

November 8, 2021

Town of Lexington Select Board

Attn: Ms. Jill Hai, Chair

Via email to: selectboard@lexingtonma.gov

Dear Chair Hai and Lexington Select Board Members,

I'm writing in strong support of the Mount Independence Local Historic District.

As a Lexington resident, runner, and parent who bikes with kids to school; as the coordinator of the Big Backyard program for Harrington Elementary; as an architect who currently serves as the executive director of the Boston Society of Landscape Architects, I spend my days immersed in the outdoor spaces of Lexington and of the region. In my profession, in volunteer activities, and in daily life, I work on shaping our communities in ways that are climate resilient, equitable, and beautiful and helping young people to consider the landscape around them, too.

Follen Hill is extraordinary. This exceptional collection of artists' houses and early twentieth century suburban residences is a neighborhood that deserves to be preserved as part of the distinct architectural legacy that makes Lexington so unique. In addition, I'd like to underscore that the landscape between the buildings is as essential to the character of this district as the architecture. The trees and terraces and plants and paths are particular to this historic time and place and together they serve to define the experience of Mount Independence. These landscape elements remind present and future generations of the special importance of this place -- the bridle path, the 19th century observatory, that prospect looking out to Boston Harbor, and the Olmsted Brothers design at 12 Summit Road. What's there now is irreplaceable.

With the Olmsteds' century-old redwood at 12 Summit Road in mind, I also write to be a voice for the trees. Earlier this year, I watched a pair of healthy oaks -- each well over 100 years old (we counted rings) -- get ripped out across the street from my house as the lot was cleared for a tear down. Earlier this year, Harrington's wooded Big Backyard path was cleared for new home construction. The mature trees of these now-destroyed landscapes captured carbon, provided habitat, helped to control stormwater, and offered shade for a warming planet. And when combined with the unique design legacy of Follen Hill? The price of destruction is too high.

I'm a design professional; I believe in development, as I believe that eras evolve and we must embrace the future. Establishing a Mount Independence Local Historic District will be a vital tool in helping us do so thoughtfully.

Sincerely,



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cc. **Anne Laurin Eccles, Chair, Lexington Historic Districts Commission, anne.eccles@alelanddesign.com**
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