



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

To: Zoning Board of Appeals Members
From: Adrianna Henriquez, Clerk
Date: February 26, 2020
Subject: Materials for **March 17, 2020** Public Hearing

Hello,

Please see the following supplemental materials for the upcoming hearing on March 17, 2020, Public Hearing. The following board members are scheduled to sit:
Brooke Lipsitt (Chair), William McLaughlin, Barbara Huggins Carboni, Michael Rossi Michael Quinn and Timothy Durken (Alternate)

1. Letter from Linas Jauniskis dated January 22, 2020
2. Letter from Beth Smith dated February 10, 2020

Thank you,

Adrianna Henriquez

ahenriquez@newtonma.gov | (617) 796 1133

From: [Linas Jauniskis](#)
To: [Dunstan East](#)
Subject: feedback on Dunstan East - too big
Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2020 5:05:21 PM

[**DO NOT OPEN** links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Hello,

I can not attend the hearing today, but want to register my comments. This development is too big for the area and will fundamentally transform West Newton in a bad way. I have lived in Newton for a number of decades, the current development surge is prompting me to accelerate my plans to leave the city, it is no longer going to be the place I wanted to live.

Best regards,
Linas Jauniskis
18 Stoneleigh Rd.

Adrianna Henriquez

From: Elizabeth Smith <ebsmith1969@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 10, 2020 9:22 PM
To: Adrianna Henriquez
Cc: Shubee Sikka; Barney Heath
Subject: Comments for the ZBA on Dunstan East
Attachments: ZBA Dunstan East Email 2.10.20.docx

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Dear Adrianna,

I am sending my comments on the current proposal for the Dunstan East project that is being reviewed by the ZBA and appreciate the ZBA's request for public input. I have "cc'ed" the Urban Design Commission, and am thus including Shubee Sikka in this email, as I know that it has also commented on this project.

Thank you and ZBA members for your consideration of this input.

Sincerely,

Beth Smith
40 Foster Street
Newtonville, MA

February 10, 2020
40 Foster Street
Newtonville, MA 02460

Dear Newton ZBA Chair Lipsitt and ZBA Members,

I along with others appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed Dunstan East development in West Newton. I do so as a Newtonville resident who participated in the entire Washington Corridor planning process, providing comments whenever requested. While I do not agree with everything in the Washington Street Vision Plan, it contains many positive and important principles. Newton spent over half a million dollars creating this plan, to say nothing of the significant time commitment of City staff, City Councilors and residents. As Dunstan East is the first development to be proposed along the corridor since the Plan's approval by the City Council, I think that it is very important that due consideration be given to it.

Before going into items in the plan that I believe deserve specific attention, I wanted to state that I support 40B as a means of creating a higher percentage of affordable housing units than is required under inclusionary zoning in Newton, even though those percentages will, fortunately, increase in the future. I understand that both the ZBA and MassHousing are open to input and ideas from the residents of the community where a 40B project is located, especially those who will be directly impacted by it. (I am not one of the latter group as I live in Newtonville, one block from Washington Street and adjacent to the Washington Place development. This has given me additional insights into the qualities that I would encourage in any future development along the corridor.)

In terms of the Vision Plan, I wanted to comment on three aspects of it as they would relate to Dunstan East:

Building height – It is true that the plan includes areas that are suggested to be zoned for as many as 6-story buildings. However, it is not certain that the City Council will allow this height when it completes its re-zoning work, and based on my own and others' experience with what will be five stories at Washington Place, many residents would prefer four stories as a maximum while others would be comfortable with five. The Vision Plan has language that states that 6-story buildings should be used "sparingly" along the corridor. It is not clear that Dunstan East should be one of those locations. It also appears that the proposed 6-story building is actually seven stories in the back, something that would exceed the Plan. Dunstan East as proposed does vary building height and type/style along Washington Street, as well as creating openings between buildings for pedestrians and open space, things that the Plan encourages.

Building design – The Vision Plan places a great deal of emphasis on "excellence in place-making and design" that also connects with the particular village where a project will be located. One concept it promotes is varying buildings' roofs. Both Washington Place and Austin Street are examples of buildings with flat roofs and "boxy" shapes that really lack variation in design and can feel more massive. All the proposed Dunstan East buildings facing Washington Street also have flat roofs. The Plan also encourages step-backs on upper floors (ideally after the 3rd floor),

which would also help make buildings feel more “human scale”, especially one that is six stories. (Building 2 (looking west) and building 1 (looking east) also look very large and unvaried.) I have been told that developers prefer to build flat roofed buildings and why they do. However, I do not believe that having more interesting roof lines should equate with allowing additional height. I am very hopeful that what gets built in Newtonville and West Newton does not look like it could be found anywhere but instead reflects these villages’ own histories and context.


“Gentle transitions” to residential areas – This issue received a great deal of focus and discussion as the Vision Plan was being created as much of Washington Street closely abuts one and two-family homes. The Plan states that: “The gentle transition from the village centers to surrounding residential neighborhoods is an important part of retaining the historic pattern of villages and neighborhoods. This Vision recommends, and the zoning could ultimately require, that building heights be lower adjacent to residences in order to be complementary to the scale of surrounding neighborhoods.”

Chair Lipsitt stated at the last ZBA hearing that abutters’ concerns and ideas were important and would be given consideration. While I would not in any way want to speak for these neighbors, who will speak for themselves, the drawing of the back of the development adjoining the brook really surprised me. Some of the buildings were six stories tall. And even though there is the brook in between, neighbors will have a new street that is not there now along with the traffic that will come with it.

One thing we have learned first-hand as Washington Place has taken shape is that transitions to a residential area are a factor of both distance from the project as well as the height of the new structures. Even though the western end of Washington Place is 90-feet from neighbors’ back property lines, a large, four-story building (even with a 10-foot step-back on the fourth floor) feels quite close. Apartments in these new buildings also tend to have large windows, creating a far different night-time experience for abutters. At Washington Place, we will have fencing and trees to provide protection at the ground level from the parking lot and garage and the cars and trucks entering and exiting the site. But we and Dunstan East neighbors will still have much visibly taller buildings than before. I do not know what would be helpful for Dunstan East neighbors...for example, does there need to be a new street in the back, with access to parking on the sides instead? Walking along the brook is a nice idea, but car traffic will detract from this. Could more open space, with many new trees planted as a buffer, be created instead?

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. I will continue to follow progress on this development. And as abutters to Washington Place, my neighbors and I also have significant experience that can be shared regarding the impact of major demolition and construction activities and would be happy to do so.

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