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: Update to Environmental Design Review, 1513-1515 and 1517-1519 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA, Docket #3821
Date: January 7, 2025

I. Summary

This memo is provided as an update to the previous planning memo provided on November 27, 2024. The following items were provided by the Applicant since the last hearing:

Materials previously submitted for consideration of this application include:

- Dimensional and Parking Information,
- Impact Statement,
- Site Plan,
- Landscape Plans, and
- Architectural Drawings.

Addition materials submitted for consideration of this application include:

- Revised plan set including Existing Condition Photos, Site Plan, Floor Plans, Roof Plan, Elevations, Façade Design Plan, Façade Characteristics, Façade Materials and Products, Landscape vs Built Area (Open Space Calculation), Public Realm Interface, Landscape Elements, Landscape Plant Category, and Context Rendering,
- Proposed Plot Plan,
- Operations and Maintenance Plan,

- Civil Engineering Design Narrative,
- LEED Checklist,
- Solar Assessment,
- Lighting Plan,
- Stormwater Report.

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.

As per Section 5.5.3, Use Regulations for Business Districts, a mixed-use building is allowed in the B1 Neighborhood Office District with a Special Permit under the jurisdiction of the ARB due to its location on Massachusetts Avenue. 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 Master Plan recommends supporting commercial areas by encouraging new mixed-use redevelopment, including residential and commercial uses, in and near commercial corridors. This new development is in close proximity to the Arlington Heights commercial district and businesses along Massachusetts Avenue. The project contains five residential units and a commercial space. The five residential units include one accessible ground floor unit. 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 proposed mixed use will not create traffic congestion or 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 Project will not overload any public water, drainage, sewer system or other municipal system. 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 for 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.

The requested mixed use does not impair the integrity or character of the B1 district or adjoining districts and will not be detrimental to health or welfare. The surrounding uses are made up of residential, commercial, and mixed-use properties. 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.

There will be no excess of mixed-use in the neighborhood as a result of this development; rather the Applicant's proposal will comport with the objectives of the Master Plan to maintain a mixed-use component along Mass Ave. 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 existing landscape will be preserved wherever possible. The proposed landscape is located in the rear and side setbacks with decks and roof decks proposed for each unit. A garden area is also proposed in the rear setback. The Project includes the planting of thirteen new trees, and measures will be taken to ensure their long-term health. Tree removal will be limited to trees determined to be in fair or poor health by a certified arborist. The project proposes to preserve one tree on the site that was determined to be in good health. There is no significant slope on the property thus grade changes are minimal. 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.

As a major corridor, Mass Ave is designed to accommodate and promote mixed-use development as contemplated in the Master Plan. The proposed new building design relates to the neighborhood and vicinity. Nearby structures include a small restaurant and a 12-unit multifamily apartment building on the 1500 block of Massachusetts Avenue and one- and two-family buildings across Massachusetts Avenue. Additionally, the structures to be demolished are close in height to this proposed new building. The addition of five new housing units should have a favorable impact on the community and will provide new housing opportunities. The commercial use will bring street activity to the property and enhance the streetscape. Moreover, based on the change in topography from the opposite side of Mass Ave, the final height of the proposed structure will be less than many of the structures across the street.

The applicant proposes a front setback of less than the required 20', bringing the front of the planned building to within 4' of the back of sidewalk and seeks relief from §5.5.2.A. Dimensional Requirements: front setback. Bringing this mixed-use building towards the sidewalk will serve to strengthen and enhance the streetscape, which is desirable along the Mass Ave corridor. The Board can find 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.

Open space is being provided in the form of landscaped areas in the building side and rear setbacks, and private decks for each residential unit. Overall, the decks and landscaped open space will provide an enjoyable streetscape and usable open space for the residents. 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.

The project proposes a single curb cut providing vehicular and bicycle access into the parking area which has five total vehicle parking spaces including one accessible space. The Project proposes one-to-one parking per residential unit and is utilizing the parking exemption for the first 3,000 square feet of commercial space in a mixed-use development per section 6.1.C in an effort to reduce reliance on motor vehicles and vehicular traffic. The Project requires 0.1 long-term and 0.6 short-term bicycle parking spaces for the 960 square feet of retail space. Additionally, the residential use requires 8 long-term spaces and one short-term space, for a total requirement of 8 long term and 2 short term bicycle parking spaces. The plans show an outdoor bike locker and long term storage area for six bikes, the Board may request adding two additional spaces to meet the requirements of 6.1.12.D.

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.

A full stormwater management plan has been developed and is included with the meeting materials, and the project includes several green features which will improve water runoff and stormwater management. The Board can find this condition met.

6. EDR-6 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.

Currently electrical, telephone and cable services are delivered to the project site above ground as is typical for this section of Mass Ave. The applicant has requested that those existing services remain overhead. Sanitary sewage disposal and solid waste disposal from the building will be in accordance with all codes and local requirements.

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.

Any signage and advertising will be in accordance with the provisions of Section 6.2 of the Zoning By-Law, compliant with the B1 Neighborhood Office District requirements. Final signage will need to be submitted, reviewed, and approved administratively by the Department of Planning and Community Development or reviewed by the Board for a sign permit.

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 proposed new building's special features will be properly screened and situated on the property to minimize exposure of service and utility areas. All special features will be housed inside the new building. The Board can find this condition 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 interior and exterior of the building have been designed to facilitate building evacuation including two forms of egress per unit. The proposed property will provide access to the building for fire, police and other emergency personnel and equipment from Mass Ave. The Board can find this condition 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.

This project includes demolition of two residential structures that are not listed on the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington* and are not under the jurisdiction of the Arlington Historical Commission. Moreover, there are no adjacent properties listed on the Inventory. The Board can find that this condition is met

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.

The proposed project seeks to minimize adverse impacts on light, air, and water resources and on noise and temperature levels of the immediate environment. The proposed uses are non-intrusive, as residential and commercial uses are part of Arlington's long-term goals for Mass Ave and historically residential units and a small commercial space do not drastically alter the noise or temperature levels of the area. The project includes a number of environmentally friendly features, such as open space, landscaping, solar ready roof, EV charging stations and energy efficient appliances which promote mixed-use development in a responsible manner. The Board can find this condition 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 project currently contains the following:

- Compliance with the Stretch Energy Code
- Sustainable building materials
- Energy efficient appliance and mechanical systems
- Energy efficient lighting
- Solar ready roof
- Light colored roofing system
- Sustainable landscaping plantings
- Non-invasive plant materials
- Stormwater management
- EV charging stations

IV. Findings

1. The ARB can find that the project is consistent with Environmental Design Review per §3.4 of the Zoning Bylaw.

2. The ARB can find that the project is consistent with §3.3, Special Permits of the Zoning Bylaw.

3. The ARB can find that the project is consistent with §5.5.2.A.

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.

12. The applicant must obtain the necessary building permits and work with the Town Engineer to ensure compliance with all applicable codes.