



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, 455-457 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA,
Docket #3673

Date: September 27, 2021

I. Docket Summary

This is an application by 2-14 Medford Street, LLC, 455 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 1, Arlington, MA, to open Special Permit Docket #3673 for the construction of a mixed-use building containing existing retail, restaurants, and adding 13 residential units, including two affordable rental units, at 455-457 Massachusetts Avenue and 2-14 Medford Street in the B3 Village Business District. The opening of the hearing is to allow the Board to review and approve the development under Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review Special Permit of the Arlington Zoning Bylaw.

The Applicant proposes to convert a portion of existing ground floor retail and second floor office spaces to residential units and to add a second floor to a one-story brick commercial structure, consolidating two buildings into one mixed use building. The proposed building is a two-story mixed-use structure. The 13 residential units are comprised of one studio and 12 one-bedroom apartments. Two affordable units, or 15% of the total units, are provided. Ten of the 11 existing commercial spaces would remain, resulting in a total commercial area of 7,802 square feet. Parking is provided onsite in a garage with 14 parking spaces.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

- Application for EDR Special Permit, including an Environmental Impact Statement;

- Site Development Plan Set, prepared by Allen & Major Associates, Inc. dated August 20, 2021;
- Architectural Drawing Set, including floor plans, elevations, and renderings, prepared by Market Square Architects, dated July 27, 2021;
- Description of project construction process by project estimated, no date;
- Mixed-Use Redevelopment Drainage Summary prepared by Allen & Major Associates, dated August 20, 2021; and
- LEED Checklist.

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 B3 Village Business District. The Zoning Bylaw, in Section 5.5.1.D, indicates that the district's predominant uses include retail, service, and office establishments catering to both convenience and comparison-good shoppers and oriented to pedestrian traffic. Mixed-use buildings are allowed and encouraged, including in the principal business area at Medford Street and Massachusetts Avenue. 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 in a single, multi-story structure, such as that proposed by the applicant.

The Arlington Center area, which radiates outward from the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Mystic and Pleasant Streets, is a major shopping district in the town. It is comprised of a blend of zoning districts from R1 through R7 and B1 through the town's only B5 districts. Arlington Center includes several B3 districts; the district in which this parcel sits stretches from the southeast edge of Whittemore Park (Old Mystic Street) and Massachusetts Avenue to just beyond Franklin Street. To the southwest across Massachusetts Avenue is the B5 district, there are predominately single-story and two-story commercial buildings. To the northwest within the B3 district are additional two-story commercial storefronts along Massachusetts Avenue, there is a two-and-a-half story apartment building facing the Russell Common Parking Lot; to the southeast across Medford Street is another single-story and two-story commercial block, which includes the Regent Theater. To the northeast is the three-story Arlington Catholic High School and Saint Agnes Parish, and the Russell Common Parking Lot, all within the R1 district; directly east is the R2 zoning district with a predominantly two-family residential streetscape of Arlington Center is dominant.

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 one new studio and 12 one-bedroom residential apartment units, of which two will be affordable to households earning at or below 70% of the area median income. 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). New housing opportunities, including market-rate and affordable homes, are needed in the community; this project helps address that demand.

The ground floor commercial spaces along Medford Street and Massachusetts Avenue will largely remain, although several will be reduced in area as part of the renovation, and one will be converted to a lobby. Ten commercial spaces (noted as commercial tenants on the architectural plans) would remain following the redevelopment of the site, as would venting for the existing restaurants. The office spaces on the second floor would be eliminated. Overall, there will be net loss of approximately 6,900 square feet of commercial space. The loss is due to the need to provide an entry and circulation for the second-floor housing units, the elimination of office spaces on the second floor, and the need to also provide parking on the site.

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 16 parking spaces for cars, comprised of two surface parking spaces, and 13 garage parking spaces, and one ADA accessible parking space. Regarding bicycle parking, the project includes eight short-term outdoor parking spaces and 26 long-term indoor spaces for building tenants and visitors. It is not expected that the proposed project will unduly impair pedestrian safety. 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, which includes the installation of pervious paver systems and an underground filtration system. In addition, a landscaped buffer will be introduced the site. Overall the proposal will result in a reduction of impervious area and quantity of stormwater flowing from the site. 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 Section 8.2 which outline the affordable housing requirements. A building with 13 units requires two affordable 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. 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 largely maintains the existing first floor façade, with the additional improvement of restoration of decorative cement work at 455 Massachusetts Avenue, which is currently obscured by an awning. The façade of the commercial storefronts at 2-14 Medford Street is proposed to be retained, preserving the historic aesthetic of the structure consistent with other buildings in the business district.

