

To: Elizabeth Hughes, Concord Planning Board, Concord Zoning Board of Appeals,  
Concord Board of Selectmen and West Concord Advisory Committee  
From: Jean and Alexander Easterday, 48 Maple St. Concord, MA  
Date: August 7, 2023  
Subject: 166 Commonwealth Avenue Proposal

We are 30+ year residents of West Concord and have been privileged to benefit from many wonderful changes that have come about in this community due to the efforts of our citizens, business owners, town government and volunteer boards all working together. Examples of these projects include additional restaurants, Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, renovation of Rideout Playground, and smart growth housing.

We were excited to hear about a proposal for a new development at 166 Commonwealth Avenue. After learning more about it via WCAC and Planning Board meetings, we now have concerns. The scope of the project is way out of proportion for the existing lot size. While West Concord would benefit from additional affordable housing, new restaurants and new retail space, the very small lot at 166 Commonwealth Ave cannot accommodate parking for all 3 uses and many key details of this project are still unknown.

The intent of this letter is to highlight some of our top concerns relating to parking, as follows:

**Safety:** Safety at this location with multiple uses at a 5-star intersection is a primary concern for all. Just referencing as a major issue but it is clear you all are already diving in deep here.

**Retail Space and The Math:**

The Special Permit Application identifies that the development will provide 21 parking spaces and will need relief for the remaining parking need, but that actual need is not clear to us. See below for our understanding:

**Parking Need**

Can be accommodated by dedicated spots proposed on site

10 units of condos: 1, 2 and 3 BR (20 parking spaces)

First floor admin/ office (1 parking space)

Additional parking needs

61 seat Restaurant (25 parking spaces)

Restaurant workers (7 parking spaces)

Retail space (?? spaces)

At a minimum, relief for an additional 32 spaces would be needed, however the Special Permit Application indicates a "max 128 occupant" for the First floor Retail space so is it possible the retail space (yet to be identified) could hold up to 60 additional customers?

Our concerns for the Retail space were raised during the Planning Board meeting on July 25, 2023, when a representative speaking for the applicant, indicated that the space might be used

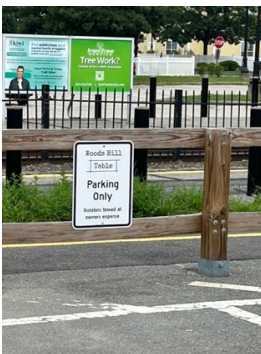
as a gym or yoga center. If that is the case, they would need a lot more parking than they have asked for. We believe the applicant should be transparent about the planned use of the Retail space and the Planning Board/ZBA should document the agreed upon occupancy, uses and parking needs for the entire project prior to discussing any parking relief request.

**Rideout Playground:** We were happy to hear that the Town Planner reached out to the Concord Recreation Department to gather input on the applicant's assertion that residents and customers of 166 Commonwealth could use Rideout Playground for parking. As abutters of Rideout Playground, we can attest to the fact that there are weekend and evening activities at the playground throughout the year and parking just for recreational activities has always been in short supply. The new parking area provided off of Laws Brook Road has helped to address the need as well as child safety concerns. Promising the use of Rideout Playground's designated parking lot to accommodate 166 Commonwealth Ave's business parking overflow is not in the best interest of the playground community.

**Parking Assessment:** We understand the Town is conducting its own review of the applicant's Parking Assessment. One item of note is that the initial assessment of 45 available metered parking spots is off by at least 4 parking spaces. The applicant's report includes 4 spaces that are currently being removed by new bump-outs in front of A New Leaf and Dance This Way, across the street, to enhance safety therefore the number of metered spaces available should be 41 not 45 parking spots. The repaving that took place last week may also change the number of spaces so available so that should be looked at as well.

We recently signed a letter from Ann Sgarzi detailing concerns about the impact parking relief would have on Maple Street. Please reference that letter for more information on this topic.

**Grandfathered Parking:** The applicant has referenced that the 99 (now West Village Tavern) does not have designated parking. The 99 had been in place for decades so the relief from parking was grandfathered for that location. Unfortunately, that relief and relief for new restaurants has caused additional parking constraints in West Concord. Many establishments have now posted signs to reserve spots for their businesses at the expense of other businesses due to the scarcity of available spots.



The Town now has bylaws in place to prevent the grandfathered situation we have with the West Village Tavern parking. Disregarding those the bylaws and granting relief for 32+ parking spaces for 166 Commonwealth Ave would set a terrible precedent for future development requests.

**Affordable Housing:** Not related to parking but important to mention, the Town requires new multi-housing projects to make 20% of the units affordable. During the Planning Board meeting, the applicant stated they were only planning to make one unit (10%) affordable. It is not clear why they applicant believes they are not accountable to meet this requirement. We believe the Town should hold the applicant accountable to this requirement.

The applicant of 166 Commonwealth is looking to maximize their profit by squeezing as much as they can into this small lot at the expense of the community. As presented, the current plan would require exemption from at least three bylaws: Parking, Affordable Housing and Open Space. While it would be nice to have the Gas Station replaced by a new restaurant or affordable housing, unfortunately this proposal is not appropriately scaled for the location.

We ask the Town to work with the applicant to help them adhere to the town bylaws (vs multiple exemptions) and reduce the scope of this proposal in a manner that benefits all. If not, we request that the ZBA deny the applicant's special permit application for parking relief.

Thank you for your time and service!