

October 28, 2018

To: The Wellesley Zoning Board of Appeals

Re: 16 Stearns Road and 680 Worcester Street, Wellesley, MA

Please accept this letter from the neighbors to 16 Stearns Road and 680 Worcester Street in Wellesley. Our comments reflect our greatest concerns with regard to the anticipated areas of discussion on 11/1/18.

### **Traffic and pedestrian traffic**

We maintain that the prospect of up to 50 automobiles entering onto Stearns Road from its dead end during weekday morning rush hour represents an unacceptable and uncorrectable danger to our children. As the map of the neighborhood (see page 1 of the attached document) shows, this traffic will be driving directly into a migration of 20+ K through 5th grade students accessing the Sprague school path at the end of Stearns Road to be in class by 8:30am. The Sprague path is also used by children and parents in surrounding neighborhoods along with visitors to the Alzheimer's Center, dog walkers and other heavy pedestrian traffic throughout the day.

During morning rush hour, additional student foot traffic to Wellesley Middle School will be walking with the automobile traffic on Stearns Rd. but against it on Francis Road, also without the safety of sidewalks.

Children walking to school from 680 Worcester Street will presumably have to walk along a sidewalk on Route 9, either east or west. Even where sidewalks currently exist on Route 9, they are rarely used because of their close proximity to fast-moving automobiles and the high, encrusted mounds of snow (created by plows) that typically last throughout the winter months and create west-facing line-of-sight challenges for cars exiting Francis Road.

When the schools are out of session, the many young children that live in the neighborhood and their friends often play outdoors and run between neighboring yards.

The new stoplight and turnaround that was installed in July, 2018 at Worcester and Kingsbury Street offers clear evidence that the traffic threshold for automobiles leaving Francis Road has already been surpassed. On weekday mornings and on weekends, there are now frequent times when stopped Route 9 traffic causes the queue of cars exiting Francis Road to back up past the driveway opening of 2 Francis Road. Because it is the only exit point for all 18 homes on Stearns Road and Francis Road, this already presents a growing safety issue.

Regardless of any traffic study, it is reasonable to conclude that adding 24 homes and 50+ cars to the end of Stearns Road would more than double the volume of automobiles waiting to enter the queue, and substantially worsen this existing safety problem. Furthermore, adding large-scale construction vehicles travelling between the two sites to the queue would make passage and driveway exiting impossible from some driveways during an emergency.

At its entrance from Route 9, Francis Road is currently barely wide enough for two mid-sized automobiles to pass at the same. A challenge commonly discussed among neighbors and visitors is how to decelerate enough on Route 9 when turning onto Francis, and stay fully in the right lane without being rear-ended. Cars exiting Francis often see others entering from Route 9 with fast, wide turns that raise fears of head-on or broadside collisions. This hazard increases during the winter months when snow mounds make the entrance smaller and limited visibility shortens drivers' reaction time.

We are also concerned that residents of the 680 Worcester Street building will have similar queue issues when trying to exit onto Route 9 and stoplight traffic has backed up to the building.

Any necessary excavation of yards to upgrade the sewer lines, and certainly disruption to Stearns and/or Francis Roads could deny property owners access to their homes and we are aware that the existing sewer line accessing Francis Road would not meet municipal standards if servicing 20 new units.

## **Architecture**

(Please reference pages 2-6 of the attached document.)

The proposed physical structure at 680 Worcester Street does not adequately or responsibly provide any occupants with a real opportunity to feel integrated with a community that was constructed under strict, single-family zoning laws, nor does it align with the architecture of the neighborhood or other domestic buildings along Route 9. The large majority of Route 9 structures, and certainly in this particular stretch, are single family residential homes. Unlike neighboring towns, Route 9 in Wellesley is 75 percent single family residential, with exceptions largely at the gateways.

Without setbacks that would allow room for screening or buffer, the two properties to the rear of the structure will also have a parking area, with mechanical stackers 12.5 feet from their property with an outdoor deck looking down on them. The positioning of the close-range, at-grade patio also offers no way to manage privacy or noise.

The height, massing, density and setbacks of the 16 Stearns Road proposal are equally incongruous with the neighborhood, positioning a 51-foot-tall building 20 feet from the abutting property line and 50 feet from a single residence home located at 10 Stearns Road to the east. All negative impacts will have a multiplied effect on the properties located at 11 Stearns Road and 9 Stearns Road, which will have projects to the rear and across the street from their two-story homes. More exterior balconies will overlook the abutting properties without mitigation of sight and sound.

