

Dear Ms. Morelli,

As abutters of this proposed project at 500 Harvard Street, we are happy to hear about plans for more housing in Brookline and more affordable housing in the neighborhood.

The submitted architectural review, while making many authoritative statements about what appearance the Town should encourage in new developments, is extremely quiet about balancing those aesthetic needs against the desperate need for more housing generally and more affordable housing specifically. Though perhaps outside the direct scope of the consultant, the ZBA and our community need to recognize and appreciate that *every recommendation to increase setbacks and step-backs decreases the usable space to build the actual housing.*

This is made at its most extreme when paired with the stated possibility of removing two floors from the building. Assuming an even distribution of units per floor, that is 10 additional households (of which, some are surely those looking for Affordable Housing) left looking for somewhere to live. Those are households of families that will never be our children's friends, that will never shop in our local stores, never serve on our Towns Boards or Town Meeting. They are also people who will never appear before this Zoning Board to speak on behalf of their homes because they will never be built.

As residents just across the street, we can vouch for the ability of households, including families with young children to live here happily, even without significant setbacks or yard space. One of the great benefits of living in this part of Brookline is the easy access to parks (Coolidge Park is just down the street, Lawton Park is only a bit further away), which we can share with *all* of our neighbors. Being in short walking distance to other "third places," such as coffee shops, toy stores, and bars/restaurants further reduces the need for on-site facilities; this is only improved by the ground-floor retail proposed for the site, which may well become one of those places.

If community benefits are to be considered, the most useful addition along Harvard Street would be ensuring that there is sufficient space for a high-quality bus stop, including the addition of a shelter. The section of Avalon Terrace directly adjacent to the site does not have the planing strip and does consequently provide some extra waiting space in the expanded sidewalk, but the overall facilities are lacking, especially in inclement weather. Bus stop improvements will also help encourage residents (new and old) to utilize the ample public transit in the area and ensure dignity to all transit users and especially transit users living in the accessible apartments.

The architectural peer review recommends potentially subsidizing off-site parking in the event the building cannot appropriately house the parking as-is. **We suggest instead the building owner offer subsidized transit passes, carshare, and/or bikeshare memberships.** This would serve the overall transportation and climate goals of the Town and ameliorate some of the car-based safety concerns raised by residents during the parking meeting last week (re: drivers making illegal turns, drivers speeding near the park, etc.).

Further, for all residents but notably for those residing in low-income and/or accessible units:

- It does not require residents to own expensive personal property.
- It reduces barriers and costs for those with physical or cognitive impairments that prevent them from operating a motor vehicle.

Metro Boston and Brookline have a housing crisis. To address this we need more housing. Achieving this is not simple and requires we make explicit tradeoffs. The remit of an architectural review appears to ensure we have “more of the same,” but without careful evaluation of these tradeoffs “more of the same” in Brookline means higher housing prices, less diversity, and more climate change accelerating sprawl.

We look forward to welcoming our new neighbors at 500 Harvard Street into our homes, our schools, our businesses, and all of the shared public spaces in Brookline that make this an appealing place to live.

Thank you,

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Sarah Hajiz, 5 Verndale Street
Matti Klock, 5 Verndale Street
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