



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, 925-927 Massachusetts Ave, Arlington, MA
Re-open Docket #2182

Date: October 10, 2018

I. Docket Summary

This is an application by Richard Fraiman of BF Arlington Properties, LLC to construct an addition to and renovation of the existing structure at 925-927 Massachusetts Avenue. The applicant also requests a parking reduction. The re-opening of the Special Permit is to allow the Board to review and approve the proposed construction and renovation, under Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review, because of its location on Massachusetts Avenue and the parking reduction, under Section 6.1.5, Parking Reduction in Business, Industrial and Multi-Family Residential Zones.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:
Application for EDR Special Permit, Narrative, Site Plan, Floor Plans, Elevations, and Landscape Plan details dated August 17, 2018.

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 mixed use structure (residential and office space) has been found to be a legal nonconforming use in the R-5, apartment district/low density zone, by the Building Inspector. 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 promotes mixed-use as a means to revitalize business districts, by bringing customers and street life to commercial areas. This project will provide updated and attractive office space as well as family-sized rental 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 project includes creating a formal parking lot at the rear of the property, although the existing circulation will not change. The proposal includes stripping nine parking spaces and 1 accessible parking space, and improvement of the current haphazard parking conditions at the rear of the property. 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 existing structure has operated in this location for many years without overloading any public utilities. 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 neighborhood. The proposed renovations will unify the existing storefront with the residential structure behind in an attractive building that will improve the streetscape. 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 property is almost entirely impervious and has no natural landscape to preserve. As part of the project, landscaping beds will be added to the rear of the property, along the southern property line, and along the sidewalk. The new landscaping will improve the condition of the property. 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 structure consists of two disparate parts: the single story commercial storefront and the residential structure behind. The proposed project will unify the existing single floor storefront with the rest of the building that is primarily residential by adding a story, a pitched roof line, and residential style windows. The existing structure also has prominent dormers, which will be better incorporated into the roof line as part of the proposed project. 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.

As noted above, the proposed project will add areas of landscaping to an existing impervious site. The applicant materials indicated that there will be 841 square feet of

landscaped open space and 250 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 proposed project will maintain all existing circulation. As required by the Zoning Bylaw, each of the three 3-bedroom units requires 2 parking spaces per unit and 1 parking space per 500 square feet of commercial space for a total of 12 parking spaces. However, the proposal only provides 1 parking space per residential unit for a total of 9 parking spaces on the property. Given the proximity to a bus stop for multiple bus routes along Mass Ave and due to the non-competing uses proposed, the Board could find the parking reduction warranted. The Board may also want additional information regarding bicycle parking on the property which is not clearly shown on the application materials.

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 application materials note that two dry wells will be installed beneath the parking lot at the rear of the site to capture stormwater from the rear downspouts and the parking lot. This is an improvement over the existing conditions. However, there is no indication of where these units will be installed or whether they are appropriately sized for the structure and parking lot. Additionally, no information regarding the maintenance of the dry wells is included in the application materials. The Board can find that this condition is met, but may want additional material submitted for review by the Town Engineer.

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 utility service 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.

There is no information provided in the application materials regarding the signage plan for the three commercial spaces proposed in the renovated building. It is anticipated that any tenant that desires to install signage in compliance with the Zoning Bylaw would have to return to the Department of Planning and Community Development for further approval, and a condition to that effect is proposed.

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.

No changes are proposed. 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.

No changes are proposed. 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.

While the property is included in a Massachusetts Historical Commission Cultural Resource Area (ARL.R), the existing structure is not listed nor is it under the jurisdiction of the Arlington Historical Commission. 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.

No changes are proposed. 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.

No changes are proposed. The Board can find that this condition is met.

IV. Conditions

A. General

1. The final plans and specifications for all signs shall be subject to final approval by the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).

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.