

69 Centre Street
Brookline, MA 02446

December 6, 2016

Zoning Board of Appeal

Town of Brookline

Town Hall

333 Washington Street

Brookline, MA 02445

Re: 40 Centre Street

To the Members of the Zoning Board of Appeal:

I have been following attentively the hearings regarding the 40B development at 40 Centre Street. I have heard it described by you as unconscionable, a detriment to the neighborhood, an overuse of the lot, too big, and adding to congestion. Despite your assessments, the project has moved forward to the conditions phase. My plea to you is to add conditions that will mitigate what I see as the two most serious problems with the proposed development: its danger to pedestrians and its removal of precious open space.

There are eleven curb cuts between Wellman Street and Beacon Street, thirteen counting the two doublewide curb cuts with islands as four. The distance is approximately 200 feet. It is a minefield for pedestrians exacerbated by the Brookline Farmers Market six months of the year. I have been bumped and forced to bolt out of the way numerous times. Adding to the danger, an inordinate number of pedestrians on Centre Street are deaf or partially deaf, blind or sight impaired, using walkers or wheelchairs, schoolchildren, daycare children walking the block holding a rope, or developmentally challenged adults (one of whom from 16 Williams Street was struck and injured by a car exiting a driveway). More elderly residents will be on the way if the JCHE project moves forward.

Those of us who walk the street regularly walk on the even side to escape the scores of cars entering and exiting the Centre Street East parking lot, especially as movies let out. The saving grace is that all the entrances and exits are open to view and on street level. The proposed parking lot at 40 Centre Street will be submerged and cars will “pop up” onto the sidewalk. I am not just afraid, but certain there will be a collision.

According to the Brookline TAB, there have been 29 pedestrian incident reports in Brookline so far this year, six in November alone including a five-year-old child hit in the lot behind Trader Joe’s. Whatever conditions are needed to keep driver sightlines clear and to warn the deaf and blind a car is coming should be imposed. I am especially concerned about delivery vehicles obstructing sightlines for drivers and pedestrians both.

In terms of open space, there are just two patches of green yard on this part of Centre Street: the front yards of numbers 32/34 and 40. Green space is so jealously protected that a group of neighbors planted a garden on the small triangle of dirt that holds the sign for the Centre Street East lot directly across from 40 Centre Street. It is unconscionable to remove all open space at 40 Centre both for the neighbors and the residents of that building.

I urge you to impose conditions that will maximize the appearance of open space in this overly paved part of our neighborhood and to consider making the balcony a neighborhood amenity.

Sincerely,

Linda Swartz

