



A Call to Action to Make Roszie the Most Walkable Neighborhood in Boston

June 3, 2019

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY (aisling.kerr@boston.gov)
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02201
Attention: Aisling Kerr, Project Manager

RE: 43 LOCHDALE ROAD, ROSLINDALE – SMALL PROJECT REVIEW

Dear Ms. Kerr:

Please accept the following comments on behalf of WalkUP Roslindale with respect to the proposed rental residential development at 43 Lochdale Road in Roslindale (the “**Proposed Project**”). As set forth in the Small Project Review application, this will be a consequential development project, located under half a mile from the end of the Orange Line at Forest Hills, and containing, as proposed, 36 housing units and 46 off-street parking spaces in a four-story building with a mix of 1, 2 and 2+ bedroom units and providing 5 affordable units under the BPDA’s Inclusionary Development Policy (“**IDP**”).

Although we generally support the Proposed Project, being in favor of production of new housing in our neighborhood, city, and region as an integral part of the required response to our surging population and housing affordability crisis resulting from decades of underbuilding and inequitable patterns of development and housing availability, we have the following concerns, which our members also voiced in person at the community meeting this past Tuesday, May 28. Our comments intend to emphasize the importance of addressing both the future of transportation and the need for more affordable housing in every development project that our city considers.

1. Excessive Off-Street Parking

Put simply, at 46 spaces, the Proposed Project is egregiously overparked. As a start, the parking ratio should be reduced from 1:1.28 to 1:1 (or lower). Zero off-street parking projects have recently been allowed in Roslindale Square (most recently, the Wallpaper City project at the corner of Poplar and South), and, as noted above, this location is under a half mile (<10 minute walk) from Forest Hills Station (where both the Orange Line and commuter rail have stops) and steps from bus stops serviced by a dozen bus routes. The Proposed Project is likewise minutes away from the start of the Southwest Corridor Bicycle Path, which is a major thoroughfare for cycling commuters.¹ All of these sustainable transportation options are complemented by several nearby ZipCar locations and easy access to rideshare services.

In light of these ample amenities, excessive parking will undeniably waste resources and induce car ownership and car use, moving our neighborhood and our city away from the mode shift and greenhouse gas and other air pollution reduction goals to which we have committed in GoBoston 2030 and Climate Ready Boston. By

¹ A City of Boston survey counted an average of well over 2,000 cyclists per day on this path in 2017; the number has surely grown since then with the completion of the cycling improvements at Forest Hills as part of the Casey/Arborway project. See <https://www.boston.gov/departments/boston-bikes/bike-data/2017-boston-bicycle-counts>.

devoting more real estate to parking, we practically guarantee more cars in the neighborhood. By contrast, reducing off-street parking will have direct positive implications on affordability, which is the next issue that we raised at the community meeting.

2. Housing Affordability

As a rough cut, assuming a standard parking space takes up about 162 square feet (9' x 18'), a reduction of even just ten (10) spaces would allow for an additional 1620 square feet of living area. We would expect that area to be split into 2 additional units, which we would recommend be added to the affordable unit count. We also note that community members from the Housing Justice task force of Roslindale is for Everyone (“RISE”) spoke at the community meeting and were particularly focused on increasing both the percentage of affordable units in the Proposed Project and the level of affordability offered beyond what the IDP would otherwise require (13% of total units and 70% of area median income). We support RISE Housing Justice on both of these requests. The Proposed Project is located in a part of our neighborhood where household incomes are lower than average and competition for scarce and increasingly expensive housing (there has been almost no new housing constructed in this area for the last several decades) is displacing our most vulnerable neighbors. We can and should do more as a city to make sure that everyone who wants to make their home here is able to do so.

With available parking thus reduced to below a 1 to 1 ratio, the Proposed Project would also be an especially appropriate project on which to un-bundle the parking from the units, so that households that do not need off-street parking can avoid that cost instead of having it included in their unit regardless. By contrast, if the parking spaces remained bundled with the units, car-free families will be less likely to live in this development, since they would be paying a premium for an amenity they do not need.

