

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS ABOUT 40 CENTRE ST PROPOSAL

Brookline ZBA Public Hearing
June 20, 2016

Order of Topics

1. Misrepresentations by developer
2. Legal issues
3. Abutter concerns
4. Pedestrian safety
5. Parking shortage in Coolidge Corner
6. Impact of trash collection
7. Preservation
8. Design

Actual street-level perspective

Misleading perspective taken with a telephoto lens at Centre St East lot



Pedestrians currently cannot see 19 Winchester due to trees and setback



Architectural context of Centre Street is Victorian homes



61 Centre

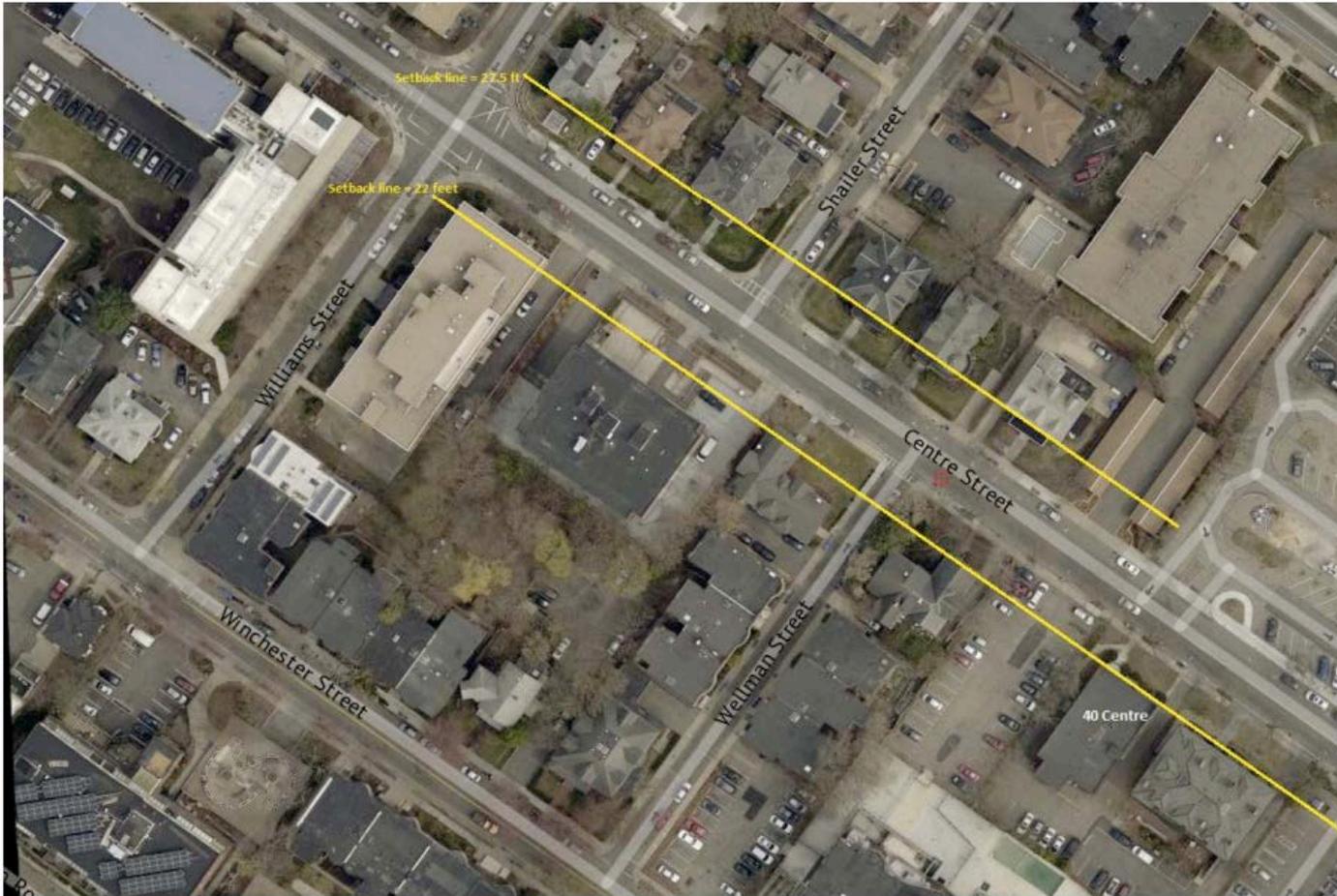


53 Centre



69 Centre

All buildings have front setbacks >24.5 feet



The Applicant improperly uses **commercial zones** on Harvard Street and Beacon Street as comparisons.

