

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS & QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES RELATED TO WINTHROP CENTER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Dedicated to the late honorable Joseph Harvey who lived at 58
Somerset Ave and dedicated his moral authority to his neighborhood
and Winthrop Residents

Current and Possible Future State

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS & QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES RELATED TO WINTHROP CENTER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

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□ CURRENT STATE - Neighborhood

- From Pleasant St. to Center, Somerset has old, well kept, predominately single and two duplex family homes with larger spacing between homes than typical in Winthrop
- Some current residents are 2nd and 3rd generation
- Residents are paying \$5,000 to \$10,000 in taxes deserve good quality of life
- A combination of residents ranging from young children to 90+ years of age make for a great neighborhood
- Residents have been friends and hospitable to one another for 3 generations. It is a family atmosphere.
- The oldest homes reflect a historical era that have withstood the test of time



Somerset Avenue in 1895 still reveals acres of open space in the distance. The elegant Victorian style home presents a quaint backdrop for the father, baby, and their dog, blamed by Harry Whorff's camera. These homes still remain in remarkably original condition. Fortunately, our town government cannot mandate that private homes be demolished when they reach a certain age.



From Images of America Winthrop - Winthrop Historical Commission

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS & QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES RELATED TO WINTHROP CENTER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

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□ CURRENT STATE - Density

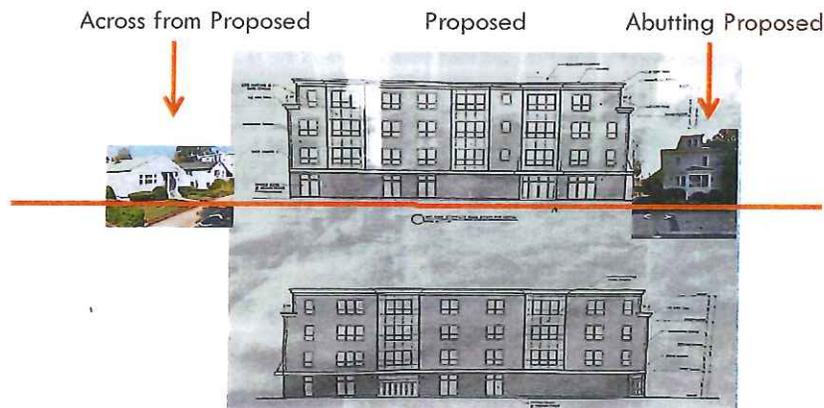
- From Pleasant St. to Center, Somerset, the houses are spaced further apart than many other streets in Winthrop
- There are 9 single family homes that are on right side of Somerset that run into the possible 12 unit and 20+ unit developments that will be 4 stories high
- Upon purchasing the CVS DunRite parcel several years ago, the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center was given a valuable Historical Tax Credit to keep the façade of the building. Why would anyone want to demolish this over 100 year old historical structure
- The maximum density of residential structures in and around the center proper are:
- The center businesses area at the end of Somerset have small businesses located in an old, one story old well preserved building
- The 2 vacant buildings at the end of Somerset are also one story
 - Somerset three 3-decker homes
 - Woodside three 3-decker homes
 - two 3 story buildings with stores and apartments

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□ POSSIBLE FUTURE – Neighborhood & Density

- A proposed development at Somerset and Cottage Park of 12 units would be strikingly out of place at the end of Somerset as well as out of place with the scale of the business structures across the street
- These projects do not fit into the great archives of architectural history of Somerset Ave



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POSSIBLE FUTURE - Neighborhood & Density

- Another proposed development on the other side of Somerset and Cottage Park is larger and is rumored to have a variance for no or very few on site parking spaces which would also be strikingly out of place at the end of Somerset as well as out of place with the scale of the business structures across the street
- Serious parking issues would also impact the neighborhoods and center businesses

Former House of Honorable John Lowell 1892



Proposed



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CURRENT STATE - Parking

- When cars are parked on each side of Somerset in front of CVS Dun Rite and across in front of the Book Depot and Joanne's Barber shop a normal size car (approx. 80") or truck (approx. 96.8") can just barely pass by
- While there are open spaces in the center after local restaurants close until businesses open in the morning and deliveries begin, there really is not much if any parking spaces available available spaces on the street during the business day
- Businesses at the end of Somerset include a coffee shop and personal services (hair, nail, etc.) and they are frequented heavily by old residents that drive to those businesses and park as close as possible. Sometimes well away from the curb.
- Of the 2 neighborhood streets, Somerset is the highest volume of auto and delivery truck

