

From: Jonathan J. Liebowitz
To: Littleton Planning Board
Subject: Proposed Development at 336-338 King St.
Date: July 6, 2020

I would like to submit comments on the proposed development at 336-338 King St. I am a member of the Historical Commission, but these thoughts are my own and do not represent those of the Commission, which has not discussed the project. I appreciate very much the care that the recent owners have taken to keep the building in outstanding condition and believe that adaptive re-use, as proposed here, is often the best way to preserve historic resources. I am not opposed to the project as such.

At the outset, it is important to emphasize that the Hager (aka Daniel and Deacon James Kimball) Homestead is recognized to be an exceptional historic property. To cite its Massachusetts Historical Commission survey form, the property is “among the most interesting and distinctive residences in Littleton.” The authors of the survey list it as “contributing to a potential historic district.” (LIT. 87, available on MACRIS) Any additions to the building should prioritize preserving and enhancing its distinctive features, including front façade, brick side walls and four tall chimneys, as well as the scenic landscape on which the building sits. Such additions should not detract from a potential National Register District that would include the Hager Homestead.

Another consideration that should be prioritized is the intention of Littleton townspeople, strongly expressed in the newly adopted “Form-Based Code” zoning, to keep new construction in built-up areas to no taller than 2 ½ stories. While the Hager Homestead is not in the part of Town included in the new zoning, it abuts this area, and the preference for this height would be even stronger here in a residential zone. Another item in the new zoning that should be considered is its preference for the traditional New England “big house, little house, back house, barn” massing, rather than large single structures.

The current proposal for 336-338 King St., with its large, 3-story-plus-roof main structure is out of scale with the existing historic house and with the surrounding neighborhood. Even with the changes made in the recent iterations of the plan, there is still a massive apartment building that overwhelms the existing structure. I hope that the architects could design their addition on what is a very large parcel in a more sympathetic, less obtrusive way.

I have not been able to judge the extent of any demolition proposed for the historic building, but would like to note that if there is significant demolition, it is subject to the Town’s Demolition Delay by-law, which provides for a delay of up to 12 months for any demolition. (Town Code, Ch. 65)