

The Lehman Family
676 Worcester Street
Wellesley, MA 02482

April 29, 2019

Re: 680 Worcester Street 40b proposal

Dear Members of the Wellesley Zoning Board of Appeals,

As the eastern abutter to 680 Worcester Street, our family has been, like you, monitoring developments with that property and 16 Stearns Road.

We appreciate all the efforts which have gone into the modifications made to the two original 40b proposals.

At this juncture, based on the last 7 months of deliberations by trade experts, town officials and other community members, our family is reminded of three years ago. Back then, Megan Jop, Wellesley's Assistant Executive Director at the time, spoke with me at the end of the first site visit at 680 Worcester Street, then owned by Geoff Engler. She said that including our property in the design would "make for a better project." Wellesley's former Planning Director Mike Zehner also indicated that to us.

Mr. Derenzo, the Applicant, has recently asked our family for a price to buy our property. We are prepared to sell to allow our property to alleviate some of the concerns below which persist around the project. To date, we have been unable to reach an agreement. However, our family continues to be open to offers from Mr. Derenzo.

- Density
- Impact
- Limitations of a single egress
- Environment
- Constructability and
- Public safety

We hope this could help all involved to achieve a mutually beneficial project.

Regarding the current design of the proposed 680 project, below are some excerpts from expert reports. Given these inputs and additional issues raised by other community members, our family is concerned that approval of these two 40b projects in their current forms would negatively impact the character of our community and our neighborhood's property values.

- **Density and Traffic Issues and the benefit of a second point of egress.**

Per Wellesley's Senior Civil Engineer, George Saraceno, in the department's most recent and final letter of this 7-month process, after review of more modifications: "As we have previously stated, we believe that the project is too dense as proposed for the lot. Not only will constructability of the site be difficult, but access issues and circulation through the site will be problematic. While the entrance driveway from Route 9 to the property has been widened to 28 feet, it remains a single point of access in which turning, snow management, short term deliveries, pickups/dropoffs and trash pickup will occur, any combination of which seems like a potential to create backing up onto Route 9.... The largest vehicle that can be accommodated are SU-30 vehicles... This will likely prohibit most trash trucks, typical moving vans, furniture deliveries and emergency vehicles" Incorporating 676 Worcester Street into the project would provide it a second egress.

The state's Traffic Engineering and Circulation Expert, Rob Nagi, agrees in his letter of last month, following previous letters, "The applicant has made minor revisions to their site plan... They have not been able to satisfy my concerns with the size of delivery of large vehicles... I have recommended to them that a condition will be required limiting the size of vehicle that can access the site and how that would be enforced."

To which our town's Senior Civil Engineer added, "Imposing vehicle restrictions is an unenforceable condition, and will likely result in a decrease in convenience and quality of life issue for the residents.... It is particularly concerning here as repercussions may cause a Route 9 public safety issue."

- **Size and Impact Issues:**

The Design Review Board stated in their first reaction letter seven months ago, in October, "The Alzheimer facility located next door at 694 Worcester Street is 2.5 stories. The applicant should decrease the height of this project to no more than three stories to keep building height roughly consistent along the corridor." The following month in November, Town Planning Director Michael Zehner summarized that the Planning Board supported the Design Review Board's comments and added, "The structure is entirely too large for the lot; this condition negatively affects vehicular ingress and egress, the ability to provide for appropriate landscaping and outdoor amenities, given the lack of space, and access to the sewer easement.... The height of the proposed building significantly conflicts with the character of neighboring properties. The Board

believes that a 4-unit project, perhaps of two duplexes would be a successful project for this site."

In a letter from four weeks ago, the Alzheimer Center abutting 680 on the other side from us, respectfully opposes the proposed project citing several health and safety issues. It reads, "The Proposed Developments are a direct threat to the Center and its approximately 110 dementia and Alzheimers' residents....If approved, the Proposed Developments will adversely alter this bright and tranquil setting to the significant detriment of the Center's residents. The construction alone will wreak havoc... The residents will be subject to years of noise pollution....This will impede, and potentially reverse, progress attained through the Center's treatment. The Center simply does not possess the resources to install expensive security systems and/or engage 24-hour monitoring to protect from trespassers on the lot. The proposed development will tower over the Center, blocking its access to sunlight. ... There are also public health and safety risks from building near a former landfill, not to mention potential compromise or contamination of the nearby wetlands...The sheer size of the Proposed Developments does not assimilate with the surrounding aesthetic. What is currently a serene residential environment – an appeal of the Center for the approximately 40 years it has been in existence – would be permanently and detrimentally transformed...The above represents just some of the Center's trepidations with the Proposed Developments. Should the ZBA approve the Proposed Developments, the quality of life of the Center's residents will inevitably decline. This cannot occur."

