

October 24, 2021

Dear Chair Hai and Select Board Members,

My wife, Carmen Ramos-Kalsow and I have lived at 25 Summit Road for the last 30 years. I am also a preservation architect and want to write you ahead of your October 25th meeting where you will be discussing Article 9 and help address some questions raised recently regarding the proposed local historic district. Much more complete information is given in the **HDC Study Report**.

Over 100 cities and towns in Massachusetts have recognized the value of a local historic district and have established one or more local historic districts in their communities. It has been more than 60 years since Lexington has established an historic district.

Local historic districts have three major purposes as stated in Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40C:

- to preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of the Commonwealth and its cities and towns;
- to maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places;
- to encourage new designs compatible with existing buildings in the district.

Lexington is much more than our role in 1775. We do not need to have lived on Mass Ave to have made significant contributions to our history. We need to welcome diversity in both people and our important architectural and historic achievements. The proposed Mt. Independence local historic district does contain important architectural, landscape architectural and cultural significance properties which is important to preserve for everyone in Lexington. The establishment of a local historic district does not prevent change, but rather the Historic District Commission does provide needed review and oversight. The Historic District Commission (HDC) is the only Commission in Lexington which has the professional background and experience to appropriately review proposed changes to historic buildings which are visible from a public way. The HDC has been performing this review and approval role very well in Lexington for the last 60 years. Inclusion in a local historic district does not prevent change but rather provides appropriate review and oversight.

In 1984, the Cultural Inventory of Follen Hill performed by Lexington Historian, Anne Grady for the Lexington Historical Commission determined that 12 Summit Road was historically significant and that it contains, "perhaps the most significant 20th Century landscape in Lexington". This was before further research determined that the significant landscape as the work of the Olmsted Brothers. In 2000, 52 Follen was determined to be historically significant and included in Lexington's Cultural Inventory. The Massachusetts Historical Commission determined on May 11, 2021 that 12 Summit Rd. is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and recommended that both 12 Summit and 52 Follen be part of a NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT. These properties which formed an artist colony of leading 20th Century artists are the core of the proposed local historic district along with 3 other historically and

architecturally significant houses as well as 2 houses and 2 wooded lots which adjoin the 2 National Register eligible properties and make a contiguous and cohesive district.

The historic significance of the proposed Mt. Independence local historic district was unanimously endorsed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission Commissioners. The historic district has also been unanimously supported by both the Lexington Historic District Commission as well as the Lexington Historic Commission. There has been significant documentation that properties within the proposed historic district are historically important starting 35 years ago.

Not only does Mt Independence meet the criteria established for a local historic district, the two key properties in the LHD also meet the criteria established for the National Register of Historic Places according to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

National Register Criteria for Evaluation The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission has determined that 12 Summit and 52 Follen meet criteria A, B and C. Properties only need to meet one of the criteria to qualify for the National Register.

There are 9 properties in the proposed local historic district. Of the 572 local historic districts in the Commonwealth, 311 (or 54%) are single property historic districts. A LHD could have been proposed which included only 12 Summit or 12 Summit and 52 Follen but a larger and cohesive LHD has been proposed. If the town desires, the district can always be expanded in the future.

It is important for all residents in Lexington that the proposed Mt. Independence Local Historic District is approved and that the Historic District Commission can provide appropriate review and oversight so that we as well as future generations can enjoy the rich heritage represented by the proposed historic district. If the Mt. Independence LHD is not approved we risk loss of important architectural and cultural resources which can never be recovered!

I am not only a neighbor to the proposed local historic district but have been a preservation architect who has restored and renovated hundreds of National Register and many National

Landmark properties throughout New England ranging from the Longfellow Bridge to colonial period houses over the last 40 years. The proposed Mt. Independence local historic district clearly meets the criteria for a local historic district. In Lexington, we value our heritage and should vote to approve the proposed Mt. Independence local historic district. The proposed Mt. Independence local historic district clearly meets the criteria for a local historic district. In Lexington, we value our heritage and should vote to approve the proposed Mt. Independence local historic district

Sincerely,

Wendall C. Kalsow AIA