

Dear Honorable Members of the Zoning Board of Appeals,

I am writing to express my strong objection to Oaktree Development's application to build "Thorndike Place" on the wetland region behind Dorothy Road in East Arlington. The plans to build a large apartment complex and parking garage on one of the last remaining parcels of open land in town, in an area that is densely populated, highly trafficked, routinely floods, and environmentally sensitive, is absolutely not suitable for development in a time of rapid climate change based on the following key issues:

Flooding—

After multiple public hearings, there has still not been a precise diagram provided by the developers of clear measurements of the underground garage in an area surrounded by wetlands which routinely experiences flooding. This lack of transparency in their building plans has become a pattern for Oaktree development. It is well known that the basement of Vox on 2 apartments experience frequent flooding on the other side of the wetland region, and their parking garage is even above ground. If these units are meant for affordable housing for seniors or lower income populations based on the 40B restrictions, it is unethical to place vulnerable people in a building where flooding of their belongings is a real hazard.

Additionally, the 2020 FEMA guidelines and updated environmental regulations with recent measures on climate change activity are not being followed in this project since the initial application was from 2015. Why is it legal to make environmental decisions without the most up to date scientific evidence? Especially when it is also a health and safety hazard to future residents?

Traffic—

This neighborhood already experiences debilitating traffic congestion, but the developers conducted their traffic study during a pandemic—another misrepresentation by Oaktree which ignores the actual effect on the citizens of the town of Arlington. The data generated was also inconsistent, for example it considered turning right on Lake Street and not left, in addition to using traffic data from the Cambridge apartment complex Vox 2 which has a completely different traffic flow than Lake Street since it is situated on the other side of the highway in a different town.

Increased traffic on Lake St. as well as all streets in the neighborhood will be a safety concern for the many children who play in the neighborhood. Currently there are only about 30-40 cars total on the street, and the proposal of 300 more cars is completely out of proportion with the current capacity.

The graphics of Dorothy Road provided by the developers have also been routinely distorted to make the road look wider and the proposed development smaller than it actually is. Currently the street is barely enough for 2 cars to pass, and if cars are parked on the side of the road it quickly reduces to 1. The streets may also be closed during construction, and it is a safety hazard if there was an accident or fire for emergency vehicles to access the area.

The developers also have not accounted for any guest parking (given the ban on overnight parking in Arlington) in their parking garage plans and have reduced to the minimal amount of parking spots claiming that the location is perfect for public transportation. However, they fail to report that the location of the development is nowhere near any grocery store, and residents would be compelled to use a car. This was my personal experience, as I moved to the area planning that a car would be unnecessary, but eventually realized that it was absolutely impossible to manage the basic necessities such as getting groceries without a car.

The developers also failed to note that the Boston transit system is already completely overwhelmed by the current population, with repairs backlogs and aging infrastructure that cannot keep up even with the current demands. Adding more residents to crowd the Alewife T station and trains which are already unable to accommodate the current residents is untenable and will only result in more disgruntled residents and infrastructure complaints.

Inconsistency of developers—

In addition to the abovementioned misrepresentations by Oaktree development, they have been repeatedly inconsistent about their plans and this current proposal does not reflect the original 40B application. The project initially proposed townhouses as a "buffer zone" and a ramp to Route 2 to alleviate traffic congestion, both now eliminated. The current large apartment complex is in no way consistent with the character of the neighborhood (mandated by the 40B statute) of single unit and duplex homes.

Cost to Arlington—

This ill-designed building development based on inconsistent environmental metrics will make flooding and litigation associated with flood damage increase cost for the town of Arlington. There may also be increased costs for maintaining or upgrading the local sewage system and other Arlington town services. In addition, doubling of the neighborhood may result in an enrollment increase at Hardy School, which is already an overcrowded and ancient building, and increased flooding may decrease the use of Thorndike Field for school sports. The value of housing in East Arlington will decrease as the character of the neighborhood will lead to less pathways to ownership and therefore less long-term investment and community involvement in the town of Arlington.

I thank you for your consideration of the issues above and for your dedication to the town of Arlington, both present and future generations. I also kindly ask that you allow public comment in the beginning of your meetings, as public comments left to the end do not allow for the full participation of citizens which would be personally affected on a daily basis by these for-profit decisions.

Anna Kukharskyy
Mott Street, Arlington