

Residences at Woodland Grove Condominium  
416 Grove Street  
Newton, MA 02462

October 2, 2013

Board of Aldermen  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

Re: Special Permit/Site Plan Approval Petition #258-12(2) – Riverside Station

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

As owners of the nine residences at Woodland Grove Condominium at 416 Grove Street, we are pleased to submit our comments to the draft special permit dated October 2, 2013.

We want to thank Alderman Jay Harney and Lenny Gentile for their tireless work to address the big issues on this development such as the neighborhood improvement fund.

At the end of the day there are still many issues that we believe still need to be addressed to secure the ongoing safety and quality of life of our residents. Many relate the size and overall scope of the project. That being said, it is unlikely that at this late date they will be addressed and therefore we urge you to deny the special permit.

**Findings:**

6b: We have particular concern about the roundabout closest to the hotel with regard to slope, size etc. While cars may be moving slower, there are not going to be any less cars going in front of the condominium. We had been led to believe at the onset of this development that this would occur. But without direct access, or access from Riverside Center throughout the MBTA, we will still have the same number of cars in front of the condominium, and many more traversing over Grove Street to enter the CD road.

11: We object to the statement "...The Project provides high quality architectural design and site planning that enhances the visual and civic quality of the Site and overall experience for residents of and visitors to both the Project and its surroundings. In particular, the façade of the residential building uses a number of different materials, incorporates doorways fronting Grove Street, sets back a portion of the building to break up the massing along Grove Street, and buries a portion of the parking garage into the hillside, all in an effort to relate the scale of this building to the surrounding neighborhood and give the appearance of townhouses along a portion of the Grove Street façade..." While the most recent sketch is an improvement from prior plans, the building is still very imposing on Grove Street, especially the section closets to the Indigo and across from the condominium. We would like this section stepped down to only two stories at the street as well as pulled back from the street.

DAVID A. OLSON, COM  
NEWTON, MA 02459

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As noted in our Indigo Letter, It is our understanding that Phase II will involve removing the trees in front of the hotel as well as large mature trees on the Riverside boundary by the residential building. These trees currently screen and protect the condominium. Please provide a provision as to ensure that these will either not be removed and/or if they are removed, they will be replaced with like kind and size trees.

16: We object to the statement that the parking management will encourage maximum and efficient use of the parking supply. The intermodal facility will have less parking than previously on the site. With 1,005 spaces, 15 are for drop off, 45 for the community center and 80 for retail. So on red sox game days there will only be 865 spaces. Furthermore, the number of parking spaces on the office building does not match with the number of personal noted in the developers' fiscal impact report. With not enough office or MBTA spaces on the site, parking will spill out into our lot as well as surrounding neighborhoods.

17: While ADA may be being met on site, it is highly unlikely that persons with hearing and visual disabilities will be able to safely navigate the roundabouts.

19: We object to the statement that pedestrian routes are appropriately designed. While the developer has proposed signalization for the condo owners to cross over the I95 exit ramp, it is highly unlikely given the grade and speed of cars that it will do much to deter them and it will be extremely dangerous for unit owners to attempt to cross Grove Street as rush hour to access the MBTA. We continue to suggest that since the developer is already widening Grove Street, that they make it a little wider to accommodate a sidewalk from the condo to the MBTA to ensure pedestrian safety as owners traverse to this "transit adjacent development".

20: We do not believe the Neighborhood Improvement Fund goes far enough. There is no reason that Lower Falls should be forced to pay for fire equipment for the City, when the City is receiving building permit fees and real estate taxes from the development.

Furthermore, given the protracted construction period, owners are very concerned about their ability to sell their units during such construction period. We had a broker from Hammond look at impacts of construction on sales and they found a prolonged marketing period and a reduction in price of 25%. The reality is that most folks do not one want to live in the middle of a construction zone for 3-4 years, but I guess if the price is right, might consider it. While we have no idea what impact will be post construction, our concerns are for mitigation during construction. We have two residents in their 80's and two families with children under 1, they are going to need to have the flexibility to move over the next 3-5 years and this type of fund would give them that. Under normal market conditions our units, on the rare occasion when they do come up for sale, are off the market in a matter of weeks. There is precedent from the Harvard Vanguard Building in Wellesley, and from what I have been reading, at some of the proposed Casino developments. What we proposing is the developer put up a \$250,000 letter of credit from first permit for the garage to last C/o. If a direct abutter can demonstrate issues with sale during that permit, they can draw on the line of credit. At c/o, the LC goes away. So if the developer believes there will be no impact, they are not risking anything.

