

From: Elizabeth Pyle <elizabeth.m.pyle@gmail.com>  
To: Jenny Raitt <JRaitt@town.arlington.ma.us>  
Date: Mon, 18 May 2020 12:23:30 -0400  
Subject: 882-892 Massachusetts Avenue

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Dear Ms. Raitt,

I am writing to provide to comments on the application for 882-892 Massachusetts Avenue, which will be heard by the ARB this evening. Please forward these comments to the Board, and include them in the official record.

I live close to the 882-892 Massachusetts Avenue block, and my family has long enjoyed the Toraya and Thana Thai restaurants that are current tenants of this building. Small restaurants like these make this community (and Arlington) a desirable and convenient place to live, and contribute to the diversity of the area. We are disappointed that the current owners of this building have decided to displace their current tenants, especially at this time when small businesses are suffering so much from the impacts of Covid-19.

As a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 10, I can also report that our community values these restaurants as improving the quality of life in this area, and that my neighbors are upset that these long-time tenants are being forced out in favor of the proposed residential/office development.

The proposed development is too big, contains too many units, is too many stories tall and will detract from the character of the community. This is just the kind of development that this area does not need or want. The proposed building looks like every other generic office or apartment building, and it could be located anywhere in the country. No effort has been made to give it New England character, or to attempt to fit it in with the Arlington community. Coupled with the new 3-story building directly across the street, it will make a canyon of new (undesirable) modern towers on this block of Massachusetts Avenue. If it's anything like the building across the street, the landlord will rent the residential units at high prices, while the first floor office space sits vacant, or poorly utilized, for years. This completely eliminates the vibrant character that currently exists in this neighborhood, and would be a detriment to our community.

In addition, the community is concerned about the environmental impacts of soil contamination at this site and air quality impacts from the proposal -- especially since the new High School construction (in part on contaminated soil) will also be happening in this vicinity. Therefore, to the extent any project is approved, we urge the ARB to require the maximum environmental monitoring of this site, including air quality monitoring, so as not to negatively impact the health of abutters and pedestrians.

In conclusion, I urge you to please deny this application. This type of generic, dense, tall development that displaces valued institutions is not what this neighborhood wants. At a minimum, the building should be reduced by one story in height, it should be set back farther from all sidewalks, the landlord should include commercial space appropriate for restaurants on the first floor (not offices), and it should be redesigned to look more like a traditional New England commercial block with brick or other features common to existing buildings along Massachusetts Avenue.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely yours,

Elizabeth Pyle  
Town Meeting Member, Precinct 10  
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