

Do we want affordable housing in our neighborhood and our state? Yes.

Do we want our neighborhood to drastically change in a way that is not consistent with its roots or current status? No.

Are we concerned about property damage and traffic that might occur from a project of this scope? Yes.

Would we be less concerned with a project that added detached housing of the size and style of existing homes in the neighborhood? Yes.

This letter opposes the proposed project on the Mugar plot that abuts Dorothy Road in East Arlington. For decades attempts have been made to develop this plot, and now the 40B statute is being leveraged to allow the landowners to bring their plans to fruition. It is understandable and laudable that the 40B statute allows for flexibility in the interest of affordable housing within Massachusetts. It is a concern of East Arlington residents that this flexibility is being pushed to its very limits with the scope and location of the proposed project, and that the primary beneficiaries will be the developers, not residents in need of affordable housing.

As per the 40B design review guidelines, the expectation is to blend with the existing neighborhood and existing resources. The milieu of the existing neighborhood is single and two family homes with a buffer of trees between Route 2 and the neighborhood. Understandably, the 40B guidelines allow for the introduction of a different form of housing in the interest of providing affordable housing. The proposed project does not meet expectation, because it does not mitigate the height and scale of the buildings to adjoining sites.

Only a few years ago, there were multiple affordable small homes along Dorothy Road. These homes were bought by developers, razed, and replaced by larger dwellings that were more profitable for the developers.

In the same spirit, owners of the undeveloped land between Dorothy Road and Route 2 desire to profit from their plot of land. That is a reasonable desire - it is their land.

In addition, the developers for the project desire to have high profit. That is a reasonable desire - development is their business.

The objection to the proposed project is the way that the desires of a few people will adversely affect the many existing residents as well as the proposed new residents. This appeal is to the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Conservation Commission, and the Select Board of Arlington. As outlined by the questions above, this is not an objection to affordable housing or to development in general, but to the specific scope of a project that is too large for the location in which it is proposed.

The proposed project along Dorothy Road is out of place in the neighborhood. Other recent large complexes constructed in Arlington are in the style of the existing homes or aligned with the things they replaced. The largest projects have been built at commercial sites with ample vehicle access - Arlington Center, the Symmes Hospital site, and the Brigham Ice Cream factory. This proposed project is permanently replacing trees and space to effectively create a cul de sac bordered on its edges by wetland at the end of a currently quiet street. The size of the proposed project rivals a nearby elementary school and an existing complex on Spy

Pond. The proposed size and style of the project do not blend with the 1-2 family homes it would abut.

Source: Image shared by an attendee at Zoning Board of Appeals meeting on January 26, 2021

The proposed project will significantly increase population density and will significantly impact the local environment. It is difficult to imagine how the proposed project would have a positive impact on the neighborhood. The size and placement of the project exacerbates existing neighborhood concerns including water in basements, traffic, and wildlife displacement.

Traffic is already a very large concern without a new development. Additional traffic concerns for new residents are very likely with a small side street providing the sole point of entrance and egress for a large complex in an area where it is not practical to get necessities on foot or by public transportation. There are also significant logistical concerns for handling needs during construction - how will large trucks maneuver from Lake Street to Littlejohn Street with cars legally parked on either side of Littlejohn allowing visitor and contractor access to homes in the neighborhood and on Lake Street? When traffic resumes after the pandemic, the new project will add to current Lake Street congestion - how much additional traffic will try to cut through our neighborhood, and how will that be exacerbated by the additional traffic in the neighborhood for construction and new residents?

Current residents are also concerned about collateral damage to their property, flora, and fauna due to transport of oversized items, site preparation, and the physical impacts of the construction itself. The physical vibrations from recent projects across Route 2 in Cambridge and Belmont could be felt in the neighborhood, and the proposed project is on a similar scale and much closer physically. Furthermore, residents are concerned about potential impacts to

home values from a finished project due to the higher traffic, less green space, and a general change to the neighborhood that would clearly no longer be just 1-2 family dwellings.

Building townhomes or single family homes on the site would blend in to the neighborhood and fit with existing infrastructure. As proposed, this project is out of place and is not in the best interest of current or future residents. The desires of the landowners and developers are understandable, and it is up to the Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Select Board to regulate those desires. As stated above, the problem is not affordable housing or development, but rather the size and scope of the proposed project in this location. I am sympathetic to the landowner wanting to realize the value of their land, but not in agreement with the amount of flexibility being leveraged via 40B statute in the interest of profit for the landowner and developer. The landowner has an option to decide to build nothing, and it is up to the regulating bodies to ensure that anything that is built is in the interest of the greater good.

Let us please be rational and not execute this project as proposed. I implore that the Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Select Board think of what should be done, rather than what can be done. If the project is approved as-is, many residents, including new residents, will be adversely affected at the will and benefit of a few.

Sincerely,

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