

**HIGH STREET HILL ASSOCIATION  
EXECUTIVE BOARD**

*SERVING OUR NEIGHBORHOOD SINCE 1958*

Statement of Position Concerning  
Two Brookline Place Development Plan

May 16, 2004

We are writing to make known High Street Hill Association's continuing opposition to the proposed 2 Brookline Place development plan as it stands. We feel the changes offered in Warrant Articles 12 –14 for the upcoming June Town Meeting do not significantly differ from the original, defeated proposal. Although we believe there is widespread support for some level of redevelopment of this parcel we were hoping that the time since the last Town Meeting would have been used to build consensus, the better to yield a fresh approach more in keeping with the concerns of Brookline residents. Instead, we must offer our reactions to essentially the same proposition.

As a neighborhood directly abutting the east end of the congested Route 9 corridor, we have long suffered the consequences of misguided development. A careful, integrated approach is necessary if the town wants to realize the best solutions for the problems in this section of town. The Comprehensive Plan discussions initiated the process but this proposal for the development of the Two Brookline Place parcel short-circuited the conversation before formal consensus on development priorities had been achieved. The "Gateway to Brookline" concept is a good one, but the contribution of this single building to the whole plan is unclear and, in effect, provides the advantages of spot zoning to one developer instead of upholding a complete vision. Furthermore, we feel the Town should commit to the completion of a new "Gateway" by setting aside a portion of the expected revenue for capital improvements to implement the dramatic redesign of the pedestrian crossings and the traffic patterns that the Comp Plan envisions. Without the Town's forceful guidance, these improvements won't happen.

We feel the current height limit provided by our zoning laws of one hundred feet is sufficient. If a building's height is not kept in scale with the surrounding area, common sense dictates that it will negatively impact the adjacent neighborhoods, not just visually but also in terms of traffic and congestion. The town leaders who wrote the existing height regulations sought to avoid excessively imposing structures. We continue to feel as they did.

We support the developer's commitment to incorporate "Green" design principles and increased open space but we are concerned that the developer is not required to adhere to the proposed improvements in design that were added in response to community input. Since the building will be one of the largest in town and will set the look and feel for the whole area, we care deeply about the aesthetics of the design.

We do not oppose the establishment of biolabs at 2 Brookline Place in principle but we question whether they provide the highest and best benefit for the economy of Brookline Village. Have other, more local business-friendly uses (e.g. hotel) been fully considered? We are, however, troubled that the latest proposal will limit biolabs to only this parcel. If the

town fully accepts the responsibility to monitor the health and safety risks associated with biolabs, it must allow them town-wide. Our neighborhood should not unduly bear the risks of this type of land use.

We are concerned that the Town's offer to accept the land and lease it back to the developers as a device to avoid loss of tax revenue could be risky and is based on insufficient information. We are particularly upset that the Town did not disclose the existence of an Activity and Use Limitation until forced to do so by a Freedom of Information request. Why didn't the Town Meeting's Advisory Committee know of this deed restriction before making their recommendation? Since the site was once the home of Brookline Gas Light Company, it is quite possible that there is significant subsurface pollution in that location, the full extent of which may not become evident until excavation begins. Who accepts the risk if the contamination is deemed excessive? This issue needs to be investigated before a vote is taken.

And, finally, to take advantage of all the opportunities this development presents and to gain our endorsement of the completed project, we propose that the Design Advisory Team be expanded modestly to include representatives from all abutting Neighborhood Associations. Local organizations that have demonstrated concerns about this matter should be able to choose their own representatives to the DAT, thus ensuring (1) neighborhood participation in the process and (2) fully disclosing communication with others who are concerned about the quality of the finished product.

Although many have worked very hard on this proposal we feel that attention to these issues would mollify the tremendous disappointment shared by many in Brookline. We respectfully request that Town Meeting Members' votes reflect the concerns of their constituents.

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