



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and 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: Claire V. Ricker, AICP Secretary Ex-Officio
Subject: Environmental Design Review, Docket #3823, 1349-1357 Massachusetts Avenue
Date: November 14, 2024

I. Docket Summary

This is an application by Robert McNamara, President, Arlington Coal and Lumber, 41 Park Ave, Arlington MA 02474, to open Special Permit Docket #3823 in accordance with the provisions of MGL Chapter 40A § 11, and the Town of Arlington Zoning Bylaw Section 3.3, Special Permits, and Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review.

The applicant proposes to renovate the street façade and renovate and slightly expand the existing ground floor retail space located in a mixed-use building at 1349-1357 Massachusetts Ave, in the B3 Village Business District. The opening of the Docket is to allow the Board to review and approve the project under Section 3.3, Special Permits, and Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application include:

- Application for EDR Special Permit,
- Dimensional and Parking Information,
- Impact Statement,
- Site Plan,
- LEED Checklist,
- Architectural Drawings,
- Building sign detail.

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 requested mixed use is allowable by special permit in the B3 Village Business district. The Board can find this condition 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 2015 Master Plan promotes mixed-use as a means to revitalize business districts, by bringing customers and street life to commercial areas. The Board can find this condition met.

3. Section 3.3.3.C.

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

The project maintains four existing vehicle parking spaces at the rear of the building. Parking is to be accessed via Park Street through the rear of the abutting properties.

Regarding bicycle parking, the project will install up to three new indoor bicycle parking spaces and two outdoor bicycle racks on the property. A "U" rack will also be installed at the Mass Ave façade for two short-term spaces. It is not expected that the proposed project will create undue traffic congestion or unduly impair pedestrian safety. The Board can find this condition 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 existing mixed use has been on the site for many years and has not overloaded any public utilities. The Board can find this condition 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 which apply to the proposed 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, morals, or welfare.

Mixed uses have been present in this neighborhood at this building and other nearby buildings for many years and do not impair the integrity or character of the neighborhood. The Board can find this condition 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 addition of 29 ft² of commercial space to the mixed-use building will not cause an excess of mixed uses detrimental to the B3 Village Business district. The Board can find this condition 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 project site has an existing landscaped buffer along the rear and left side lot lines adjacent to the parking area. The buffer will not be removed or altered as part of the proposed construction. The Board can find this condition 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 project proposes reconstruction of 18% of the Mass Ave storefront façade to align with the structural front of the building (back of sidewalk), resulting in creation of an additional 29 ft² of interior commercial space. The renovated façade relates harmoniously to the other storefronts on this section of Mass Ave. The Board can find this condition 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.

The site does not have any existing open space and none is proposed. The rear of the building is used for parking, except for a small, covered porch area next to the building that will be renovated with new surfacing and given to employee use. The parking area has an existing landscaped buffer and cannot be seen from the Mass Ave façade. The Board can find this condition 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.

Circulation for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians will remain as existing on the property. While the applicant is not required to install any bicycle parking, the proposal includes the addition of several bicycle parking spaces including up to three new indoor bicycle parking spaces and two outdoor bicycle racks on the property. A "U" rack will also be installed at the Mass Ave façade for two short-term spaces. The applicant has been asked to provide the proposed rack location on Mass Ave, and revised specifications for bicycle parking that meet the requirements of Section 6.1.12 of the Zoning Bylaw.

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.

Existing drainage systems will be used for surface water. While under construction, a siltation barrier will be provided along the rear and side property lines to contain particulate matter on-site. The rear of the building is within multiple conservation jurisdictions, including the regulatory floodway where no construction is permitted. However, replacement in kind can be sought through a minor permit from the Conservation Commission. Most importantly, there can be no rise in the elevation of the asphalt or replacement patio, and no introduction of new impervious surface.

6. EDR-7 Utility 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.

Utility access will not change as a result of this proposal. The Board can find this condition met.

7. EDR-8 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 has proposed a wall sign for the Massachusetts Avenue façade of the retail storefront above the principal entry to the retail space, which is in the Business Sign District. The top of the sign would be mounted at a height of 12 feet 5 ¾ inches. The sign occupies less than the 60% maximum for the sign band area. The total area of the sign area as proposed does not exceed the maximum cumulative wall sign area of 40 ft².

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.

8. EDR-9 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 are no special features included in this proposal. The Board can find this condition met.

9. EDR-10 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 project is designed in compliance with the Ninth Edition of the Massachusetts State Building Code and is accessible to first responders on at least two sides of the building. Cut sheets for new exterior lighting to be installed are included in the application. The Board can find this condition met.

10. EDR-11 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 not listed on the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington*. The Board can find this condition met.

11. EDR-12 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.

The applicant proposes no new structures, hard surface, or ground coverage. The applicant proposes to remove asphalt from under a porch roof at the rear of the building and replace it with a cement pad but no new hardscape is proposed. The Board can find this condition met.

12. EDR-13 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.

A LEED checklist was provided for this proposal; however, the Applicant does not intend to submit this project for certification. The Board can find this condition met.

IV. Findings

1. The applicant should request a waiver from this requirement in Section 6.1.12.G(3) of the Zoning Bylaw: *Bicycle parking must not require lifting bicycles off the floor or carrying bicycles up or down any steps or stairs.*
2. The ARB may find that the project is consistent with Environmental Design Review per Section 3.4 of the Zoning Bylaw.

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.
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 shall be filed with and reviewed and approved by the Department of Planning and Community Development and Inspectional Services.
11. The applicant must comply with the conditions set forth herein, with the State Building Code, including the Town of Arlington requirements, and, where applicable, with the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board regulations.