



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
Department of Planning & Community Development
730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, Massachusetts 02476

Public Hearing Memorandum

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Arlington Redevelopment Board and public with technical information and a planning analysis to assist with the regulatory decision-making process.

To: Arlington Redevelopment Board

From: Jennifer Raitt, Secretary Ex Officio

Subject: Environmental Design Review, 1500 Massachusetts Ave, Arlington, MA
Docket #3633

Date: September 9, 2020

I. Docket Summary

This is an application by 1500 Mass Ave, LLC to construct a new mixed-use building with four (4) residential units and one (1) commercial unit at 1500 Massachusetts Avenue. The opening of Special Permit Docket #3633 will allow the Board to review and approve the development in the B1 Neighborhood Office District under Section 3.4 Environmental Design Review (EDR).

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

Application for EDR Special Permit including dimensional and parking information, building and site plans, existing site conditions, proposed landscaping, photographs, impact statement, building elevation and renderings, LEED checklist, and signage details dated August 20, 2020.

II. Application of Special Permit Criteria (Arlington Zoning Bylaw, Section 3.3)

1. Section 3.3.3.A.

The use requested is listed as a Special Permit in the use regulations for the applicable district or is so designated elsewhere in this Bylaw.

A mixed-use building allowed in the B1 Neighborhood Office District with a Special Permit under the jurisdiction of the ARB due to its location on Massachusetts Avenue. The Board can find that this condition is met.

2. Section 3.3.3.B.

The requested use is essential or desirable to the public convenience or welfare.

The Master Plan recommends supporting commercial areas by encouraging new mixed-use redevelopment, including residential and commercial uses, in and near commercial corridors. This new development is in close proximity to the Arlington Heights commercial district, and businesses along Massachusetts Avenue. The corridor is well served by transit and existing infrastructure. This project will provide a net increase of one residential unit and new office space. The Board can find that this condition is met.

3. Section 3.3.3.C.

The requested use will not create undue traffic congestion or unduly impair pedestrian safety.

The proposed new building and use will not create undue traffic congestion or unduly impair pedestrian safety. The Board can find that this condition is met.

4. Section 3.3.3.D.

The requested use will not overload any public water, drainage or sewer system or any other municipal system to such an extent that the requested use or any developed use in the immediate area or in any other area of the Town will be unduly subjected to hazards affecting health, safety, or the general welfare.

The proposed new building and use will not overload any municipal systems. The Board can find that this condition is met.

5. Section 3.3.3.E.

Any special regulations for the use as may be provided in the Bylaw are fulfilled.

All such regulations are fulfilled.

6. Section 3.3.3.F.

The requested use will not impair the integrity or character of the district or adjoining districts, nor be detrimental to the health or welfare.

The use does not impair the integrity or character of the B1 district or adjoining districts and will not be detrimental to health or welfare. The Board can find that this condition is met.

7. Section 3.3.3.G.

The requested use will not, by its addition to a neighborhood, cause an excess of the use that could be detrimental to the character of said neighborhood.

The use will not be in excess or detrimental to the character of the neighborhood. The Board can find that this condition is met.

III. Environmental Design Review Standards (Arlington Zoning Bylaw, Section 3.4)

1. EDR-1 Preservation of Landscape

The landscape shall be preserved in its natural state, insofar as practicable, by minimizing tree and soil removal, and any grade changes shall be in keeping with the general appearance of neighboring developed areas.

The current lot is vacant following demolition of the former three-family structure and removal of vegetation. The proposed new development will introduce new landscaping materials and will be regraded which is in keeping with the general appearance of neighboring developed areas. The Board can find that this condition is met.

2. EDR-2 Relation of the Building to the Environment

Proposed development shall be related harmoniously to the terrain and to the use, scale, and architecture of the existing buildings in the vicinity that have functional or visible relationship to the proposed buildings. The Arlington Redevelopment Board may require a modification in massing so as to reduce the effect of shadows on the abutting property in an R0, R1 or R2 district or on public open space.

The proposed new building design relates to the neighborhood and vicinity. Neighboring structures include a small restaurant and a 12-unit multifamily apartment building on the 1500 block of Massachusetts Avenue and one- and two-family buildings across Massachusetts Avenue. The proposed new building height will not shadow abutting properties in the R1 residential district. This is primarily because of the grade change between those properties and the proposed new building. Additionally, the former structure was close in height to this proposed new building. The Board can find that this condition is met.