The **measured setbacks** along Centre Street are consistently >24.5 feet

Selectman Wishinsky's letter to MassHousing in its proper context:

“The location of this project in the heart of Coolidge Corner meets most of the tenets of SMART growth. The site is proximate to rapid transit on Beacon St and bus service on Harvard St and is on the cusp of the largest commercial area in Brookline.

However, the required demolition of an attractive *circa* 1921 Georgian-Federal Revival style brick building (including the elimination of an existing apartment) is antithetical to the overriding development principle of “concentrating development and mixed uses” by “encouraging remediation and reuse of existing sites, structures, and infrastructure”

The Board of Selectmen laments the growing tendency in essentially fully developed communities like Brookline to replace existing structures including residential buildings with new buildings under the auspices of 40B ... The proposed demolition of this property is an egregious violation of SMART growth principles.”

Selective, misleading quotation from Applicant on May 23, 2016:

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- “The location of this project in the heart of Coolidge Corner meets most of the tenets of SMART growth. The site is proximate to rapid transit on Beacon Street and bus service on Harvard Street and is on the cusp of the largest commercial area in Brookline.”
 - Neil A. Wishinsky, Chairman of the Board of Selectman (in a letter dated March 8, 2016)

Stakes in the ground

Transcript of May 23, 2016 ZBA meeting:

MS. POVERMAN: Could you put stakes on the edges where the actual building is going to be so we can see how much of the lot it actually is going to take up, which I believe is common practice? Just stake it out? I'm not seeing any nods.

MR. ROTH: Absolutely.

MS. POVERMAN: Thank you. Stake all of it.

Site visit on June 9, 2016: NO STAKES PROVIDED

Sham affordability regarding the allocation of parking spaces



- Only 17 parking spaces for 9 affordable & 36 market units.
- Will all 9 affordable units be guaranteed a parking space, at no additional charge?

2. Legal issues

1. Review list of waivers
2. Inadequate parking arrangements
3. Density, intensity of use and building design
4. Traffic and pedestrian safety
5. Specific impacts to abutters
6. Applying legal standards to this application

3. Abutter concerns

19 Winchester

- Concerns about damage to adjacent pool and garage
- Rain runoff damaging our sub-structure
- Proximity to our property: use of pool, privacy, shadows

