

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, August 2, 2023
7:45 PM
City Council Chamber, 562 Main Street, Melrose

PRESENT: Paul King, Beth Delahaij, Anne DeSouza Ward, Carla Morelli, Greg Sampson, Jack Welch, Michael Aveni, Tim Bailey & Brian Gregory

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Denise Gaffey, Director & City Planner, Lori Massa, Senior Planner & Maya Noviski, Assistant Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 PM by Mr. Sampson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, June 21, 2023

Board Members had no comments or adjustments to the minutes. Ms. Morelli made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN REVIEW & SPECIAL PERMITS

Case 22-009, 14-24 Tremont Street, Eli Pechthold & Greg Young—K&K Developers Inc (c/o Garden Homes Development) (continued public hearing)

David Lucas, Attorney, Michael Lawson, Architect, John Barrows, Engineer, Michael Santos, Traffic Engineer, Greg Wilson, Landscape Architect, Greg Young, Developer, and Eli Pechtold, Developer, appeared to present the case. Attorney Lucas provided a brief overview of the revisions made to the plans including a reduction in the number of units and parking spaces, redesigning the loading zone, a stepped back fifth floor, and a solar ready roof. He also noted that the City solicited a peer review of the traffic study, conducted by Stantec, that recommended measures to enhance pedestrian safety around the site.

Mr. Lawson continued by explaining that the revised plans reduced the number of units and parking spaces to 87 and 90, respectively. The design of the building has also been modified. The left side of the fifth floor has been stepped back so that it appears like a four-story building from the street and the Applicant is proposing a monument sign rather than a canopy sign. The roof is solar ready, and the building is all electric. The plans also reduce the number of curb cuts; one curb cut will be utilized for the garage opening and the loading zone, and there will be two curb cuts for the pickup/drop off area. The ramp in the loading zone has been eliminated and turning movements were submitted to the Board showing how trash trucks can access the loading

zone from either direction, pull into the driveway, back up to the loading zone, and make a left turn onto Tremont St.

Mr. Barrows provided more detail about the curb cuts noting that a memo was submitted to the Board comparing the width of the current curb cuts with what is being proposed. There are three existing curb cuts that are 94 ft. wide in total and the new design is proposing 65 ft. of total cut curb.

Mr. Santos explained the truck turning movements for the loading zone noting that the site can accommodate a standard size truck that is about 30 ft. in length with two axles. The truck will only be able to turn left out of the driveway due to the site layout and visibility, and there will be signage restricting right-hand turns.

Peter Vasiliou, Stantec Engineer, provided a summary of the peer review findings. He explained that the traffic study that was based on the plans for 107 units was reviewed including the level of service projections and the existing and proposed site conditions. The report found that the Applicant's study adequately predicted traffic volumes and growth rates considering other planned projects within the area. He noted that traffic counts were conducted for three different afternoon peak periods including school dismissal, regular commuting, and athletic practices/games, with the most traffic observed during typical commuting times. The future build analysis showed a slight increase in traffic but there will not be a severe degradation of the level of service at the surrounding intersections or a large increase in delay times. The report found that the project would not exacerbate vehicles using Lake Ave. as a cut-through and that the parking ratio was sufficient for the site.

Stantec also reviewed the traffic report's speed analysis which suggests that vehicles travel at speeds slightly higher than the legal limit. Mr. Vasiliou reviewed recommendations for traffic calming measures including the installation of a new crosswalk north of the project near the athletic facilities with a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon for pedestrians crossing the street. He also noted that two of the four studied intersections reported crashes at higher-than-normal rates, but the four-way stop at Tremont St. and West Emerson St. will help reduce incidents. He commented that while the proposed landscaping should not affect vehicles' sight lines, the Applicant should consider the height of the vegetation in front of the building. Other recommendations include restricting the trash truck from turning right out of the loading zone and installing warning signs notifying pedestrians of existing vehicles by the garage exit and drop off area.

Board Members asked if the number of units affects traffic predictions. Mr. Vasiliou responded that while it is hard to definitively answer, doubling the number of units does not equate to doubling the number of cars so it would vary depending on the project. One Member asked if the trip generation manual considers the demand for deliveries when calculating the predicted number of trips for units and if it is up to date. Mr. Vasiliou confirmed that demand is accounted for using nationally aggregated data that incorporates service vehicles, community vehicles, and demographic variations, and the manual is updated every two years. One Member asked if Stantec's findings validated VHB's analysis to which Mr. Vasiliou noted that there were minor discrepancies that did not majorly impact the findings.