3. EDR-3 Open Space

All open space (landscaped and usable) shall be so designed as to add to the visual amenities of the vicinity by maximizing its visibility for persons passing by the site or overlooking it from nearby properties. The location and configuration of usable open space shall be so designed as to encourage social interaction, maximize its utility and facilitate maintenance.

The proposed open space primarily appears in a 25 foot front setback from the sidewalk along Massachusetts Avenue. There are additional pockets of landscaping on site, including new trees and smaller plantings. The Board can find that this condition is met.

4. EDR-4 Circulation

With respect to vehicular and pedestrian and bicycle circulation, including entrances, ramps, walkways, drives, and parking, special attention shall be given to location and number of access points to the public streets (especially in relation to existing traffic controls and mass transit facilities), width of interior drives and access points, general interior circulation, separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, access to community facilities, and arrangement of vehicle parking and bicycle parking areas, including bicycle parking spaces required by Section 6.1.12 that are safe and convenient and, insofar as practicable, do not detract from the use and enjoyment of proposed buildings and structures and the neighboring properties.

The applicant is seeking a parking reduction through Section 6.1.5 and has submitted a Transportation Demand Management ([TDM](#)) Plan accordingly. The proposed commercial use would require two parking spaces. In mixed-use developments, the first 3,000 square feet of non-residential space is exempt from parking requirements. The residential use includes four, two-bedroom residential units. Each two-bedroom unit is required to have 1.5 vehicle parking spaces per unit. The applicant will have five vehicle parking spaces in the driveway. [The applicant proposes providing preferential parking for carpooling vehicles as part of the TDM Plan. Additional information on how this will be successful in a relatively small development will be needed to assess its appropriateness for the TDM Plan and the requested parking reduction pursuant to Section 6.1.5.](#)

Related to bicycle parking, in Section 6.1.12(A), the commercial use requires 0.50 short-term spaces and 0.30 long-term spaces and the residential use requires 0.40 short-term spaces and 6 long-term spaces. The applicant has included a total of 2 short-term and 8 long-term bicycle parking spaces.

The vehicle parking spaces and overall site circulation may be constrained. The stacked parking on the side entry aisle appears narrow and the side exit aisle also appears narrow. Compact parking spaces may be recommended and additional safety measures installed onsite to accommodate vehicles and pedestrians on the property.

5. EDR-5 Surface Water Drainage

Special attention shall be given to proper site surface drainage so that removal of surface waters will not adversely affect neighboring properties or the public storm drainage system. Available Best Management Practices for the site should be employed, and include site planning to minimize impervious surface and reduce clearing and re-grading. Best Management Practices may include erosion control and stormwater treatment by means of swales, filters, plantings, roof gardens, native

vegetation, and leaching catch basins. Stormwater should be treated at least minimally on the development site; that which cannot be handled on site shall be removed from all roofs, canopies, paved and pooling areas and carried away in an underground drainage system. Surface water in all paved areas shall be collected in intervals so that it will not obstruct the flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic and will not create puddles in the paved areas.

In accordance with Section 3.3.4., the Board may require from any applicant, after consultation with the Director of Public Works, security satisfactory to the Board to insure the maintenance of all stormwater facilities such as catch basins, leaching catch basins, detention basins, swales, etc. within the site. The Board may use funds provided by such security to conduct maintenance that the applicant fails to do.

The Board may adjust in its sole discretion the amount and type of financial security such that it is satisfied that the amount is sufficient to provide for any future maintenance needs.

The site includes permeable pavers and the driveway includes permeable material systems. The applicant is working with the Town Engineer on a review of the stormwater plan.

6. EDR-6 Utilities Service

Electric, telephone, cable TV, and other such lines of equipment shall be underground. The proposed method of sanitary sewage disposal and solid waste disposal from all buildings shall be indicated.

There will be no changes to the existing utility service infrastructure as a result of this proposal. The Board can find that this condition is met.

7. EDR-7 Advertising Features

The size, location, design, color, texture, lighting and materials of all permanent signs and outdoor advertising structures or features shall not detract from the use and enjoyment of proposed buildings and structures and the surrounding properties.

