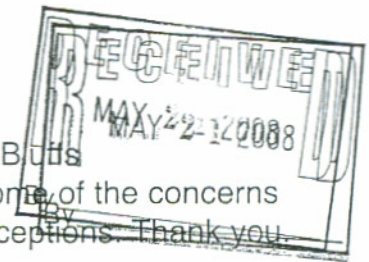


May 21, 2008

TO: The Martha's Vineyard Commission

FROM: Alison Shaw, Alison Shaw Gallery, 88 Dukes County Avenue, Oak Bluffs

RE: in support of Bradley Square. I would like to respectfully respond to some of the concerns expressed by opponents of this project, and also to clear up some misconceptions. Thank you.



Objection: Not enough parking spaces.

I feel the issue of parking has been blown way out of proportion by some neighbors. By various estimates, there are anywhere from 82-187 nearby legal on-street parking spaces, more than enough to accommodate neighbors and visitors (please see attached map). In addition, the various galleries and shops in the immediate neighborhood provide on-site parking for their customers. Dragonfly Gallery has 4 spaces, PikNik 7, Alison Shaw Gallery 4, Island Interiors 9, Red Mannequin 3, and Periwinkle Studios 2. The planned shuttle bus will further alleviate the parking and traffic in the summertime. Also, Arts District businesses plan on hiring a policeman to be on duty during art openings and strolls, to insure that cars are not parked illegally.

Objection: Scale of the project is too large.

"The buildings would be substantially larger than those in the surrounding neighborhood."
(Vineyard Gazette 4/18)

The size of the Bradley Square buildings is actually in keeping with the size (in terms of both overall mass as well as height) of many other buildings in the neighborhood. The two new Bradley Square buildings will be lower than the existing Denniston building.

Objection: Loss of trees.

"The development will pretty much devastate the neighborhood by clearing the lots and remove beautiful old trees..." (letter from Russell Rogers and Nancy Giordano to the MVC 3/17/08)

Based on the study of the health of the trees on the property, it would seem that losing a number of them, and planting young healthy trees, would provide an overall benefit to both the property and neighborhood. Of the 27 trees on the property, only 5 were rated as "good", and none as "excellent". As I see it, removing the unhealthy trees is a positive rather than a negative.

Objection: This project is being sprung on the neighbors as a done deal with no opportunity for input.

This project has been in process for over a year now. During that time, the regular meetings of the Bradley Square Design/Build Committee had been posted in Town Hall and open for public input, input which was actively sought out during the design process. A public hearing to which all neighbors within 150' were notified by mail was held on December 10, 2007 at the Oak Bluffs Library meeting room. The meeting was very well attended, and the audience was excited about and supportive of the project. The closest thing to any criticism or negative feedback was a single neighbor's voicing of concern over parking.

Objection: Our neighborhood is fine just the way it is and always has been.

"I am greatly offended by remarks made by one Holly Alaimo, (and others) about my neighborhood." (letter from Stephen Lewis to the M.V. Times 5/15/08)

The bottom line is, what Holly said about drug deals, flop houses, a murder, and rented shacks are all true. Thad Harshbarger called the area a "slum" at the first public hearing, which was harsh, but his comment had some truth to it. Many properties in the neighborhood are cared for, and have been homes to families for generations. But a number of the properties are derelict. I would invite the commissioners to take ten minutes to walk the neighborhood, and come to their own conclusion. The Denniston property itself has been part of the problem. What is proposed for Bradley Square is a crucial part of turning this neighborhood into something we *all* can be proud of.

Corrections/clarifications:

"The informal arts district exists in name only." (Vineyard Gazette 4/25)

We may not be a zoning district, but the Arts District is a vital neighborhood of galleries and studios, which has a professional organization with regular meetings and elected officers.

Some property owners in the neighborhood *"...have been subjected to low ball insulting offers for their homes, so low you would have to leave the island."* (letter from Donald Muckerheide to the MVC 3/18/08)

While it's true that several neighbors were made offers for their properties, these offers were by no means low ball and insulting. In one case an abutter sold to a third party for the same amount he had already been offered by the Island Affordable Housing Fund. In another case an abutter countered an Island Affordable Housing Fund offer with one that was ridiculously high, at over 200% of the property's appraised value.

"...said Dukes County Avenue resident Nancy Giordano....." (Vineyard Gazette 4/25)

She doesn't live on Dukes County – she owns a vacant lot there.

"'We live here, too,' said Circuit Avenue resident Donald Muckerheide." (Vineyard Gazette 4/25)

He owns the former Pit Stop property, but Mr. Muckerheide doesn't live in the neighborhood – he lives on Circuit Avenue in Tisbury. Ironically, many of the most vocal opponents to Bradley Square don't even live in the neighborhood. And even if they did, isn't the greater good this project will bring to the future residents of Bradley Square, the town of Oak Bluffs, and to the island more important than the opinions of those of us, either pro or con, who live, work, or own property in the neighborhood?

"...eighty-seven-seat auditorium...." (Vineyard Gazette 4/18)

The sanctuary in the Denniston building is just a room which could have a bunch of folding chairs set up for a concert or lecture or church service.

"...but it falls short of what reasonably can be considered historic preservation." (Vineyard Gazette 4/18)

I think Linsey Lee and David Wilson would wholeheartedly take exception to this. The decisions made all along about the Denniston House have very much been based on historic preservation. The Denniston house will look virtually the same in terms of design as it does now, the footprint will be identical, the orientation towards Masonic Avenue will remain, the sanctuary space will be preserved, and the contents of the building have been saved. The Island Affordable Housing Trust could easily have come in there, taken the contents of the house to the landfill, torn down the Denniston house, clearcut the land and put up a bunch of houses on those lots. Instead, they reached out to the African American community, the neighbors, the Arts District, and other people motivated to preserve the legacy of the property, while also adding much-needed affordable housing.

The following is a map of 123 legal on-street parking spaces within a three-minute walk of Bradley Square. I have tried to only include spaces which don't interfere with neighbors who park far over onto the shoulders of the road, and (with the exception of spaces on Vineyard Avenue) to only include spaces which when occupied would have little or no impact on traffic flow – streets that are wide enough to accommodate the parking. Together with the 29 on-site parking spaces at the galleries and shops in the Arts District, in my opinion these on-street parking spaces are sufficient to cover the parking requirements of both the local residents and also the visitors to the gallery strolls, or any events that might occur at Bradley Square in the Denniston House cultural center.

