



**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, 645 Massachusetts Ave, Arlington, MA  
Docket #3665

**Date:** August 24, 2021

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### I. Docket Summary

This is an application by JP Morgan Chase Bank NA, 1111 Polaris Parkway, Columbus, OH to operate a bank and replace the signage at 645 Massachusetts Avenue property owned by Key West Realty LLC, 63 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02478. The opening of the Special Permit is to allow the Board to review and approve the use as a commercial bank branch with greater than 2,000 square feet in the B5 Central Business District, renovations to the building, and alterations to the façade under Section 3.4 Environmental Design Review (EDR). The prior use was a restaurant, a use that has been at this location since at least the 1970s.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

- Application for EDR Special Permit dated August 4, 2021;
- Project Narrative by Core States Group, dated July 28, 2021;
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans and Photographs, prepared by KMS, dated June 9, 2021;
- Dimensional and Parking Information Sheet;
- Parking Plan;
- Sign Submittal Package, prepared by Philadelphia Sign, dated June 17, 2021; and
- Quitclaim Deed dated September 7, 2007.

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 commercial bank of 2,000 square feet or more is allowed in the B5 Central Business 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 use and the upgrades to the building and site are in the public's interest. However, banking uses can be found throughout the immediate area in Arlington Center, including four banks/ lending institutions and a number of stand-alone ATMs.

3. Section 3.3.3.C.

**The requested use will not create undue traffic congestion or unduly impair pedestrian safety.**

The proposed location is in the heart of Arlington Center. Many customers are likely to access this location by foot, bicycle, or use on-street parking along Massachusetts Avenue, or park in the public municipal lot behind the structure. The use will not impair pedestrian safety any more than the prior restaurant use. 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 bank does not have a high demand need for water or sewer. 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.**

Multiple other banks are located within the vicinity and have had no detrimental impact on the integrity or character of the neighborhood, district, or adjoining districts, or on the health and welfare of the community. 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.**

At present, there are four different bank branches and additional ATMs in Arlington Center. The site of this proposed use is directly adjacent to another bank branch location. The prior restaurant use contributed to an active, lively streetscape in the afternoon and evening and provided meals tax income to the Town, neither of which can be said of the proposed use.

**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 project site is developed, contains a multi-tenant building, and is entirely impervious. The landscaping around the perimeter of the site will remain in its current state. 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 storefront and entry will be renovated, and a second rear entry will be introduced. Additional windows will be introduced to the façade facing David Lamson Way, increasing the transparency of the ground floor. New signage will be introduced. These updates will rehabilitate the existing storefront consistent with the style of the building and neighborhood.

The applicant proposes to eliminate the awning over the Mass Ave and David Lamson Way façades of the building which was added by the prior tenant. The presence of awnings along Mass Ave is desirable, as they provide shelter for pedestrians in

inclement weather, are within the design vernacular of other storefronts along the corridor and mediate the stark façade of the structure.

The applicant should confirm that the “proposed new storefront” callout along David Lamson Way on floor plans on DRC pages 7 and 8 refer to the new commercial windows and not operable service windows.

**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.**

There are no changes proposed to the existing building site and currently no open space on the project site. 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 number of parking spaces will increase from zero to three. The new use requires eight spaces, therefore the applicant requests relief from the Zoning Bylaw parking requirement. The site is adjacent to available on-street parking along Massachusetts Avenue and the public parking in the Railroad lot. The ARB has jurisdiction to reduce the number of parking spaces required by the Zoning Bylaw.

The applicant does not propose to add handicap parking, nor is the proposed rear entry to the building ADA accessible. Under this proposal, accessible access to the building would require parking along Mass Ave and travelling in the right of way until reaching a curb cut, or parking in the Railroad lot and circumnavigating the entire east and south sides of the building before reaching the accessible entry and designate one of the three parking spaces as HC accessible.

The circulation on the site will change with the addition of the second entry to the building off the Railroad lot. The application materials indicate an assumption that 50% of customers will use this entrance. The applicant is strongly encouraged to make the rear entry ADA accessible for the reasons described above.

Related to bicycle parking, the “office, business, or professional use” requires two long term and two short term bicycle parking spaces. The applicant has requested an exemption from the bike parking bylaw, citing bike racks along Massachusetts Avenue and in the Railroad lot as reasonable provision of parking. No long-term bicycle parking is indicated in the application.

The applicant should provide both indoor long-term bicycle parking for employees and short-term parking for visitors. The proximity of the business to the Minuteman Bikeway increases the demand for bicycle parking. For short term parking, the addition of a bike rack to the Massachusetts Avenue or the rear side of the building is recommended, which would support bicycle access to Arlington Center overall. Long term bicycle parking should be provided in an enclosed or covered area or inside the building. Further, indoor bicycle storage shall be included on the plan.

**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.**

There will be no changes to the exterior of the building or surface water run-off as a result of this proposal. The Board can find that 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.**

There will be no changes to the utility service as a result of this proposal, which will affect only the interior of the building. 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 project site is in the Business Sign District. The proposal exceeds the total number of signs allowable by right. The applicant submitted a sign package with a number of primary and incidental signs proposed:

- One wall sign with illuminated channel lettering located over the main entrance measuring 20.7 square feet;
- One wall sign with illuminated channel lettering located over the rear entrance measuring 12.7 square feet;
- One illuminated projecting sign measuring 8.17 square feet on each side;
- Three (3) wall mounted regulatory signs in parking area measuring 2 square feet each;
- One ADA entrance plaque measuring 0.25 square feet; and
- One ADA directional sign measuring 0.45 square feet.

The existing awning will be removed and the sign band across the Mass Ave and David Lamson Way façades will be covered with a dark nickel metal panel three feet in height.

While the narrative description addresses the two proposed wall signs, it does not describe the projecting sign, incidental signage, or other façade elements such as the new windows on David Lamson way and the dark nickel metal panels on all three facades.

Per Section 6.2.2(C), the ARB may grant a Special Permit to allow more than the number of signs allowed, “provided the architecture of the building, the location of the building relative to the street, or the nature of the use being made of the building is such that an additional sign or signs of a larger size should be allowed in the public interest.”

In terms of sign area, the two wall signs and the projecting sign comply with Section 6.2.5 of the Zoning Bylaw if the dark metal panels (E02, E03, and E06 in the sign package), for which dimensions are not provided, are not counted toward the total square footage of allowed signage. Dimensional information for the elements on all

three façades, including the mounting height of the projecting sign, are required to determine compliance with Sections 6.2.5(D)(8) and 6.2.5(D)(10).

Overall, the aggregate square footage of incidental signage exceeds what is allowed per Section 6.2.1(E)(3) by 0.076 square feet. The applicant has not proposed any window signage, however any intended signage including hours of operation and logos on entryways needs to be included in the sign package. Any additional window signage or incidental signage would add to the excess of the six feet of allowed incidental signage.

**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 will be no adverse impacts on light, air and water resources, or on noise and temperature levels. 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 renovation of the space at 645 Massachusetts Avenue will conform to code requirements for safety and accessibility by emergency personnel and equipment. 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.**

The building containing 645 Massachusetts Avenue is listed on the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington* and is under the jurisdiction of the Arlington Historical Commission. The Historical Commission will review the proposal and this permit shall be conditioned on their approval.

**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 (new structures, hard surface, ground coverage, or machinery) 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 construction will be primarily indoors, and will prioritize energy efficient HVAC systems, plumbing fixtures, LED fixtures, and products incorporating low/no VOCs and recycled content. The Board can find that this condition is met.

**IV. Conditions**

1. The final sign, exterior material, and lighting plans shall be 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 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 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.