

March 24, 2021

Dear Maria,

I hope you have been doing well since the call on the 500 Harvard Street building on March 10.

In the letter that I sent to you on March 1, I wrote that narrowing sidewalks on Harvard and Kenwood Streets due to the proposed building's large footprint might lead to a safety issue: people stepping from the sidewalk into traffic lanes. This issue can potentially lead to traffic accidents. I am sending you three photos of a potentially dangerous situation, pedestrians stepping into the traffic lane, which I described in the March 1 letter. In that letter, I have sent you two photos of a lady blocking the sidewalk with her big bags near the Bus 66 stop **EVEN BEFORE ANY SIDEWALK NARROWING** due to the proposed building's construction.

In the same letter, I also wrote about an incident that involved a homeless person shouting at people last summer. At the time, people stepped into the road to stay as far as possible from him. Last Friday (March 12, 2021), the homeless person returned as the weather became warm. Below are three photos that I took minutes after 8 AM. After dropping off my child at school, I was returning to my home office when I noticed that the shopping carts, garbage bins, and other boxes with the homeless person's belongings partially blocked the sidewalk in front of the proposed building (see Photo 1 attached).

As I slowed down to take that photo, two young women passed me in the direction of the homeless person. When they noticed him, one of the ladies stepped from the sidewalk onto the road. There was no place for both of them to walk on the sidewalk (see Photos 2 and 3). The woman who walked in the traffic lane clearly demonstrated an existing safety issue in front of the 500 Harvard Street building.

But the safety issue could be more acute due to the sidewalk narrowing because of the new building's proposed large size. First, the homeless person was in a friendly mood, and only one lady had to get into the traffic lane. When the homeless man was agitated last summer, all people had to keep their distance from him by stepping into the traffic lane. Second, the ladies were walking north toward Allston: they were facing the oncoming traffic. If they were walking south

(from Allston to Brookline), it could have been more dangerous because they would have been walking with their backs to vehicles traveling from Allston to Brookline. Third, walking along the partially-blocked narrow sidewalk is most dangerous for children. In the past, I have seen kids jump into the street to avoid a (perceived) problem on the sidewalk BEFORE looking at oncoming vehicles. Thankfully, the vehicles were able to stop, several times with the sound of screeching tires, but they did stop without hitting anyone. Finally, avoiding a problem on the sidewalk and stepping in the traffic lanes could also be dangerous for senior citizens and disabled people, who are less mobile and would not be able to jump back to the sidewalk's safety if a vehicle rushes toward them.

I have written to you about the SAFETY issues around the proposed building (i.e., pedestrians walking in the traffic lanes because of blocked sidewalks, cars driving in the wrong direction on Kenwood Street, near-accidents on the corner of Harvard and Kenwood Streets) not because I imagined them but because I have seen them in the day-to-day reality. We ask the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Town of Brookline not to focus only on the interests of the developers and people who would get five affordable units in their building. Please consider the interests of all taxpayers who live in the area (hundreds of people) and the Coolidge Park visitors (thousands of people per year). We want safety for our kids and us in the neighborhood around Coolidge Park. Taking into account the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population rather than satisfying a small group of people, none of whom even live in the five-street area around Coolidge Park, would lead to the sustainable development of the area.

If the building is shorter than six stories, it would most likely not need such a broad base (footprint) that would lead to narrowing sidewalks. It cannot be true that the developers are incapable of making money on a building that is lower than six stories high. If this were true, there would be very few buildings in Brookline. There are a number of construction projects that have been going on in the five-street area around Coolidge Park. All other developers are eager to get the rights to build new houses, all of which are not higher than two-and-a-half or three stories. The six-story building proposed by the developers is 50% above the zoning regulations that stipulate that buildings should not be taller than four stories (!) The zoning regulations were not developed in a vacuum: they reflect the accumulated wisdom of multiple parties, such as the town planners, architects, police, town residents, etc. Among other things, the zoning regulations protect the safety of Brookline's residents and the town itself – from overdevelopment.

If the developers cannot make money or are not satisfied with the level of their profits on any building that is shorter than 50% above the zoning limit, maybe they should focus on developing buildings in towns with no or lax zoning regulations. There will be plenty of other developers who would love to build buildings that would fit in and bring harmony to North Brookline.

Respectfully,

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Member of the Save North Brookline committee