



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

February 21, 2020

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY (stephen.j.harvey@boston.gov)

Boston Planning & Development Agency

One City Hall Square, 9th Floor

Boston, Massachusetts 02201

Attention: Stephen Harvey, Project Manager

RE: 3992-3996 WASHINGTON STREET, ROSLINDALE – SMALL PROJECT REVIEW

Dear Mr. Harvey:

Please accept the following comments on behalf of WalkUP Roslindale with respect to the proposed rental residential development at 3992-3996 Washington Street (the “Proposed Project”). As set forth in the Small Project Review application, this will be a consequential development project, located just over half a mile from the end of the Orange Line at Forest Hills, and containing, as proposed, 18 housing units and one commercial space, and providing 2 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 Monday, February 3. 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

At 18 spaces, the Proposed Project is overparked. The parking ratio should be reduced below 1:1. 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). This Proposed Project’s location is just over a half mile (12 minute walk) from Forest Hills Station (with access to both the Orange Line and commuter rail), and is adjacent to a bus stop (serviced by 9.5 bus routes on Washington Street) and a BlueBikes station (on Archdale Road). The Proposed Project is likewise minutes away from the start

of the Southwest Corridor Bicycle Path, which is a major thoroughfare for cycling commuters. 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 devoting more real estate to parking, we 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

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. We recommend the Proposed Project be increased in height by one story, allowing for more (and more affordable) units to be built.

With available parking reduced below a 1 to 1 ratio, the Proposed Project would also be an especially appropriate project on which to unbundle 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. Car ownership is far from a necessity for future residents given the bevy of transportation options described above.

With a reduction in the parking ratio and an increase in the height of the Proposed Project, we would expect that additional affordable units should be built. The number of affordable units should, at a minimum, be doubled (from 2 to 4). The final number should be negotiated when the new design is shown to the community, and if warranted, the number of affordable units could be increased beyond the minimum of 4.

3. Mitigation Items

As part of mitigation, and to improve the safety of residents of the Proposed Project and surrounding neighborhood, we propose the following items:

- Vision Zero improvements for the intersection of Washington Street and Archdale Road, including raised crosswalks crossing Archdale Road
- Installation of covered bus stops at the intersection of Archdale and Washington
- Installation of at least one safe crosswalk across Washington Street between Archdale Road and Firth Road

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

The Proposed Project's location is 0.1 miles (3 minute walk) to the South Street Arnold Arboretum entrance. When completed, the Roslindale Gateway Path will be an amenity for residents of the development and the broader surrounding neighborhood. 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.

5. Green Building

The Proposed Project is below the Large Project Review threshold and is only technically required to meet building code-based energy efficiency and green building requirements. However, the BPDA should require the Proposed Project to exceed those limited standards and approach Net Zero/Zero Plus/LEED Gold-Platinum standards. If our city is truly serious about preparing for and attempting to mitigate the climate crisis, all new buildings need to be far more efficient in their use of energy. The Proposed Project should be a "net zero" building (energy used equals the amount of energy generated by the building on an annual basis). A BPDA-approved proposed 14-unit residential addition to Roslindale Hardware (at 4407 Washington St - just a mile down the street from the Proposed Project) is an excellent example of how to use solar and energy efficient techniques and materials to create a structure that is close to or better than net zero.

The Commonwealth is decarbonizing the grid rapidly, so investing in electric and renewable infrastructure in the Proposed Project is critical to avoid erecting a building that will emit more CO₂ for decades to come. We assert that:

- All appliances should be electric.
- Heating and cooling should be provided by either ground- or air-sourced heat pumps. Utility incentives and tax credits (such as SMART, the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target) can help reduce the cost.
- Solar panels should be included in the design. Other developments in the area have considered retrofitting their buildings only to give up due to the logistical hurdles of dividing up costs and benefits amongst multiple units, as well as the significant cost of modifying an existing structure (versus including solar from the start).
- Each parking space should have access to an electric vehicle charging station. At a minimum, dark conduit should be installed next to each space so that adding charging stations could be accomplished with minimum expense in the future.

After the Proposed Project is built, it will be too late to implement these energy efficiency measures that could easily be incorporated at the design phase.

In closing, we wish to reiterate our overall support for the Proposed Project, while especially emphasizing our call to both reduce the off-street parking ratio and increase building height in order to maximize the number of affordable units.

Sincerely,

Ben 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 @ 21 Conway Street, 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 above) resulting from our mission and principles.