



SMART GROWTH AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

September 1, 2020

Town of Brookline
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445

RE: 500 Harvard Street

Dear Brookline Transportation Board and Zoning Board of Appeals:

I am writing to indicate MAPC's support for mixed-income transit-oriented development (TOD) in Brookline, such as the project under review for 500 Harvard Street. Greater Boston is experiencing a housing crisis characterized by high demand, insufficient production, and home prices that have increased by rates among the fastest in the nation. All municipalities in the region need to build more housing to stabilize the market, ensure the people who live here can continue to thrive, and accommodate our growing workforce.

As you know, the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, with Brookline as one of the 15 members, formed the Regional Housing Taskforce in 2018 to address this crisis through regional collaboration and mutual support. The Taskforce committed to increasing housing supply across their cities and towns by 185,000 units by the year 2030, based on labor force and housing demand projections. The Taskforce also adopted 10 principles to guide new residential development, including:

1. Housing production - Production of housing that meets the needs of all types of households and income levels.
2. Housing affordability - Development of housing that is affordable to low-, moderate-, and middle-income households.
3. Housing diversity - Development of diverse types of rental and homeownership housing at a range of scales and a unit mix inclusive of multiple bedrooms.
4. Housing location - Residential and mixed-use development in transit-accessible and walkable areas where people can get around locally and make connections throughout the region without relying on private auto.

Leveraging smart growth development opportunities like 500 Harvard Street would help Brookline and the entire metro region to work towards this production target and advance these principles. The proposed development would not only create 30 new homes, it would also include 6 affordable units for very-low-income households at 50% of Area Median Income. It would do this by efficiently using land that currently houses a single-story building and many parking spaces, bringing new retail and restoring the street wall for an improved pedestrian and bicyclist experience.

MAPC strongly supports the development of housing with limited parking in areas well served by transit like Packard's Corner and Coolidge Corner where the Green Line and #66 bus line run, both within (5- or 10-minute) walks to 500 Harvard Street. Homes in these kinds of places typically rent easily without off-street parking. Using valuable land and resources to build parking that is neither needed nor in demand makes it more difficult to achieve other Town goals: increasing the supply of homes, making a significant portion of those homes affordable, creating an appealing streetscape, and/or enabling developers to devote resources to energy-saving and emission-reducing infrastructure. It can be difficult for any single development to provide all of these community benefits, but none should be sacrificed in favor of parking in transit-accessible areas.

As determined by MAPC's Perfect Fit Parking research (<https://perfectfitparking.mapc.org/>), expanding the supply of parking in residential buildings does not reduce traffic; it actually induces it by encouraging the tenancy of households with a higher rate of car ownership. Given the high demand for housing in Brookline and this particular site's proximity to transit, MAPC feels that 7 parking spaces for 30 units would be adequate. Furthermore, requiring the developer to build more parking spaces would only increase financial pressure for a taller building, which we know is also an issue of concern in Brookline.



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Members of MAPC's housing and transportation staff would be glad to provide input that might help the Town balance these complex issues, while at the same time encouraging mixed-use, mixed-income development in this transit-oriented location. We are always available to assist. If you have any questions or need additional information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Marc D. Draisen
Executive Director

cc: Mel Kleckner