

From: Judith Vanderkay [<mailto:jvanderkay@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, May 15, 2017 6:00 PM
To: Alison Steinfeld
Subject: Further comment on 455 Harvard 40B
Importance: High

Hello –

I am writing to add further comments to my earlier letter about this oversized, insensitive proposal. I attended two subsequent hearings and did not see that the developers had made any attempt to address the neighborhood's concerns. (Unless attempting to convince us that black is white counts for that.) The developers have continued to show serious disrespect for the neighborhood, along with a disingenuous disregard for facts.

For example –

- They asserted that the current building is hard to find because it is set back – a ludicrous statement.
- They repeatedly mentioned “three other gas stations” on abutting corners, when there are only two.
- A supposed gap in the “retail wall” is not a bad thing, as they attempted to make it seem. Instead it is a benefit, offering access to light and air.
- The nearby retail is not “one and a half stories” but one story.
- Abutting houses may be tall, but they are not monolithic with flat roofs, and they are not built out to the lot lines.
- They tried to make elimination of unused curb cuts a benefit, which they are not.
- The developer stated how gratifying it will be to offer affordable housing – this does not ring true: if it is so gratifying, why not make all the units affordable? Instead it has the minimum.
- Finally, it is insulting when a principal of this effort to run roughshod over the quality of life in my neighborhood repeatedly shows up at public meetings looking like a slob, with untucked shirt, etc.

How can they in conscience propose a building that essentially walls off the abutting house from the world? This oversized building would suck the sky out of the abutters' lives. It is simply wrong to impose this on our already-dense neighborhood.

As for the traffic concerns that many neighbors have expressed, I believe the number of daily trips is seriously underestimated. Thorndike is already very challenged by traffic, and even making a right turn onto Harvard today can be problematic. Going left is much worse. What if the owner of Shimon's gas station across Thorndike decides to develop his property, as has been rumored? Will the site lines and traffic flow be adequate then?

Additionally, it would displace the current tenants – does 40B also allow developers to cancel troublesome legal leases? Does no one whatsoever have rights when a 40B development is proposed?

Overall, the proposed development completely ignores the 40B guidelines to be respectful to context, to offer green space, etc. It is as if they looked at the guidelines and set out to go as far in the opposite direction as possible.

Thank you.

-- Judith Vanderkay, TMM Precinct #9 and Library Trustee
Homeowner, 16 Columbia Street, since 1983