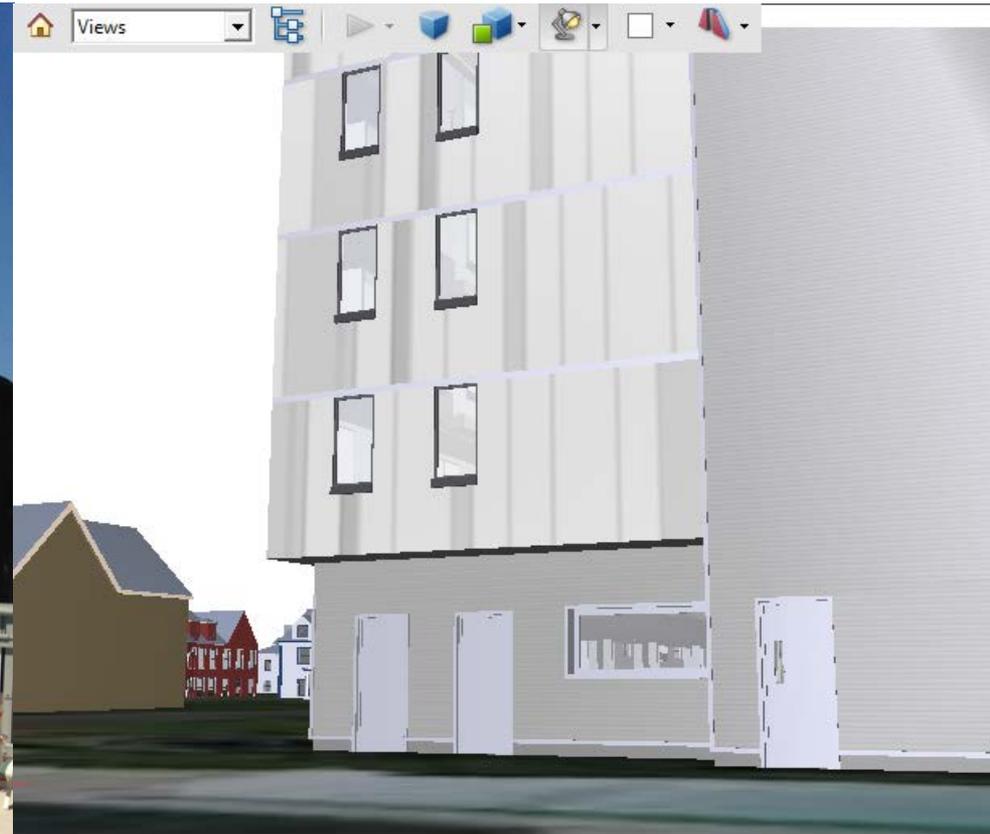
50 Centre St

- Loss of sunlight and sky
- Incongruous design in relation to the streetscape
- Build 4, Not More

