

## Re: 500 Harvard plans

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To: Maria Morelli <mmorelli@brooklinema.gov>

Cc: Anna Kolodner <annakolodner@gmail.com>; Joanna Gallimore <jolougal@gmail.com>; Lisa Coady <lcoadymaso@gmail.com>

 8 attachments (15 MB)

Page 1.jpg; Page 2.jpg; Page 3.jpg; Page 4.jpg; Page 5.jpg; Page 6.jpg; Page 7.jpg; Anna Kolodner - Page 1 - 11-19-20.jpg;

Hi Maria,

Thank you so much for informing us that the latest materials were added to the website.

Below are some of the observations discussed by residents of the five-street area around Coolidge Park.

**Only the Developers' Opinions Seem to Matter:** The residents overwhelmingly supported the idea of a smaller building (three- or four-story-high) at 500 Harvard Street. The idea of a smaller building was supported by the ZBA Chair Jesse in his closing argument during the 500 Harvard Street Hearing on January 16. Despite all this, the developers decided not to compromise with most people's will and continue their own-profit-maximizing push for the biggest building they would be allowed to build.

**Parallel Universe:** The developers continue to misrepresent the reality in their designs. In the past, according to one of the Kenwood Street residents, the developers already showed Kenwood, a one-lane street, as a borderless savannah with gazelles running in it. They claimed that they could not make money on anything other than a six-story building even though EVERY other developer working on constructing buildings on Harvard Street (and most other streets) in Brookline could do it. (The only other six-story building, 2Life at 384 Harvard Street, is operated on a not-for-profit basis.) They continue to use the transportation studies conducted in June 2020, when children and parents worked from home during the height of the pandemic and when traffic volume was 80-90% down compared to the pre-pandemic level. We are almost back to the pre-pandemic levels in terms of parking and traffic in the area. The developers did not win any fans among the residents by using the lower traffic and parking numbers in their projections.

The developers did not show the metal benches for the Bus 66 stop in their latest drawings of the proposed building. I do not think these benches will disappear. They already block the

pedestrian traffic on Harvard Street, especially when people with bags sit on the benches (please see photos 1 and 2 attached to the letter from March 1, 2021). Slide 2 of the current drawing pack shows that three people would be able to walk next to each other on Harvard Street in front of the proposed building. I'm afraid I have to disagree with this depiction: there will be no place for three people to walk side-by-side unless they make their building narrower than the existing restaurant. On slide 5 (the view from Chabad House), they strategically put a mother with a baby to hide that the sidewalk will be very narrow in front of the proposed building.

**Share Not Only Benefits but also Costs:** The developers need to share not only the project's benefits but the project's costs as well. Over the last two days, some underground repairs were done on Columbia Street. As a result, cars and trucks were re-routed – they were allowed to drive on Kenwood Street toward Harvard Street in the wrong direction. With cars and trucks zooming in both directions, Kenwood Street, a one-way road most of the time, became a dangerous thoroughfare. We (residents of the five-street area) are anxiously waiting for the repairs to end.

However, the new building is likely to result in cars idling on Kenwood and driving in the wrong direction to Harvard Street. The building is very likely to bring worsening of safety on Kenwood Street. As a neighbor from Russell Street wrote to me last night, "We don't want this overcrowding! We need our neighborhood and our park to be safe!"

I have proposed an idea of charging \$500 fines to developers for every car or truck seen on a camera installed at the intersection of Kenwood and Harvard Streets driving from the garage or after servicing the building in the wrong direction. Can this idea be implemented, especially if the size of the building is not reduced?

**Easy to Support Any Construction if You Face No Negative Externalities:** I hope that the ZBA understands the difference in where most people, who support and oppose the project's size, live. After the last webinar meeting, when a lady who lives on Summit Street spoke about her support for the project, I went through public comments on the project's website. The overwhelming percentage of people who support the project in its current form do not live in the five-street neighborhood around Coolidge Park. They live in parts of Brookline located far away from Coolidge Park. Some do not even have their addresses listed. The overwhelming percentage of people opposing the large size of the project are residents of the five-street area.

It is very easy to support any construction project when you live far from it and face no negative externalities. When you live close to the construction site, you understand the negative externalities and tend to take a more pragmatic look at the project's costs and benefits. As I mentioned on a number of occasions, the opposition to the project would not have existed or

was much less intense if the developers wanted to build a three- or four-story building that would fit into our neighborhood.

If you could, please share these comments with the ZBA. Thank you very much!

Also, as I said in my email message on November 25, 2020, and during subsequent webinar calls, we collected 110 signatures in support of the petition to limit the height of the building. I am attaching photos of all of them. It would be great if the project's website would indicate that we collected 110 signatures and not just 66 collected initially.

Once again, I truly appreciate all your help!!!

Best regards,

Vitaly

On Saturday, March 6, 2021, 03:27:53 PM EST, Maria Morelli <mmorelli@brooklinema.gov> wrote:

Good afternoon,

Revised plans have been posted to the project web page under Materials for March 10 hearing. Thank you for sharing this update with the community.

Sincerely,  
Maria