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15 Burke Lane
Wellesley, MA 02481
[REDACTED]

Board of Selectmen
Town of Wellesley
525 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02482-5992

Dear Board of Selectmen,

Thank you for giving the neighborhood the opportunity to provide our feedback about the Cedar Place development proposal. We appreciate the Board's patience and their willingness to entertain comments from concerned residents during the January 22nd town meeting.

Affordable housing is a legitimate need in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and especially in the Town of Wellesley. To address this deficiency, the Town of Wellesley took deliberate and diligent action by developing a Housing Production Plan (HPP). This plan, which was approved by the Massachusetts Department of Community Development and Housing, outlines a clear strategy for attaining the 10% affordable housing as established by Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) Chapter 40B.

Although we strongly agree with the proposals put forth through the HPP, as abutters to the proposed Cedar Place development, we're deeply concerned about the Cedar Place project as currently designed. We fear this project will introduce undue burden and safety issues to the Burke Lane community and feel it does not align with the spirit of HPP.

Burke Lane is a unique, small, and tight knit neighborhood that sits between McLean St. to the south and Worcester St. / Route 9 to the north. Even though the neighborhood is in close proximity to Worcester St., its terrain and landscaping, coupled with traffic restrictions, help insulate the neighborhood from the hustle and bustle of Worcester St / Route 9. The introduction of a 32 bedroom apartment complex to this neighborhood raises serious concerns around safety and the impact to the neighborhood.

Development Design

The Cedar Place footprint is considerable compared to the size of the property as well as other structures on Burke Lane. Burke Lane is lined by small to mid-sized homes (averaging 2,920 sq ft and 4 bedrooms). If passed, this proposal would introduce a structure that is almost six times the size of the average single family home on Burke Lane. The HPP acknowledges there will development proposals in single family neighborhoods but it emphasized the desire to align proposals with their neighbor, "It is very unlikely that Wellesley's desire to protect the character of its single-family neighborhoods would rise to the level of a local planning concern that outweighs the regional need for affordable housing... It also needs to work on ways to introduce modestly scaled affordable units in the established neighborhoods." As an abutter and member of the neighborhood, I am not opposed to modestly scaled units. However, I do not believe the developer's current plans to build a 16 unit, 3 story, 17,430 sq ft structure can be considered "modest", especially compared to the average Burke Lane neighborhood home.

Additionally, the current design imposes completely unnecessary impacts on the southern and western abutters. The current design calls for a 23 car parking lot spanning the length of and adjacent to the abutters' property line. With the parking lot, the developer also plans to place a dumpster, fire pit, picnic areas, and a dog run, on the side of the property facing the only residential abutters. Parking lots are inherently loud. Modern cars beep when locked and unlocked, idling engines are known and documented noise disturbances, stereo volumes may be unreasonable, and car alarms may go off. Of course, this is reasonable to expect regardless of whether there is a 2-4 car driveway next to your property or a 23 car parking lot, however, the probability for such issues is much higher with 23 cars than say 2. Additionally, it is much easier to approach your next-door neighbor about the problem, than an unknown individual who temporarily resides in (or is a guest of) one of 16 units next door. In the past year, 7 Burke Lane was rezoned to allow the property owner of 170-184 Worcester St. to expand their parking lot. It would seem logical to place the parking lot, dumpster, and other noise inducing amenities along the property line with 7 Burke Lane.

Safety

The developer proposes to cut into the slopes on the southern and western property lines. Although not noted in the application, these slopes are incredibly steep, unstable, and subject to erosion. Action has already been taken to mitigate erosion on the 15 Burke Lane property. Cutting into the slope can potentially lead to further erosion which can damage the abutting property and structures. Also, there are no details on how the proposed retaining walls, constructed to support the cut-ins, will be made safe for neighboring children. My neighbor has two toddlers and my wife and I anticipate starting a family shortly. As you can imagine, this is very distressing. Not only is it concerning that these slopes were not noted as "steep" in the application and no safety measures referenced, it is also worrisome that the developer does not have a level of experience managing these types of projects.

As you well know, the intersection of Route 9, the Cedar St. on ramp to Route 9 and Burke Lane is a dangerous and partially blind intersection. We're concerned the traffic study, which was limited to the northernmost side of Burke Lane, did not take into account the traffic from the on ramp and Route 9. We are concerned that this omission will present an inaccurate depiction of the true nature of traffic safety on Burke Lane.

In addition to the harrowing Route 9-Burke Lane intersection, the second access point to the development is through McLean by way of Cedar St. Not only is there a school bus stop on McLean, but the Cedar, Hunnewell, McLean, and Hasting intersection is extremely challenging and dangerous during off peak hours, and nearly impossible to navigate during peak hours. Additionally, many Fiske Elementary students cross this intersection to get to and from school. Increasing the traffic load, even by a moderate amount can have a significant impact on the safety and wellbeing of the community and its children.

Burke Lane does not have sidewalks or curbs. This forces residents to walk on a street that has multiple blind spots. Due to the safety concerns associated with this, on street parking is prohibited on Burke Lane. Additionally, northbound turns into Burke Lane are prohibited during peak commuting hours. Adding at least 25 cars to the traffic load can only increase the dangers posed by this road. This is only exasperated during winter weather.

In conclusion, we are welcoming of a 40B project and we strongly believe many of our neighbors share this belief. However, considering the aforementioned, we feel the size and design of the current proposal is not appropriate for the property and neighborhood. We feel a

multi-family (an appropriate expansion of the existing structure) of ~8 units or less would reduce the impact on safety, align with the aesthetics of the neighborhood, allow for easy access for emergency vehicles, limit potentially damaging impacts on abutters, provide the residents with more green space, and will be a win for the developer, the town, the community, future residents, and the state.

Sincerely,
Jared & Caitlin Linder
15 Burke Lane