One Member asked if there are any recommendations for bicycle safety within the driveway to which Mr. Vasiliou explained that unless there is a big commercial development, driveways are not typically dotted. Attorney Lucas asked Mr. Vasiliou to review Stantec's recommendations for improving the pre-existing traffic conditions on Lake Ave. Mr. Vasiliou explained that the City could implement traffic restrictions during certain hours, but this would require regular enforcement. He emphasized that this project will not exacerbate the conditions on Lake Ave.

Mr. Wilson continued by reviewing changes to the landscape plan. Pavers and cobblestones will be used to differentiate the loading zone from the driveway, which will be asphalt, and more landscaping will be planted in front of the loading zone for additional screening. Groundcover, ivy, and shrubs were added along the driveway and plantings were added in the back right corner of the property, which will also be the snow storage location. A bench was added in between the two private stoops on the left side of the building. The river birches were replaced with magnolias, and the plantings near the main entrance and the driveway will not be taller than 2 ft. tall. The tree species chosen in front of the building will be vertical and columnar to limit impacts on site lines.

One Member asked what type of trees the Applicant is proposing. Mr. Wilson responded that they are European Hornbeams and Sentry Ginkos and both will be approximately 15 ft. tall at installation. One Member asked if there are any existing street trees. Mr. Wilson explained that there are none and the Applicant will plant six new trees including four Magnolias that are setback and will provide a second tier, ornamental canopy. There will be perennial beds behind the building and along the left side of the patio. Planters could also be put on the roof deck, which will be reviewed by the Design Review Subcommittee. One Member asked if the plans propose permeable pavers and if the Applicant has chosen a material for the retaining wall. Mr. Wilson confirmed that the pavers are permeable, and the retaining wall material will be brick or another type of masonry. Members requested that the Applicant include an additional bench and confirmed that the open space conforms to the dimensional requirements.

One Member asked if trash and recycling are private to which Mr. Lawson confirmed that they are. One Member asked about parking for workers during construction. Mr. Lawson responded that the workers will park in the building once the garage is built, which will occur before the framing. Before that, the Applicant can contract with a private property owner and shuttle workers to the site. He explained that framing requires the highest demand for workers and before the garage is built, there will be less workers and less demand for parking. Members asked if the roof is solar ready or if the Applicant will install solar panels. Mr. Lawson explained that since the type of HVAC equipment has not been specified, the orientation of the mechanical equipment and exhaust vents on the roof is not solidified. Due to this, the Applicant is committed to being solar ready and will install panels in any available space once the organizational details are finalized. Members clarified that this will be reviewed by the Design Review Subcommittee.

One Member asked if the breezeway on the fifth floor will be made of glass. Mr. Lawson explained that the Applicant is required to provide a means of egress, so the breezeway has a roof but is open on the sides. It connects two sets of stairs on either side to allow residents to cross. One Member asked if there is any noise mitigation for the units on the first floor proximate

to the parking garage and loading zone. Mr. Lawson explained that there is sound attenuation between the garage and the residential units, but an Acoustical Engineer will be consulted during construction to prevent any noise disturbances. He also noted that trash pickup is infrequent with five total pickups during the week including both trash and recycling. One Member asked if the loading zone will be available for residents to use when they move in. Mr. Lawson explained that it will be and moving trucks will have to follow a plan to ensure that there is no overlap with trash pickup.

Members confirmed that there would be onsite management and the units would be rentals owned by Garden Homes Development. One Member commented that the lack of multi-paned windows makes the building look more commercial. Mr. Lawson responded that the design breaks down the scale of the building and the windows have divided lites and mullions to break down their scale. The windows are a maximum of 3-5 ft. wide.

Overall, Members were supportive of a residential use in this location. Some felt more comfortable with the building's height given the design of the fifth floor and felt that the shadow study showed minimal impact on neighboring houses. A few Members were still unsure about the proposed fifth floor, but it was acknowledged that five stories are allowed with this Special Permit and in the Rail Corridor Overlay. One Member commented that 158 Essex St. is also five stories, and with that project's design it is not imposing. One Member voiced support for the landscaping plan, noting that it provided adequate plant diversity and meets the open space requirements. Many felt comfortable with the reduced parking and agreed that the building should not be mixed use. Residents will help support the existing Cedar Park commercial node. Members were also supportive of the driveway relocation and the unit count reduction.

