

To the Hingham Historic Districts Commission:

The purpose of this letter is to vigorously oppose the proposal to redevelop the property at 709 Main Street in order to protect the historic nature and beloved beauty of Main Street, preserving what Eleanor Roosevelt reportedly referred to as “the most beautiful Main Street in America.” For context, I was born and raised in Hingham, and for 59 years I have appreciated how Main Street has been preserved and protected (with the sad exception of the loss of the beautiful Elm trees lining the street). It is also a source of great pride to take visitors on a drive down Main Street to point out all the historic houses, barns, and architectural features uncluttered by modern and distasteful encroachments. Without exception, guests are awed by the beauty and preservation of such a quintessentially historic American treasure.

The 709 Main Street proposal is completely out of character for Main Street. Most importantly, its massing and design are completely out of scale and context for the historic district. The nearly 9,000 sq. ft. structure with gigantic slab-sided elevations would be clearly visible from Main Street and Mill Lane. It is an affront to the historic norms of the district and is completely out of character for the area. If approved, not only would Hingham lose a home with substantial architectural and historic significance, this proposal would replace it with a modern, commercial-scale building. No amount of fencing or landscaping can hide the size and scale, or architectural misplacement of this commercial structure. I suggest that the Commission take a formal site visit to the proposed project, including erecting poles and markers to demonstrate the massing and visibility of the design; I’m confident that the Commission and the public would be shocked at the impact and unprecedented size of the proposed structure.

In addition to the massing, the architectural and materials elements of the proposal must be examined closely. The slab-sided elevation alone is completely out of character, and the other features like the decks, railings, and garage doors add to the sense that this is a large commercial structure plopped down in a residential neighborhood. The choice of materials and colors exacerbates the fact that the proposal seeks to replace a treasured circa 1748 historic home with a completely out-of-place modern industrial building.

The Historic Districts Commission has faithfully protected Hingham from excessive departure from its historic roots, while allowing for improvements and repairs by homeowners. I know many residents who worked with the Commission closely to achieve their improvements while maintaining the historic integrity of the structures and continuing the stewardship of their properties. This proposal is completely in opposition to those goals. A developer seeks to maximize scale and mass to earn a profit at the expense of the Town and our history. The developer will walk away with its cash, and the Town will be left with an eyesore for generations, and an irreplaceable piece of history will be lost.

This is a moment for the Commission to stand firm in its mission, but you do not stand alone; lifelong Hinghamites stand with you to protect our history. As one of those, I respectfully urge you to reject the proposed redevelopment of 709 Main Street to preserve our history and the beauty of the most beautiful Main Street in America.

Sincerely,

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