Proximity of proposed structure

Current view

Proposed view



Centre Street - 3D Concept Model

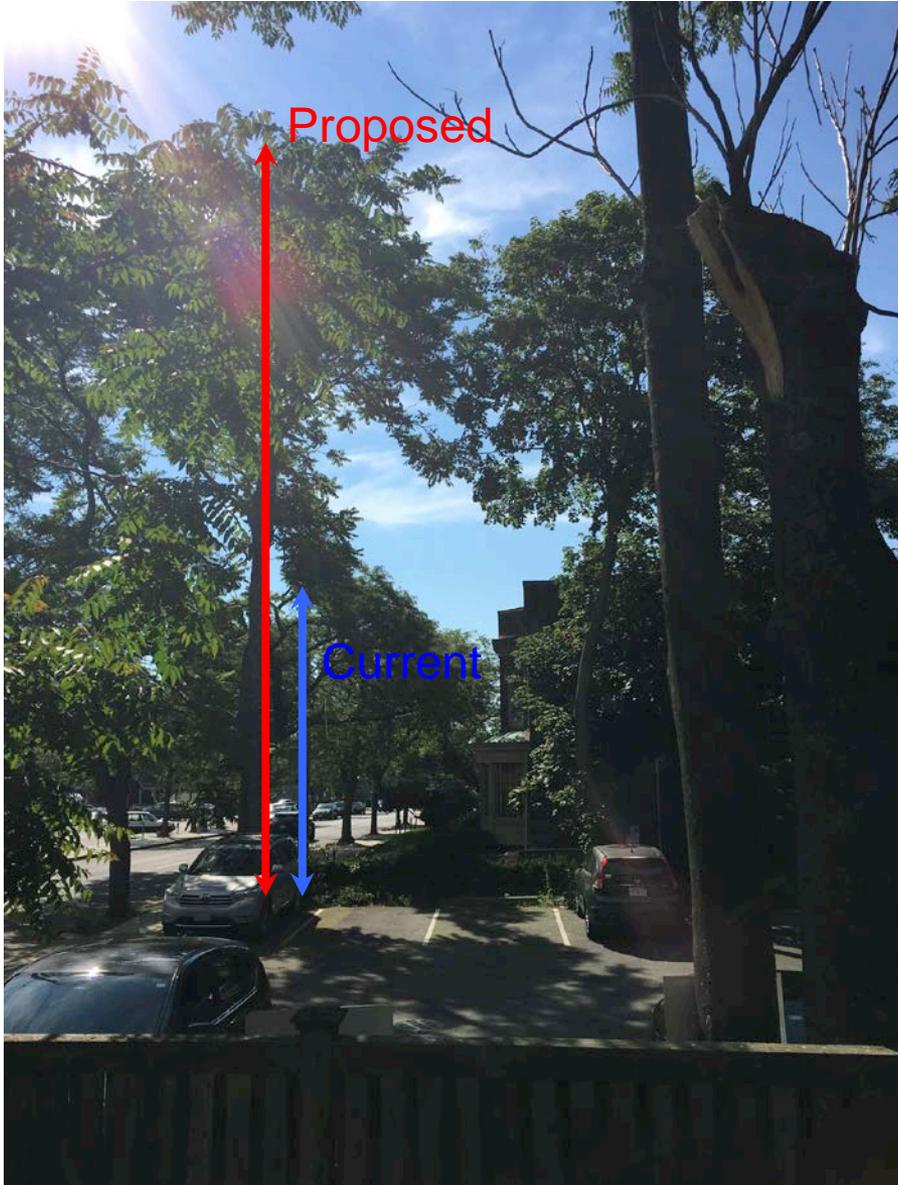
Irreparable damage to trees



Eight mature trees
>35 feet high are
on Centre St land
owned by 19
Winchester

These trees
provide privacy
and greenery
immediately west
of the 40 Centre
site

Visualizing a 70-foot height



Visualizing a 70-foot height



Loss of sunlight and sky at 50 Centre



40 Centre Street - 3D Concept Model

4. Pedestrian safety

- **Highly vulnerable populations live adjacent to 40 Centre:**
 - 498 housing units for seniors at 100 Centre & 112 Centre
 - 10 special-needs residents at 16 Williams
 - 3 blind residents on Williams St
- **Farmers Market (Thursdays: June 2 to November 17)**
 - 34 vendors
 - Pedestrians, bicycles, dogs, children, elderly people

Pedestrian safety



Pedestrian safety



Pedestrian safety



Visibility can be impaired on either side of an exit (Beacon Street example)



