

COLLEGE HEIGHTS ASSOCIATION

A community of neighbors committed to responsible growth in Wellesley.

February 8, 2018

Dear ZBA,

Thank you for your hard work and continued diligence reviewing the proposed 40B project at Delanson Circle. As you know, we are a group of neighbors and friends who have joined together to discuss the impact that the Delanson Circle 40B project (as currently proposed) would have on our neighborhood and the town. Our group is FOR affordable housing in our neighborhood when it is done in the context and scale of the neighborhood.

As Chairman Seegel requested, we are sending this letter on behalf of the College Heights Association. The residents are alarmed about current **traffic and road-safety** based on the increase in the traffic that cuts through local streets to avoid the congestion along Weston Road and at the intersection of Linden and Weston. Our fear is that these traffic concerns will be magnified with the potential building projects. We have organized our comments into three sections:

- Existing Traffic Concerns
- Impact on Traffic from Wellesley Crossing
- Concerns with Developer's Traffic Study

EXISTING TRAFFIC CONCERNS / COLLEGE HEIGHTS

College Heights has experienced a dramatic increase in traffic over the past three years. The root cause of this problem points to the fact that traffic backups on Route 9 and Weston Rd. result in commuter traffic being directed into the College Heights neighborhood via Waze and other smartphone traffic avoidance apps. In the fall, residents mobilized and formed a neighborhood task force to document current driving behaviors. A proposal for changes to deter reckless driving was submitted on October 24, 2017 to Chief of Police, Jack Pilecki to then present to the Traffic Committee. The consensus among residents is that if something is not done to address the already dangerous driving trends in our neighborhood, an accident involving serious injury or another death is inevitable.

Based on this traffic, many of us have difficulty entering and exiting our driveways during morning and evening rush hours especially as drivers are in a hurry to get through to and from Weston Rd/Linden St. We have the added challenge of not having continuous sidewalks throughout these streets. Being a heavy-walking neighborhood, pedestrian (including children walking to the elementary-, middle school- and high-schools) are at risk with the increased impact from the added traffic of the developments proposed for Delanson Circle, Weston Road and Rt. 9/Hardy School.

IMPACT ON TRAFFIC FROM WELLESLEY CROSSING

1. **Drop-off/Pick-up** A reality of living in Wellesley is driving and carpooling. There does not appear to be any place to pull-off on Linden Street to safely pick-up or drop-off a child (or an adult for that matter) at the proposed Wellesley Crossing.

There is absolutely no parking or stopping on this busy stretch of Linden Street. If a car were to stop in front of the project, it would block the single lane of traffic on Linden Street. It is precisely in front of the proposed project on Linden Street, just before the curve toward the Crest Road/Linden Street intersection, that cars select a lane, to either turn left into the Square, continue straight to Weston

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Road, or turn right to go up Crest Road. Traffic moves quickly and there is no room for error. Commuters exiting the MBTA and school children from multiple public schools navigate through the intersection on a daily basis. A stopped car would cause serious safety concerns and endanger drivers and pedestrians along Linden Street. A dedicated pull-off area is essential to everyone's safety.

- 2. Visitor Parking.** The 1.1 parking ratio is inadequate for a suburban apartment building. Where will the babysitter, visiting family or friends who are coming for dinner park? While the commuter rail is accessible, it has a limited schedule and cannot be relied upon for all transit needs. How will spaces be distributed? 100 spaces for 90 units seems disproportionately low, as a reasonable assumption would be that each one-bedroom unit would have at least one car, and each two and three bedroom unit would have two. Even if we assume that there is only one car per unit, where are visitors to park? Where is Zipcar? How realistic is stacked or tandem parking? Bottom line, there is inadequate parking. With the lack of street parking on Linden Street and Hollis Street, how will this be addressed? How can we ensure that residents and guests do not create dangerous parking situations on adjacent streets?
- 3. Delivery.** Again, no consideration seems to have been given to delivery to residents. Where will moving vans, UPS and FedEx trucks, the pizza delivery or a furniture delivery truck park? Especially in a rental building with a more transient population, moving trucks and delivery services will be a regular reality. These services cannot be accommodated off of Linden Street, or Hollis Street, which is a private way. How will they access the single elevator bank? A plan needs to be clearly articulated and demonstrated.

CONCERNS WITH THE DEVELOPER'S TRAFFIC STUDY

While there is an industry-accepted methodology for reviewing and analyzing traffic, we have concerns regarding the accuracy of the traffic study submitted by the developer based on the existing traffic patterns. We've highlighted three key points to note:

- 1. Study Timing.** The study was conducted on June 14, 2017, which was a Wednesday, an early release day for elementary schools at a time of the year when nice weather means infinitely more kids walk to and from school rather than being driven. Private schools had closed for the year and public schools were tapering off, with the high school graduation having occurred nearly two weeks earlier, eliminating 375 kids from the annual public-school population. Our first-hand experience living in the town supports the fact that traffic at this time of year is in fact far less than during the months of September to May; we disagree vehemently with the conclusion reached in the developer's report, based on irrelevant traffic data taken at the intersection of Interstate 95 and Rt. 20 in Weston, that traffic actually peaks in June. In that regard, the traffic study should take place in the next month or two, but not during either February or April public school vacation weeks or March private school vacation weeks, and should give particular focus not only to morning and evening rush hours, but also the hours between 2PM to 4PM to capture school release times. From our experience living in the neighborhood, that is perhaps the worst time of day to be driving that stretch of Linden Street and would provide a more realistic view of traffic behavior.
- 2. Study Scope.** As part of the study, the report projects traffic forward, including potential impacts from other planned projects in town. The only two projects listed as potentially impacting the area were the Tolles-Parsons Center and the Recreational Center on Rt. 9. The report did not include the 40B project on Weston Road which has now received a site eligibility letter, and the proposed 40B project for the Rt. 9/Hardy School area, both of which would clearly have a huge impact.

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- 3. Study Assumptions.** To calculate projected car trips from the proposed project, the report used data compiled in the town from 2011-2015 of people's modes of commuting, which were: 60.7% single-occupant vehicle, 4.9% carpool, 10.9% public transportation, 13.1% walk, 8.9% work at home, 0.7% biking. From this there is an assumption that 75% of people from the project would drive to work, but with 1.13 persons per car, that 15% would take public transportation, and 10% would walk or bike. **Besides the fallacy that people within the building are going to carpool to work, what they also fail to consider is that people who take public transportation to work may still be making car trips during morning and evening rush hour in order to get their kids to daycare or school before getting on the train, or alternatively, will have nannies traveling to the building to babysit their children there.**

Based on the concerns cited in this letter, we are eager to hear from independent expert reviewers on traffic. Specifically, we would like the study be more comprehensive and include the surrounding area as well as to show the traffic patterns during peak commuter/school traffic during a more representative time of the year. We believe that this information will provide critical data to help inform decisions on how this project will impact the health, safety, environmental and local planning of our community.

Thank you for your attention to this this topic.

Sincerely,

College Heights Association