The Board received 8 letters from the public, two in support of the development and 6 in opposition. In addition, John Connery of 19 Park St., Paul Schille of 504 Lebanon St., Elizabeth Peart of 318 Vinton St., Danielle Champoux of 111 Youle St., Christopher Park of 76 Vinton St., Susan Graff of 242 Tremont St., David Goodhue of 11-13 Tremont St., Houghton Young of 220 Essex St., Mari Ferentinos of 89 Lake Ave., Guy Sturges of 60 Lake Ave., Martin Cassavoy of 6 Virginia Ave., Mark Garipay of 71 Mooreland Rd., Kyle Carroll of 46 Lake Ave., Kimberley Whitworth of 147 Berwick St., and Cindy Luongo of 76 Lake Ave. appeared to speak.

Most of the public who provided written and/or verbal comments expressed concerns about the proposal including:

- Added traffic volume, congestion, and safety
- Number of parking spaces
- Site contamination and the developers need for insurance for cleanup
- Heat island effect
- Air flow within the units
- The building's massing is too large
- Number of trash pickups per week
- The trash truck's ability to maneuver out of the site and its route
- Parking for construction workers

Those in support expressed approval of:

- The number of units and parking spaces
- The need for housing units that this proposal would help to address
- The landscape plan and added bench
- The improved loading zone
- The location of the project close to the Commuter Rail Station and Downtown Melrose
- The project's proximity to a commercial district
- The design including the fifth-floor step back

Board Members discussed concerns around site contamination and noted that in addition to GZA's memo addressing the environmental status of the site, a development must follow state law regarding removing any contaminants during construction. Members discussed visitor parking and noted that the Cedar Park Commuter Rail parking lot is located nearby. Additionally, the parking spaces will be unbundled from the units so if there are spaces available, more visitor parking can be added. One Member asked how visitors will be able to access spaces in the garage if there is a controlled door. Mr. Lawson explained that there is a controlled level and an open level so they would fill the bottom first and use the top for visitor spaces. One Member suggested that the Board condition that the Applicant monitor the visitor parking spaces and adjust accordingly.

Some Members wondered if the trash truck would interfere with parked cars on the other side of the street when pulling out of the loading zone. Mr. Vasiliou explained that the truck will have to enter into the incoming lane when turning but that the parked cars on the other side of the street would not be impacted. One Member asked if the building will have trash compactors. Mr. Lawson explained that the trash will compact within the trash chutes.

Mr. Aveni made a motion to close the public hearing and continue the case to August 28, 2023. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor of the motion. None were opposed.

Documents:	Inspectional Services Letter	November 15, 2022
	Application	December 28, 2022
	Letter from Department of Public Works	February 2023
	Traffic Study	March 2, 2023
	Environmental Site Conditions	May 8, 2023
	Stormwater Report	June 16, 2023
	Construction Management Plan	June 16, 2023
	Supplemental Traffic Data	June 16, 2023
	Architectural Plans	July 25, 2023
	Civil Plans	July 25, 2023
	Landscape Plans	July 21, 2023
	Photometric Plan	July 28, 2023
	Open Space Plan	July 31, 2023
	Traffic Peer Review	August 1, 2023

Case 23-002, 272 Tremont Street, OnPoint Capital

David Lucas, Attorney, Will Chalfant, Architect, and Garret Hogan and Max Taylor, Applicants, appeared before the Board to present the case. Attorney Lucas explained that the proposal includes a mixed-use building with 21 residential units above ground floor commercial space. He noted that the Planning Board approved a Site Plan Review application for a similar project at this location two years ago however, this development will have different ownership, more units, a different parking orientation, and a fifth floor, which requires a Density Incentive Special Permit allowed under the recent zoning change. The garage now features a one-way entry and one way exit on opposite sides of the building so cars are circulated around the development. The fifth floor was designed to support the elevator shaft and includes a residential amenity space. The project's FAR will be 2.0, which is allowed in the zoning district and does not require approval through the Density Incentive Special Permit.

Attorney Lucas explained that a commercial tenant has not been identified and the Applicants are open to renting the space to a nonprofit or community organization for reduced rent. He noted that the use is not predicted to generate a lot of traffic. The Applicants held a meeting with the neighbors who voiced concerns about the direction of the cars entering and exiting, the landscaping plan, and the noise and visual impacts of the HVAC units.

Mr. Chalfant provided an explanation of the architectural design. There is currently a two and a half story three-family house on the property. The new building proposes 21 residential units with 15 parking spaces. The parking spaces will be at grade behind the commercial space with the building covering them from above, but the sides will be open. Additional bike spaces have been added since the last proposal, and the trash room has been reconfigured and will have a compactor. The units have also been reconfigured and reduced in size.