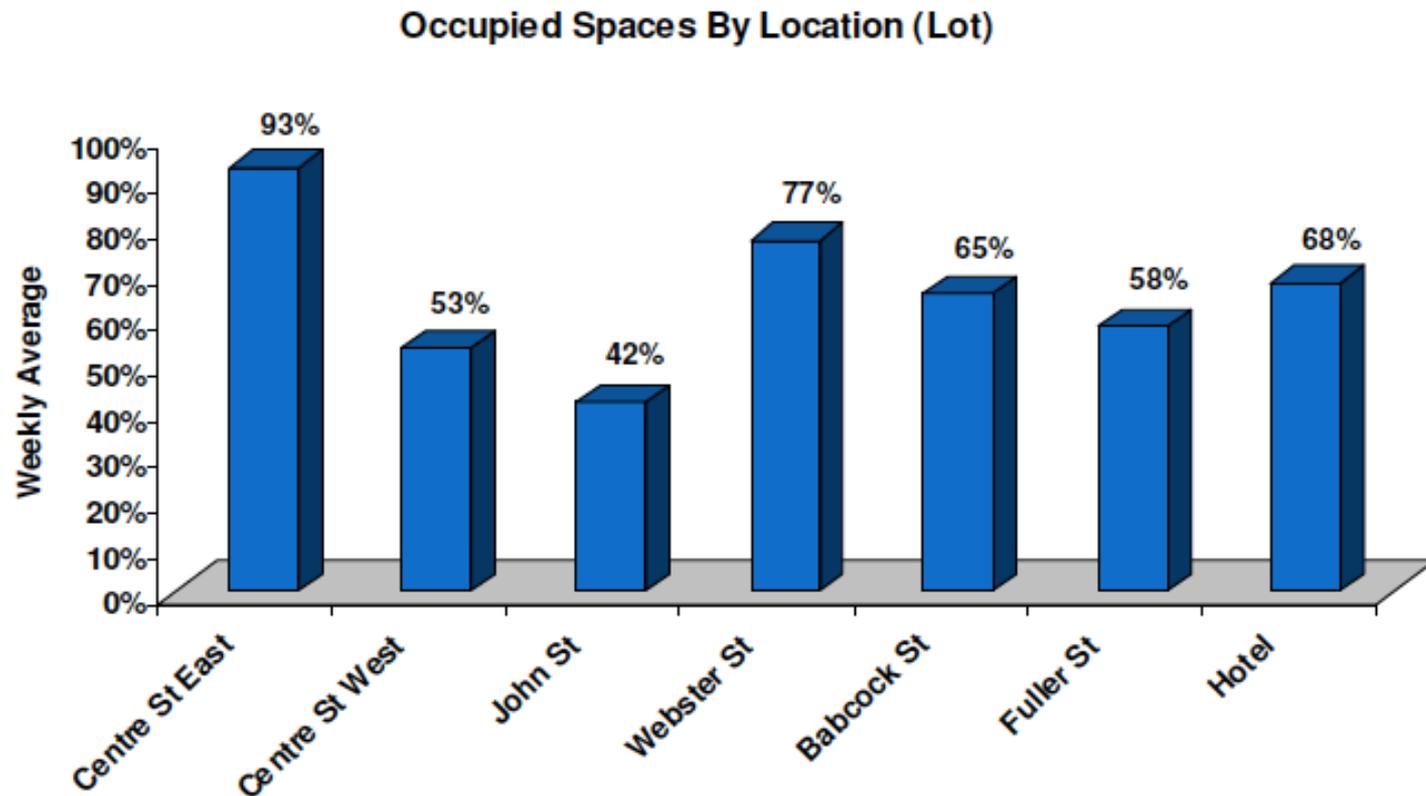
5. Parking shortage in Coolidge Corner

- Severe shortage of parking in Coolidge Corner for residents, visitors, and health aides
 - State of Brookline Businesses 2002 study “referred to **inadequate parking supply as affecting the continued viability of commercial areas such as Coolidge Corner**”
 - Coolidge Corner Merchants Association 2006 survey identified **756 employees that attempt to park in Coolidge Corner on a weekly basis**. We identified 119 businesses that employ 1263 people.
 - 2007 Transportation Analysis by Traffic Solutions LLC found a **93% occupancy rate of Centre Street East parking lot**

Insufficient parking in Coolidge Corner

During the Devotion School renovation from 2016 to 2018,
20 of 143 parking spaces at Centre St East lot will be designated for teachers
15 of 56 parking spaces at Centre St West lot will be designated for teachers

