



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

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**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, 882-892 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA  
Docket #3625

**Date:** May 14, 2020

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**I. Docket Summary**

This is an application by 882-892 Massachusetts Ave., LLC to demolish an existing one-story brick building and construct a mixed-use building at 882-892 Massachusetts Avenue. The proposed building is located in the B2 Neighborhood Business District per Section 5.5. The Board will review and approve the proposed construction under Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review, because the building is mixed-use. The proposed uses include 750 square feet of commercial space (one commercial use) and twenty-two (22) residential units comprised of eighteen (18) one-bedroom and four (4) studio units. The proposed project meets the threshold for the inclusionary housing requirements; therefore, three (3) units of the 22 total units must be made affordable per Section 8.2 of the Zoning Bylaw. The site is comprised of two adjoining lots: 882-888 Massachusetts Avenue and 890-892 Massachusetts Avenue.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

Application for EDR Special Permit, April 21, 2020

Supplemental information including dimensional and parking information, Plans and Rendering by Allen & Major Associates, Inc., correspondence from Kristen Welch, Greater Metropolitan Real Estate, LEED v4 for Building Design and Construction: Homes and Multifamily Lowrise checklist by Market Square Architects, LLC, Stormwater Management Plan, including Drainage Summary and Site Development Plan Set dated April 10, 2020 from Allen & Major Associates, Inc.

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.**

Mixed-use is allowed by Special Permit in the B2 Neighborhood Business District. The Zoning Bylaw, in Section 5.5.1 B, indicates that the district is intended for small retail and service establishments serving the needs of adjacent neighborhoods and oriented to pedestrian traffic; and mixed-use buildings. Mixed-use is a combination of two or more distinct land uses, such as those proposed by this applicant, and the definition encourages such uses to be located in a single, multi-story structure, such as that proposed by the applicant. The B2 Zoning District is limited to this one site. The adjacent zoning districts include B4, R6, B2A, and R2. The neighborhood includes mixed-use buildings, commercial buildings, Arlington High School, and a mix of residential buildings which includes single- and two-family homes and a neighboring 33-unit, 5-story apartment building. 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 requested use is essential and desirable. The second key finding in the Master Plan notes that *"Massachusetts Avenue has the capacity for growth. It can support mixed-use development commensurate with its function as Arlington's primary commercial corridor. Massachusetts Avenue is accessible to neighborhoods throughout the town; it has frequent bus service, bicycle routes, and good walkability. Increased density through greater building heights and massing would benefit the corridor from an urban design perspective and benefit the town from a fiscal perspective."*(p.8)

This proposal will bring twenty-two (22) new 1-bedroom and studio residential units, of which three will be affordable to households earning at or below 70% of the area median income, and one commercial space. The Town has clearly established affordable housing priorities described in its Housing Production Plan (adopted by the Select Board and Redevelopment Board and approved by the State in 2016). There continues to be a need to create new housing opportunities, including market-rate and affordable homes, in the community; this project helps address that demand. We recommend a mix of units to include a range of one-, two- and three-bedroom units.

Additionally, the commercial space could be convenient for the surrounding neighborhood which includes abutting residential, commercial, and institutional uses in the following districts: B4, R6, B2A, and R2. Furthermore, there is a supermarket approximately 150 feet from the property and additional neighborhood businesses in the immediate vicinity, including banks, restaurants, a pharmacy, gift shop, exercise studio, pre-school, and Arlington High School. A bus stop with shelter serving multiple routes is on Massachusetts Avenue directly in front of the building. 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 25 surface parking spaces for cars and forty (40) short- and long-term, indoor and outdoor spaces for bicycles, for building tenants and visitors. The proposed project improves pedestrian safety by reconstructing portions of the sidewalk and resetting granite curbing around the perimeter of the property on Lockland Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue. We recommend reducing parking for cars to increase the rear buffer. The project must increase long-term parking for bicycles as required in the Zoning Bylaw. 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.**

A Drainage Summary letter indicates that standards have been met with the proposed stormwater design, including the addition of landscaped areas to the site, a reduction of impervious area, and new catch basin and sump for treatment and reduction of runoff rates. The proposed project will improve, not overload, 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.**

As a condition of any decision for the proposed mixed-use building, the applicant will need to fulfill the requirements of the Affordable Housing bylaw, including making three units that are representative of the mix of units in the building available to eligible households making up to 70% of the area median income. Three units must be shown on the plan and all units must be equitably dispersed throughout the proposed building. There are no other special regulations for the use that must be fulfilled. The Board can find that this condition is 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 proposed building departs from the turn of the last century commercial block architecture as seen in the existing single-story brick building. The property owner explored redevelopment of the property in 1988 and the Board issued an Environmental Design Review Special Permit to allow the addition of up to six, two-bedroom apartments above the existing brick building. The addition was never developed and the permit eventually lapsed.

