

From:Joanna Gallimore <email address redacted>
Sent:Tuesday, September 15, 2020 11:10 AM
To:Maria Morelli <mmorelli@brooklinema.gov>
Subject:Comments on 500 Harvard Street Developer's Traffic Assessment

Dear Zoning Board Of Appeals

I am writing to comment on the Traffic Assessment submitted by the developer of 500 Harvard Street.

As an introduction I would like to mention that this past Spring, before Covid-19, I was almost hit by a car which was crossing over Harvard Street from the side of Thorndike with the new 40b at 455 Harvard to the other side of Thorndike by Anna's Taqueria. Since I did check that it was okay to cross in the crosswalk on Thorndike Street between Anna's and the Sonocostation, I was quite startled when a car passed by me within inches. This happened so quickly I was quite shaken. On mentioning this to someone in my household, they said they had almost been hit by a car at the same crosswalk recently. Concerned, I put out a query on a neighborhood online group and got many responses indicating that others felt this intersection had gotten less safe recently. Since I knew that bump outs had been installed on the opposite side of the street recently next to the 40b 455 Harvard, I wondered if they might be causing the intersection to be less safe. I contacted a member of the Pedestrian Advisory Committee who said they would come out to take a look. Unfortunately before they did, traffic all but ended due to Covid. We are currently waiting for traffic to normalize before getting an assessment.

I mention this because the same developer now wants to build an even larger building on this site and has presented a lot of incorrect information in his Traffic Assessment. I am concerned that the Peer Review by Brookline is not adequate to fully assess the safety impacts of such a building. I believe a comprehensive independent traffic study needs to be done by the town when traffic has normalized to adequately assess the safety impacts of this project.

One of the inaccuracies that I am concerned about is the inadequate crash data provided by the developer. I have heard this area referred to as a crash cluster area. I have also read in the Tab that a car hits a pedestrian on average once a week and have been told that in general pedestrian crashes are increasing. Since this is such a pedestrian dense area and because there is a park down the street, the sheer size of the building makes it a dangerous building from a traffic safety point of view. Also, traffic and pedestrian counts were performed during school and college vacation when there are fewer pedestrians and cars.

Another inaccuracy in the assessment is that the neighborhood is used to traffic from the site going down Kenwood Street. In fact very little traffic exits down Kenwood from the site as mostly all exits via Harvard St. It is a very roundabout way to exit via the Kenwood Street exit. So all traffic from the proposed site would now exit Kenwood and impact the neighborhood. Additionally, most traffic brought in by the site would also use Kenwood as Harvard is a very busy street. If the loading zone is occupied, all other project traffic will use Kenwood to drop off, double park or unload deliveries etc.. To say otherwise defies common sense. Any vehicle approaching the project from the North will need to come down Kenwood to get to the loading zone (if available) on the other side of Harvard Street.

It is also inaccurate to say that because this large project provides so few parking spaces it will create very little traffic. This also defies common sense. A six story building with commercial space will bring Uber, Ups, FedEx, moving vans, delivery trucks, Amazon, trash pickup, visitor and customer traffic, all impacting the

neighboring streets, three of which border a heavily used park. Please refer to the developer's own words in his letter to the ZBA dated 6/21/19 against 445 Harvard another 40b.

The developer also states that he will use the existing curb cut at Kenwood, yet his plans show that he will be widening the curb cut. So now a driveway that has been used over the years as an entrance (with exit on Harvard Street ie. original building was a bank with drive-thru) will now be wider, closer to the busy intersection, and be used as both an entrance and exit.

The developer states that the bus stop is at the corner of Verndale and Harvard. Not true. The bus stop is on Harvard, right next to the site, very close to the proposed loading zone.

I am also concerned that the developer did not take into account the ongoing development in Allston, when projecting future traffic conditions. This site is two blocks from Allston. There is a large development on Corey Rd which becomes Brainerd Rd. and empties onto Harvard two blocks away. Also Whole Foods opposite this development may be developed. Herb Chambers nearby is being expanded and there are several building sites in Packard's Corner. Also the **Waldo St.** project in Brookline was not mentioned but will also bring traffic to the area.

The developer also states that residents will not want to have a car. There are requests online every day for renters looking for a parking space. Also **I believe** many **Brookline** residents will look to electric cars rather than go without a car in the future, especially in the current situation with Covid. I don't want to encourage car use but I also don't think it is fair for a very densely populated neighborhood to bear all the negative impacts such a large building will bring. Please read the developer's own words about parking regarding his other 40b on Marion Street, which is one block from the C line, in a letter to the ZBA dated 9/26/16:

"...All 25 parking spaces at 45 Marion St. are rented and we are renting an additional 15 parking spaces elsewhere in the neighborhood. This brings the total to 40 spaces used to 65 units. Looking back, if we could do it again we would have built fewer units, creating a better parking ratio."

The Peer Review did point out that the developer may have underestimated vehicle speed when determining adequate sight distances and also used less stringent guidelines. The design of this building considering its location, should not be based on minimum safety requirements but on absolute best practices and anything less should be unacceptable.

One error not picked up in the Peer Review concerns the figures used in Table 4 of the developer's Traffic Assessment. The Table indicates that the project would generate "66 less vehicle trips on an average weekday" than the existing site. However the figures are based on a "high turnover (**sit** down) restaurant" that is 1,733 sf. I would argue that the current restaurant is not "high volume" in any way and is about 1000sf. If the current site actually generates approx 97 site trips (not the 194 they report) the net new trips would be an INCREASE of 31 trips, NOT a decrease of 66 trips, which is in the table. Any other calculation that uses these figures needs to be changed. I also don't believe the current actual restaurant generates 97 site trips.

It is incredible that this developer is hoping to build this 6 story building while at the same time trying to stop another smaller 40b from being built next to his own 40b at 455 Harvard Street. The actions of this developer raise many questions about the integrity of the 40b process.

Sincerely,

Joanna Gallimore