Transportation Analysis, Coolidge Corner District, Brookline,



6. Impact of trash collection

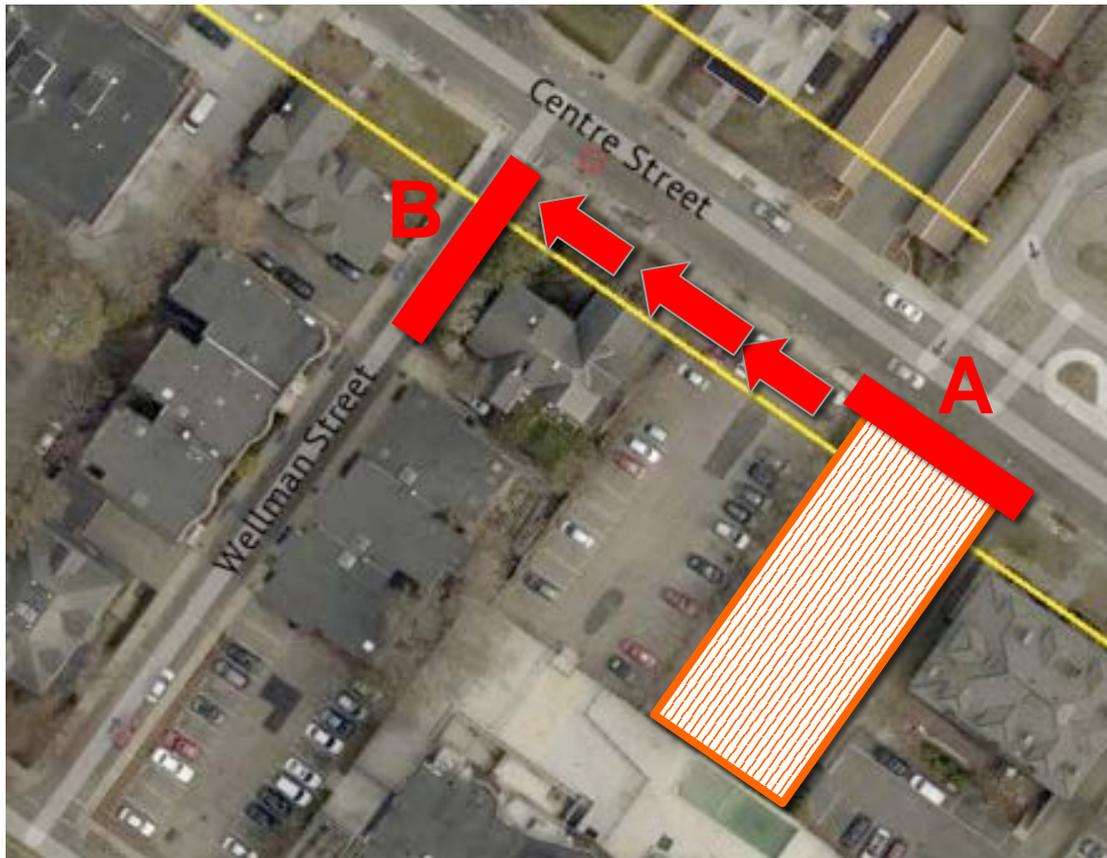
- 45 units will generate 1200 pounds of trash per week
 - 5/18/2016: Brookline TAB article: “The average Brookline household disposes of 26.5 pounds of trash per week.”
- This represents **thirty 35-gallon trash carts along the sidewalk: >55 feet long and 2 feet deep**
- Additional carts will be required for recycling
- These substantial obstacles blocking the sidewalk or road (especially in winter) represents an additional threat to pedestrian safety.

Existing trash: June 19, 2016

Imagine 35+ garbage totes & 10+ recycling totes each week



How will trash be picked up?



(A) Block Centre St sidewalk in front of building

(B) Wheel trash to Wellman Street

(C) Current design does not allow in-garage access for trucks

Trash collection will further endanger pedestrians



Centre Street is a busy street that is narrowed by parking on one side. This is what garbage collection looks like at buildings like 40 Centre.

7. Preservation

40 Centre Street

- Building Architect: George Nelson Jacobs
- Built for: Ellis L. Snider
- Date: 1921

History:

- THE FIRST OCCUPANT, **Ellis Snider**, was born in Russia or Poland around 1890, came to America in 1905 and was naturalized in 1914. He became the treasurer of the Boston Wharf Company and lived at 40 Centre Street until he died in 1964. More recently it was occupied by Dr. Warren Becker.
- THE ARCHITECT, **George Jacobs**, was born in Boston and by 1912 was listed in the Boston Architectural Club book. He was known for his apartment building designs, including buildings on Park Drive, Commonwealth Avenue, Beacon Street, and St. Mary's Street in Brookline. **His most prominent building was the Coolidge Corner Arcade, designed in 1927.** He also designed houses at 95 Carlton Street and 104 Babcock Street.

Historical significance of 40 Centre

The building at 40 Centre Street meets two of the four National Register of Historic Places (NR) criteria of significance based on a preliminary study:

- C. The building **is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events**, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town or Commonwealth.
- D. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, **either by itself or as a part of a group of buildings.**

From: “Brookline Preservation Commission Demolition Application Report (2015)”

Status: Why not National Register listing?