The requested mixed-use building is in keeping with adjacent land uses, particularly along Massachusetts Avenue. New residential units will not impair the integrity or character of the district or the adjoining districts and it will not be detrimental to health or welfare. The proposed structure is generally consistent with the Design Standards for the Town of Arlington. The proposal removes a more active ground floor uses which are encouraged along Massachusetts Avenue per the Design Standards.

The building materials will include a brick first story followed by clapboard on the 2<sup>nd</sup> story, fiber cement panels on the 3<sup>rd</sup> story, and a board and batten façade on the 4<sup>th</sup> story. Additional attention should be given to this façade and selected building materials; the applicant should improve the design pattern to enhance the building elevation and its prominence on the streetscape. The building includes a step back above the third story in order to minimize the building mass. The building also includes differentiation of the upper story and variation in the façade with added terraces on the top story, which is encouraged in the Design Standards. The building is also set back from the sidewalk and provides a buffer along Lockland Avenue. Bicycle parking is available and vehicular parking is located behind the building. Signage and wayfinding details should be provided by the applicant.

**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 there is no natural landscape to preserve. As part of the project, approximately 1,470 square feet of impervious material will be replaced with landscaped areas, including 4 flowering trees and a combination of arborvitae, shrubs, and perennial plantings along the property edges. The new landscaping will improve the condition of the property and provide buffers along Lockland Avenue and along the adjacent building at 898 Massachusetts Avenue. An additional landscaped buffer along the eastern edge of the property would be possible if the number of parking spaces is reduced per Section 8.2 and the lot spacing reconfigured. We also recommend that higher caliper trees be planted rather than the

two proposed smaller caliper red maples and the one shadblow serviceberry smaller caliper tree. 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.**

There are a range of architectural styles in the vicinity. The proposed development is located in the B2 Neighborhood Business District which is limited to this one site which includes a parking lot and the existing single-story brick building. Heights in the vicinity range from single-story to five-story. The B2A District, across the street, includes a three-story mixed-use building on the former site of a garage. As the Town's Design Standards indicate, greater height in certain locations can be beneficial. The proposed building step-back helps to diminish the impact of overall building height. There is a modest set back from the sidewalk which differs from the existing building setback against the street edge. Improved building façade treatments that relate to the building's prominent location and a more active street level use would improve the overall relationship of the building to the environment.

**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 proposal includes approximately 1,440 square feet of usable open space along the perimeter of the building, as well as plantings along Lockland Avenue and the western edge of the property. While the proposal meets the landscaped open space requirement at 10.2%, approximately 8% of additional usable open space is required to meet that requirement. The applicant should identify the areas of landscaped open space and usable open space on the site plan.

Additionally, the setback for the proposed building is on a corner lot meaning that the setback should be the same as an adjacent lot. On the Mass Ave frontage, the adjoining lot is an apartment building in R6 which would be approximately 19 ft. (15 ft + (height/10 ft)). On the Lockland frontage, the two-family is in R2 with a setback of 20 ft. The Board can adjust this requirement per Section 5.3.16.

Lastly, a buffer is required along the parking lot adjacent to the R2 lot on Lockland Ave.

#### 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 includes 25 spaces for vehicles located at-grade at the rear of the property in an existing parking lot, including one HC vehicle space and outdoor bicycle parking. Improved sidewalks, curb cuts, and curb treatments are also proposed. Any such proposed improvements in the public right-of-way will require additional review and approval by the Engineering Department. The parking requirement is for mixed-use which calculates the parking required for each individual use; the parking required for the residential use totals 25 parking spaces, and while the commercial space would typically require two parking spaces, the first 3,000 square feet of non-residential space in mixed-use buildings is exempt from the parking requirements per Section 6.1.10.C. While the parking proposed meets the requirement, we recommend that this applicant utilize the available parking reductions in order to better maximize space on the lot and to meet buffer and open space requirements. With regard to meeting the long-term bicycle parking requirements, 10 additional spaces are needed to meet the requirement. The hanging bicycle rack designated for short-term parking in the mail room would only be allowed per Section 6.1.12.F. There are an additional 12 outdoor bicycle parking spaces as provided in a rack located in the parking lot. The required short-term parking is already met by being located inside. Therefore, the provision to provide short-term parking within 50 feet of the building entrance does not need to be met. Bike rack specifications are needed to determine compliance with Section 6.1.12.E.

