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Subject: Public Comment on 1021-1025 Mass Ave

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Good Evening Members of the ZBA,

I am writing in support of the 1025 Mass Ave project. I have reviewed the project materials available on the town web site and watched the presentation on 10/18.

This is exactly the kind of mixed-use, mixed-income project we should be welcoming into town. The project will create affordable housing opportunities with affordable equity building possibility, not something that happens very often, especially here. It will create 50 sorely needing housing units, including some sized for families. It is on one of our primary transportation corridors and close to the bike path. It is even three doors down from a bike shop. The project is extremely well positioned to allow residents to live carbon-light lifestyles.

Yes, new construction is going to be on the expensive end. Construction costs in the region are high. Land is expensive. On the upside, as academic studies have shown, the construction of market-rate housing helps relieve upward pressure on existing housing units. The construction of 50 new units has the potential to relieve pressure on 25 condo conversions of existing two-family houses, potentially preserving sorely needed rental units. It is our lack of supply that drives up housing prices, not new construction. Municipalities that have allowed more new construction have had lower rates of growth in their housing prices and more stable housing prices in general.

The project seems quite likely to be of great economic benefit to the storefronts across the street and along Mass ave in

general.

While the loss of a large sycamore tree is regrettable, I think we must consider that in a broader context. If we, as a town, do not allow this sort of development here, it does not eliminate the demand for these housing units. They are likely to be built further away from the city center, on a large lots, potentially clearing dozens of acres of forest, requiring new roads and infrastructure to be built, and creating housing units where the occupants will have significantly larger carbon footprints than they would here in Arlington. Reflexive conservation is not necessarily good environmental policy. Sprawl is a much greater threat to our environment than an apartment building in a walkable neighborhood with good access to public transit and a bike path.

In 2010, Arlington voted to support 40B, voting down a ballot question on repealing it 64-36 percent. As a town, we support the goals of 40b. This project seems very much in keeping with those goals. As other town residents have noted in their groundbreaking book, *Neighborhood Defenders*, the public comment period on a project is often not representative of the town in general.

The one place where I might take issue is with the project is the application for a waiver from the up-lighting prohibition. We just passed that in town meeting. Not sure the uplighting is critical to the creation of much-needed housing.

Finally, the project brings all of this to the town without spending a nickel from the town budget. We should welcome it expediently and hope for other such developments to follow the same path.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this project and service on the ZBA.

Alex Bagnall
Wyman Street