

To: Arlington Redevelopment Board  
Subj: Docket 3625 - Parking and Open Space Issues

Having reviewed the latest plans for 882 Mass Ave which were released to the public this past Thursday afternoon, I am disappointed to see that no attempt was made to correct the parking problems that were revealed at the first hearing on July 6. Additionally, the plans show a lack of understanding of several of Arlington's zoning bylaws regarding the requirements for landscaped and usable open space.

Section 6 of the Bylaw, listed below, is quite clear that the parking spaces in the two rows in the plan must each be 18 feet long. The aisle space between the two rows must be 24 feet wide. Five foot wide green buffers must be provided between the parking area and the building, and also the rear/side lot lines. Based upon these restrictions, a two row parking lot as portrayed on the plans must have a minimum width of  $18 + 18 + 24 + 5 + 5 = 70$  feet. When the architects moved the building back from the street by a few feet and failed to reduce its depth, they reduced the available parking width to just 63 feet. This is simply too small to accommodate the minimum dimensions required by the Bylaw. Additionally, the frontage along Lockland is considered a front yard, and the parking area must be set back a minimum of 20 feet from the street.

Without radical design changes to the size, shape, and location of the building, there does not seem to be any way to accommodate more than a single row of about 10 to 12 parking spaces.

The latest plans claim that various areas of landscaping about the lot comprise the required Usable Open Space. Dimensions are

lacking, but it appears that none of the claimed areas meet the basic bylaw definition **ZBL Section 2: Open space shall be deemed usable only if ... no horizontal dimension is less than 25 feet.**

The claimed areas also fail to meet the basic standards set out in the bylaw for the Board's environmental review, **ZBL 3.4.4.C:**

- **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 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.**

It hardly needs to be said that the space hidden behind a dumpster does not meet this standard.

There are two steps that can resolve these fundamental problems with the parking and lack of open space. One row of parking should be eliminated, reducing the number of spaces by half. The reclaimed land can then be used to satisfy the Bylaw's dimensional requirements for open space.

I do not believe that the Redevelopment Board has the authority to exempt the developer from the basic dimensional parking requirements of Section 6 of the Bylaw, but you do have the authority to reduce the number of parking spaces.

It is worth noting that if the developer had wished to build a straightforward apartment building on his 14,000 sf B2 lot, he would be allowed only a nine unit building. That is consistent with what a lot this size can support. Relabelling it as a mixed use development relaxes certain zoning requirements but does not magically create the needed

space. A 14,000 sf lot is simply not adequate for a twenty-one unit apartment building. It is suitable for a two or three story building with the ground floor all commercial and one or two residential floors above, with six to twelve apartments. That is the vision that was presented to Town Meeting in 2016 when they voted for Mixed Use.

Parking Bylaw articles relevant to 882 Mass Ave.

#### **6.1.11. Parking and Loading Space Standards**

- A parking space may be inside or outside a structure and shall be for the exclusive use of one motor vehicle. Spaces entered from the front or rear, and stacked spaces, shall have **minimum dimensions of 8.5 feet by 18 feet**. Compact car parking spaces permitted in accordance with Paragraph C(11) below shall be at least 8 feet by 16 feet. For parallel parking, a space shall have minimum dimensions of 8 feet by 22 feet, except that such spaces which are open and unobstructed at one end may be only 18 feet in length. In residential side yards, the width of a parking space may be the width of the side yard, but in no case less than 7.5 feet.
- All parking and loading areas containing over five spaces, including automotive and drive-in establishments of all types, shall be paved and subject to the following:
  - (3) Each required off-street parking space shall have direct access to an aisle or driveway having a **minimum width of 24 feet** in the case of two-way traffic

D. All parking and loading areas containing over five spaces which are not inside a structure shall also be subject to the following.

- (1) The surfaced area shall be set back at least 10 feet from front lot lines and from all lot lines of abutting property used for residential purposes; however, **for side and rear lot lines the setback need only be five feet if the setback includes a solid wall or solid wooden fence**, five to six feet in height complemented by suitable plantings. **In no case shall the paved area be set back from the front lot line a distance less than the minimum front yard setback** for the district, nor from a side or rear lot line a distance less than the minimum buffer width required in the Density and Dimensional Regulations of the district. Where deemed appropriate by property owner, acceptable to immediate abutters, and approved by the Building Inspector, another wall or fence height or fence type may be substituted for the required wall or fence.
- 2) The area shall be effectively screened with suitable planting or fencing on each side that faces abutting lots used for residential purposes. The screening shall be within the lot boundaries and at least five feet and not more than six feet high. Parking areas and access driveways accessory to any multi-family dwelling **shall be separated from the building by a buffer strip of green open space not less than five feet wide and suitably planted.**
- (3) The area within the setback from the front lot line shall be landscaped and shall contain a compact hedge, fence, or berm at least three feet high, placed parallel to the street except within 10 feet of driveways.
- (4) **Parking shall not be located within the required front yard area in any district.**

***It is the purpose of this Bylaw to discourage the perpetuity of nonconforming uses and structures whenever possible.***

Don Seltzer

18 July, 2020