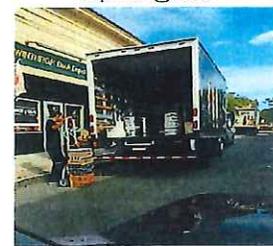
Sept 29 @ 2:09



Sept 29 @ 8:05



Sept 28 @ 2:17



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□ CURRENT STATE - Parking

- Of the three Somerset 3 deckers, only one has a driveway but all park on the street
- Cottage Park homes have fewer driveways than Somerset and park on the street
- Woodside 3 deckers and apartment residents have no driveways and they also park on the street

Somerset - Oct 2 @ 6:30am



Cottage Park - Oct 2 @ 6:30am



Woodside - Sept 30 @ 10:26



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□ CURRENT STATE - Parking

- At the corner of Pleasant & Somerset, parking has become a problem due to a number of cars parked there by residents and visitors of homes on Pleasant
- They commonly have no parking sticker and are sometimes out of state, park overnight and any other time of day. They have been reported but the problem persists.
- They also park very close to the corner making it difficult for delivery trucks and fire engines to navigate the corner turn onto Somerset



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□ POSSIBLE FUTURE – Parking & Traffic

- Parking which is already at or near capacity will become a significant problem with developments totaling 32+ units
- The rumored development in the CVS to Dun Rite parcel with no on-site parking for the condo owners and their visitors would significantly impact parking for existing residences and businesses
- Somerset Ave, Cottage Park Road and Woodside Ave would be the primary access roads to condo developments substantially increasing traffic at certain times of day
- Construction and demolition vehicles and worker vehicles would severely impact residences and businesses for the duration (up to 2 years) of the demolition and construction
- Demolition and construction noise and demolition pollution could effect mental and physical well being of residents
- Twenty years ago Dunkin Donuts was denied a shop in the Center because of additional traffic

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□ POSSIBLE FUTURE – Parking & Traffic

- A little known variance that allows developers to build without adequate parking, from 1.5 to .5 spaces per unit is unfair to the established residents and businesses and calls into question who the town is looking out for
- 1 to 1.5 per spaces per unit or more should be required for new units to account for owners with multiple vehicles and their visitors
- The Town Council and Planning Board should seriously consider returning to the old codes for parking and building codes considering the information that is presented in this document

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□ OBSERVATIONS AND CONCERNS

- It is one thing to build 2 side by side residential developments totaling 32+ units on a road like Pleasant St (Rt. 145) but it is another thing entirely to add them at the end of a beautiful street and in front of the well kept Swett's block of small shops that occupy the building
- These developments would stress the current conditions in the impacted areas to an unacceptable level for residences and businesses
- Wikipedia states that Winthrop is one of the smallest and most densely populated municipalities in Massachusetts
- The town should respect the history of neighborhoods that represent what Winthrop is and not acquiesce to the demands of developers looking for the highest profit, lowest cost developments and have no respect for the location in which they are building their developments
- Look how the front of Atlantis Marina looks after only 9 years

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□ POSSIBLE FUTURE – Demolition/Construction & Health Concerns

- Is there asbestos in the buildings? This could trigger a cloud of cancer causing asbestos
- Will the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) be consulted to check if there is asbestos?
- What will the environmental effects be on the neighborhood with heaps of scrap wood, broken glass, bricks and possibly toxic dust
- The Center demolition and construction could possibly send particles of lead and other pollutants into the air and onto the soil that could impact Cummings Elementary School and Winthrop Parks
- Lead is toxic to point that health officials warn no amount of it in a child's bloodstream is safe
- There are several day care centers (For Kids Only) and pre-school located near the old CVS Building
- The possible dislodging of hundreds of rodents into the neighborhood

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□ POSSIBLE FUTURE – Demolition/Construction & Health Concerns

- The possible release of hazardous mold in the buildings
- Construction indisputably will impact the entire center for possibly up to 2 years
- The entire center will feel like a construction site due to the size of these developments
- Demolition and construction equipment will negatively impact traffic, infrastructure, environment not to mention daily life



