



Phil Goff, Chair
94 Grafton Street
Arlington, MA 02474

March 30, 2009

Selectman Clarissa Rowe, Chair
Selectman Jack Hurd, Vice-Chair
Selectman Diane Mahon
Selectman Annie Lacourt
Selectman Kevin Greeley

Arlington Board of Selectman
Town Hall, 730 Mass Ave
Arlington MA 02476

Re: Proposed renovation of the Thorndike Field parking lot

Dear Board of Selectman:

The East Arlington Livable Streets (EALS) Coalition is a neighborhood-based advocacy organization founded the fall of 2008. The Coalition includes over 60 neighbors, many of whom regularly attend our monthly meetings at the Fox Library. **Our vision is for a more safe, green and sustainable East Arlington neighborhood that is more walkable and bikeable, containing vibrant business districts and inviting parks.**

The Arlington Recreation Department and Parks and Recreation Commission's current plan for the Thorndike Field parking lot (Concept C-2) is a significant improvement over earlier schemes that enlarged the footprint of the asphalt lot. While EALS supports the public-safety provisions of the plan—the vehicle turnaround and the extension of the Margaret Street sidewalk—we oppose the use of \$170,000 of Town money for the primary purpose of institutionalizing the existing parking lot.

We support a modest-sized parking lot and vehicle turn-around/drop-off zone at Thorndike Field, but, given its lack of use during most days outside of warm-weather weekends, we believe that a 50-60 car parking lot is entirely adequate. Instead of being built beyond the parking lot's current footprint, the new turn-around loop should be instituted within the southern-most bay of the lot, minimizing the impact to the grassy, buffer area immediately to the east. This adjustment will eliminate only 10-12 more parking spaces beyond what's proposed in Option C-2, where six parking spaces are slated for removal from the current count of 72. More importantly, the relocation of the turn-around to the far end of the existing lot will save a large chunk of the project's budget, for the most—if not all—of this turn-around can be accommodated by using paint and signage, with minimal reconstruction of the curbs or new pavement. The funds saved from this redesign should be redirected to make other improvements within the park such as: new benches, a foul-weather shelter, improved lighting, a drinking fountain, enhanced bike parking, a new walking path to the Magnolia Field playground and/or a seasonal restroom or portable toilets. Additionally, a raised crosswalk/speed table along Magnolia Street at the entrance to the parking lot could provide a safer pedestrian connection to Thorndike Field and slow cars as they enter or leave the lot.

We also recommend that the basketball hoops within this zone be retained and improved with new poles, backboards and rims. Currently, this portion of Thorndike Field is designated as “multi-use” within the Open Space zoning category and requires a special permit to continue its use as a parking lot. Despite being poorly

maintained, the basketball hoops are in fact used during the vast majority of the year when the parking lot remains virtually empty. There are two other basketball courts nearby, but the one at Hardy School is off-limits to the general public during school hours and the one at Magnolia Field is in need of significant repair as its southwest corner is sloped 12-18” because of unstable soil conditions.

The Thorndike/Magnolia recreation area is one of East Arlington’s greatest assets and the EALS Coalition would like to reiterate our support for the proposed Thorndike Field drop-off loop and new Margaret Street sidewalk connection. It is a mistake, however, to primarily fund improvements that benefit those who drive to the fields while so many other needs within both Thorndike and Magnolia fields remain ignored. A win-win for the neighborhood, the town and all recreational users of Thorndike Field would include a turn-around zone on the existing paved area and additional amenities more appropriate for a neighborhood green space.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

1-Tore & Kate Kapstad	130 Varnum Street
3-Lynette Martyn & John Crawford	132 Varnum Street
5-Bob Pomeroy & Tiffany Thompson	119 Varnum Street
7-Diane & Noor Hasan	113 Varnum Street
9-Jen and Drew Hite	33 Varnum Street
11-Chad & Michelle Gibson	35 Varnum Street
13-Dave Ward & Sabine Keller	8 Brooks Avenue
15-Bertram Lehman & Daniella Sosa	8 Brooks Avenue
17-Domenic Camelio & Kellie Pini	12 Brooks Avenue
19-Donna LaRue	16 Brooks Avenue
20-Paolo Marinelli & Stacie Hurst	28 Brooks Avenue
22-Ruth County	30 Brooks Avenue
23-Pam DiBona & Adam Gerberick	77 Grafton Street
25-Martin Ferguson	67 Grafton Street
26-Ernst van Nierup	90 Grafton Street
27-Phil Goff & Liza Halley	94 Grafton Street
29-Larry Slotnick & Elizabeth Rocco	94 Grafton Street
31-Melissa MacDonald	26 Franklin Street
32-Thovis Jones	51A Wyman Terrace
33-Sam Cadena	24 Cleveland Street
34-Frank Cunningham & Anne Black	56 Margaret Street
36-Amy Ellentuck	23 Winter Street
38-Parke Wilde & Sarah Huber	24 Amherst Street
39-Lauren Hefferon	30 Marathon Street
40-Angela Alton	91 Harlow Street
41-Todd Bearson	79 Harlow Street
42-Alan Frank	35 Gardner Street
43-David Stoff	88 Fairmont Street

Cc:

Joe Connelly, Department of Parks and Recreation Director
Nathaniel Stevens, Conservation Commission Chair
Ed Starr, Transportation Advisory Committee Chair
Andy West, Redevelopment Board Chair
Leslie Mayer, Parks and Recreation Commission
Brian Sullivan, Town Manager
Jack Johnson, Bicycle Advisory Committee Chair
Kevin O’Brien, Director of Community Planning