- Owner Consent Problem resulting from 1980 revision of NHPA

“Over My Dead Property! Why the Owner Consent Provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act Strike the Wrong Balance Between Private Property and Preservation” (2008)

http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=hpps_papers

Jess Theodore

Georgetown University Law Center

“The consent provision was not in the public interest given that the public as a whole has an interest in preserving its cultural heritage. However, the public was stymied from combating the owner consent provisions through either a lack of information regarding the impact of the consent provisions or the general collective action/free rider problem. While one would hope that Congress would act for the public interest in such cases, members of Congress had a distinct interest in promoting the owner consent provisions given that **the large businesses pushing for it were also large political donors and Congress was not facing similar pressure from citizen constituent groups because of the collective action problem.**”

Recommendations for preservation

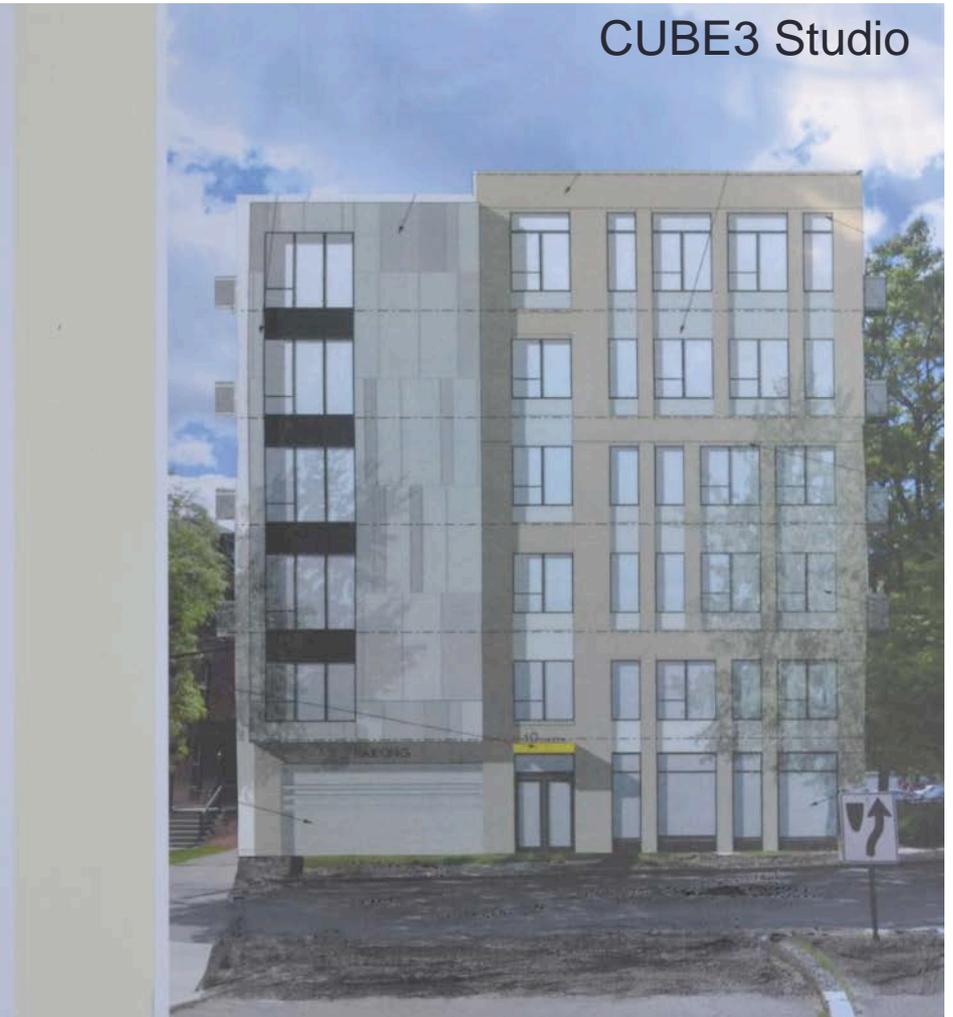


What to do?

- It is especially important to research and document 40 Centre Street
- Information can be provided to MHC when project PNF is reviewed
- If building is destroyed, documentation can help architectural historians

8. Design

This massive building violates multiple DHCD guidelines for Adjacent Building Typology



Intact Victorian streetscape: 53, 61, 69, 75 Centre Street



Context of 30,32,34,40 Centre Street



Original Victorian: 62 Centre St



Original Victorian: 108 Centre St



Volunteer garden adjacent to Centre Street East parking lot



Re-development at 121 Centre is out of scale and character of neighborhood

