



## THE GARDEN CONSERVANCY

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April 21, 2020

Mr. Michael Bushby  
Mass Housing Finance Agency  
One Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02186

Re: 582 Blue Hill Avenue Chapter 40B Application  
MH ID no. 1071

Dear Sir:

In reference to the above application for 120 multi-family rental units and 180 parking spaces to be built at 582 Blue Hill Avenue, Milton, Massachusetts, the Garden Conservancy joins scholars, the Cultural Landscape Foundation, and other cultural organizations in opposing the plan.

The site is an example of living history, representing the work of several significant figures in American architecture and landscape architecture. The landscape and gardens, which would be destroyed by the proposed construction, were designed by the renowned landscape architect Ellen Shipman in 1925, at the height of her career. The garden, known as the McGinley Garden, is a stunning example of Shipman's garden design philosophy: the close integration of house and garden. The design includes a series of three long, narrow descending garden rooms, each with its own distinctive character. Most of the original detail of the garden is intact and the landscape was carefully restored by the previous owners. The Garden Conservancy has had the honor of opening these gardens to the public through our Open Days program several times between 2016 and 2018, drawing keen visitors from all over the world.

The garden also touches on the career of Edith Schryver, who produced drawings for the garden in Shipman's office in the 1920s and went on to partner with Elizabeth Lord, opening Lord & Schryver, the first women-owned landscape architecture firm in the Pacific Northwest.

In addition to razing the garden, the proposed plan also calls for the destruction of a significant country house designed over 75 years ago by famed Boston architects Winslow and Bigelow. The house would be better suited to adaptive reuse. The proposed massive housing project is also out of scale for a quiet, secluded, residential area in the Town of Milton.

Given the McGinley Garden's historic significance and its distinctive and iconic garden design, as well as its strong connection to pioneering women in American landscape architecture, this garden should be preserved, not destroyed. This important piece of cultural heritage, created by a woman who is one of America's premier landscape architects, should be treasured and preserved for the education and inspiration of generations to come.

Noted historian Judith Tankard, author of *Ellen Shipman and the American Garden* (updated in 2018) and recipient of the Gold Medal from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for her role in the advancement of historic New England gardens, adds, “The McGinley Garden is a rare example of a private garden by the renowned landscape architect, Ellen Shipman, that has been thoughtfully repaired, planted, and maintained. Most of Shipman’s few surviving gardens, such as the Cummer Museum and Longue Vue, are in the public domain. In recent years, hundreds of visitors enjoyed visiting the McGinley Garden on Garden Conservancy Open Days. Located in a quiet, leafy residential community, the house and garden should be saved as an important cultural resource, rather than replaced by a massive housing project.”

The Garden Conservancy is the nation’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, sharing, and celebrating America’s gardens and diverse gardening traditions for the education and inspiration of the public. We champion the vital role that gardens play in our history and our shared cultural heritage. We believe that the proposed development and its destruction of this significant landscape will have an adverse effect on the character and quality of life of the Town of Milton.

On behalf of the Garden Conservancy and our board of directors, I thank you for your thoughtful review of the application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Brayton Hall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "B".

James Brayton Hall  
President and CEO

cc: Mr. Michael Dennehy, Town Administrator, Town of Milton Select Board, Milton, MA