The proposal includes some signage that is compliant with the B1 Neighborhood Office District. Final signage will need to be submitted, reviewed, and approved.

8. EDR-8 Special Features

Exposed storage areas, exposed machinery installations, service areas, truck loading areas, utility buildings and structures, and similar accessory areas and structures shall be subject to such setbacks, screen plantings or other screening methods as shall reasonably be required to prevent their being incongruous with the existing or contemplated environment and the surrounding properties.

The proposed new building's special features will be properly screened and situated on the property to minimize exposure of service and utility areas. All special features will be housed inside the new building. The Board can find that this condition is met.

9. EDR-9 Safety

With respect to personal safety, all open and enclosed spaces shall be designed to facilitate building evacuation and maximize accessibility by fire, police and other emergency personnel and equipment. Insofar as practicable, all exterior spaces and interior public and semi-public spaces shall be so designed to minimize the fear and probability of personal harm or injury by increasing the potential surveillance by neighboring residents and passersby of any accident or attempted criminal act.

The proposed new building will conform to all code requirements for open and enclosed spaces. The building design and features will increase safety. The Board can find that this condition is met.

10. EDR-10 Heritage

With respect to Arlington's heritage, removal or disruption of historic, traditional or significant uses, structures or architectural elements shall be minimized insofar as practical whether these exist on the site or on adjacent properties.

The former three-family structure which was located on this property and demolished was not listed on the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington* and is not under the jurisdiction of the Arlington Historical Commission. There are not any adjacent properties listed on the Inventory. The Board can find that this condition is met.

11. EDR-11 Microclimate

With respect to the localized climatic characteristics of a given area, any development which proposes new structures, new hard surface, ground coverage or the installation of machinery which emits heat, vapor or fumes shall endeavor to minimize insofar as practicable, any adverse impacts on light, air and water resources or on noise and temperature levels of the immediate environment.

The proposed new building includes an added non-permeable footprint due to the parking lot driveway flow and circulation on this modest parcel. The new hard surface and ground coverage will not have adverse impacts on the microclimate. The Board can find that this condition is met.

12. EDR-12 Sustainable Building and Site Design

Projects are encouraged to incorporate best practices related to sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. Applicants must submit a current Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) checklist, appropriate to

the type of development, annotated with narrative description that indicates how the LEED performance objectives will be incorporated into the project.

A LEED checklist has been provided which indicates that the development as proposed scores 39 points. Additional attention could be paid to incorporating additional best practices on-site to achieve at least a 40 point score. The applicant should focus on including additional sustainability and performance features that will enhance energy and atmosphere and indoor environmental quality for future building tenants.

IV. Conditions

1. The final design, sign, exterior material, landscaping, and lighting plans shall be subject to the approval of the Arlington Redevelopment Board or administratively approved by the Department of Planning and Community Development. Any substantial or material deviation during construction from the approved plans and specifications is subject to the written approval of the Arlington Redevelopment Board
2. Any substantial or material deviation during construction from the approved plans and specifications is subject to the written approval of the Arlington Redevelopment Board.
3. The Board maintains continuing jurisdiction over this permit and may, after a duly advertised public hearing, attach other conditions or modify these conditions as it deems appropriate in order to protect the public interest and welfare.
4. Snow removal from all parts of the site, as well as from any abutting public sidewalks, shall be the responsibility of the owner and shall be accomplished in accordance with Town Bylaws.
5. Trash shall be picked up only on Monday through Friday between the hours of 7:00 am and 6:00 pm. All exterior trash and storage areas on the property, if any, shall be properly screened and maintained in accordance with the Town Bylaws.
6. The Applicant shall provide a statement from the Town Engineer that all proposed utility services have adequate capacity to serve the development.
7. Upon installation of landscaping materials and other site improvements, the Applicant shall remain responsible for such materials and improvement and shall replace and repair as necessary to remain in compliance with the approved site plan.
8. Upon the issuance of the building permit the Applicant shall file with the Inspectional Services Department and the Police Department the names and

telephone numbers of contact personnel who may be reached 24 hours each day during the construction period.

9. Any final building signage will be reviewed and approved by the Department of Planning and Community Development and Inspectional Services.