The redevelopment of the second story and conversion into housing 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 upper floor façade is comprised of white fiber cement panels along Massachusetts Avenue, and light green fiber cement panels along Medford Street. The building also includes differentiation of the upper story and variation in the façade with a shared roof deck at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Medford Street, which is encouraged in the Arlington Design Standards. Along Medford Street, the design of the second story is compatible the Regent Theater and its adjacent properties directly across the street. Additionally, the applicant has agreed to make the Park Terrace façade available for public art or mural installations to improve the relationship with the streetscape. The Applicant has also proposed installation of a more permanent

outdoor seating area with a canopy for more comfortable and year-round outdoor seating for the community.

While both 455-457 Massachusetts Avenue and 4-14 Medford Street are in the Arlington Center Historic District, only 4-14 Medford Street is a contributing historic structure. Both structures are under the jurisdiction of the Arlington Historical Commission, who will need to review the building design.

Long-term indoor bicycle parking is accessed through either the lobby or behind the building, short-term outside bicycle parking is available along Park Terrace; structured and surface vehicular parking is located on the ground floor and accessed via Park Terrace.

The Applicant is proposing a floor area ratio (FAR) of 1.5. The existing building's FAR is 0.98. The Zoning Bylaw allows a maximum FAR of 1.5 for a mixed-use building on a lot less than 20,000 square feet in this zoning district. The maximum FAR of 1.5 is at odds with the maximum story and height allowed in the Zoning Bylaw of up to 5 stories and 60 feet respectively.

The proposed mixed-use building is in keeping with adjacent land uses, both Massachusetts Avenue and Medford Street include residential uses, including The Legacy across Massachusetts Avenue to the east and multifamily buildings along Medford Street. While it is desired to maintain or increase the amount of commercial space, 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.

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 property is entirely impervious and there is no natural landscape to preserve with the building fully saturating the building lot. As part of the project, two areas of approximately 2,457 square feet of impervious material will be replaced with a landscaped buffer of perennials, flowering trees, and arborvitae and pervious walkways along the side property line and a landscaped walkway to the lobby. The new

landscaping will introduce a buffer from the rear parking lot of the property at 473-475 Massachusetts Ave. 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 and zoning districts in the vicinity. Building heights in the vicinity range from single-story to 11-stories. The ground floor storefronts will largely be preserved, however the transparency of the lobby for the apartment units will be reduced as the existing glass storefront will be reconstructed with three smaller windows. The applicant proposes to remove the awning and restore the concrete detailing above the façade at 455 Massachusetts Avenue storefront; the existing benches along Massachusetts Avenue will be maintained, and flower boxes and awnings will be added along the façade. The second floor façade maintains a commercial mixed-use appearance and roofline consistent with adjacent structures in the district.

The applicant seeks relief from required setbacks. The structure is on a corner lot and subject to Section 5.3.8.A, which states that the setback should be the same as an adjacent lot. On the Medford Street, the adjoining property is the Arlington Catholic High School in the R1 Zoning District, which has a significantly larger setback than the existing structure at 2-14 Medford St. The Board can adjust this requirement per Section 5.3.16. 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 proposal includes approximately 2,457 square feet of landscaped open space along the rear of the building, which also provides a buffer with the adjacent building at 473-475 Massachusetts Avenue. This provides about half of the 10% landscaped open space requirement. The usable open space is located on the roof deck and is approximately 2,140 square feet. This is only 9% of the usable open space requirement and does not meet all the requirements for usable open space.

Lastly, the applicant seeks relief from the required 15-foot buffer in Section 5.3.21, as a landscaped buffer is precluded by the applicant's need to provide parking on-site. The Board may determine that a waiver is required as the adjacent R1 site is occupied by the Arlington Catholic High School, which is not a "buildable residential lot."

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 a total of 16 vehicle and 34 bicycle parking spaces (see Site Development Plan Set, Sheet C-102). The ground-level garage will provide 14 spaces for vehicles, including one van-accessible HP vehicle space. Two surface parking spaces are located adjacent to the garage. Parking access is provided via a drive aisle from Park Terrace. The proposed number of vehicle parking spaces is an increase over the existing conditions; at present the site provides 14 parking spaces, eight of which are tandem spaces blocked by the other six spaces and none of which are HP spaces.

The parking requirement is for mixed-use which calculates the parking required for each individual use; the parking required for the residential use totals 15 parking spaces, and while the commercial, business, and retail space would typically require 27 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. The applicant is requesting a reduction in the number of parking spaces provided to 16 spaces per Section 6.1.5 of the Zoning Bylaw. As such, the Applicant should submit a Transportation Demand Management Plan.

