

2018 May 5

Ms. Maria Morelli, Senior Planner
Brookline Zoning Board of Appeals
Via email

Re: 1299 Beacon Street Development Proposal

Dear Ms. Morelli:

We are residents of 70 Sewall Avenue, writing to express our concerns over the proposed development at 1299 Beacon Street. We had previously written to the Selectmen, regarding our strong objections to the project. We still have a number of significant issues with the development as currently illustrated in the documents submitted by the proponent and CBT Architects, and feel that it is much too large and fundamentally ill-conceived for this site. One of us is an architect with forty years of experience.

The biggest issue is safety.

Sewall Avenue would clearly be the primary street serving the building's residents, retail patrons and their cars, as well as delivery trucks, UPS, and building service vehicles. This is a fundamental problem, because that section of Sewall, between Longwood and Charles Street, is already heavily congested for much of the day. The Post Office is one primary source of this congestion, as their trucks (and their workers) are parked right at the bend in the street, often straddling the curb, and sometimes double-parking, making walking and driving hazardous. Second, Temple Sinai generates both foot and vehicular traffic due to its school and weekly services. Third, the removal of Trader Joe's overflow parking (in the Neena's lot) will exacerbate the traffic problems that already exist at the market, pushing more cars onto neighborhood streets, searching for parking.

While the idea of stacked parking and valet service might be a marketable amenity, we are confident the sheer quantity of cars being addressed in this proposed development—that is, the throughput of the valets handling up to 99 cars—will result in added backups of cars at peak times onto Longwood and Sewall. Again, this street network is already strained by existing loads. The Town should not allow this many cars to be added to these streets.

Finally, we point out that Coolidge Corner, as a transit-served neighborhood, would be an appropriate place to drastically reduce the amount of parking being provided by new developments. That is one of the fundamental tenets of what is called "transit-oriented development." Irrespective of the number of dwelling units proposed, a parking ratio of, perhaps, 0.5 parking space per unit would make more sense. The residents should be using the T or renting Zipcars. In short, Sewall Avenue cannot handle the volume of 99 additional cars from 1299 Beacon Street, without exacerbating an already hazardous condition.

We have heard that the proponent has conducted a traffic study. Reportedly, that study states that this project will have minimal impact, which we find inconceivable, given the existing conditions. We urge the ZBA to demand that the traffic study be conducted on multiple weekdays in the winter, when Sewall Avenue is further compromised by snow.

We want to summarize by being as direct as possible. The proposed number of cars will make an already-unsafe condition much worse, and this should be enough reason to reject the development as proposed.

Regards,
Roger and Cindy Goldstein
70 Sewall Avenue, Unit 4
Brookline, MA 02446