<b>Vehicle Parking Requirements*</b>			
<b><u>Number of Bedrooms/ Apartment Use</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Units</u></b>	<b><u>Zoning Requirement</u></b>	<b><u>Total Parking Required</u></b>
1-bedroom	18	1.15	21
Studio	4	1	4
<b>Total Proposed and Required Vehicle Parking</b>			<b>25</b>
* First 3,000sf of non-residential space in mixed-use buildings is exempt.			
<b>Bicycle Parking Requirements</b>			
<b><u>Use</u></b>	<b><u>Short-Term Parking</u></b>	<b><u>Long-Term Parking</u></b>	

Residential	3 spaces	33 spaces
Office/ Retail	1 space	1 space
<b>Total Required Bicycle Parking</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Total Proposed Bicycle Parking</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>

**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, drainage summary letter, and site development plan show reconstruction of the existing parking lot and an improved stormwater management system. A new catch basin with a sump and hood at the outlet pipe will be installed to provide treatment. This is an improvement over the existing conditions. The proposed design complies with the Town's current stormwater bylaw. Final design materials must be submitted for review and approval 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.

All new utilities will be underground. 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 applicant did not provide any indication on plans or drawing submitted of future sign locations, directories, lighting, and any other potential outdoor features relative to the building.

**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 roofing plan provided indicates that roof structures are appropriately set back and that a parapet and additional screening will provide screening of said structures. The site plan shows an enclosed dumpster and recycling area located in the parking lot. 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 building has been designed to meet all relevant health and safety codes. A lighting plan was not provided as part of the plan set. These details are needed to assess safety criteria.

**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 proposal will include demolition of the existing one-story brick building in order to build a new four-story building. Neither the existing structure nor adjacent structures have been deemed as being historic, traditional, or significant uses, structures, or architectural elements. The proposed massing and preliminary design for the proposed building are compatible with other uses in the immediate neighborhood. 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.**

Based upon materials provided in the application, there will be no adverse impacts on air and water resources or on temperature levels of the immediate environment. While the owner states that they do not contemplate installation of machinery that emits heat, vapors, or fumes in connection with the proposed building, additional plan details are needed with regard to lighting and emissions from machinery located on the roof to determine any impacts on the immediate environment. Mechanical specifications for the HVAC equipment should also be provided.

#### **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 proposed building generates a LEED score that demonstrates the building could be LEED certified. We recommend that the proposed building aim to achieve higher LEED performance standards where possible, particularly in the following categories: energy and atmosphere and indoor environmental quality. The Board can find that this condition is met.

### **IV. Conditions**

#### **A. General**

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 Article 30 of 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. The applicant shall provide evidence that a final plan for drainage and surface water removal has been reviewed and approved by the Town Engineer.
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. All utilities serving or traversing the site (including electric, telephone, cable, and other such lines and equipment) shall be underground.
9. Upon the issuance of the building permit the Applicant shall file with the Building Inspector and the Department of Community Safety the names and telephone numbers of contact personnel who may be reached 24 hours each day during the construction period.
10. Building signage will be filed with and reviewed and approved by the Department of Planning and Community Development and Inspectional Services.

## **B. Special Conditions**

1. The owner will work with the Department of Planning and Community Development to comply with all requirements of Section 8.2, Affordable Housing Requirements.
2. The affordable units must be equitably dispersed throughout the building and shall be comparable to market-rate units in terms of location, quality and character, room size, number of rooms, number of bedrooms, and external appearance.

3. An Affordable Housing Deed Restriction shall be executed with the Town prior to issuance of an Occupancy Permit for the four affordable units.
4. No condominium conversion of said affordable rental units shall be permitted without the express permission of this Board. In the case of a proposed condominium conversion, Applicant shall work with the Department of Planning and Community Development to ensure that the units continue to meet the requirements of Section 8.2.