

From: Lara Curtis <lara.curtis@gmail.com>
To: cricker@town.arlington.ma.us, rzsembery@town.arlington.ma.us, mtintocalis@town.arlington.ma.us, srevilak@town.arlington.ma.us, KLau@town.arlington.ma.us, EBenson@town.arlington.ma.us
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Subject: Comments to ARB re: 190, 192-200 Mass Ave proposal

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January 22, 2023

Rachel Zsembery

Chair, Arlington Redevelopment Board
% Claire Ricker, Director
Planning & Community Development Department
Town of Arlington

VIA EMAIL

Dear Ms. Zsembery,

I am writing to express my concerns and provide comments regarding the proposed development for 190, 192-200 Mass Ave. This 30-unit residential project would have a major impact on the Capitol Square neighborhood, and as such, its design should be especially considerate of its surroundings.

Please consider the following issues:

- The belatedly-added elevations on the Town's web site do not entirely correspond to the provided floor plans. At first glance, the balconies shown in the elevations are not shown on the floor plans. Any inconsistencies should be addressed. Balconies should not be allowed to overhang the sidewalks.
- An updated traffic report, reflecting an increase in commercial area and on-site parking spaces from the previous iteration of this project, should be provided. A new 30-unit project is a large project for this neighborhood, and neighbors and the Board should be informed as to any increase in traffic.
- The provided renderings do not accurately represent the pedestrian environment surrounding the site, including locations of all utility and traffic poles and signage, which are in abundance on these sidewalks.
- Both Lake and Chandler Streets are extremely narrow and busy sidewalks, and would benefit from a slight building setback to provide some breathing room, particularly because a 4-story building will emphasize the narrow feel. Related, the commercial entrance along Lake Street should be recessed, providing cover and limiting conflict between entering/exiting patrons and other pedestrians on the narrow sidewalk.

- The front patio is a significant improvement for this project. An egress to the patio from the proposed restaurant space would make it more usable and a better amenity.
- The parking along Chandler Street should be screened if not fully enclosed. As currently designed, the parking is extremely tight, so the lack of an exterior wall or barrier probably allows people parking in those spots to actually exit their vehicles. Open doors should not be something a pedestrian should have to deal with, particularly along this slope, which can be treacherous during winter months. A vehicular circulation plan should be required to show how each parking spot is accessible even when other vehicles are parked in neighboring spots.
- A 13% grade vehicular ramp is extremely steep, and the parking garage design should be further vetted. A section plan showing feasibility should be provided.
- The rear setback should be substantially increased. No existing residence should have to endure a new 4-story building less than 8 feet from their property line. If the rear setback were increased, perhaps the project could come closer to meeting usable and landscaped open space requirements. The proposed 7.5 feet is not even close to the required setback, which the proponent has elected not to indicate on the documents, preferring to just leave it at $(H+L)/6$. Not indicating how much rear yard relief is being requested, combined with the lack of a rear view rendering, does not reflect well on the proponent or project.

This design is an improvement over the previous proposal, however, it does need significant changes before it should be seriously considered.

Sincerely,

Lara Curtis Hayes

5 Cleveland Street