

BROOKLINE BY DESIGN PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Version 9-23-2023

Brookline by Design proposes the following amendments to the Form-Based Zoning of Harvard St., as proposed by the Select Board in STM 4 WA 1.

We believe that implementing our proposed changes will bring the Harvard St. rezoning into better alignment with the stated goals of the project, which include a desire for a variety of housing price points, retention of as much existing commercial as possible, and affording the opportunity for new mixed-use development. We feel strongly that by varying heights, protecting architecturally significant buildings, and retaining our vibrant commercial properties, we are creating a corridor that will still look and feel like Brookline while accommodating many new development opportunities. Our proposed changes will also help minimize displacement and gentrification of both affordable housing units and local small businesses.

Brookline by Design Proposes the following Amendments to STM 4 WA 1:

1. **Remove the 1st Floor Commercial Requirement from H-MSN** - These house-scale buildings (2.5 stories) are already being utilized for commercial uses and we do not want to incentivize demolition, which may be triggered by the expansion of allowable square footage under the Harvard Street rezoning proposal.
2. **Remove Parcels that Do Not Directly Abut Harvard St** - These parcels would include: #5-7, 9 and 11 Verndale, #64 Coolidge, #10 and #7 Beals St, and the Brookline Village parcels on Kent, Station, and Webster Place. As a consequence of the proposed rezoning, these parcels become attractive for redevelopment with the likelihood of replacement structures with significantly larger massing and mandatory 1st floor commercial. This is not suitable within residential areas beyond Harvard Street. Furthermore, with its complex mix of uses, tight roadway geometries and parking challenges, the Village beyond Harvard St. warrants its own careful analysis and planning.
3. **Remove Parcels with Two or More Floors of Commercial Uses** - Buildings along the corridor with 2 or more floors of viable commercial uses, e.g., the following Harvard Street addresses: #29, #62,64,68, #138(3 story business), #229-233(10 Sewall Ave. parcel), #251(5 Longwood Ave. parcel), #308(next to Arcade), #315(Healthworks Building), are *already* contributing significantly to the amenities within walking distance that so many rely upon and represent a significant contribution to our commercial tax base. A redevelopment would most likely ***reduce the amount of commercial square footage*** in the resulting structure if upper floors were residential and only a portion of the 1st floor would remain commercial, as both residential lobby space and most likely parking will be competing for 1st floor space.
4. **Remove Parcels Adjacent to Stop & Shop** – In addition to the parcel (#155) containing the Stop & Shop building, there are 4 adjacent and related parcels that should be removed: #149 (Stop & Shop parking lot), #137 (gas station), #143 (Scrub-a -Dub) and #20 Harvard Court (electric substation). Any significant redevelopment of the Stop & Shop site will likely require the consolidation of these parcels.

5. **Remove the Walgreens Parcel** - As with the Stop & Shop and TJ Maxx parcels, the Walgreens site, because of its relatively larger size, represents an important opportunity for a larger, all commercial redevelopment.
6. **Remove Architecturally Significant Properties** – Remove buildings such as #54-58, #152-158, #172-174, #217-221, #514, #524, #526 Harvard Street. These architecturally significant structures are large scale, mostly three-story residential structures. These buildings are one of a kind and built to last. Their presence on the corridor adds significant character and delight to the streetscape. Retaining these properties will help retain existing more moderately priced housing and maintain the uniquely Brookline look and feel of Harvard St.
7. **Increase the Required Rear Setback to 15ft.** - The abutters must be protected. The rear of many properties on Harvard St. will be where loading, trash receptacles, parking access, etc. must be accommodated. The increased height of the new buildings will also reduce the abutters' access to light and air. The proposed rear set back of 5 ft. or 10 ft. is clearly inadequate to provide any buffer between the new buildings and people's homes. Abutters clearly requested larger setbacks in the public input sessions held by the Planning Department.
8. **Provide for Building Height Variation Consistent with Existing Height Limits** - In order to promote some variation of height, reduce the maximum height to 40ft for parcels currently located in an L-1.0 or M-1.0 districts.
9. **Require Some Smaller Dwelling Units** - In new housing projects with 9 or more units, a minimum of 1/3 of all new units shall be studios or 1 bedrooms not to exceed 900 sq.ft. The "market" clearly leans towards the provision of very large, very expensive housing. Brookline has a dearth of smaller units, especially as the average household size declines and the population of single-person households increases. Smaller units will, by definition, be somewhat less expensive. Because MBTA-CA compliance is met through passage of the M-district Plus proposal, we should embrace our freedom to require smaller units, a form of housing we need.
10. **Eliminate Short Term Rentals from the Allowable Uses** - Short Term Rentals remove housing units from the pool of units available for long-term stable rental. Not allowing this use on Harvard St. will help promote both the availability and affordability of housing on the corridor.
11. **Design Standards for M-District *must* Remain** - While this item is not an amendment to the Harvard St. FBZ proposal, we want to clearly state that the design standards the MMPC developed are critical to both that proposal's acceptance by Town Meeting and to prevent disruptive redevelopment results if we allow by-right development without these design standards.

Additional Considerations that Brookline by Design Recommends:

- A. **Provide for Increased Public Parking to Serve Businesses** – Provide for increased public parking, at for example, Centre St., through contributions from developers to a public parking development fund.

On-site parking for commercial uses is not practical if we wish to maintain Harvard St.'s walkability. The most efficient type of parking is shared public parking. It is likely that the parking study the Town has committed ARPA funds for (\$350,000) will come to the conclusion that additional public parking is necessary in Coolidge Corner.

- B. **Public Realm Improvements, Public Benefits and Development Mitigation** - As redevelopment occurs there needs to be a mechanism to plan for and fund development mitigation, infrastructure improvements and public realm enhancements. To create a vibrant public realm that encourages and supports public gathering, lingering and social mixing, improvements such as pocket parks, street furniture and Complete Streets treatments should be planned for the corridor. A fund for this purpose could be established with contributions from developers.
- C. **Relocation Assistance for Small Displaced Businesses** - The Town should establish and finance a small business relocation assistance process and fund to help retain displaced small businesses that have served the Town and its residents.
- D. **Determine Impacts to Infrastructure, Town facilities and Town Services** - The Town needs to understand its capacity for such growth in order to plan for future capital needs.