

Subject: FW: Katya Frois-Moniz : Revised plans for Babcock Place

From: Katya Frois-Moniz [mailto:kmoniz@mit.edu]
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2017 3:48 PM
To: Maria Morelli
Subject: Revised plans for Babcock Place

Dear members of the Zoning Board of Appeals -

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the current plans for Sam Slater's Babcock Place development.

I currently live at 187 Babcock St., and have lived on Babcock St. for most of my life (156 Babcock St. 1980-1993; 60 Babcock St. 2004-2006; 187 Babcock St. 2006-present); my parents, Ernest and Naomi Moniz, still reside at 156 Babcock St., just a few doors down from the proposed Babcock Place site.

I have studied Mr. Slater's revised plans for the development, and am extremely disappointed by the meager changes he is proposing. These changes do not address the community's concerns, nor the town's by-law's, with regards to building height, set backs, open space, parking, neighborhood character, and preservation of vegetation. Specifically, I would like to draw attention to the comments made by the Board of Selectmen in January, 2017, because the development, as currently designed, still does not address these concerns:

* "We support the assertion in the [State Planning] Guidelines that "it is important to mitigate the height and scale of the buildings to the adjoining site ... it is particularly important to consider the predominant building types, setbacks and roof lines of the existing context." None of these elements has been considered or incorporated into the Babcock Place project design. "The existing setback conditions along Babcock Street help to create a harmonious cadence along the streetscape and their relationships signal a transition between the apartment buildings and the single and two-family residential neighborhood. With new development, these relationships are important to maintain to help integrate the new more intensive use into the existing neighborhood. Babcock Place, as currently configured, is inconsistent with the existing streetscape and setback of the properties on this block."

* "The proposed five stories overshadow abutting and nearby properties."

* "Given that massing should take into account the pattern of the existing street frontage, reducing the size of the building-including both the height and footprint-would help mitigate the impact to the abutting properties."

* "The Board of Selectmen is also concerned about the low parking ratio and strongly recommends that the ratio be increased in order to minimize impacts on the abutting neighborhood. The Board is expressly not recommending that the number of parking spaces be increased, but rather the number and/or size of the units be decreased. Fewer units will allow for a smaller building footprint, thereby increasing the setbacks, creating opportunities for usable open space and providing a better parking to unit ratio." Please note that the town is already considering modifications to Babcock St. that may significantly reduce or eliminate street parking along much of Babcock St. Any additional parking pressure will have a very negative impact on the abutting neighborhood.

* "[We] would also like to take this opportunity to alert you to the fact that the project is within a block of the Graffam-McKay Local Historic District (LHD) we respectfully suggest that you at least acknowledge the historic sensitivity of this neighborhood in your deliberations. As currently configured, the proposed building does not respect the local character or historic sensitivity of the neighborhood.

In addition, the proposed project would eliminate all trees from the development site, and likely threaten the survival of mature trees directly abutting the site. Our neighborhood has been suffering a steady loss of tree cover in recent years, which negatively affects both our local environment, our health*, and the beauty of our neighborhood; the Babcock Place project, as currently configured, will significantly worsen this problem, in conflict with Brookline's stated goals of environmental sustainability, and much to the detriment of our community.

I urge the Zoning Board of Appeals to uphold the town's requirement that new developments "preserve neighborhood character", and to rigorously adhere to the town's stated goal to "protect and enhance the physical and architectural character of Brookline's neighborhoods and encourage new environmentally sustainable affordable housing in all neighborhoods that complements neighborhood identity" (2016 Housing Production Plan).

Similar to Mr. Slater's Auburn Street development, I consider Babcock Place a "litmus test" of sorts, that will shed light on the ZBA's commitment to respect and uphold "in the words of Jessica and Colin Stokes of Auburn Place "the historic, aesthetic character our neighborhoods, the power of our communities, and the stated intent of our by-laws" or whether the ZBA will instead prioritize the "economic interests of non-resident, private developers who overreach and ignore the communities in which they profit." If Mr. Slater can, as the Board of Selectmen recommended, engage in a good faith effort "to find creative design solutions that respect the surrounding neighborhood", this will fulfill the town's stated goal "to harmoniously integrate diverse housing opportunities into the streetscape and Town." As the development

currently stands, it does no such thing. I urge you to ask Mr. Slater to revise his plans to respect the town's housing production goals and by-laws in a meaningful way.

Respectfully,

Katya Moniz 187 Babcock St. Unit 2

* REFERENCES

1. James, P et al. Exposure to Greenness and Mortality in a Nationwide Prospective Cohort Study of Women. *Environ Health Perspect.* 2016, 124:1344-52
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5. Astell-Burt T et al. Is neighborhood green space associated with a lower risk of Type 2 diabetes? Evidence from 267,072 Australians. *Diabetes Care.* 2014, 35:197-201
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7. Lovasi GS et al., Children living in areas with more street trees have lower prevalence of asthma. *Epidemiol Community Health.* 2008, 62:647-9.
8. Thiering E, et al. Associations of Residential Long-Term Air Pollution Exposures and Satellite-Derived Greenness with Insulin Resistance in German Adolescents. *Environ Health Perspect.* 2016, 124:1291-8.

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