

Date: 3/21/17

To: Town of Brookline and Residents

From: Victoria Longino

Re: Opposition to demolishing 455 Harvard Street; support for preserving significant buildings; call for creative, successful plans for revising 40B requirements/guidelines in Brookline

Dear Town Officials and Brookline Residents--

In 2017, the National Park Service will celebrate the centennial of President John F. Kennedy's birth in Brookline, MA. The Town of Brookline can honor this momentous event, celebrate its historic streetscape, and invite wider tourist interest and commerce by preserving the many buildings in North Brookline, JFK Crossing, Coolidge Corner, and elsewhere from the era of President Kennedy's childhood in Brookline (1917-1927). I am requesting that the Town and residents start by preserving 455 Harvard Street as an example of the architecture that existed during the Kennedys' life in Brookline. The building at 455 Harvard Street is a quaint, early gas station--probably used by the Kennedys for their new motorcar--and is threatened by developers who want to demolish it and build a multi-story structure that would not only deprive us of an architecturally and historically significant building from President Kennedy's childhood years and but also violate the streetscape and degrade the environment of neighbors and the community.

As the preservation efforts launch and progress, I am requesting that the Town issue a moratorium on any action that would endanger the structure, integrity, and survival of the building at 455 Harvard Street. The preservation plan encourages Town officials and residents to join with each other and the National Park Service to preserve the building at 455 Harvard Street, expand preservation efforts to other buildings from the JFK era in Brookline, and provide plaques for buildings to indicate their significance.

The link below will connect you to information from the National Park Service about its commitment to preserving historic gas stations in the U.S.: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/46-gas-stations.htm>. This National Park Service document provides information about the historical significance of these gas station structures, preservation information, and the range of uses for these structures, including restaurants and shops.

The early twentieth century gas station at 455 Harvard Street, Brookline, MA 02446, is a significant example of this type of American landmark and is worth saving. It is remarkable that this small, charming building has survived around 100 years with its architectural features and usefulness intact, originally and recently housing a gas station and at least 3 different restaurants, currently Shan A Punjab.

PLEASE NOTE: The Danesh family, owners of 455 Harvard Street AND 500 Harvard Street, can respect the town's history, preserve the JFK historic building at 455 Harvard Street, and accomplish its dual goals of 1) operating a restaurant and 2) building their multi-story structure with the following plan: 1) keep their current restaurant operation at the historically and architecturally significant 455 Harvard Street and 2) with an appropriately scaled and approved plan, build their multi-story structure at 500 Harvard Street (around the corner from my house) which is not an architecturally significant building of Kennedy's childhood era and where it will blend in with the other multi-story buildings on that stretch of Harvard Street.

Also, I call on the Town to rev up its creative and legal talents to address the issue of over-construction in town, preserving not demolishing significant and charming buildings, and revising 40Bs by doing the following: 1) The Town of Brookline will create a task force to make a winning case to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that all alternative housing units and residents in Brookline--including housing for low income residents, senior residents, nursing home residents, developmentally and physically challenged residents, rooming house residents, homeless and charity residents, Section 8 residents, "recovering from abuse" residents, sanctuary residents, etc.-- be included in the 40B 10 percent goal that the town must meet if not already included; 2) The Town of Brookline will significantly raise the percentage of low income units and residents that must be included in all existing and new 40B construction in Brookline to at least 50 percent; 3) The Town of Brookline will impose a moratorium on 40B construction while 1 and 2 above are in progress.

If you are interested in preserving 455 Harvard Street and the many other significant buildings in Brookline, please be in touch with me, the town, and the National Park Service using the link above. And make your support for preservation and for 40B revisions known by attending town meetings (e.g., March 30, 2017, around 7:20pm, Town Hall), writing letters, attending other meetings, etc.

Sincerely,

Victoria Longino

PO Box 1114, Brookline, MA 02446