



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, 400-402 Massachusetts Ave, Arlington, MA
Docket #3638

Date: November 19, 2020

I. Docket Summary

This is an application by 400-402 Mass Avenue, LLC to establish a mixed-use building with four (4) residential units and (1) office unit in an existing building at 400-402 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).

A 1980 Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) decision was issued relative to this property which limited the number of residential units on the property to two (2) with one (1) onsite parking space per dwelling unit. The Special Permit decision also conditioned the entrance to the basement office be from the front of the building with an open stairway leading down from the front inside entrance and clearly marked as to how to enter the basement office.

On June 23, 2020, the ZBA issued a decision (attached) amending the 1980 decision. The ZBA found that it would be appropriate for the ARB to evaluate the application under Environmental Design Review as the ARB is the Special Permit Granting Authority for the site and proposed use. The ZBA decided that if the ARB grant a special permit after finding that all applicable review criteria are met then the four conditions of the 1980 Special

Permit would be withdrawn. If the ARB does not grant a special permit, then the 1980 conditions would stand.

The Applicant does not propose any exterior changes to the existing building. Based on the information presented in the application materials, the Applicant is seeking review by the ARB in order to convert office space into dwelling units. If there are any exterior changes proposed, including signage, the Applicant must seek a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Arlington Historic Districts Commission due to being located within the Avon Place Historic District.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

- Application for EDR Special Permit including dimensional and parking information, dated October 15, 2020 and updated November 7, 2020;
- Narrative and impact statement dated October 15, 2020 and updated November 7, 2020;
- LEED Considerations, prepared by Lagrasse Yanowitz & Feyl, dated October 15, 2020 and updated November 7, 2020;
- Building Façade Photos, dated October 15, 2020 and updated November 7, 2020;
- Existing Floor Plans, prepared by Lagrasse Yanowitz & Feyl, dated January 14, 2020; and
- Proposed Floor Plans, prepared by Lagrasse Yanowitz & Feyl, dated May 28, 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.

The use is 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 redevelopment, including residential and commercial uses, in and near commercial corridors. This building is located in the Arlington Center commercial district and in close proximity to amenities located on Massachusetts Avenue. The corridor is served by transit and the site by existing infrastructure. This project will provide a net increase of two residential units. 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 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 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 proposed 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 proposed 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.

There are no exterior changes proposed. Existing landscaping at the front of the building and along the Avon Place sidewalk will remain. 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 existing building is situated in a stretch of Massachusetts Avenue in Arlington Center that is zoned B1. Within this district there are: two mixed-use buildings of residential and office space; a funeral home; two two-family dwellings; a three-family dwelling; and a single-family dwelling. The proposed mix of office space and residential space is consistent with the current uses in this B1 district. With no exterior changes to the existing building at 400-402 Massachusetts Avenue, there will be no change to the existing architectural pattern along this stretch of Massachusetts Avenue. 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 existing open space remains as there are no exterior changes to the existing structure. The site includes 864 square feet of landscaped open space and zero square feet of usable open space. 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 proposing six parking spaces on site, and is requesting a parking reduction per Section 6.1.5. The parking requirement for the building is as follows:

Parking Requirement			
		<u>Zoning Requirement</u>	<u>Total Parking Required</u>
Office Space	630 sf	1/500 sf*	0
Residential	3 one-bed 1 two-bed	1.15 spaces per one-bed 1.5 spaces per two-bed	5 spaces
Total Parking			6 spaces
Section 6.1.5 Reduction			Not necessary
Total Parking Provided			6 spaces
* First 3,000 sf of non-residential space in mixed-use projects is exempt.			

Because the first 3,000 square feet of mixed-use buildings is exempt from the parking requirement (Section 6.1.10.C.), providing six parking spaces is consistent with the requirements of Section 6.1 and a parking reduction under Section 6.1.5 is not necessary. However, the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan is accepted and should be implemented. The TDM Plan includes providing covered bicycle parking and storage, providing an electric charging station, and installing a shower in the office unit. While these items seem appropriate for the proposal, the Applicant should clarify the following: specify if a shower is proposed; identify where the EV charger will be installed; and provide details on how the covered bicycle storage will be provided, including the number of short- and long-term bicycle parking spaces per Section 6.1.12(A).

Providing tandem (stacked) parking is allowed per the bylaw and the parking spaces appear to be sized appropriately. The Applicant should provide additional information on how the six parking spaces will be assigned to limit conflicts among the building tenants.

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.

No stormwater controls are present on the site, and the proposal does not trigger the addition of additional controls. However, stormwater from the roof appears to sheet flow off the property and the Applicant could investigate ways to better control and mitigate flow before it reaches the street.

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 application materials do not include any information about new signage at the building, nor does the application indicate whether the existing office signage will be removed. Final signage plans will need to be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the ARB and the Historic Districts Commission as this property is located in the Avon Place Historic District.

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 application materials do not provide any information about how solid waste and recycling will be screened and maintained. The photos provided with the application materials show totes placed along the building rear. The Applicant should provide either a closed and screened area at the building rear or space within the building for waste and recycling.

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 existing building provides safe and convenient access into and around the property. 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.

Based on the information presented in the applicant materials, there are no proposed exterior changes to the existing building. If there are any exterior changes proposed, including signage, the Applicant must seek a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Arlington Historic Districts Commission due to being located within the Avon Place Historic District. 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.

There are no proposed changes that would affect 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 was not provided, but a memo from Lagrasse Yanowitz & Feyl provides an overview of the sustainable building practices that will be incorporated as part of the renovation. The Board can find that this condition is met.

IV. Findings

1. The proposed project is approved under Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review.

V. Conditions

1. The final design and sign 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. All utilities serving or traversing the site (including electric, telephone, cable, and other such lines and equipment) shall be underground.

7. 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.
8. Any final building signage will be reviewed and approved by the Arlington Historic Districts Commission, Department of Planning and Community Development, and Inspectional Services.
9. The Final Transportation Demand Management Plan shall be submitted for review and approval by the Department of Planning and Community Development.