Given that these proposed structures are twice the height of every other home, and unusually close to four abutters, along with school facilities, we respectfully request the arrangement of independent shadow and lighting studies.

### **Stormwater / Wetlands**

With an existing high water table that already requires sump pump and other water mitigation systems in almost every home, our stormwater and rising groundwater concerns are significant. In addition to the culvert issues and potential for increased homeowner damage, the end of Stearns Road commonly freezes over during periods of snow melt during the winter months and these two projects will greatly increase the amount of nearby impervious cover. The properties at #9 and #11 Stearns Road that sit between and below the project sites in elevation will likely be the most impacted by new issues.

We are further alarmed at the combined effect of rising water levels and significant soil disturbance, acknowledging that the area is built on landfill and neighboring property owners have excavated pollutants from the soil on several occasions. The spreading of hazardous waste through our water systems could have a devastating effect on the population and the wetlands between the two properties.

We fully agree with the Town's assertion that the wetlands Negative Determination of Applicability was based upon an inspection in the fall, and that an inspection for the presence of a vernal pool should be conducted in the spring, as well as evaluating the role of the wetlands in flood control. We also understand that any filling of this isolated wetland will require additional permitting at the state level.

### **Staging and site coordination**

As stated in our traffic concerns above, a clear and detailed site coordination plan is of high importance to the neighbors. Since purchasing these two properties Mr. Derenzo has not been held accountable for violating the Town's tree bylaw, parking policy, signage guidelines, commercial vehicles that have driven over neighbors' yards and unpermitted construction activities, and the construction in question has yet to officially begin. Given this pattern of bad faith dealings and system abuse, we

feel strongly that having a coordinated plan that is specific and enforceable by the Town is critical to our safety.

We also feel that extensive blasting of ledge on a raised lot surrounded by a school, playgrounds, playing fields, well-traveled school path, nursing home with residents that move around the property in wheelchairs and neighboring back yards where children and pets play presents risks that are far too great, and unnecessary. The removal of blasted materials and significant masses of soil will also call for unsafe and unreasonable truck traffic, and the proposed underground parking will require significant concrete work and staging of additional trucks.

The obvious traffic issues, single egress point, narrow roads and spatial constraints of Stearns and Francis Roads make the use of 16 Stearns Road as a staging site unacceptable.

Thank you for your willingness to review these comments and accompanying visuals. Please let us know if you have any questions prior to the 11/1/18 hearing.