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□ POSSIBLE FUTURE – Demolition/Construction & Health Concerns

- Noise pollution and exhaust pollution from demolition and construction equipment
- Since demolition and construction is in a high water table area soil erosion and damage to surrounding foundations could result
- Construction could possibly cause water quality and flooding issues
- Air Quality after effects could lead to high levels of lead and other toxins in grass and soil where children play
- There is a direct link to the health and safety of residents especially children
- Higher buildings than surrounding structures could impact the dispersion of pollutants from increased traffic and delivery vehicles
- Center streets could be shut down during construction since there is no setback from the sidewalk

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□ ZONING CHANGE CONCERNS

- Residents and especially abutting residents, that would be impacted by miss-matched architecture, scale and esthetics, quality of life, and other neighborhood impacts should have been notified in a much more robust communication effort for an open town public meeting
- Adding more expensive residential units does not improve Winthrop but simply gentrifies Winthrop and in some ways makes it more difficult for all especially elderly that are fixed income home owners
- Developers may justify their greed by claiming density will improve business and environmental sustainability
- There was no representation for “advocacy planning” for residents due to the lack of community information
- It appears with all the zoning and code changes, residents and current neighborhood were not a paramount concern

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□ ZONING CHANGE CONCERNS

- Sometimes ordinary people cannot find time to attend meetings due to work and family and other responsibilities. Therefore the responsibility for the greater good is in the hands of elected officials who have to ethically speak to their precinct residents.
- Construction in high water table areas, such as the center, especially at the end of Somerset where 50 or so years ago still had sections of swamp, will require pilings which could cause cracking of walls and foundations in the general area
- The planning board should go back to original Town of Winthrop Code requirements to address the impacts of abutters and well being of all residents, especially children
- Preservation of the character and scale of the center’s historical neighborhoods

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□ ZONING CHANGE CONCERNS

- These new residential structures will tower over abutters casting shadows over yards, businesses and homes
- Structures often have no setback from the sidewalk as one proposed plan indicates and completely change the feel of lower Somerset and the center in a negative way
- Neighborhood character will be diminished
- New England Mgmt. Plan posted for weeks public meetings and positions
- Were surrounding cities (East Boston, Revere, Chelsea) supposed to receive certified letters about code changes?
- "Piggy back parking" should not be allowed
- Can you build privately and use public parking spaces? We think not.
- Traffic studies reveal – Winthrop high traffic significant congestion during peak hours

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□ CENTER REVIVAL

- Winthrop Center revitalization should encourage social interaction at the street level
- It should favor bus, foot and bicycle traffic over cars
- We believe that any residential building to be built should adhere to previous height and parking code
- Residential buildings should have first floor businesses with residents above with parking provided by the developer for each unit
- We enjoy French Square where people can meet
- The council and planning board should foster a mosaic of architectural styles that meet old codes of height limits – not large boxes of residential units
- These current proposals disregard and lack respect for residents who have shopped in Winthrop Center over the decades

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□ AFTER EFFECTS

- Possible noise pollution from:
 - Air handlers on top of structures running day and night
 - More traffic
- A new evacuation plan for center area would be required
- Increased daily traffic emissions
- Traffic studies have already shown Winthrop has a significant amount of cars for land of 1.6 square miles
- Possible impact on water pressure. Increasing pressure to address issue could impact soundness of pipes
- Possible sewage back ups in neighborhood homes could result from increase of waste water from the two new developments
- These two developments will destroy the character of a traditional and historic neighborhood and the historic center structure as well

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□ AFTER EFFECTS

- Proposed developments will significantly increase density, shadows, traffic, parking issues and loss of business for local café's and stores
- Chances are very good that the facades of these structures will be cheaply constructed and deteriorate quickly

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□ WEATHER IMPACT ON TRAFFIC & PARKING

- During snow emergencies horrible parking and traffic problems resulting from the two development's addition of 40 or more cars will be exacerbated by the parking ban and frozen mounds of snow on either side of the road, sometimes for weeks
- How will the parking ban be enforced as this will have a significant impact on access by emergency vehicles and even just normal traffic on Somerset, Cottage Park, Woodside and Bartlett
- When the Revere Flood Gates are closed on the Parkway, there will be an even bigger problem with traffic exiting and entering Winthrop, not just from these two propose center developments but others under construction and proposed

