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Martha's Vineyard Commission
P.O. Box 1447
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Commissioners:

I attended the May 22nd public hearing regarding the Bradley Square project. It was quite apparent that the larger objections raised were to the "density" of the project and the "parking problem" that it was perceived it would cause.

The "parking problem" is not a problem of where to park, but a problem of access, and excess use of cars in areas never designed for their current volume - directly due to population growth (and our exuberance for riding everywhere). Since we cannot reduce our population dramatically, we either have to face the reality of more cars, or change the way in which we manage their use. If we really want to solve the "parking problem", we should ban casual use of cars in dense areas altogether (I would exempt those driving to their home and commercial delivery in the area, which could also be limited by time of day). Parking cars on the periphery of congested areas and providing effective shuttle or trolley service, encouraging walking by promoting such mixed use projects as Bradley Square, and making it easier to use bicycles all would provide enormous benefit while reducing (or eliminating) the "parking problem". Such a solution is the purview of the town, NOT a private developer.

In any case parking is not and should not be the only or even primary focus of the MVC's deliberations regarding Bradley Square; you hopefully are looking at the overall benefits: affordable housing, historic preservation, neighborhood revitalization, business development - not to mention the addition to the town's tax base (not so unimportant today in OB). There certainly is no such thing as the perfect project. But to reach a fair compromise must involve weighing overall benefit against real detriment, and eliminating erroneous perceived detriment from the consideration altogether.

As to density - it appears to me this is less dense than the 7-unit project approved by the Commission last year (DRI 601) on Summer Street in Edgartown - another example of "Smart Growth" planning of a mixed-use project in a business district. That project comprises just over 6000 square feet of habitable space in 7 units on 0.2 acres. Bradley Square as proposed is under 11,000 square feet of habitable space in 11 units on 0.44 acres. That's 30,000 square feet per acre on Summer Street vs. under 25,000 at Bradley Square.

Whether we like it or not, population density is increasing and must be addressed. You cannot solve that or the "parking problem" by rejecting or severely conditioning a project that in other ways has so many benefits - to the neighborhood, the town and ultimately the entire island. The population grows and the cars will just keep coming.

Sincerely,



Doug Ruskin