25: We object to having smaller parking stalls. Most families have at least one SUV and there needs to be room for these larger vehicles.

Conditions:

3a) We would like to see the following added:

- The construction entrance to the site via the Collector-Distributor (C-D) Road must be in place and operational before any other project-related on-site or off-site work may commence.
- All infrastructure and utilities must be completed and the site entrance from the Collector-Distributor (C-D) Road must be operational and open to the public prior to the issuance of any certificate of occupancy.
- No construction shall commence until all project-related federal, state, and local permits and approvals have been applied for and received.
- We would also like to see the advisory committee noted in item 19 set up prior to construction.

6. The Woodland Grove Condominium as well as the Riverside Center, as included in previous drafts, should have a seat on the Traffic and Neighborhood Improvement board as these buildings will have the most direct impact.

12. There currently is an issue with snow removal to sidewalks over Route 128. There needs to be some provision for the developer to work with the City and State to have this performed in the future.

13. We have a high level of concern that the developer / operator of the apartment building is not known at this time and/or that it may be Normandy. Given the issues the condominium has had with Normandy's first venture in hotels with Indigo, we want assurances that prior to commencement of development of the residential units the City will be informed of the operator and ensure that they are experienced and creditable.

19. As noted in 3a, this should be established prior to construction.

20h. Please strike if applicable. Please incorporate the findings and suggestions of the planning committee. In particular, that not trees shall be removed before construction of IM.

20 k (strike, appears to be typo).

20 n We request that there be a requirement that there be no onsite rock crushing. There is no way to baffle this noise and it is constant. The developer construction manager stated at the Land Use working session on Monday September 30<sup>th</sup> that they did not need the rocks on site. The quality of life of residents in the surrounding neighborhood (including the guests of Hotel Indigo) should be tantamount to environmental concerns in this case.

20o.iv. As noted in our Indigo Letter, It is our understanding that Phase II will involve removing the trees in front of the hotel as well as large mature trees on the Riverside boundary by the residential building. These trees currently screen and protect the condominium. Please provide a provision as to ensure that these will either not be removed and/or if they are removed, they will be replaced with like kind and size trees.

20 pi. At the September 30<sup>th</sup> land use working session, the developer agreed that for the portion of Grove Street construction, controlled by the City and to be developed by the developer, to

have construction hours of roadway improvements between 10-4 as well as to encourage state and federal agencies to do the same.

20pv: Please revise: All construction traffic and construction deliveries shall access the site only via the Route 128 corridor and the Collector-Distributor (C-D) Road. Construction traffic shall not use local Newton or Weston roads.

21h, should be designated at start of construction of IMF.

20iv – Please designate number of spaces and how it will be documented.

**New:**

On days when Red Sox baseball games are being played in Boston, electronic signs shall be placed on Route 128 to instruct MBTA patrons of the availability, or lack thereof, of parking spaces on the site. The electronic signs shall also provide information on alternate parking locations. No outdoor project construction work shall be permitted in, on or along Grove Street at such times.

Staging areas, lay-down areas, administrative offices, etc. shall be located in the interior of the site, and not on its periphery, so as to limit off-site noise and commotion.

State dust control requirements – water spray, sweeping, barrier around the perimeter of site if necessary, program for washing affected neighboring buildings/windows when necessary. We want assurance that on occasion or building and vehicles will be cleaned as necessary due to building and roadway construction.

We would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Owners of the Nine Residences at Woodland Grove Condominium:**

Duncan Po and Annie Lei

Lynne D. Sweet and Thomas P. Rezendes

Newton Housing Authority/Edward, Nella and Sasha Bogushevsky

Lois Crandall

Sunny Yang, Nicholas Farley and baby Carl

Judy Sudhalter and Abraham Torosyan

Helen Adelman

Julie Messer and Randy Messer and baby Caroline

Liqun Yu and Jun Qian