

## **455 Harvard LLC**

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Polly Selkoe  
Assistant Director of Regulatory Planning  
Town of Brookline  
Zoning Board of Appeals

### **RE: 445 HARVARD STREET PROPOSED 40B PROJECT**

Dear Zoning Board of Appeals,

As the owner of 455 Harvard Street, (the neighboring property currently under development across Thorndike Street) we are not opposed to development but the current proposal dated 4/9/2019 is unequivocally unacceptable. Our firm has studied and evaluated the site located at 445 Harvard Street for a potential development, but passed on the opportunity several occasions because we believed a development at this location would disrupt too many abutters. Five different abutting properties would be significantly adversely affected from a development at this site. Our analysis concluded that the site at 445 Harvard Street was best fit for a one-story retail space, not a 5-floor mixed use building.

The Developers of 445 Harvard Street and the Town of Brookline has made several comparisons to our site at 455 Harvard Street. However, the two sites are unique. Most importantly, 455 Harvard Street has one abutter while 445 Harvard Street has five different abutters.

This letter is to express grave concerns about the size and scope of the proposed mixed use development at 445 Harvard Street. The proposal must be significantly modified in several ways.

#### **HEIGHT**

The proposed building is 58' tall, not including the mechanical systems and elevator shaft. With the mechanical systems and elevator shaft, the proposed building will likely be **over 65' tall**. A 65'+ tall building will overwhelm the surrounding homes on all directions. Such a tall building will reduce light by creating shadows on over seven different properties. This current plan would overwhelm the streetscape and reduce the quality and value of all the homes in the neighborhood.

The current proposal would have a direct detrimental impact to the following properties:

1. 64 Coolidge Street
2. 70 Coolidge Street
3. 74 Coolidge Street
4. 76 Coolidge Street
5. 77 Thorndike Street

6. 455 Harvard Street
7. 441-435 Harvard Street
8. 78 Thorndike Street

The developer of 445 Harvard Street must **lower the building by at least 2 stories.**

Finally, given the close proximity to neighboring properties, there should be no outdoor terraces. These terraces will create unnecessary additional noises to the neighborhood and are directly across from several different apartments.

### **TRAFFIC AND CONGESTION SAFETY ISSUE**

Thorndike Street is a narrow, two-way street that cannot withstand an additional 20 car parking lot. In addition, 455 Harvard Street will have cars entering and exiting from the garage directly across from the proposed 445 Harvard Street. Cars will be lining up waiting for the garage to open, while cars are simultaneously entering and exiting 455 Harvard Street and traffic going up and down the street at the same time.

This is a significant safety issue given the fact that Harvard Street and Thorndike streets are pedestrian areas with many bicycles. In addition, the current garage opening should be increased to 24' as required by the Town of Brookline for 455 Harvard Street to accommodate cars entering and exiting at the same time and to prevent backups.

Finally, cars exiting the parking lot at the proposed 445 Harvard Street will have their headlights flashing directly into several different apartments. Light pollution will be a significant disturbance.

### **LOBBY LOCATION**

The Town of Brookline and its respective consultants required 455 Harvard Street to locate the residential and retail entrances on Harvard Street to reduce congestion on Thorndike Street. The Town's recommendation was based on several different factors, all of which have merit. UPS, FedEx, Uber, Lyft, moving trucks, and other residential services create significant traffic and repeated double parking to simply do their jobs.

**Placing a residential lobby on Thorndike Street is dangerous and will overburden a narrow, busy, two-way street at the intersection of Harvard. It is simply bad planning if you spend any time at this intersection.**

### **SETBACKS**

#### **Thorndike Street**

- The Town of Brookline required 455 Harvard Street to have a setback of 9' on the Thorndike side of the property. This setback was justified by the transition from commercial on Harvard Street to residential on Thorndike Street. Our development team had several neighborhood meetings in which it was clear that having a significant setback Thorndike was a primary concern of the neighborhood.
- Having a setback on Thorndike Street is also paramount to the safety of the intersection. Bikes, cars, pedestrians all cannot safely cross the intersection without being able to see into the distance when approaching the intersection.

### Rear of 445 Harvard (77 Thorndike)

- The current setback starts at 2' and goes to 10' at the rear of the property. We request that the setback in the rear of the building be 15' – 20' at a minimum.

### Coolidge Street

- The setback from 64 Coolidge Street is currently 5' from the existing house. This is will not only block all light and air from entering the house but will severely devastate the property value. The minimum setback on this side should be 15' – 20'.

### Harvard Street

- 455 Harvard Street has a 2' setback along Harvard Street. This setback was created with the suggestion of the Town of Brookline's consultant Cliff Boehmer and the ZBA.

## **MATERIALS**

The current proposal by 445 Harvard Street suggests a combination of veneer fiber cement panels. These materials do not conform in a neighborhood which consists of brick, historic buildings. All the buildings along this corridor on Harvard Street feature natural stone. Introducing a façade with a completely foreign, cheap material will not be attractive to the neighborhood and be an eyesore for Brookline. In addition, the Town of Brookline required that 455 Harvard Street use brick on the front of the building to all sides of the building, including the rear which is not visible to neighbors.

Unlike 420 Harvard Street, this side of Harvard Street is on the sunny side of the street. Using veneer and fiber cement panels on this side of Harvard Street will create strong sun reflections onto neighbors and cars driving on Harvard Street.

## **ADDITIONAL CONCERNS:**

- The plans which are being referenced to for 455 Harvard Street are not accurate. The setbacks, garage locations and materials are not the final plans. The developer of 445 Harvard Street is using preliminary plans to justify their unreasonable design.
- Neighborhood meetings. We are extremely concerned with the lack of neighborhood feedback in this proposal. There has been no communication or outreach by the developer, which underscores their lack of consideration of the abutters.

This proposed development has not taken into consideration its neighbors or context whatsoever. The developer must reduce the height, unit count, parking configuration before it can proceed. It may be the developer's strategy to propose such an absurd building and work with the Town of Brookline to reduce the height. If that is the case, they are wasting everyone's time if not, it cannot be approved.

Respectfully,

455 Harvard, LLC