



# Town of Brookline

## Massachusetts

### Department of Public Works

#### Engineering & Transportation Division

TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
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October 4, 2019

Jesse Geller, Chair  
Brookline Zoning Board of Appeals  
333 Washington Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

Re: 445 Harvard Street

Dear Chairman Geller,

Per Chapter 317 of the Acts of 1974 the Transportation Board for the Town of Brookline is the local governing body which has authority to enact rules and regulations regarding the movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians on the public way. However, as you are aware, Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B Sections 20 – 23 and 760 CMR 56.02 supersedes our enabling legislation for not only permitting but also for creating and altering the Traffic Rules and Regulations for the Town's public ways. Therefore we are writing this letter to provide comments and recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals relative to the proposed 445 Harvard Street Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit Application.

At the October 2, 2019 meeting of the Transportation Board, we reviewed the plans for the proposed 40B development at 445 Harvard Street with representatives from the proponent including Victor Sheen of Aura Properties and Jeffrey Dirk of Vanasse & Associates. Also present were the ZBA's Peer Review consultants James Fitzgerald of Environmental Partners and Art Stadig of Walker Parking. It is the Boards understanding that the project will entail the removal of the existing gas station and service center and construct in its place a new Mixed-Use Development with:

- 25 residential units with pedestrian access from Thorndike Street,
- 20 parking spaces, involving 19 spaces via stackers and 1 handicap assessable space, in a ground level garage accessed via Thorndike Street,
- First floor cafe/retail space with access from Harvard Street,
- A proposed 40 foot commercial loading zone on Harvard Street

The hearing included a discussion with the developer, their consultant, peer review consultants, staff, and neighborhood residents on the design elements of the building, the proposed commercial loading zone, the

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existing traffic congestion and impacts by the project, the appropriateness of the onsite parking ratio, planned and potential transportation demand management and travel mode choices by future residents, public parking supply and usage and how this project could impact it, planned safety improvements by 455 Harvard Street project, proposed safety improvements by 445 Harvard Street and the fact that this is a designated high crash cluster area by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration and how this project will impact these conditions.

In response to this discussion and our review of the plan, in general we offer the following comments and recommendations on this project that were unanimously adopted by the Transportation Board:

1. In recognition of the Town's sustainability goals and to increase mode share of non-personal motor vehicle travel, in order to provide a more direct access for residents to nearby MBTA Rte. 66 Bus stops include a doorway to Harvard Street via the planned patio through the internal bike locker room.
2. In recognition of the fact that the area provides easy access to non-personal motor vehicle modes of transportation including the MBTA Rte. 66 Bus, MBTA B & C light rail lines, and BlueBikes station, require the unbundling of the parking spaces from the residential leases rather than automatically include the space with the rental price of a residential unit. This is an increasingly common best-practice in parking-constrained neighborhoods like JFK Crossing.
3. Because of the high demand for metered curbside parking by customers to the existing commercial and retail businesses on Harvard Street, the fact that commercial loading zones on the public way are not building specific and available to all retail tenants, and the fact that a new commercial loading zone will be installed less than 90 feet from the proposed development the Board opposes the use of the recaptured limited curbside for the purpose of a commercial loading zone.
4. Alternatively, the board proposes that the Zoning Board of Appeals require, as part of a mitigation package, that the developer pay the cost to extend the planned curb extension (constructed by others) at the southeast corner of Harvard Street at Thorndike Street to accommodate the relocation of the nearby BlueBikes station allowing it to become a permanent station as opposed to a seasonal one that is removed each winter due to its current location on-street in 2 metered parking spaces. The remaining space can be used as a 20 foot metered curbside space which nets 3 new metered parking spaces.
5. Should the Zoning Board of Appeals decide to install the commercial loading zone on Harvard Street the Transportation Board recommends that:
  - a. The area be posted COMMERCIAL LOADING ZONE/TOW AWAY ZONE 7AM TO 10AM and all signs and poles initially installed are paid for by the developer and meet Town of Brookline specifications
  - b. The proponent be responsible for the full cost of materials and labor needed to accommodate the construction of the loading zone which must meet Town of Brookline specifications
  - c. The loading zone be normal metered parking during non-loading hours
  - d. Any changes in design must be approved by the Director of the Engineering & Transportation Division
  - e. The building owner be responsible for the removal of snow and ice in the loading zone so that it remains available for their tenant use

- f. The use of the loading zone is available to any vehicle authorized by the Traffic Rules and regulations for the Town of Brookline and not the exclusive use of the tenants of 445 Harvard Street
6. The driveway entrances should not be depressed, but should be at the elevation of the sidewalk to minimize impacts to pedestrians.
7. Support for the removal of curbside parking on Thorndike Street from the driveway curb cut 30 feet to the east.
8. Support for the removal of curbside parking on Thorndike Street from the driveway curb cut west to Harvard Street.
9. Transit screens (similar to <https://transitscreen.com/>) displaying real time information for MBTA buses, Greenline Trolleys, and other alternative modes of transportation should be installed in the onsite residential lobby for use by residents, visitors, and service people.
10. Sufficient on-site covered bicycle racks should be provided for use by residents, visitors, staff, and cafe/retail employees. The Transportation Board recommends that the developer be required to utilize the City of Cambridge Bicycle Parking Guide as a best practice for siting, dimensions, rack styles, etc. but not necessarily for the minimum ratios of required bicycle racks.
11. Mitigation package should include the cost to design and construct the staff developed intersection improvement concept to the intersection of Harvard Street @ Thorndike Street, meeting all Town of Brookline standards as determined by the Director of Engineering & Transportation. This compliments the planned mitigation for 455 Harvard Street and improves the overall safety of the intersection.
12. A comprehensive Parking & Transportation Demand Management (P&TDM) program that complies with the Town's Transportation Access Guidelines for employees of the residential building and any tenant that occupies the cafe/retail space.
13. A Transportation Access Plan Agreement including traffic monitoring that complies with the Town's Transportation Access Guidelines.
14. Installation of EV Chargers and EV Ready spaces be included in the garage in compliance with the Town's Transportation Access Guidelines.
15. Reserve the right to comment further in the process when this information is made available for review by the public.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed 445 Harvard Street Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit Application. Because the proposal may change throughout this process the Transportation Board does reserve the right to provide comments further in the process when this information is made available for review by the public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris A. Dempsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Chris Dempsey, Chair  
Brookline Transportation Board

Cc: Alison Steinfeld, Director – Planning & Community Development  
Peter M. Ditto, Director – Engineering & Transportation Division  
Daniel Bennett, Building Commissioner