



**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:** Kelly Lynema, Secretary Ex Officio

**Subject:** Environmental Design Review, 611 Massachusetts Ave, Arlington, MA  
Docket #3703

**Date:** July 22, 2022

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**I. Docket Summary**

This is an application by Cyrus E. Dallin Art Museum, Inc. (CDAM, Inc.), 611 Massachusetts Avenue, 02474, to open Special Permit Docket #3707 in accordance with the provisions of MGL Chapter 40A § 11, and the Town of Arlington Zoning Bylaw Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review and Section 6.2 Signs. The applicant proposes install a freestanding post sign at 611 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA in the Single-Family District (R1) and the Residential Sign District. The opening of the Special Permit is to allow the Board to review and approve the project under Section 6.2 Signs.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

- Application for EDR Special Permit;
- Impact Statement;
- Sign Submittal Package

The property at 611 Mass Ave, historically known as the Jefferson Cutter House, is owned by the Arlington Redevelopment Board and has three tenants – the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, and the Cutter Gallery. A post sign for the Dallin Museum and the Arlington Chamber of Commerce had previously been installed on

the site, and located close to the Mass Ave frontage and within the Whittemore Park. That sign was removed when the park was rehabilitated. In the current application materials, the applicant provided dimensions of the old sign, but staff could find no record of a permit for that sign in the Department of Planning and Community Development or the Inspectional Services Department's files.

## 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 historic Jefferson Cutter House was moved to this location many years ago and is currently used by the Dallin Art Museum, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, and the Cutter Gallery for many years as pre-existing conforming uses. The signage is the subject of the special permit as required by Section 6.2, Signs. 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 Dallin Art Museum, Arlington Chamber of Commerce, and Cutter Gallery are unique institutions in Arlington. The Board can find this condition is met.

### 3. Section 3.3.3.C.

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

Only the signage is subject to review. The Board can find 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.**

Only the signage is subject to review. The Board can find 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.**

There are no special regulations for this particular use. The Board can find this condition 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 uses on this site have operated here for several years and do not impair the integrity or character of the neighborhood. 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 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.**

There are no changes to the landscape as there are no proposed exterior alterations other than the proposed new signage. 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 no changes to the exterior of the building other than the proposed new signage. 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.**

There are no changes to open space as a result of the sign proposal. 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.

There are no changes to any circulation patterns. The Board can find that this condition is met.

**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.

There will be no changes to the exterior of the building or surface water run-off because 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. 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 seeks to install a post sign exceeding what is allowable in the Residential Sign District, as post signs are not an allowed sign type in that district. The subject site is in the R1 Zoning District, but the surrounding properties are located in the B3, B5, and R7 Zoning Districts. The entire area operates as a cohesive central business district. A post sign had previously been located on this site, but was removed as part of the Town's project to revitalize Whittemore Park. Staff could not find any evidence that a sign permit was issued for the prior sign, which had been installed long before the sign bylaw was updated in 2019. An approval for this application will legally clarify that a post sign is allowed on this property.

The proposed sign measures approximately 8.29 square feet in sign area. The height of the proposed sign is less than four feet high. The size and design of the proposed sign is consistent with the previous sign that was located on the property closer to the Mass Ave frontage.

The majority of surrounding properties are located in the Business Sign District where the maximum size allowed for a post sign is 24 square feet. Per Section 6.2.2(C), the ARB may grant a Special Permit to allow signs in a location other than what is 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."

**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.**

The building and property are 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 signage 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.**

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. Findings**

1. The ARB finds that the nature of the use being made of the building is such that allowing the proposed post sign is in the public interest consistent with Section 6.2 of the Zoning Bylaw.
2. The ARB finds that the project is consistent with Environmental Design Review per Section 3.4 of the Zoning Bylaw.

**V. Conditions**

**General**

1. 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. 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.
3. This project must be further reviewed and approved by the Arlington Historical Commission.