

May 6, 2018

Zoning Board of Appeals  
Town of Brookline  
333 Washington Street  
Brookline, MA 02445  
(VIA EMAIL)

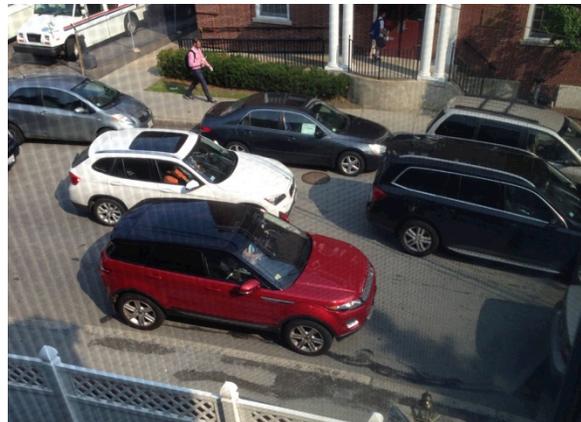
RE: Safety & Community Concerns – Proposed 40B Project at 1299 Beacon Street

Honorable Members of the Board:

As abutters and long-term residents of Brookline, we welcome efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing in our town. However, we have serious concerns about safety on Sewall Avenue if the project, as proposed, is granted a building permit. Furthermore, the proposal violates numerous 40B requirements, including access for disabled persons. We urge the Board to hold the developers to the standards prescribed under 40B regulations and to seek neighborhood and professional counsel to identify ways to mitigate the very real threat that the proposed project poses to public safety.

1. The proposed building site is sandwiched between **(a)** the 2<sup>nd</sup> busiest Trader Joe's store in the country, **(b)** one of the busiest USPS sorting facilities and post offices in the Commonwealth, and **(c)** Temple Sinai, which, among other programs that serve the neighborhood, hosts a daily religious school for children, as well as **(d)** a dense residential neighborhood on the southern side. Longwood Avenue, less than 60 feet from the proposed site, is an artery for emergency vehicles to access these residential and commercial properties as well as other Brookline homes and the Longwood Medical Area. The project will exacerbate the neighborhood's already heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

- This photograph illustrates a traffic jam that is typical for Sewall Avenue between 3–6 PM.
- Owing to traffic conditions, snow removal on Sewall Avenue is notoriously difficult. The two photographs below illustrate the nature and scope of the problem.
- Emergency vehicles are routinely hampered by double and triple-parked vehicles and by many postal and delivery trucks that park or stop on both sides of this one-way street, as shown in the photograph below.
- This short stretch of Sewall Avenue is the only



one-way segment between 3 two-way streets. As a result, cars and cyclists routinely drive and ride in the wrong direction. Not long ago, a young cyclist was killed here.

- The busy Coolidge Corner post office sorts mail for several zip codes and the staff use trucks, vans, and private cars to deliver mail and packages. Dozens of postal employees' cars take up every available parking spot in at least 3 blocks. Daily loading of so many vehicles causes traffic jams and poses problems that currently lack obvious solutions.



2. As a long-term business owner who has complained at Town hearings about traffic conditions on Sewall Avenue, the developer is undoubtedly aware of the unsafe conditions. The safety study he commissioned and presents with the 40B proposal is seriously flawed on many grounds. To cite just a few: **(a)** "Data" were captured in September 2016, when the street was closed for nearby construction, and in part over the MLK Day national holiday in 2018. **(b)** Crucial assumptions have no logical basis. The study arbitrarily assumes that the majority of residents will use public transportation, and makes no reference to the easily anticipated demands of a 55+ community (visiting health care workers, package deliveries, essential services). **(c)** The study shows no evidence of having considered the likely sizable demands associated with 12,000+ sq. ft. of retail space and the proposed catering facilities, services, and entertainment for the residents of 74 units. **(d)** It does not address delays and wait times related to the proposed parking facility (where vehicles will be stacked vertically and only valets will have access) and limited turning radius. These design flaws will inevitably cause the building's traffic to spill onto Sewall Avenue. Even after these glaring omissions and unjustified assumptions, the Impact Study makes specific recommendations for 2-way access and a minimum width of 24 feet. The proposal, as presented, does not incorporate these recommendations.

3. The 2 stories of proposed retail space add to the untenable nature of this development. Circulation and parking plans are insufficient to support retail needs of the proposed scale. No attention has been given to deliveries or to the substantial volume of residential and commercial refuse that will need to be removed daily. We are not aware of any element of 40B regulations –in letter or spirit– that promote development of retail space in conjunction with affordable housing.

4. Despite several promises during public hearings, the developer has not reached out to neighbors to discuss the plans or how we might work as a community to mitigate pressing safety concerns. We hope to engage the Board through additional public hearings that address the abutters' legitimate and serious concerns.

Many thanks for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Ramesh and Lisa Shivdasani  
51B Sewall Avenue