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□ INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACTS

- The two proposed developments and other proposed developments as well as those already under construction will add a significant burden to:
 - Schools
 - Police Department
 - Fire Department
 - Highway Department
 - Water and Sewer
 - Taxpayers
- The two proposed developments will worsen existing life styles, change the character of the center and surrounding neighborhoods

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OUT OF THE BOX IDEA

- If an historical store façade, which has been given a valuable Historical Tax Credit in the past, is really not desired by the Town or needs to be demolished, why not replace it with something that makes the disruption and resulting possible hazards from demolition worth the risk
- The discussion about having additional green space/garden for the Center to become a more inviting destination for shopping, eating and gathering for events is a good idea.
- That kind of space should be in the densest part of the center's businesses and restaurants
- Ignoring ownership complications, doesn't the best place for a green space/garden seem to be right at the CVS to Dun Rite parcel of land?
- See next page

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OUT OF THE BOX IDEA (done to approx. scale)



NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS & QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES RELATED TO
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□ APPENDIX - Parking Observations

Somerset Sept 29 @ 8:07



Somerset Oct 14 @ 9:53



Somerset Sept 21 @ 2:10



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□ APPENDIX - Parking Observations

Somerset Oct 6 @ 11:50



Woodside Oct 6 @ 6:15



Woodside Oct 5 @ 3:06



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□ APPENDIX - Parking Observations

Somerset Sept 28 @ 8:08



Somerset Sept 29 @ 3:27



Bartlett Sept30 @ 10:14



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□ APPENDIX - Parking Observations

Bartlett Oct 7 @ 10:53



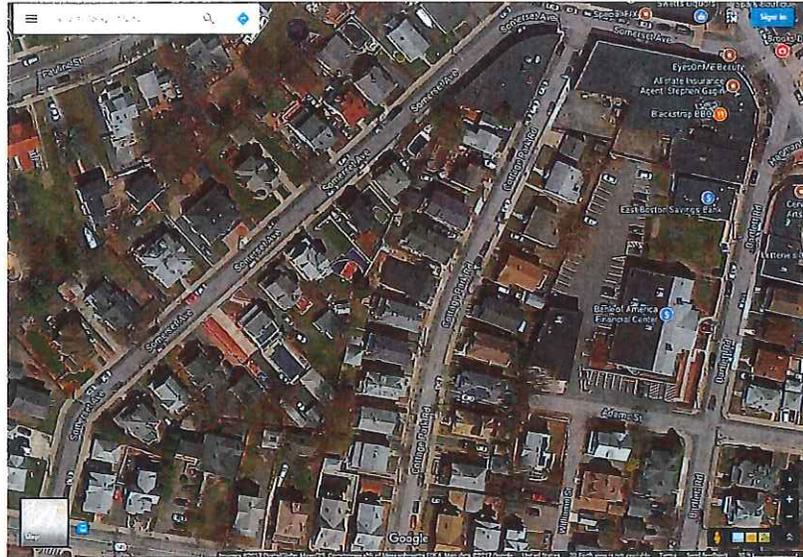
Somerset Sept 30 @ 10:14



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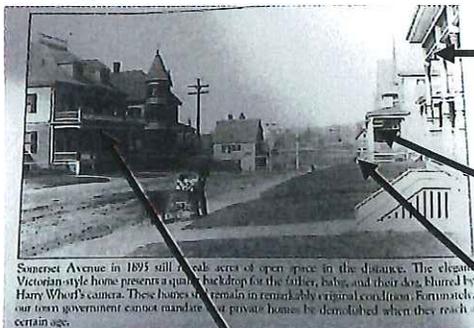
APPENDIX – Density and Scale



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APPENDIX – Somerset Homes Built Prior to 1895



Somerset Avenue in 1895 still reveals acres of open space in the distance. The elegant Victorian-style home presents a quiet backdrop for the father, baby, and their dog, blurred by Harry Whorl's camera. These homes still remain in remarkably original condition. Fortunately, our town government cannot mandate that private homes be demolished when they reach a certain age.



