



**Hospital Hill Neighborhoods Association: 114 Whitwell St. Development Should Be Smart,
Responsible, Appropriate**

Published in The Quincy Sun, October 31, 2019

To the Editor:

In 2016, when FoxRock Properties purchased 114 Whitwell Street, neighbors were optimistic about the future of the former Quincy City Hospital site. The Hospital Hill Neighborhoods Association (HHNA), representing over 120 families, long advocated for responsible redevelopment of the underutilized property. We welcome a residential development and the new neighbors it will bring to our community. However when FoxRock revealed their plans in May 2019, it was clear that their vision was neither compatible with the scale of surrounding homes nor with comparable developments around our city.

FoxRock's current proposal consists of a 465-unit development, with a total of 632 bedrooms contained in buildings up to six stories in height. All of this will be located on approximately 11 acres (Glendale Park - 4 acres of steep wooded area - is undevelopable). This proposed campus is similar in size to the Elevation apartment complex located in Crown Colony. But unlike Elevation, located on industrial zoned land and surrounded by highway access ramps, 114 Whitwell Street is in the middle of an established neighborhood of single, two and three-family homes.

During the first two public hearings on FoxRock's proposal, HHNA provided objective analysis that shows the project does not fit the character and scale of our neighborhood. As proposed, this development would result in 31 dwelling units per acre of land, including the area of Glendale Park (42 units/acre when you exclude the park.) Other Residential Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) average 21 units/acre, while the surrounding neighborhood has a density of 7 units/acre. The requirements for a PUD are relatively free from constraints when compared to other zoning districts, but the flexibility afforded to a developer of a PUD comes with greater responsibility to the community and additional approval discretion by the permit granting authority.

In revisions yet to be presented to the Planning Board, FoxRock made adjustments headlined by a reduction of 25 units. Yet at the same time FoxRock also 1) increased bedroom count by 14, 2) completely eliminated a 55-plus age restriction that originally applied to 90 units, and 3) increased the size of the development by over 20,000 sq ft. The net result leaves the expected population virtually unchanged while increasing the number of commuters and school age children. The developer also decreased the number of available parking spaces to 590. Overall, these latest changes amount to nothing more than a shell game while ignoring the most significant concerns of the surrounding neighbors.

Unfortunately, FoxRock maintains that discussions about unit count are - in their view - "arbitrary" and "both inappropriate and counterproductive." This is absurd, as the impact of 465 units on the surrounding neighborhood is clear: For the abutters, privacy will be lost as the proposed development will loom over their homes, which for many is their largest investment. For those that live in the surrounding neighborhood the impact will be significant as well. Traffic will increase. The wait time at key intersections will increase so as to accommodate the added vehicles. Intersections already deemed "high risk" to pedestrians will be made even more dangerous.

Amazingly, FoxRock has proposed little to mitigate the impacts of this development on the surrounding areas. Few commitments have been made to implement effective traffic calming measures on Whitwell Street or to improve intersections that would see additional traffic. FoxRock has also failed to fully identify - let alone suggest improvements to - the pedestrian ways that its residents would utilize.

Many concerns of our neighbors are mitigated with a meaningful reduction in the number of units. Contrary to FoxRock's position, a discussion about unit count is relevant and entirely appropriate. HHNA desires to have that discussion and to come to a compromise with the developer.

Six City Councillors have spoken before the Planning Board in support of the neighborhood and have told FoxRock that their proposal is simply too big. So have over 40 residents who have written to the Planning Board, 61 who have signed in opposition to the current plan, and the standing-room-only audiences who packed City Hall on two previous occasions.

The Planning Board's next public hearing on this development is scheduled to continue on November 7th at 7PM in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. We ask that citizens from across Quincy attend to voice their opinion. One of the great assets of Quincy is the strength of its neighborhoods - let's ensure that development in those neighborhoods remains smart, responsible and of appropriate scale.

THE HOSPITAL HILL NEIGHBORHOODS ASSOCIATION

The Hospital Hill Neighborhoods Association (HHNA) was established in 2003 and is committed to maintaining and improving the quality of life in the neighborhoods immediately west of Quincy Center. HHNA has a membership of over 100 families residing in Wards 3 and 5 and welcomes all neighborhood residents to our join our association.

For more information visit www.hhnaquincy.org or email HospitalHillNA@gmail.com