The fifth floor will offer a large amenity space with a roof deck. The HVAC units will be located on the roof and will be below the sound levels allowed. The fifth floor is setback so the development will appear as a four-story building from the street. The building proposes a contemporary design with triple paned windows and private balconies for each unit. A shadow study was provided showing that the building will cast a shadow on the commercial building next door during the winter in the early morning and late afternoon. Although the onsite landscaping is minimal, the Applicant will plant new trees in front of the building.

Mr. Chalfant noted that the back of the building can be redesigned with more detail and the Applicants have agreed to reverse the direction of the cars entering and exiting the development. This allows for better circulation away from the intersection at Franklin Street. The change also reduces conflict with the commercial property next door. This property has an easement to use the current driveway for trash pickup.

Board Members asked if the easement for the next-door neighbor is on the subject property and Attorney Lucas confirmed that it is and grants access for trash pickup. Residents living in the condominium to the left of the project also have an easement that they have used for parking. Board Members were supportive of reversing the direction of cars entering and exiting the

development. One Member commented that the Applicant must ensure that there is height clearance for a trash truck underneath the building and requested turning radii to ensure that the driveway and parking layout will work. Attorney Lucas responded that easement information and turning movements can be provided.

One Member asked if any business owners attended the neighborhood meeting, and it was confirmed that they did not. One Member asked if there will be a fence between the driveway and the easement and Mr. Attorney responded that there will not be a fence. One Member commented that there are inconsistencies between the sustainability report, which claims native plants will be used for landscaping, and the landscaping plans, which show non-native plants. Attorney Lucas responded that the sustainability report is more accurate, and the Applicant will update the landscape plans. It was confirmed that the development does not need relief from the Board of Appeals.

The Planning Board received a letter with concerns about the reduced parking and the limited amount of landscaping proposed. In addition, Kori Mendonsa of 42 Richardson Rd., Susan McGraff of 242 Tremont St., Debra Newman of 8 Clifton Park Court, Houghton Young of 220 Essex St., Philip Morgan of 11 Sargeant St., and Cindy Luongo of 76 Lake Ave., appeared to speak. Comments and questions included:

- There is too much development in the City
- There is not enough parking
- Not enough landscaping
- The property should be in a residential zoning district
- If the commercial building is redeveloped it will be in shadow
- Are these apartments or condo units?
- How will there will be assurance that a nonprofit rent the space?
- How will there be assurance that sustainability measures are incorporated?

Mr. Sampson responded to the public comments explaining that the zoning predates this development, and it allows for mixed-use buildings. He also noted that the Planning Board cannot review applications based on potential redevelopments so a future development being in shadow is not a consideration at this time.

The Applicant responded that the units will be apartments. Attorney Lucas noted that the building code will require that the Applicant incorporate certain sustainability features and the Density Incentive Special Permit requires community benefits so renting the commercial space to a community organization is one way to achieve that. There will be conditions of approval.

Board Members requested that the Applicant provide a shadow study showing the proposed developments nearby to see the impact from a neighborhood block perspective.

Mr. Aveni made a motion to continue the public hearing to August 28, 2023. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor of a continuance. None were opposed.

Documents: Application Materials for Case 23-002

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Case 23-014, 121 Florence St.

Board Members had no comments or suggestions. They felt that this was a small request that could best be handled by the Board of Appeals with input from abutters.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to send a neutral letter to the Board of Appeals. Ms. Morelli seconded the motion. All voted in favor, none were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-014

Case 23-015, 71 Sheffield Rd.

Board Members had no comments or suggestions. They felt that this request is best handled by the Board of Appeals with input from abutters.

Mr. Welch made a motion to send a neutral letter to the Board of Appeals. Mr. King seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-015

Case 23-017, 10 Beacon Pl.

Board Members had no objection to the requested variance but agreed with the comments provided in the staff brief relative to the project's design and recommended adding additional windows on the left side of the addition.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to send a neutral letter to the Board of Appeals and include the comments noted above. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-017

Case 23-019, 15 Green St.

Board Members felt that the requested number of spaces was appropriate for the change in use and supported the proposal to reduce the number of required parking spaces and utilize available spaces on an abutting lot.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to send a letter in support to the Board of Appeals. Mr. King seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-019

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Planning Board is a joint public hearing with the City Council on August 14, 2023.

The following meeting of the Planning Board is scheduled for August 28, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 PM.