

Mugar Wetlands - Thorndike Place

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Town of Arlington, Mass.
Conservation Commission

Honorable Members

My name is John Yurewicz. I am a 57 year resident of the Town, 39 of which are at 47 Mott Street at the corner of Littlejohn Street. I write to you to explain my rationale for NOT allowing this Thorndike Place development.

We have successfully fought development on this site since 1975. There have been a few different plans, none of which were allowed. The reason(s) mostly because it would be done in an existing wetland. "Wetlands" always had some "hands off!!" effect on developers, contractors, and municipal authorities.

Now, in 2023, the authorities have come 'half circle' and are contemplating allowing this development. The site is still a large, natural wetland! It is also one of the very few wetlands in the Town and is prominent in that the site is heavily treed, and is the habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. There are so few natural green spaces and even fewer wetlands in the Town! To lose this one would be cruel to all those nearby.

What has changed?? I'll tell you! The Commonwealth of Mass. created their "40B" program that says the State can trump local zoning laws by simply being the State and declaring how much 'affordable housing' the Town must have. In 2016, there was debate between the Town and the State about just how much affordable housing there was in Arlington. The State flexed their muscles and decreed that Arlington was deficient in affordable housing as shown by some formula.

Now, in 2023, the numbers will show that the Town is, in fact, up to the required amount of affordable housing. The State, in their echelon of power claims that today's numbers don't count and all permitting and allowances must be based on those debatable numbers from seven years ago.

So, here we are today. Counting, but not limited to the 'block' described by: Route 2, Lake Street, Margaret Street, the Minuteman Bike Path, and Thorndike Field, there are approximately 240 residential single and two-family dwellings. In that 'block' are several 'sleepy', narrow residential streets connecting residents to each other and the rest of the Town. Vehicular activity within that 'block' is minimal. Adding a development the size of Thorndike Place puts a negative cast on this quiet, residential neighborhood 'Block', if you will. Without echoing all the topics raised over the years: traffic, ground water, air pollution, emergency access, infrastructure, loss of green space, and, not the least of which, a complete disruption to the daily existences of all

the occupants of those aforementioned dwellings, we can add all those residents on the other side of Lake Street and Margaret Street. Everyone described will be negatively effected! Lake Street already acts as a very busy two way connector from Mass. Ave. to Route 2 and this development will further enlarge and congest that traffic.

All through these nearly fifty years of fending off developments and winning, we neighboring owners have watched as the owners of these wetlands have been "absentee landlords"! Homeless people have set up in a hodge podge of a lesser than 'shanty-town' cardboard, tents, lean-to's, and a whole barrage of trashy, unhealthy living waste! The landlord NEVER provided policing or rejection of these conditions. Large, old trees have fallen and never been cut and removed. The wonderful benefits of that green space have been countered by a non-participating landlord who, now, wants to build, sell, collect monies, and then "DONATE" the remaining, undeveloped land to the Town for the Town to police and maintain, so they can wipe their hands clean of any future responsibility, just like that!

Absolutely none of the proposed development benefits any of the many occupants of the previously described 'block'! In reality it is all a huge negative in so many ways! Underground water aquifers, additional motor vehicle traffic, a strain to the existing services (water, sewer, electricity), delays to emergency access to all the streets in and around the 'Block', and the permanent loss of natural greenery!

Consider, also, that owners and developers in cities and towns throughout Massachusetts will be watching to see what happens with this wetland development! An environmentally dangerous precedent could be set!

In closing, a word comes to mind: "Conserve"! If this wetland is allowed to be ruined and is lost because of the proposed Thorndike Place Development, I wonder what will remain for our Conservation Commission to "Conserve". Instead, we can all mull what was lost because an absentee landlord managed to convince authorities that their development is a good thing. It is NOT, in any way, a good thing.

Please consider closely what will be lost with this proposed development.

Respectfully submitted,

John C. Yurewicz