



## TOWN OF CONCORD

West Concord Advisory Committee  
c/o Department of Planning & Land Management  
141 Keyes Road – Concord, MA - 01742

May 2, 2018

To: Members of the Planning Board, 141 Keyes Road, Concord, MA

From: Members of the West Concord Advisory Committee

**Re: Proposed construction of 13b Commonwealth Ave.**

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Dear Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the West Concord Advisory Committee (WCAC) in connection with proposed plans by Oaktree Development, owners of Brookside Square on Beharrell Street, to build a 6,750-square-foot retail building at 13b Commonwealth Ave. Oaktree, represented by owners Gwen Noyes, Arthur Klipfel, and Patrick Cleary, attended three WCAC meetings to show and discuss various iterations of plans for the site.

The first meeting in December 2017 produced fairly negative comments from the committee, mostly because the proposed building did not follow any identifiable parameters set forth by the July 2011 “West Concord Design Guidelines.” Oaktree returned to the WCAC in February, as did a large number of residents from the community. At this meeting, Mr. Cleary walked through another iteration of the plans. These more clearly reflected some elements set by the guidelines, such as changes to the roofline and exterior materials used. Oaktree also succeeded in incorporating requests put forth by WCAC members including an addition of awnings above the storefronts and molding added to the large plate-glass windows that had been proposed in December. But the developer still was not successful in convincing the committee, or the community members present, that the building reflected the culture and design of the rest of the Village.

In April, Oaktree returned, as did a large group of residents. Here again, a new plan was proposed that both reflected the developer’s contemporary construction style, echoed in its residential building further back on Beharrell, but also incorporated more of the community and committee’s wishes. For example, Oaktree altered the window trim from 2 to 6 inches, and changed the material from black aluminum to off-white wood. It also added a layer of trim to the bottom of the windows, modeled after the nearby Concord Outfitters building. It widened the

doorframes to give the entrances a more traditional look and created an 8-inch header running across the top of the doors and the windows. Oaktree also added a plan for more outdoor seating, gooseneck lighting, sconces and awnings to create a sense of consistency with other businesses in the Village. Finally, Oaktree set back a portion of the building by five feet to vary the façade, another clear guideline set forth in the 2011 report.

While some members of the community appreciated the changes and praised Oaktree, others still felt the design was inconsistent with some of the more traditional buildings on the streetscape. Members of the WCAC were similarly split, though the seven present appreciated Oaktree's willingness to adhere to our requests for change, as well as the parameters put forth by the accepted guidelines.

To that end, in its role as an advisor to the Planning Board, the WCAC would like to pass along these comments about 13b Commonwealth Ave.

- The building is indeed more contemporary than others along that strip, but that style is not necessarily in conflict with the design guidelines. We do think it's important to note that many members of the public did not want, nor see the need, for 13b to be constructed in the same style as Brookside Square apartments.
- The building now includes elements that are consistent with other businesses along Commonwealth Avenue, including awnings, no large plate-glass windows, more traditional lighting, smaller signage for business names, and room for plantings and seating.
- Some members of the committee and public felt the most recent iteration continues to include too many different surfaces and colors, creating a mishmash effect.
- The building, because of its proximity to Village shops and public transportation, should include a second story. In keeping with the streetscape and design guidelines, a top level would also help it to look consistent with other structures. This comment was repeated numerous times both by members of the WCAC, as well as members of the community. We encourage the Planning Board and Town to work with the developers to seek creative solutions to parking and sewerage concerns that would allow a second floor.

The WCAC views this new building as an important piece of our thriving and dynamic Village business district. Oaktree has been responsive and adaptable to our requests so far. We do believe the developer has more changes to make, but we are hopeful they will get closer to the community's wishes through the Planning Board and its public comment opportunities.

Sincerely,

Carlene Hempel, on behalf of the members of the West Concord Advisory Committee including Jeff Collins (chair) Peter DeRosa (clerk), Tim Alexander, Karen Currie, Don Detweiler, Steve Irza and Anita Opitz