



September 13, 2020

Dear Ms. Morelli,

We are Brookline residents writing in support of the proposed 40B Project at 500 Harvard Street with 30 residential units (6 deeded affordable in perpetuity) and 6 parking spots. The project as proposed provides important benefits towards three Town objectives: housing production (including low-income subsidized housing), climate action via transit-oriented development, and preservation of neighborhood character. Reducing the number of housing units or requiring additional car parking would compromise these goals. Consequently, the project should not be reduced in scale, nor should additional car parking be required.

Housing Production Everyone needs a home, and building new homes is an essential part of being an inclusive community. Brookline has committed itself towards building new homes in transit accessible neighborhoods in many forums, including the Town's 2016 Housing Production Plan (which identifies the area in which 500 Harvard St is located as an "opportunity corridor" where higher FAR and less parking is appropriate) and the 2018 Metro Mayor's statement on regional housing production. If we support this concept in principle, we need to support it in practice too. This project would allow 30 families to live in Brookline—including, at no direct cost to the Town, 6 low-income households who might not otherwise be able to afford to live in Brookline. Allowing more housing for people of all incomes is consistent with our values as a progressive and inclusive community.

Climate Change This project advances the Town's climate change objectives by promoting walking, biking, and public transportation use. On average, a personal automobile emits 4.6 tons of carbon emissions annually, according to the EPA. The relatively low parking ratio (0.2 spots per unit) in this project reduces greenhouse gas emissions by discouraging personal vehicle ownership in a neighborhood with viable alternative transportation options. In this census tract (400300), 42.4% of renter households do not have a car, according to the 2013-2018 American Community Survey, and 500 Harvard St is located in a particularly transit connected and walkable location within the Census Tract. Further, the project provides bicycle parking to residents and eliminates a curb cut on Harvard St (where presently automobile traffic cuts through a bike lane and the sidewalk). Giving back this curb cut is an important gain for pedestrian and bicycle safety and non-automobile transit and a community benefit from this project.

Neighborhood character The proposed parking ratio (0.2 per spots per unit) is a characteristic feature of nearby multifamily housing and mixed-use buildings (I will provide examples from Brookline, but this is also true of the nearby buildings in Boston). Many abutting buildings have zero parking spots. For example, 514 Harvard St (abutting 500 Harvard St) has 16 residential condominiums and zero parking spots. 8 Verndale St (abutting 500 Harvard St) has 4 apartments and zero parking spots. Other mixed-use and residential buildings on Harvard St have very few or no off-street parking spots (such as all buildings from 367 to 397 Harvard St, which also have essentially no setbacks from the sidewalk). For example, 395-397 Harvard St (0.25 miles from 500 Harvard St) has 19 residential units and 2 commercial units, with no off-street parking. The proposed project is thus firmly in line with the relatively dense, pre-automobile development patterns characteristic of the neighborhood.

While the proposed building is a few stories taller than what is immediately around it, 6 stories is hardly oppressive for North Brookline, nor is a three-story difference in height between adjacent buildings particularly egregious (on Beacon Street, 10 story buildings often abut 1-2 story ones). The mixed-use 40B at 370 Harvard St (which also has 0 residential off-street parking spots for 62 housing units) is also 6 stories tall, and each of the buildings at 112 Centre St and 100 Centre St (about 0.3 miles away from 500 Harvard St) are 12 stories tall—double the proposed building at 500 Harvard. Allowing greater height is a necessary component of fulfilling Town objectives of redeveloping and strengthening our major commercial corridors (see discussions in the 2016 Housing Production Plan review of site selection and the 2019 Brookline Fiscal Advisory Committee report).

Mixed-use, mixed-income, transit-oriented development is good for Brookline and for the planet. We hope you approve this project as proposed.

Sincerely,
Amanda Zimmerman, President of Brookline for Everyone
On behalf of Brookline for Everyone