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October 18, 2022

Richard Lipof, Chair
Land Use Committee of the City Council
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Re: 940 Boylston Street, Newton – Dunkin' Donuts Store

Dear Chair Lipof and Members of the Land Use Committee:

As we approach the next Land Use public hearing I wanted to take this opportunity to summarize the petition and number of improvements that the proposed project will make to the site at 940 Boylston Street and why the City Council should approve the proposed drive-through service for the Dunkin' Donuts store.

As you may recall, the site is located in the middle of a Business Zone district, surrounded by commercial uses/businesses, and has an existing Dunkin' Donuts store that has been there for decades. The proposed drive-through is to expand services required for the business to remain relevant and viable, and also to provide a service sorely lacking in the City of Newton.

1. Improved Pedestrian Safety: The current site does not have any clear markings for pedestrian walkways or footpaths. The proposal features two clearly marked pedestrian walkways: one off Boylston Street's sidewalk, and the other off Ramsdell Street. New signs and lighting will be added on the property to further enhance the safety of pedestrians, staff/employees, and customers.
2. Improved Traffic Safety:
 - a. Ramsdell Street: The proposal will substantially remove the existing curbcut to Ramsdell Street thereby eliminating public traffic entry and exit source. This change will eliminate cars using the property as a cut-through to and from Ramsdell Street and Route 9 and will also improve pedestrian safety.

- b. Route 9/Boylston Street: Currently, the curbcut essentially extends the entire width of the frontage on Route 9/Boylston Street. The proposal will provide clear ground markings and signs for cars coming in and leaving the site via Route 9/Boylston Street. New ground markings and “Enter” sign will direct traffic flow from a single point of entry on the easterly side of the frontage along Boylston, and the “Exit” sign will steer on-site traffic to a single exit point on the westerly side of the frontage along Boylston Street. These improvements will enhance safety and help traffic flow and reduce possible accidents on the property.
3. Improved Lighting: Four new lighting posts are proposed on all four sides of the property. The additional lights will help pedestrian, customer, and employee safety on the property.
4. Additional Landscaping & Pervious surfaces: The property currently does not have any landscaping except for the small raised planting area immediately around the existing free-standing sign on the northerly side of the property facing Route 9/Boylston Street. The proposal adds three (3) areas of landscaping: a) a landscape berm will be added to the entire easterly border which adds a buffer from the direct abutter; b) a landscape berm will be added to a portion on the westerly side, and c) an area to the rear of the store around the proposed drive-through menu board. The landscaped areas will have drought resistant plantings. The additional landscaping and pervious areas improve the aesthetics of the property.
5. No Air Quality Concern: An air quality test was conducted by Tech Environmental, Inc. who performed one-hour and eight-hour carbon monoxide (CO) air dispersion modeling assessment for the proposed project at the property. Tech Environmental, Inc. concluded that the results of the air dispersion modeling found at the project will not cause or contribute to a violation of the one-hour and eight-hour CO National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Its October 25, 2021 report concluded that “the project does not cause a public health air quality concern.”
6. Appropriate Proposed Drive-Through Queue and Actual Data Used from Wellesley Dunkin Donuts Stores: Often times studies of potential traffic trips are based upon estimated, anticipated or speculated data. Here, the traffic studies provided for our project use actual data from existing Dunkin’ Donuts stores of similar size, scale, and services located approximately six (6) miles west of our property. Extensive analyses, modeling, projections, and reviews of the data by PARE and the City’s peer-review consultant, BETA, were performed. The proposal provides a twelve (12) car queue that sufficiently addresses anticipated traffic.
7. Support from City of Newton Commission on Disability: Our petition was heard at the April 2022 hearing by the City’s Commission on Disability. In response to the presentation of the proposed project, the Commission issued a letter to the Land Use Committee supporting the project and “...*strongly urge you*

[the City Council] to approve these plans which allow a drive-through at 940 Boylston Street?
In addition to the obvious benefits to people with disabilities, the drive-through service helps ALL people with mobility issues, parents with small children, elderly folks who need the assistance of walkers, as a few other examples. We believe this is by far the most important reason for the City Council to approve this project as the proposal will provide a service that is lacking, and often overlooked, in our community.

8. Petition Requires MassDOT approval: As Route 9 is a state highway, MassDOT also has jurisdiction over the project. If the City approves this project, the Petitioner is then required to apply for an Access Permit from MassDOT. Pursuant to an email from Vivek Trivedi, PE, Permits Engineer – District 6, MassDOT – Highway Division, “*MassDOT Highway Access Permit will be required. We need to review the configuration of Drive-thru lane and the queuing of the vehicles to make sure that it does not spill on the Boylston Street.*” A copy of the email was submitted to the Planning Department for their records and as a part of this Petition.
9. Improvements to Store Façade: Along with the reduction in the building/store size extensive renovations, updates and improvements will be made inside and outside. The overall aesthetics will be enhanced and modernized thereby making the site more attractive and welcoming.

In sum, the petition will:

- Add safety measures to pedestrians and to vehicles;
- Enhance the aesthetics of the entire site and the store;
- Provide much needed accessibility services to the City of Newton that are sorely lacking; and
- Allow an existing business to remain relevant and viable.

I hope this summary is helpful. We look forward to presenting our application before your Committee soon.

Sincerely,



Laurance S.L. Lee

Enclosures

cc: Katie Whewell, Chief Planner, Planning And Development Department