

From: Judith Vanderkay [<mailto:jvanderkay@gmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, December 07, 2016 6:25 PM

To: Alison Steinfeld; 'Neil Wishinsky'; Nancy Daly; 'Benjamin Franco'; 'Nancy Heller'; 'Bernard Greene'; Melvin Kleckner; Joslin Murphy

Cc: Maria Morelli

Subject: High concern over proposed 455 Harvard Street 40B in Brookline

Importance: High

Dear Town officials and Board members,

I'm writing to express my serious concern – alarm is actually not too strong a word, or even outrage – about the monstrously large 40B development currently threatening my immediate neighborhood (JFK Crossing) at 455 Harvard Street. Replacing a small and charming single-story building – a landmark for the neighborhood in a way -- that is well set back from the street and its neighbors, with a monolithic four-story block of a building that essentially goes out to the lot lines on all sides would seriously damage our neighborhood.

My house is across Harvard street and two houses in – this would loom over us. It would completely block the light and air from its direct abutter and diminish those for the other neighbors. Its driveway – on a narrow side street -- would deliver unworkable congestion and traffic backups in an already busy area. The design is nothing like any other building in the neighborhood – I don't think there are any four-story buildings on Harvard Street, in fact, until you get down to Brookline Village, maybe. It's completely out of place.

The noise of the proposed mechanical parking, which could be activated at any hour of the day or night, would be totally inappropriate on this tree-lined, residential block of what were originally single-family houses. The 24/7 noise of all the HVAC equipment on the roof would also prevent residents' quiet enjoyment of their property. And, as the site was formerly a gas station, who knows how well it was mitigated many years ago when its use first changed? Construction activity could introduce hazards to residents.

I also found the presentation from the developer and consultants rather distressing. They sought to position this behemoth as an improvement – they denigrated the open space, light and air afforded by the current use of the lot, as if total build-out to the lot lines is a public good. At the same time, their misleading drawings show large swaths of open space and grass where there will be none. I found it outrageous that the architect asserted that the ugly design is “responding to the context.” It is responding to its context the way Attila the Hun responded to the human rights of those he invaded – it's running roughshod over it.

Importantly, like almost all* of the 40Bs in the pipeline for North Brookline, it is also flouting the very 40B guidelines that enable such proposals. 40B is NOT a blueprint for neighborhood destruction, which is how it's being used. From the guidelines:

“(1) Relationship to Adjacent Building Typology–

Generally, a Project is developed in the context of single family dwellings and introduces a different form of housing into the neighborhood. Assuming that this is the case, it is important to **mitigate the height and scale of the buildings to adjoining sites**. In this context, it is particularly important to **consider the predominant building types, setbacks, and roof lines of the existing context**.

(a)

The massing of the Project should be modulated and/or stepped in perceived height, bulk and scale to create **an appropriate transition to adjoining sites.**

(b)

Where possible, the site plan should take advantage of the natural topography and site features, or **the addition of landscaping, to help buffer massing.**

(c)

Design may use **architectural details, color and materials taken from the existing context as a means of addressing the perception of mass and height...**"

BUT the scale and height are not mitigated, the predominant building types are ignored, there is no transition to adjoining sites, there will be almost no landscaping (and certainly no landscaping that would buffer massing), and the materials proposed do not address its perceived mass and height.

If this monstrosity is erected, my neighborhood will be seriously and permanently damaged. And for what? **Not to deliver affordable housing – only four of the units will be affordable, the bare minimum.** No, it's clear that this developer – like almost all* the developers proposing unsuitable monolithic 40B developments in Brookline – seeks only the profit resulting from inflicting this inappropriate building on us. **Would he like to live next to it? I don't believe he would.**

This proposal is the closest to my house, and therefore would have the largest direct effect on my quality of life. **But, my larger neighborhood is also seriously threatened – by the outsize five-story replacement of a single-family house at 420 Harvard, by the unconscionably overscaled proposal to replace two houses on Babcock Street, by the huge building replacing a historic house at 40 Centre, and all the others, which in addition to inappropriate scale, poor design and destruction of existing open/green space, also have in common inadequate parking, which places additional burdens on the neighborhood. These opportunistic developers all propose only the minimum number of affordable units – their motive is simply profit. Are their profits truly worth the destruction of the Coolidge Corner neighborhood?**

There has got to be a limit! In addition to the half-dozen proposed within a quarter-mile radius and the several more in other areas of North Brookline, I understand that new 40Bs may be proposed for the gas station next door to 455 Harvard – what a construction and traffic nightmare that would be! – and the Rubin's deli location just two blocks away. **Is there no mitigation for this attack on our quality of life?**

Sincerely, Judith Vanderkay
Homeowner, 16 Columbia Street, Brookline

* The exception, in my opinion, is the proposed non-profit project at Kehillath Israel at 384 Harvard, which would replace the current structure with one that is similar in massing but might be more pedestrian-friendly. This project is also the only one that would truly fulfill the mission of 40B: its 62 units will ALL be affordable.