

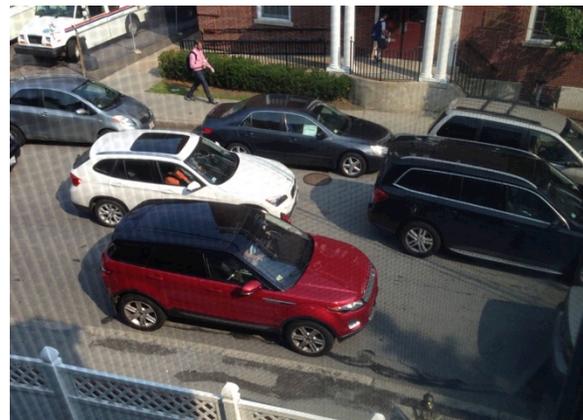
Dear Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the Board:

As longtime residents of Brookline, we value affordable senior housing. Unfortunately, the proposed 40B mixed-use development at 1299 Beacon Street will exacerbate already unsafe traffic conditions. All vehicular access is proposed through a one-way stretch of a narrow residential street (Sewall Avenue) that is already taxed beyond its limits by activities related to a busy grocery store and a US post office that serves as both a sorting facility and a package delivery hub. Just a hundred feet away on this street, Temple Sinai hosts religious services and children's activities. Longwood Avenue, less than 60 feet from the proposed site, is an artery for emergency vehicles to access Brookline homes and the Longwood Medical Area. The well-known problems in this area were underlined by a bicycle fatality a few years ago, and bad as the conditions are year-round, they easily cross the tipping point with every snowfall. The local conditions simply cannot support a development anywhere close to the proposed size.

For almost 2 years, the neighborhood has worked collaboratively with the Town's Transportation Board to identify workable solutions to the serious safety issues on Sewall Avenue. Except for limited progress on overnight parking of postal vans, traffic and safety conditions have barely flinched because the space is inherently constrained. We strongly urge you not to allow the proposed development at 1299 Beacon St. to proceed unless and until the serious concerns outlined below are adequately mitigated.

Living on Sewall Avenue, every day we observe compromises of resident safety, as follows:

- Children regularly jostle between double- and triple-parked cars and trucks to access the Temple. This photograph illustrates a daily traffic jam.
- Residents, particularly the elderly with walkers, families with strollers, people in wheelchairs, and people with grocery carts, stumble over sidewalks that are in chronic disrepair because inadequate street berth forces delivery and service trucks to drive over, and park on, Sewall Avenue sidewalks.
- In the winter, this congestion inhibits snow removal and the same elderly residents,



families, and others must navigate the tiniest strips of clear surface at the center of the road because large segments of the street and sidewalks become impassable. When snowstorms come close together, these conditions often last for weeks. These photographs illustrate the nature and scope of the problem.



- Emergency vehicles are routinely hampered by double and triple-parked vehicles and by many postal and delivery trucks that park or stop on both sides of this one-way street, as shown in the photograph here. Inadequate snow removal during the winter months compounds the difficulty.
- During peak hours, bumper-to-bumper congestion daily backs up to Longwood Avenue. This makes it hazardous for Sewall Avenue residents to exit our driveways and for emergency vehicles to pass.
- As the short stretch of Sewall Avenue in question is the only one-way segment between 3 two-way streets and is badly congested, cars and cyclists routinely drive and ride in the wrong direction. It's worth repeating that a young cyclist was killed here.
- The busy Coolidge Corner post office sorts mail for several zip codes and the staff use trucks, vans, and private cars to deliver mail and packages. Dozens of postal employees' cars take up every available parking spot in at least 3 blocks. Daily loading of so many vehicles causes traffic jams and poses problems that currently lack obvious solutions.



In summary, the proposed development at 1299 Beacon St. will further degrade safety on a street that is already compromised. Additional traffic from private, service, and delivery vehicles needed to support 108 residential units, 178 parking spaces, and elder services is simply untenable in this location. To make matters significantly worse, the plan proposes limited frontage for deliveries,



services and the needs of the proposed retail stores, and it calls for valet services and elevator lifts that will back on to Sewall Avenue. This photograph gives a glimpse of the dangers that the proposed development would magnify several-fold.

We embrace efforts to bring affordable senior housing to Brookline, as this serves an important need for our aging community. The development proposed at 1299 Beacon Street unfortunately exacerbates an already unsafe situation on Sewall Avenue and fails to address grave dangers.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ramesh and Lisa Shivdasani  
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cc: Ms. Alison Steinfeld, Director, Planning & Community Development Department  
Ms. Stephanie Orsini, Town of Brookline