- **Dissatisfaction with Setbacks and Positioning:**

The state's Architectural Peer Reviewer, Clifford Boehmer reacted to revised drawings 4 weeks ago saying, "I'm seeing some things tonight really for the first time... so I have some comments on these new images...there still are, as I say, many things that would have to be documented or conditioned or otherwise addressed before, I think, before the building could really get built."

Reraising concern for the set-backs which he noted in his first review, he said, "Actually ...a resurfacing of a discussion we had quite a long time ago, I think with the original documents. The setback from the street, I don't, are you convinced that this view is accurate? The setback from the sidewalk 'cause that's another, for me it's another, I think the building - again I'm not speaking about anything other than exactly that issue of the setback. I think that, for me, **the building would benefit from a little bit more of a setback.** I know there is the easement in the rear, I, we certainly would not want to get the building in any way closer to the neighbors in any way that would impact them."

And addressing concerns about the positioning of a southwestern corner gravity retaining wall, in the zone characterized as wetlands by the demolition team, he states, "I share that concern about not having enough particularly street-level perspective views so people could really understand what the building would look like once it landed there, including the retaining wall issue - not having a perspective that really gave us a sense of that. I think it would be possible if you swing around a little further to the east and look down you could see that retaining wall and I think ideas about what that wall really would look like, it is important and we don't see it in any of the existing drawings so I concur completely with that. ...the wall needs to be there to make the site work. If it did move further to the (pause), I mean theoretically you could move the building further to the east but then I think you're creating an issue again with the neighbor. Uh so those are the kinds of tradeoffs I'd look at."

Wellesley builder of 30 years Vincent Trubiani notes that the only non-single-family structures along Route 9 with setbacks as small as these proposed 12'1" setbacks are from before Route 9 existed, and other taller structures not even as tall as this proposal would be are significantly set back from the road.

- **Groundwater and Surface Water Issues:** Also from our town's Senior Civil Engineer's letter of last month: "The information submitted is not sufficient for us to understand how groundwater and surface water will be managed during construction and given the intensity of the proposal, the proximity to abutting properties and the limits access, we are concerned that there could be offsite impacts."

Regarding Environmental/Wetlands Protection and Procedural Issues, per Wellesley's Wetlands Administrator, Julie Meyer, an earlier wetlands delineation has expired. On Monday April 29, Julie explained that her town office had not been contacted by the builder for the site to undergo this required environmental verification, and they should not be proceeding without requesting a delineation. The presence of a Vernal Pool or Isolated Land Subject to Flooding would constitute a mandated protectable resource.

When I asked the head of the company who did the demolition of the single-family home previously on 680 about any environmental concerns, he told me he noted the wetlands pooling and vegetation in the southwest section of the lot, slotted for a gravity retaining wall.

8/10 of our neighbors have sump pumps running in their basements all year.

- **Density and Constructability Issues:** Per our town's Senior Civil Engineer, in the same most recent letter as above: "We remain concerned that there is too

much building for this site, and that during construction there will be impacts to abutting lots and to Route 9, which is a significant safety concern."

- **Impingement of Sewer Easement:** Again in the Senior Engineer's letter of last month, in response to updated modifications, "The proposed building foundation appears to be located on the easement line, which likely means that the footing will encroach. The DPW does not allow this. Further, as we have stated and continue to believe that the proposed building and site plan result in a condition that permanently limits our ability to sewer a sewer lateral, and is a problem for the DPW."

In closing, my family and I thank you for the opportunity to comment. We hope we have presented our points clearly and respectfully to all involved. Again, we appreciate the diligence that has gone into exploring these proposals thus far. We are hopeful that constructive plans can be arrived at to maintain the cohesive character and wholesome reputation of our town, and to create the most appropriate new structures for new residents in our neighborhood.

Gratefully,

Anne-Laure, Giselle and Sydney Lehman