

August 30, 2020

To the Select Board

From Clarissa Rowe, Landscape Architect

**RE: Support for the Mirak 40B Project for Arlington**

Colleagues: I have reviewed the 25 slide presentation for The Redevelopment of 1165R Massachusetts Avenue, dated April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This project is an excellent candidate for a friendly 40B for the Town, and its owners are long term Arlington residents and benefactors. The developer, Spaulding and Slye, is a good one. I know the good reputations of Bargmann, Hendrie +Archetype, Architects, and Kyle Zick, Landscape Architecture. I do not know Mr. Gamble but plan to attend the public meetings to get to know him.

As a long time historic preservationist, I think that the adaptive reuse of the buildings is excellent. The inclusion of the Workbar and Small Park are good assets for the project. The incorporation of the Mill Brook into the scheme brings to fruition the dream of the Mill Brook Master Plan work of 2010.

Most importantly, Arlington needs affordable/community housing. With 25% of the units being affordable for 80% of medium income, it will be a boon to the town. As a long-time critic of the Mugar proposal, I see a vast difference between this proposal and the Oaktree proposal. The site has been held by the Mirak family for generations. The Mirak Family has a good steward of their land and buildings. The Mugar has not been, and just this weekend, there was another theft by one of the homeless encampment. This Mirak project will not be taking place in an area prone to flooding, although the Mill Brook does occasionally overtop its walls. The complex fits into the existing site and keeps a lot of the landmark features of the existing buildings.

Obviously, this first meeting is just the beginning of a process. There are a lot of details that will need scrutiny. There will need to be environmental assessment and critical historic Commission review. The neighbors need to be heard. The design of the new buildings needs to be more in keeping with the historic simplicity of the existing buildings.

My biggest concern about the project is the Mirak family's decision to evict the artists who have had their studios there for decades. Most pay a rent of less than \$350 a month. Where will these artists, including friends of mine, go?

Honestly, I think it is time that the Town of Arlington steps up and starts looking for affordable artist studio space, perhaps in some of our old industrial buildings? We cannot rely on the Mirak's generosity forever. When the Arts and Culture Action Plan was done recently, the issue of artist housing and studio space was not a hot one. It is now. We need to set up a task force now to set a campaign for finding a building and looking for someone to rehab it for artists' studios, and if possible artists' lofts. Arlington values its artists and it's time for us to contribute real support ourselves to securing artists spaces and creating incentives to property owners to rent studio space to artists, like the Mirak families did for so many years.

I hope that you all will vote favorably tomorrow night on the proposal to make this project a friendly 40B for our Town. It is a first step and there will more scrutiny of the plans as they proceed.

Clarissa Rowe, 137 Herbert Road, Arlington, Massachusetts