

October 16, 2012

My name is Lynn Slobodin and I have lived at 61 Washburn Ave. for more than 30 years. Like many residents in my neighborhood I **am extremely concerned about the far reaching traffic impact that a development of the size proposed here, and without direct highway access, will have on the already serious traffic problems in Auburndale.**

Currently Auburndale Square and the intersections leading into the square are often gridlocked during both the morning and the evening rush hours. It is not uncommon in the evening for the back-up from Auburndale Square to extend west on Comm. Ave. all the way to the Marriott Hotel, and south on Lexington/Auburn/Grove Street clogging three to four additional intersections. This gridlock encourages drivers to cut through small residential streets. So many commuters currently speed down Auburn Street to avoid the delays in the evening that Newton regularly pays a police officer to sit on that street to ticket speeders, and Melrose Street residents have complained to our Aldermen about similar problems.

The Planning Department has said that this development will **"cause no harm" to the neighborhood.** In my opinion a development of this size on this parcel, without direct highway access, will have a **significant negative impact on the already difficult traffic situation in our village.** One afternoon I sat outside the adjacent Riverside Office Center, and I counted the cars that exited from 5 p.m. until 5:20 p.m. During this time period 250 cars exited with **30% of those vehicles turning left and going north towards Auburndale Square, double the approximately 15% reported in the Traffic Impact and Access Study.** This number does not include the vehicles that cut through the senior citizen community of Lasell Village. Imagine adding in to the existing rush hour problems in Auburndale over 30% of the vehicles exiting the new development with no mitigation (as proposed by the developer).

If built as currently planned, the development will be **50% larger than** the ongoing development at **Chestnut Hill Square, on a property that is about two acres smaller,** and it will be situated on a **mainly residential Scenic Road** in contrast to **"the region's most heavily traveled retail corridor"**. The tallest building at the Chestnut Hill development is **8 stories** and it is located in a **mostly commercial area that is across from a 10 story residential condo.** This plan would allow for a **10 story office building, one of the tallest buildings in Newton, and it will be built in a mostly 2-3 story residential area.** In addition this plan allows for a massive, unimaginative garage without adequate setback and screening for the surrounding residents.

I would like to ask that you review what appears to be the **dramatically changed exterior design of the residential component.** The current design drawings show an ugly box, which is not what the neighborhood was promised. In earlier versions the residential building resembled a row of town houses which would have a more pleasing aesthetic and be more in keeping with the surroundings.

Traffic, mass, and building design are not the only reasons that the proposed development is not appropriate as is. **Well designed open space, available for public use, is sorely lacking in this proposal.** The Chestnut Hill Square development was required to have **"20% open space"**. **This proposal should at least match that requirement, and the open space should be accessible to the public. Let's be real, a traffic roundabout is not a garden!**

A sense of place, and smart integrated design are also not evident in this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration