

**From:** John Duesenberry & Debra San

**Sent:** December 1, 2018

**To:**

Select Board of the Town of Brookline

Polly Selkoe, Assistant Director for Regulatory Planning

Dear Select Board,

We write in response to a recent notification, postmarked 11/20/2018, about the 40B Development at 500 Harvard Street, proposed by “500 HARVARD LLC”, aka The Danesh Group.

We have been Brookline residents, taxpayers, and voters for 35 years. We own two units of Avalon Terrace Condominium. Avalon Terrace is a 100-year-old, 16-unit multifamily building at 514/516 Harvard Street. Avalon Terrace directly abuts 500 Harvard Street, and as such would be the neighbor most affected by the proposed structure.

We appreciate the notification, but we are alarmed to be presented with a 127-page technical project specification (and other documents) and given fewer than 10 days to respond. This doesn't even allow time for us to convene our condominium's Board of Trustees to discuss the matter.

The documents available show little evidence that the developers are concerned about, or have any plans to mitigate, a number of obvious (it seems to us) problem areas. These include:

1. During construction, major disruptions and inconveniences to abutters and the surrounding neighborhood are almost inevitable. These problems can and do go on for years. They include disruption of utilities and/or pipelines, wiring, etc.; traffic jams; obstruction of emergency vehicles; intrusions on privacy; noise, debris, trash, vermin infestations, etc.
2. The former Rubin's Delicatessen building was built right up to the 500/514 Harvard St. property line, with only a fraction of an inch between structures. The removal of the Rubin's building has the potential to cause permanent or long-term damage to our building and its retaining walls. We do not see any evidence that the developers have investigated what problems might lie between or under the adjoining properties. A complete engineering report and plan is required for this phase of the project.
3. Parking issues: The proposed building will exacerbate the severe shortage of parking spaces that exists in our neighborhood and throughout Brookline. The plan to include six parking spaces under the building is simply not adequate to accommodate either the building's residents, or its business customers.

Without wishing to appear facetious, we suggest that a three-story parking garage at 500 Harvard Street, offering leased spaces for cars and bicycles, would be extremely welcome in our neighborhood, and possibly quite lucrative.

4. Other long-term effects: The proposed building will put large portions of 514/516 Harvard Street in permanent shade. This is likely to cause damaging snow/ice accumulations on our roof and gutters. The effect on the internal temperature of our building could result in higher fuel costs. The proposed building will block all existing windows on the 514 Harvard half of our building. These units will lose their views and probably some of their value as a result. It is grossly unfair that the owners and residents of 514/516 be forced to bear these added costs, without compensation, while “500 HARVARD LLC” reaps the profits of the project.
5. The presence of a 5-story building in this location will interfere with, and likely damage, trees rooted on adjoining Verndale and Kendall Street properties.
6. The proposed building’s resident population and business customers will exacerbate the problems of the already overcrowded and poorly operated MBTA bus line #66, which stops directly in front of 500 Harvard Street
7. The following is an aesthetic judgement, but so is the “Architectural Narrative” of the proposal. We believe that the character of Brookline’s “commercial corridor” is defined by its fine, traditional brick and wooden structures; all of these are one to three stories in height. A five-story design may look excellent elsewhere, but does not fit well at 500 Harvard Street.

*Conclusion:* The 40B Development at 500 Harvard Street, as proposed by “500 HARVARD LLC” aka The Danesh Group, gives rise to many questions and some objections. Until and unless the developers can address these satisfactorily, we cannot support their proposal at this time.

The authors write as private citizens of Brookline, not as representatives of the Board of Trustees of the Avalon Terrace Condominium Association, of which they are members.

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