

TO: The Zoning Board of Appeals and Select Board

FROM: Carl Wagner, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 15 - Edgehill Road

The 40B Project at 1021-1025 Mass Ave represents an overruling of local control, protections and laws. It would be bad for our climate resiliency and even bad for our affordability efforts. Waivers and favors beyond the 40B law requirements would be unfair to others in town and hurt our efforts to deal with our budget problems. I urge the Town to reject the requests of the developer to be given ADDITIONAL waivers, bonuses and treat as well as to deny the current project.

The developer asks to be exempt from the tree preservation bylaws which requires a Tree Plan and payment into the Trees Please Fund for trees removed. The developer cites lack of feasibility for his large project without removal of many trees and he does not want to pay the fees that every other developer or homeowner would have to pay in the same situation. Our trees are important -- their losses add to heat islands, which we are trying to fight, and hurt our ability to fight climate change. Losing these trees and not charging the developer is unfair to all others who play by the rules and unfair to our children and grandchildren. Who wants to cut down our Amazon forests? Who wants to enable the cutting down of forests? I ask you to give NOTHING more than the minimum required by state law to the developer, especially not when it would be unfair to others or hurt our town revenues- which face an enormous deficit soon.

Beyond the specific 40B project's illness, I'd like to remind you that large residential apartment units do not help affordability. It's true that they add housing supply, but we do not have a supply problem, we have a housing AFFORDABILITY problem.

New apartment buildings often don't even cover the cost of the public school costs of the residents in the taxes they pay to Arlington - to say nothing of other shared town services. A good example of this is the Brigham development by Shattucks Hardware. It pays less in total taxes to Arlington than just the cost of educating its residents in Arlington Public Schools! Even the actual rental rates in town are worsened by 40B projects themselves. They raise the average cost of housing, since 75% of the new units are at the highest market rates for the Boston area, while 25% are rented at 80% of area median income, which for a family of four would be a third of \$100,000, or about what our older existing apartments might rent for.

Arlington should seek to avoid further 40B projects, by following a path like Winchester Officials have done: by properly defining non-residential land out of the residential zoning, and thus reaching the 1.5% land area "safe harbor" exemption from 40B loss-of-control projects. Thinking positively about how we can help the affordability crisis in housing, we should work to enhance the efforts of the Housing Corporation of Arlington, the Arlington Housing Authority and we should remove the Kelleher Amendment to the Arlington Housing Trust, which changed its focus away those who are most in need, those below average median income.

For these reasons, I urge you to deny the Comprehensive Permit Application. For the Select Board and their employees in Town government, I urge you to work to meet the Safe Harbor so we may begin to improve actual affordability, instead of hurting it with 40B.

Thanks,  
Carl Wagner  
Edgehill Road

PS: Please record my comments in the record for this project.