



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, 1416-1420 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA
Docket #3646

Date: February 17, 2021

I. Docket Summary

This is an application by 1420 Massachusetts Avenue, LLC, c/o Bierbrier Development, 420 Bedford Street, Lexington, MA, to reconstruct the Citizens Bank and make other site improvements at 1416-1420 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA in the B4 Vehicular Oriented Business District. The opening of the Special Permit is to allow the Board to review and approve the development under Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review, and Section 6.2, Signs.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

- Application for EDR Special Permit;
- Proposed Site Plan Documents, prepared by Bohler Engineering, dated January 21, 2021;
- Conceptual Elevations, prepared by BKA Architects, dated January 20, 2021;
- Drainage Memorandum, prepared by Bohler Engineering, dated January 21, 2021;
- Sign Submittal Package, prepared by AGI, revised January 14, 2021.

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 bank with more than 2,000 square feet of gross floor area with drive-up banking services requires a special permit. A bank has operated at this location since 1977. 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 banking use is essential and desirable for the public convenience and welfare. The continuation of the use and the upgrades to the building and site are in the public's interest. The Board can find 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 existing traffic and circulation patterns at the site will remain the same. The fifteen off-street parking spaces will be retained. Pedestrian safety will be improved through the creation of an ADA compliant pathway from the sidewalk to the bank entrance. The plaza at the edge of the sidewalk is inviting and provides space for pedestrians to rest. The Board can find 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.

A bank has operated in this location since the 1970s and will not overload any municipal systems. There is a decrease in impervious surfaces associated with the reconstruction of the Citizens Bank. Currently, most stormwater water flows into the municipal system. The new design will detain roof runoff onsite to the south of the building. The Board can find this condition met.

5. Section 3.3.3.E.

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

There are no special regulations for this particular use. The Board can find this condition met.

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 continuation of the bank use, a use that has existed onsite since the late 1970s, will not impair the integrity or character of the district or adjoining districts, nor be detrimental to the health and welfare. The Board can find 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 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 existing site condition is developed. The landscaping around the perimeter of the site will remain in its current state. With the reconstruction of the building, new landscaping will be installed around the new building and down to the sidewalk. The Board can find this condition 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 building will be reconstructed in general the same location as the existing building. The proposed one-story building provides some visual interest with the over-height entrance, but the long façade facing Massachusetts Avenue may not be an improvement from the pedestrian-oriented entrance of the existing bank building. The addition of the plaza at the sidewalk will be an asset to the Arlington Heights business district, provides seating and bicycle parking, and provides a connection between the front door of the bank and the public sidewalk.

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 landscaped open space requirement is 10% for this permitted use. The amount of landscaped open space will increase from 23% to 28% with the proposed reconstruction of the building. 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 existing 15 parking spaces will be retained onsite. The existing building at 4,366 square feet required 15 parking spaces, but the new building at 2,400 square feet only requires 8 parking spaces. The bank should consider further reducing the amount of impervious surfaces on the site by eliminating some of the parking, especially due to the availability of on-street parking on Massachusetts Avenue in the business district.

The circulation on the site remains the same, and the elimination of the canopy and islands will eliminate any potential for property damage. The circulation is set 10 feet off of the rear property line and a series of retaining walls negotiate the slope between the property and the residential properties located in the R2 District to the north of the site. Section 5.3.21 requires that there be a 15-foot buffer. Due to the space on the site to the rear of the building and the additional parking spaces that may not be necessary, there may be the ability to provide a buffer in compliance with this section of the Zoning Bylaw.

The site plans indicate that there will be two short-term bicycle parking spaces located off of the plaza at the sidewalk, in compliance with the requirements for short-term bicycle parking. Additionally, the style of bike rack shown in the application materials is discouraged by the Bicycle Parking Guidelines. The applicant should review those Guidelines and select a different type of bike rack. Further, the application materials do not address the compliance with the long-term bicycle parking at the site. At least one long-term bicycle parking space needs to be provided.

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 ensure 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.**

A Drainage Memorandum has been prepared for the proposed redevelopment of this site. It does indicate that there is an improvement to runoff rates and volume from the site due to the decrease in impervious surfaces. The existing system will remain in place, although some roof runoff will be directed to landscaped areas on site. The Board can find this condition is met.

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.

Existing utilities will be reused and upgraded as necessary. The Board can find 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 applicant submitted an updated sign package with a number of signs proposed:

1. The existing monument sign will be refaced in compliance with Section 6.2;
2. Two identical wall signs located at either corner of the main entrance of the building measuring 15.625 square feet each;
3. A large Citizens Bank logo on the Massachusetts Avenue windows;
4. Citizens Bank signage on the main entrance doors; and
5. The hours of operation and other information noted on the entrance door is exempt.

The updated signage package removed the wall sign on the drive thru elevation as it was identified as being in excess of the signage allowed by Section 6.2.

The large window logo facing Massachusetts Avenue provides some visual interest and may obscure views looking into the building, but no information is provided to document the size of the logo. The signage on the doors is compliant with Section 6.2.

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.

There are no such special features proposed for the site. The Board can find 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.

As noted in the application materials, security of the bank building was taken into consideration regarding the placement of landscaping around the building and the location of windows. The Board can find 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 existing structure is not listed on the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington* nor is it under the jurisdiction of the Arlington Historical Commission. As such, the site contains no historic, traditional or significant uses, structures or architectural elements. 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 will impact 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.

The application materials indicate that the building will meet existing energy codes and will include low-flow plumbing fixtures and efficient appliances. A LEED Checklist was provided and indicates that the project would receive a low level of certification.

IV. Findings

1. The ARB finds that the project is consistent with Environmental Design Review per Section 3.4 of the Zoning Bylaw.

V. Conditions

General

1. The final design, sign, exterior material, landscaping, and lighting plans shall be subject to the approval of the Arlington Redevelopment Board at the time when future operators are identified. 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. Upon installation of landscaping materials and other site improvements, the owner shall remain responsible for such materials and improvement and shall replace and repair as necessary to remain in compliance with the approved site plan.
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.