

Brookline Zoning Board of Appeals
c/o Maria Morelli, Project Coordinator
Building Department, Town of Brookline
In re: **134-138 Babcock Place redesign**

September 30, 2017

Dear Ms. Morelli and Members of the Board:

I have attended public hearings on this project from the outset and been impressed by your presentations, thoughtful inquiry and review.

Critical consensus emerged at the last public hearing for the first iteration of this project:

- 1) The mass of the proposal was overwhelming.
- 2) Shadowing effects from 5 stories would steal morning light from abutters and afternoon light from the public who might otherwise enjoy the adjacent park on Babcock Street.
- 3) Founding the building at the proposed 9- to 11-foot setbacks would result in destruction or destabilization of at least 31 mature trees on the developer's and abutters' land—many of which are on abutters' properties and essential to environmental integrity (continuity of canopy, soil stability, air quality and habitat) and privacy for abutters.
- 4) Parking ratios were hugely inadequate—less than 50% of the 86 spots for 62 units mandated by the Town's bylaws.
- 5) The “modern” design was commercial in appearance and aesthetically incongruent with its environment.

Now the developers offer a plan revision which they will attempt to sell as being responsive to critical consensus and representative of substantial compromise as compared with the original design. **Unfortunately, the new proposal fails to make meaningful compromises in any of the areas that matter.** It is:

- 1) **No less massive**—just as close (or closer) to adjacent properties with the exception of two 4-and-a-half foot “notches” along some 60 feet of the west wall. And the 10-unit reduction translates to only a 3.37% reduction in total square footage.
- 2) **No less tall**—the shadowing and physical dominance prevail;
- 3) **Marginally less threatening to abutting trees**—but 15 feet compared with 11 feet distance from a 70-foot maple with a 50-foot diameter crown and commensurate root bed is insufficient to guarantee tree survival and soil stability;
- 4) Forty spaces for 52 units still **fails compliance with the Town's bylaws for parking.**

The developers may credibly tout aesthetic improvement in the new proposal, but in my view, they just put lipstick on a pig. New drawings featuring forced perspectives and non-existent trees attempt to make the building look like an innocuous townhouse. **But any celebration of “compromise” by the developers on October 2nd will be regarded in the community as a disingenuous manifestation of avarice under the cover of 40B.** There is much work to be done to get a good building here. We are up to the task and pray that you are too.

Respectfully, John Robert Anderson, MD 119 Stedman Street Brookline, Massachusetts