Respectfully submitted,

Residents of the Stearns Road/Francis Road neighborhood

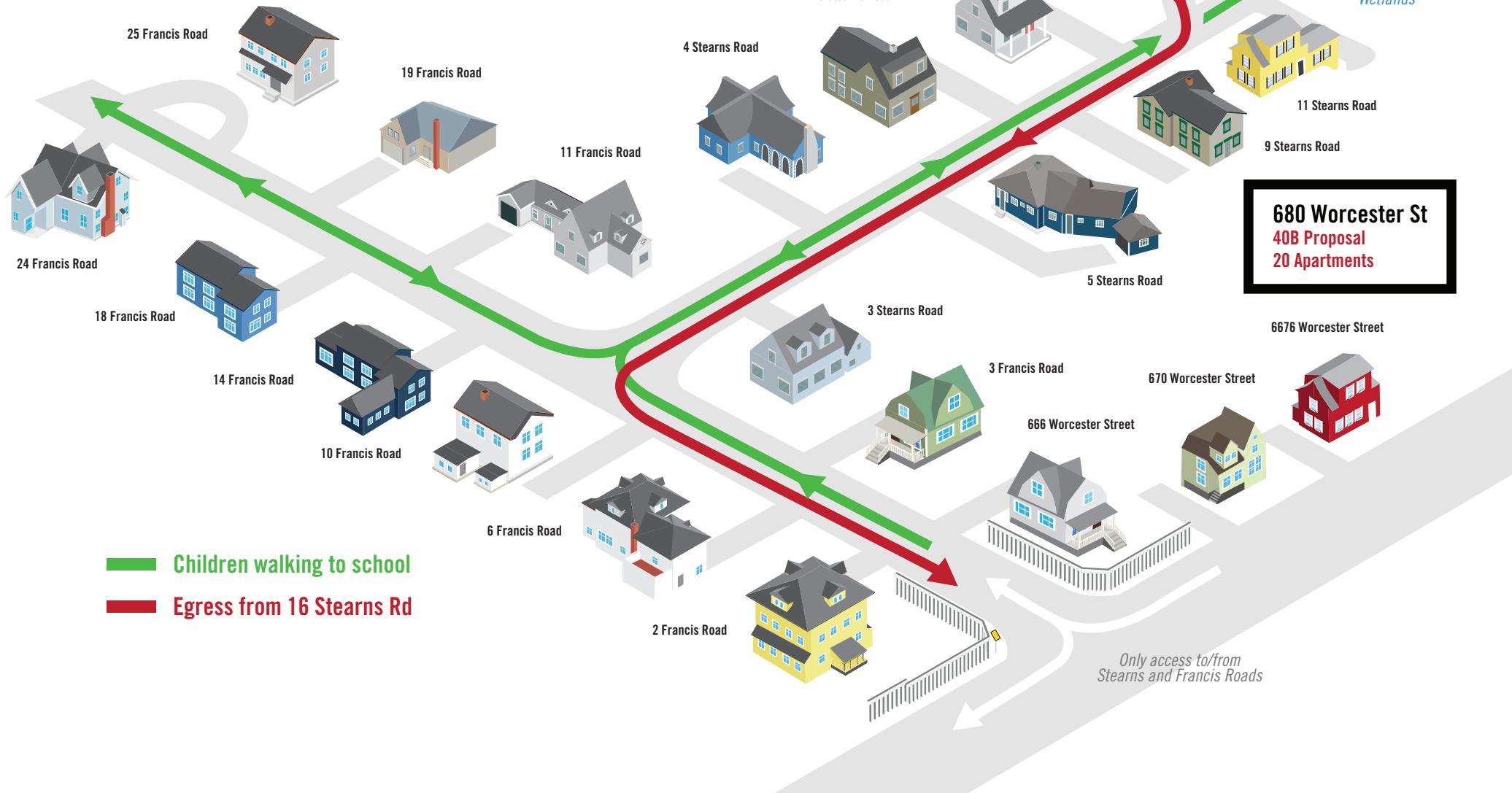
*The*  
**STEARNS/FRANCIS  
NEIGHBORHOOD**

— 2018 —

*Wellesley Middle  
School*

*Town Fields*

*Sprague School*



16 STEARNS ROAD & 680 WORCESTER STREET  
DIRECT ABUTTERS



11 Stearns Road

9 Stearns Road



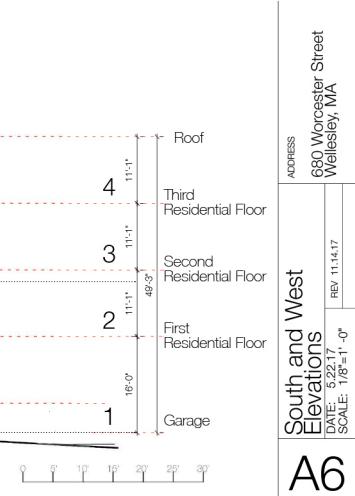
676 Worcester Street

10 Stearns Road

680 WORCESTER STREET  
SCALED COMPARISON TO ABUTTERS



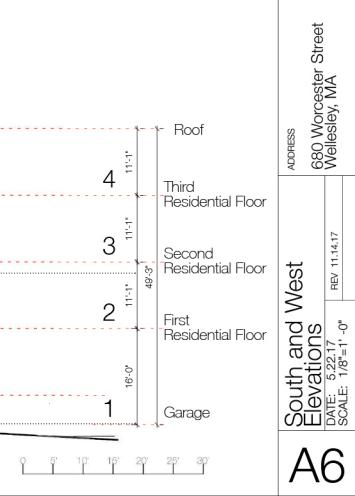
A6



A6



A5



A6

16 STEARNS ROAD  
SCALED COMPARISON TO ABUTTERS



RENDERING OF 9 & 11 STEARNS ROAD



RENDERING OF 9 & 11 STEARNS ROAD WITH SCALED COMPARISON  
TO PROPOSED 680 WORCESTER STREET PROJECT

