

Statement of Abutters re: Proposed Washington Place Development 1/29/17

As abutters on the north side of the proposed Washington Place development, we have consistently expressed our objections to its height and density, as well its location relative to our residential neighborhood and the boundary of the Newtonville Local Historic District. We oppose the rezoning of the property to MU4 and to the many special permits that would be required to build such a massive project.

We do not, however, oppose redevelopment of the Orr Block as long as it is done on a scale that is consistent with existing zoning and with the surrounding neighborhood, and we strongly support the inclusion of a significant number of affordable residential units.

We are providing this statement in response to questions about what we would support as an appropriate, scaled-down version of the proposal.

Location: The property should be set back from the north property line by a minimum of 90 feet. The current plan is set back 90 feet at the Washington Terrace side but it is only 45 at the Walnut Street side. The Walnut Street entrance and exit will be a busy, two-way street adjacent to the ramp to underground parking. It should have a greater buffer from the adjacent residences in the Newtonville Local Historic District.

Height: The building should be limited to three/four stories, with the taller portions on Washington Street and the lower on the Washington Terrace and Walnut Street wings. There are no buildings of five stories in height along the north side of Washington Street or in the surrounding neighborhood. The tallest building in the immediate area is the Bram Building on Walnut Street, which is three and ½ stories. The Austin Street development is limited to three/four stories. There is no compelling reason for creating a new precedent that exceeds those heights for a project that extends much further in length than either of those benchmarks.

Number of units: Given the proposed floor plans for the development, making the above reductions in the height and set-back of the project would leave the developer with approximately 100-105 residential units. It is our understanding that that is consistent with the number of units that may be constructed under existing zoning on a site of this size.

Affordable Housing: The existing buildings in the Orr Block site include more than 20 residential units with significantly lower rents than in other parts of Newton. Any project that displaces those apartments should be creating more affordable housing in order for there to be a net increase in such units. The Austin Street project was approved by the Council with the requirement of 33% of the 68 units being income restricted for households earning up to 80% of Area Median Income. We support a similar requirement for this development, which would result in at least 34 affordable units and all 103 units would count towards the City meeting the threshold of the State's SHI requirements.

Robert & Elizabeth Smith, 40 Foster Street

Mari and John Wilson, 30 Foster Street

Bette White, 14 Foster Street

Ellen Fitzpatrick, 20 Foster Street

Meghan Smith, 34 Foster Street

Patrick Slattery, 227 Walnut Street

Francesca & William Koss, 142 Lowell Avenue