3. Green Building

Although the Proposed Project has dropped below the Large Project Review threshold and is technically required to meet only building code-based energy efficiency and green building requirements (albeit at the city’s “Stretch Code” level, which produces a 10% improvement over the otherwise applicable standards), we would request that the BPDA require the Proposed Project to exceed those standards and approach Net Zero/Zero Plus/LEED Gold-Platinum standards. If our city is truly serious about the climate crisis, all new buildings will need to be much more efficient in their use of energy. There is no more time to wait to start this effort on a citywide basis, and we would like to see this happen in this neighborhood now.

4. Roslindale Gateway Path/Blackwell Path Extension at Arboretum Road

We understand and appreciate that the developer is being required to install a new crosswalk and curb extension at Washington Street and Lochdale Road. In much the same vein, the developer should also be required to assist financially with ongoing efforts around the Roslindale Gateway Path/Arboretum Road archway and entrance as this will be a significant amenity for residents of the development and the broader surrounding neighborhood. Funds are still being assembled for the first phase of the path’s extension, running from the current end of the Blackwell Path to Arboretum Road, and a significant contribution for this effort would be an excellent way for this Proposed Project to bring value and increased accessibility to its own backyard immediately.

In closing, we wish to reiterate our overall support for the Proposed Project, while especially emphasizing our call to reduce the off-street parking count and repurpose the space saved to increase the number and level of affordability for the affordable units. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



Benjamin Bruno

Resident @ 27 Colgate Road, Roslindale, on behalf of the WalkUP Roslindale Steering Group
Ricardo Austrich, Resident @ 843 South Street, Roslindale
Lisa Beatman, Resident @ 180 Mount Hope Street, Roslindale
Rachel Blumberg, Resident @ 15 Newburg Street, Apt. 2, Roslindale
Lucy Bullock-Sieger, Resident @ 33 Brookdale Street, Roslindale
Steve Gag, Resident @ 631 South Street, Roslindale
Liz Graham-Meredith, Resident @ 6 Crandall Street, Roslindale
Matthew Lawlor, Resident @ 15 Basto Terrace, Roslindale
Margaux Leonard, Resident @ 35 Harding Road, Roslindale
Mandana Moshtaghi, Resident @ 12 Arborough Road, Roslindale
Robert Orthman, Resident @ 31 Mendelssohn Street, #2, Roslindale
Rebecca Phillips, Resident @ 10 Tappan Street, Roslindale
Adam Rogoff, Resident @ 28 Ashfield Street, Roslindale
Adam Rosi-Kessel, Resident @ 36 Taft Hill Terrace, Roslindale
Rachele Rosi-Kessel, Resident @ 36 Taft Hill Terrace, Roslindale
Laura Smeaton, Resident @ 61 Cornell Street, Roslindale
Mark Tedrow, Resident @ 169 Sycamore Street, Apt. 1, Roslindale
Marc Theiss, Resident @ 55 Prospect Avenue, Roslindale
Greg Tobin, Resident @ 1 Sheldon Street, Roslindale
Nick Ward, Resident @ 35 Harding Road, Roslindale
Alan Wright, Resident @ 98 Birch Street, Roslindale

About WalkUP Roslindale

WalkUP Roslindale, which takes its name from the international movement to foster “Walkable Urban Places,” is a collaborative group of residents dedicated to making 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 and other forms of active mobility as means toward better personal and public health, safety, social capital, economic development, and environmental sustainability. We are led by a steering group of about thirty residents and have nearly 1,000 additional supporters. More information about WalkUP Roslindale and our initiatives can be found at 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 support of our steering group members (indicated below) resulting from our mission and principles.

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43 Lochdale Road, Roslindale
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Copy to:

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RISE Housing Justice – Claire Gosselin (claireg53@gmail.com)