

April 15, 2008

Dear Commissioners

While the current Bradley Square proposal has been presented to the public as a model “in-fill” project it has, over the winter, become an issue of great conflict in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Unusually for such projects the conflict does not stem from the affordable housing component (in fact this is welcomed) but rather concerns the scale and density of the project as a whole and the inclusion of a sizeable “function” space with no off-street parking, operating 20-40 hours a week in a largely residential area.

It appears to the neighborhood residents that the IAHF/IHT and the “arts district” (an unofficial designation of 6 of the 12+ businesses on Duke County Ave) are willing to sacrifice the character of the surrounding established year-round residential neighborhoods in order to increase the viability of the one-street B-1 district. These historic neighborhoods of modest year-round houses are significant in the history of Oak Bluffs and of Martha’s Vineyard. It is here in “Little Lisbon” (as Susan Klein terms it) that many of the Island’s first generation Portuguese speaking families settled. These days it remains a place where children play in the street, working families live for many generations on the same property and you can wake up to the sound of chickens. These enduring characteristics are endangered by the scale of the project and overflow of traffic and parking.

So can (and should) the surrounding residential community accept the large scale of the proposed Bradley Square project and the serious deficiency in off-street parking with its associated safety concerns?

- To increase affordable housing units - yes;
- To bolster the viability of the “arts district” – probably not;
- To accommodate an 80+ people capacity function space – absolutely not.

I encourage the Commission and the IAHF/IHT to consider these concerns as catalysts for designing a more neighborhood-appropriate project that provides the much needed housing for our friends and neighbors.

Respectfully

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