



*A Call to Action to Make Roslindale the Most Walkable Neighborhood in Boston*

BY EMAIL ONLY

May 8, 2017

Boston Board of Appeal  
1010 Massachusetts Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02118  
Email: [zba@cityofboston.gov](mailto:zba@cityofboston.gov)

**RE: 32 Cummins Hwy  
Roslindale, MA 02131**

Dear Honorable Members of Zoning Board of Appeals:

I write on behalf of WalkUP Roslindale to comment on the referenced appeal for zoning relief from the Zoning Board of Appeals (the “**Appeal**”).

WalkUP Roslindale, which takes its name from the international movement to foster “Walkable Urban Places,” is a collaborative group of residents founded in June 2015 to make Roslindale the most walkable neighborhood in Boston. We advocate for a dynamic, livable streetscape. And, we support positive changes to our public and private built environment that strengthen walkability as a means toward better public health, safety, social capital, economic development and environmental sustainability. More information about WalkUP Roslindale and our initiatives can be found at [www.walkuproslindale.org](http://www.walkuproslindale.org). We recognize that no single group of people can be said to speak for our entire neighborhood - instead, please take these comments as representing the collective, specific viewpoint of our steering group members offering what we see as the analysis that results from our mission and principles statements.

The project set forth in the Appeal is a 9-unit residential building with 12 surface accessory parking spaces on the rear ground level with vehicular and pedestrian access from Cummins Highway (the “**Proposed Project**”). The Appeal describes the Proposed Project as requiring several variances from the use, lot size, FAR, usable open space and parking standards applicable to the 2F-5000 residential subdistrict zoning under the Roslindale Neighborhood District of the Boston Zoning Code (the “**Code**”).

WalkUP Roslindale supports the Proposed Project and urges the ZBA to approve the relief sought. We do so especially in light of the increase in population that is currently underway throughout Boston, including Roslindale, and is forecast to continue through 2030 and beyond. The need for new housing units in our city is acute: the lack of new housing at all price levels has driven up rents and made homeownership in the city increasingly unattainable for the middle class, which results in decreased socioeconomic diversity, longer and more difficult commutes (with a commensurate increase in traffic and pollution), and a drag on the economy as employers struggle to find workers. While we appreciate that accommodating

new neighbors in existing neighborhoods such as ours can be challenging and should be approached thoughtfully, WalkUP Roslindale advocates for welcoming newcomers and the vitality they bring to our neighborhood.

WalkUP Roslindale's support for the Proposed Project comes with the following comments and suggestions for improving the Proposed Project and our neighborhood:

- In concept, this is a project that fits well within WalkUP Roslindale's principles. The location is immediately adjacent to Roslindale Square, and thus walkable to its services, restaurants, shops, and transit options (both MBTA commuter rail and bus service). The design and program appear to make reasonable use of that high level of walkability.
- The Proposed Project is not subject to inclusionary zoning requirements for affordable units. We are not aware of any commitment of this Proposed Project to provide any of the units as "affordable" and strongly encourage the developer to ensure that at least one unit meets the city's affordability criteria notwithstanding the absence of a requirement.
- We strongly agree that the Proposed Project should be granted relief from the parking requirements, which we find unnecessarily biased toward automobile use and a general discouragement away from walkability, cycling, and public transportation use. We are convinced that demographic and lifestyle changes over the past few decades, which have only accelerated in the last several years, support a policy move away from a high preference for automobiles. In short, "if you build it, they will come"—the more parking spaces added to a development, the more additional cars are sure to be added to the neighborhood. Committing more space to parking also hurts affordability. Because of that, we would have liked to see the ratio at 1-to-1 (unit to spaces) but understand the desire of the developer to satisfy the request of some abutters and think that on balance the ratio is acceptable.
- Similarly, the developer's decision to include bicycle parking shows a refreshing willingness to engage on encouraging active transportation in our neighborhood. We believe these amenities will be very attractive to people looking to buy homes in Roslindale, and are essential complements to the slightly higher than 1-to-1 parking ratio proposed for the Proposed Project.
- We are pleased with the effort the Proposed Project has made to develop a building that has architectural merit and is not merely a box. We would have liked to have seen a bit more green landscaping included in the site design but have been pleased and grateful that the developer has volunteered to support financially the design and development of a new playground/pocket park two lots away at the back of the Charles Sumner School.

In closing, we wish to reiterate our support for the Proposed Project and our commitment to making our neighborhood more walkable by collaborating with our neighbors to produce better outcomes for everyone.

We very much appreciate your careful consideration of our comments and would be happy to discuss any questions you may have on them.

WalkUP Roslindale Support Comment Letter on 32 Cummins Hwy  
Zoning Board of Appeals  
May 8, 2017  
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Sincerely yours,

Gregory Tobin  
Resident @ 1 Sheldon Street, Roslindale  
on behalf of WalkUP Roslindale Steering Group

Copy to:

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