Pedestrian circulation behind the building would be improved, as two previous walkways connecting the rear of each storefront and the lobby to Park Terrace, as well as the trash and recycling area, are proposed. The sidewalk on Park Terrace should be reconstructed. Any potential improvements in the public right-of-way will require additional review and approval by the Engineering Division. Additionally, benches along Massachusetts Avenue, often used by individuals waiting at the adjacent bus stop, will remain. Planters along the Massachusetts Avenue façade and landscaping at the rear of the building will improve the human scale elements of the ground floor space.

Regarding bicycle parking, the applicant proposes both short-term and long-term bicycle parking exceeding the required minimum. Eight short-term spaces are provided off Park Terrace, one more than the minimum required. Indoor long-term bicycle parking is provided behind the lobby and accessible through the Massachusetts Avenue

entry or via a walkway behind the storefronts at 2-14 Medford Street; 26 spaces are proposed, five more than the minimum required. Bike rack specifications are needed to determine compliance with Section 6.1.12.E.

Vehicle Parking Requirements*			
<u>Number of Bedrooms/ Apartment Use</u>	<u>Number of Units</u>	<u>Zoning Requirement</u>	<u>Total Parking Required</u>
1-bedroom	12	1.15	14
Studio	1	1	1
<u>Commercial</u>	<u>Square feet</u>	<u>Zoning Requirement</u>	<u>Total Parking Required</u>
Service	5,377	1 per 300sf	18
Business	1,255	1 per 500sf	2.5
Retail	1,951	1 per 300sf	6.5
Total Required Vehicle Parking			42
Total Proposed Vehicle Parking after Section 6.1.5 Reduction			32
* First 3,000sf of non-residential space in mixed-use buildings is exempt.			
Bicycle Parking Requirements			
<u>Use</u>	<u>Short-Term Parking</u>	<u>Long-Term Parking</u>	
Residential	1.3 spaces	19.5 spaces	
Retail	5 spaces	1.1 spaces	
Total Required Bicycle Parking	7	21	
Total Proposed Bicycle Parking	8	26	

The proposed project is highly accessible by transit, bike, and walking, and since there is a reduction in commercial space, it is likely that the aggregate number of trips to this location will be reduced. The provided parking is intended for residential tenants and not for patrons of the commercial space, with commercial tenants and visitors relying on on-street parking or the Russell Common Parking Lot. As such, the actual impact of the current trips is dispersed across Massachusetts Avenue, Medford Street, Broadway Plaza, and the Russell Common Parking Lot.

The applicant is seeking relief from the drive aisle dimensions described in Section 6.1.11.C(3). The parking garage provides a 20-foot drive aisle, less than the required 24-foot aisle necessary for two-way traffic. A formalized concrete drive apron is proposed to improve access to parking. Due to the existing street network and one-way condition on Park Terrace, parking would be accessed through the Russell Common Parking Lot, and vehicles would exit the site from Park Terrace onto Medford Street. It may be appropriate for the ARB to request a trip distribution analysis to assess how people will access this site. The ARB may also wish to request additional details on how service vehicles and delivery trucks would access the site.

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.

The application materials, drainage summary letter, and site development plan show that surface water drainage will be improved through the installation of pervious pavers and an underground stormwater infiltration system that will receive reduce stormwater runoff from the site. In addition, approximately 1,008 square feet of presently impervious pavement will be replaced with landscaped areas. 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 utility service will be provided through connections to existing utility lines adjacent to the site. 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 application materials show a representative sign on one of the commercial storefronts. Any future signage would be subject to review by the Department of

Planning and Community Development, and possibly the Redevelopment Board, prior to the issuance of a sign permit. Additionally, lighting and any other potential outdoor features relative to the building should be provided.

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 adjacent to the surface parking. The existing businesses currently utilize Park Terrace for truck loading and unloading and for service deliveries. 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 and compliance.

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 both structures are part of the Arlington Center Historic District area, only 4-14 Medford Street is a contributing historic structure as identified on the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington*. Both structures are under the jurisdiction of the Arlington Historical Commission, which will need to review the building design.

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 applicant states that they intend to minimize any adverse impact, additional plan details are needed regarding lighting and emissions from machinery located on the roof to determine any impacts on the immediate environment.

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 qualify for LEED platinum certification. The Board can find that this condition is met.

IV. Findings

The following findings are for the Board's consideration:

1. The ARB finds that the project is consistent with Environmental Design Review per Section 3.4 of the Zoning Bylaw.
2. The ARB finds that the setbacks on Lake Street and Chandler Street are appropriate per Section 5.3.16.
3. The ARB finds that the two-story building will not adversely affect the adjacent R1 zoning districts per Section 5.3.19.
4. The ARB finds that the vehicle and bicycle parking improvements justify the parking reduction per Section 6.1.5.

V. 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 two 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.