

To: ZBA Members, Town of Arlington

Please include this letter as testimony for the official record of ongoing Public Hearings on the proposed Mugar 40 B development

Dear Chairman Klein and Members of the Board,

For years we have watched with trepidation the threats presented by the Mugar group with respect to their ambitions for development at their large site in East Arlington. Not satisfied with their success in gaining Planned Unit Development zoning designation they have proceeded on the outrageous endeavor to obtain approval for a 40B permit. Clearly their intention is to ignore restrictions and safeguards on development with which they would have to comply under the zoning which they were awarded. This is community exploitation at its worst. The fact that they are providing “affordable” units gives no excuse for this greed. These units are too expensive for those who most need them. At 80% AMI eligibility few will be available to low and very low-income families.

East Arlington’s housing is very dense (much of it exceeds Governor Baker’s recommended density for MBTA communities). This already presents a burden on some municipal services, flood control and school overcrowding etc. Stormwater and sewage in this area with FEMA designated flood prone areas presents challenges and health hazards which should not be exacerbated under any circumstances in this era of concern regarding climate control. Loss of trees would impact air quality in the entire area. It would likely create a heat island.

In addition to the increased traffic and crowding for residents close to the proposed development, the abutting Thorndike Field is a vital athletic field for our land-starved town and is used for high school sports. It has been used for decades for Arlington High School soccer meets and for summer soccer training programs for Arlington Recreation Department. For these athletes the damage to air quality caused by removal of large numbers of trees in this area of constant traffic exhaust from Route 2 is of concern. These students will not be exercising in the air-conditioned VOX 2 or the anticipated residences of Mugar’s air-conditioned project.

It is reprehensible that the Planning Department in their preoccupation with trying to increase housing density (www.blog.arfrr.org) did not do sufficient work (by various available means such as zoning district designation change for certain cemeteries) to ensure that our statutory goal of 1.5% of land area occupation by affordable units would be recognized. As a result, Arlington and the Mugar property have no safe harbor from 40B development.

If you must grant this permit, please impose strict restrictions on the level of development consistent with the fragility of the site and the importance of health, welfare, and safety of the large number of people who will be affected by this devastating project.

Very truly yours,

Patricia Barron Worden, Ph.D.
Town Meeting Member, pct 8

Former Chair, Arlington Housing Authority
Former Charter Member, Arlington Human Rights Commission
Former Chair, Arlington School Committee
Member Housing Plan Implementation Committee