

JOHN & TRACY MARTIN
12 Simpson Terrace
Newton, Massachusetts 02460

17 December 2016

Mr. Marc Laredo
Newton Board of Aldermen
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Dear Mr. Laredo:

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed project at the Orr Block in Newtonville. No project will be able to please everyone, but this proposal has much to commend it.

First, it proposes to build rental housing in one of our village centers. We must build housing in our village centers if we hope to create the dense, walkable environments that will characterize desirable places to live in the coming years.

Second, this project proposes to build that density in one of our village centers that is characterized by proximity to transit - both bus and commuter rail. Building housing within a walkable radius of public transit greatly reduces the need for both high parking ratios and automobile trips.

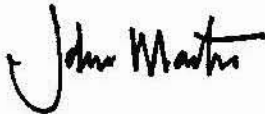
Third, the proposal places the majority of the height and mass of the design against the north side of Washington Street, which has two benefits. It moves more of the mass away from the abutters to the north on Turner Street and it focuses the mass along the wide corridor that is Washington Street. A street this wide would benefit from a taller street wall to help define the corridor, like so many of the great urban boulevards from Paris to Peoria. Placing the taller portions of the project along Washington Street also has the tertiary benefit of casting shadows across the project's own site rather than the abutting properties to the north.

Fourth, It is my understanding that the proponent has placed the building faces a few feet back from the property lines to create wide, pedestrian friendly sidewalks. This is an important concession that will greatly improve the public realm and set a precedent for future developers in our village centers. Most of our village centers suffer from streets that are too wide and sidewalks that are too narrow for pedestrian comfort.

Finally, this proposal is appealing because the architecture is rich, varied, sensitive to context, and well scaled. The developer has broken the overall composition of the project into three different volumes, which have the potential to read as three independent buildings on the block. The materials depicted in the perspective renderings suggest a varied palette of bricks and cast stone accents with different window sizes that give the buildings a rich visual texture. The materials, scale and fenestration patterns are compatible with nearby historic structures like the Masonic Building on Walnut Street.

In short, it's a great project that would provide great benefits to our neighborhood and our city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John Martin