

To the Zoning Board of Appeals,

I have lived in Arlington for almost five years, and have lived close to the proposed development of Thorndike Place for the last two and a half years. My wife and I greatly value the quality of life in Arlington, so we have recently purchased a home close to this neighborhood (on the other side of Lake Street from where we are now).

I have serious concerns about the proposed development, especially from a transportation perspective. I am not a transportation planner by profession, but I have training in this area, and my knowledge of the subject makes me extremely skeptical of the conclusions of the traffic impact study conducted for this development. One of the key conclusions to me sounds exceedingly optimistic: "...During the weekday evening peak hour, the Project is expected to generate 33 vehicle trips (20 entering and 13 exiting)." Given that there would be 176 new housing units built, this means that there would be a person commuting to work by car **in fewer than one out of every five housing units**. I find that extremely hard to believe.

It is also important to scrutinize any assumptions made about public transit ridership returning to pre-covid levels. We simply don't know if they can return, or ever will return, especially given the proposed cuts in MBTA services. For example, when Philadelphia's commuter rail line went on strike in the 1980s, ridership stopped completely, and then took over 10 years to recover. We simply don't know what will happen with the MBTA, and approving a major development like this that relies heavily on pre-covid use of mass transit to avoid devastating impacts to traffic in the area is simply too big of a risk to take.

I would therefore urge you to have an independent expert(s) review the traffic impact study with these factors in mind.

I also urge you to consider that there are currently roughly 300 units of housing in the entire triangle between Route 2, Lake Street, and the Bike Path. This development would increase that by more than 50%. And this would be done in an area where there is simply no more room to expand road capacity. If the extremely optimistic projections for transit ridership do not materialize, there will be no way to address this problem. What will we do then--add another lane to Lake Street (and knock down 40 or 50 houses in the process)?

Traffic on Lake Street prior to the pandemic was a disaster and an embarrassment to the town. I've heard people who said they were stuck in traffic for up to half an hour just getting home from route 2 via lake street. I have been stuck in traffic myself for more than 45 minutes to make the final mile of my trip back home. The situation was untenable. Until the town finds a long-term transformative solution to address these underlying problems, ***adding any more traffic to an already unacceptable situation should simply not be considered.***

Lastly, while this project is likely to be touted as "transit oriented" for its proximity to Alewife Station, please also bear in mind that there are no shopping or entertainment destinations (or pretty much any other kind of destination) in this area that can reasonably be reached without a car. So every time one of the hundreds of new residents needs or wants to leave their home, it's a pretty sure thing they will do so in a car.

Thank you for your serious consideration of the serious potential harm that this project presents to our long-standing community and the quality of life in Arlington.

Best regards,
Joe

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