

Mr. Brian P. Golden, Director  
Boston Planning and Development Agency  
One City Hall Square, Ninth Floor  
Boston, MA 02201

ATTN: Casey Hines, Project Manager  
Re: 15 Washington Street, Whole Foods Development, Neutral stance

Dear Mr. Golden,

As a key member for the IAG for the proposed Whole Foods/15 Washington Street Development project in Brighton, I would like to share my thoughts after several initial community meetings. Through these meetings and many hours of community feedback, developer insight, traffic studies, and incredibly productive conversations, our IAG has not come to a unified consensus on this project, but I do believe there are some overlying themes the proponent should consider. It is my perspective that the IAG is divided on this project and has a wide range of concerns. We did not come to a consensus, but I do feel strongly that the development will not be approved as currently constituted. This letter comes from comments I've received from my neighbors and friends, my own perspective on the project, and feedback from other residents and immediate abutters.

Before I share my thoughts, I'd like you to know that I truly believe a redevelopment of this underutilized site would be a wonderful addition to the community. This parcel sits on a sea of asphalt - an ode to an archaic design trend that prioritized cars over people. This is a prime example of a site that would benefit from a forward thinking, human-centric development in a part of our neighborhood that has not adopted modern architectural trends and urbanist development. I can see that this project will certainly aim to address some of the core needs of our community including, but not limited to, a desperate need for affordable housing, accessible and public green space, and energy efficient buildings with an active and vibrant ground floor.

With that said, I am only willing to support this project conditionally and I currently am in a state of neutral/conditional support of the project. I believe it is in the best interest of the development team and the community to come together and find a way for this proposal to address several of the community concerns outlined below and present a comprehensive and thorough community benefit.

- **MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT/PARKING:** This proposal contains major issues with the proposed increase in parking. While the grocery store will still maintain the perfectly adequate 151 parking spaces, another 172 spaces have been proposed in the new development for up to 270 housing units. 323 total

parking spaces is simply too many parking spaces for such a multimodal transit-rich area. I ask all of our new developments to consider the impact of increased cars in the neighborhood, especially against the best wishes of urban planners, and I would like to see this project promote multimodal development. As someone who has been to this store many times, I have never seen an overwhelmed lot. There is no need to encourage public parking and to waste this space for parking cars. A parking ratio of approximately .63 spots per unit has been proposed. I recommend the developers consider decreasing the current parking ratio to .5 (a subtraction of approximately 37 spaces for 286 total spaces) and/or increase the units offered to offset the environmental impact of the new parking spaces. I would like to see more transportation management in this project as well. There has been little to no conversation about alternative transportation, bus subsidies for residents, bike share, etc. While I understand the market demands of this development, I do not want to encourage new employees, employers, and residents of Allston-Brighton to increase emissions and carbon footprint by offering over 300 parking spots in one building. Many of your prospective employees will live right here in Allston-Brighton. You will have hundreds of new Brighton residents and a great deal of foot traffic. Most of the pressing concerns for this project have been based around all the cars it may bring to the neighborhood. You can solve that problem by being forward thinking and encouraging less car ownership. As for the proposed parklet and protected bike lane options presented in the designs, it is clear that Design Alternative #2 is the best option to provide added greenspace and fully protect bikers with a fully buffered bike lane. In addition, the drive lane should be kept at 13 feet maximum and this proposal should work with the BTM to implement traffic calming measures as this area has a high proportion of seniors, disabled residents, and foot traffic. This is a high risk area for accidents and this project should aim to calm traffic to the fullest extent.

- **HOME OWNERSHIP AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** There should be a greater commitment to home ownership and affordable housing from this development. As you know, our current IDP only encourages developers to propose a minimum of 13% affordable units in new developments. That is woefully inadequate for the needs of Allston-Brighton. As a development in the unique position of being able to provide housing and stable, large-scale commercial space with long-lease tenants such as Whole Foods, your team should commit to one or all of the following:
  - Provide a minimum of 20% permanently affordable units on-site of the final development
  - Commit more funds to affordable development projects in Allston-Brighton by organizations such as the Allston-Brighton CDC through the linkage funding program
  - Increase the units offered in this proposal and decrease the commercial space and parking.

I recommend you consider all options with your team and will be happy to discuss each with you.

I believe the creation of these units is a fantastic benefit for the community, but in order to solve a core community problem - generating stable housing and homeownership opportunities at an affordable rate - the developers must propose a greater mix of deed-restricted home ownership in this parcel. I ask the developers to reconsider the current mix of housing and commercial space to produce more homeownership opportunities this project. It is certainly acceptable for this parcel to still contain rental units, as there is a desperate need for housing in the area, but the development team should consider an opportunity to have mixed opportunities for ownership and rental.

- **PUBLIC REALM AND GREEN SPACE:** I believe this project does not provide adequate public realm space or green space. While the current area is a sea of asphalt, the proposed development does not allow for any “to-the-sky” public realm on site. This project should increase the green space and public realm by creating a “to-the-sky” green space between the Allston Street and Corey Road sides of the development. This project could, and should, be built higher and accommodate for more public realm - not aim to cram many units into a shorter building with little to no publicly accessible ground floor courtyard/public way/public realm space. The entrance on Washington Street leading to Corey Rd should be expanded and open air if at all possible. If this is not possible in the redesign, the courtyard on the top of this passageway should be expanded, publicly accessible, and considerably more green than initially rendered.

I hope the development team will seriously consider the above recommendations from concerned Allston-Brighton residents. I appreciate your consideration of this letter, and I look forward to remaining involved in this process.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Arena - IAG Member and Neighbor in Allston