

April 27, 2021

Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Arlington

RE: Mugar Property - Thorndike Place Development

Dear Zoning Board of Appeals Members:

I am writing because I fear that the ZBA and the project proponents have the impression that as long as there are townhouses along Dorothy Road, everything else with the development is fine – that what is behind the townhouses doesn't matter. This is simply not true – **there is no way any proposal that looks anything like the “old” initial development proposal is preferable or acceptable.** There are numerous problems because of the overall size and location of the development, particularly:

- Increased traffic and pedestrians walking to Alewife and soccer fields
- The amount of land in this very wet area that is impacted by the development

Traffic

An entrance from Edith/Burch Streets would present an extremely dangerous risk to pedestrians that is unacceptable. In normal times, the neighborhood, especially Edith Street, Osborne Road, and the portions of Burch, Dorothy, Margaret streets in the area of Edith and Osborne is used for parking during the week for commuters accessing the Alewife T station and on weekends in the Spring and Fall by families for soccer games in Thorndike and Magnolia Fields. The streets are narrow and cars park on both sides of all the streets – allowing space for just one car in one direction to pass through. People are walking everywhere. Even if everyone stayed on the sidewalks (which do not exist everywhere), there are several street crossings. Because of all the parked cars, there are limited sight lines. **Adding additional cars to this situation is dangerous.** If parking is restricted to just one side of a street, or if street parking is eliminated altogether, then the cars that are driving will just go faster, increasing the danger to pedestrians and bicyclists. Especially during the week, drivers that have been stuck in the back-up on Lake Street, speed once they are “released” into the neighborhood.

The project proponents might try to assert that post-pandemic we won't have traffic or commuters, but that's simply not true. They will be back – certainly by the time a project is constructed and open – because avoiding the parking fee and traffic congestion at Alewife will always be attractive. And people living in their development will generate a significant number of vehicle trips, whether in their own cars, for deliveries of goods and food, and via Uber/Lyft. The weekend/evening soccer traffic is already happening now. You can get a small taste of the parking/pedestrian situation on Saturday mornings in soccer season, which is now, particularly when games times start and end – such as around 11:45ish. **Bottom line – adding more vehicles into the neighborhood is unacceptably dangerous, and an entrance via Edith/Burch even more so.**

Lastly, I want to reiterate again – that if we were in “normal” times, you would be able to see for yourselves that any large development in this area is totally outrageous. If we were in normal times and you tried to drive to the site, particularly from Route 2, around 5:00 or 6:00 in the evening, you would immediately know that adding any more vehicles to Lake Street and this area is crazy.

Water

As everyone should be aware, the neighborhood where this proposed project is located has major issues with water, particularly with a high groundwater level and subsequent basement flooding, and developing this project will only make them worse. When it rains a lot, the water table rises and impacts

basements in the area. In many areas, the groundwater rises to the surface and ponds. If we were not in drought conditions (we ended 2020 over 7 inches below normal and are several more inches below normal so far in 2021), and you could see for yourselves how wet this area is in a normal spring rainfall situation, you would know that **adding any underground structure or impermeable surface is crazy.**

Stormwater management is of great concern. All stormwater management structures, retention ponds, and infiltration galleries must be located far away from nearby homes because they will raise the groundwater level around them and negatively impact basements of homes in close proximity. **Any below ground level areas of the proposed building will be in contact with the groundwater, particularly when it rises during and after storm events.** This will interfere with groundwater flow, directing it through the drainage stones surrounding the foundation and around the building, increasing the flow towards nearby homes, increasing their basement flooding.

Below ground structures will flood when groundwater rises, as the current residents on Dorothy Road experience. The project proponents plan to pump out the water that will flow into their French drain-like system and/or that accumulates in the basement/parking area itself and put it in the municipal stormwater pipes in the street. However, the municipal stormwater system conveys water to Alewife Brook and relies on gravity to work properly. When it rains a lot, the level of Alewife Brook rises and there is no longer a head change between the storm drains and Alewife Brook. There is no place for stormwater to flow and the system backs up overflowing the storm drains, particularly in the area of Edith and Margaret streets. **The project cannot be allowed to discharge any pumped water into the municipal storm drain system.** Bottom line – given the existing high groundwater level in the neighborhood, particularly during and after storm events, any project will have devastating impacts on the neighborhood. **The more land area the project impacts, the larger the negative impact.**

I also have concerns about the sewage system. The development will add a significant amount of sewage to the system. Much of the piping is in contact with the groundwater, particularly when it rains a lot and the groundwater level rises. Unfortunately, this old piping has leaks and allows groundwater to infiltrate. During the big storms of October 1996 and March 2010, sewage was bubbling up out of the manhole in Margaret Street at the entrance to Thorndike Field (it is labeled as sewer not stormwater). **There are serious questions about the capacity of the sewage system to safely handle the significantly increased flow the proposed project will generate.**

Lastly, any development cannot be allowed to drive piles for the foundation. When the apartment and office buildings and hotel were built across Route 2, a large number of piles were driven. In addition to the infuriating noise, the foundation of my house and others in the neighborhood shook terribly. This proposed project is MUCH closer and driving piles for the foundation will cause damage to the homes in the surrounding neighborhood. **Pile driving must be prohibited.**

Thank you for your attention to my concerns. Please contact me with any questions or for additional information. And thank you for all the work you do for the town.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Griffith
4 Edith Street
Arlington, MA 02474