



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, 86 River Street, Arlington, MA
Docket #3640

Date: December 15, 2020

I. Docket Summary

This is an application by Cambridge Repro-Graphics, 21 McGrath Highway, Somerville, for Frank Balurdi, owner of the property at 86 River Street, Arlington, MA, 02474, for Special Permit Docket #3640 in accordance with the provisions of MGL Chapter 40A § 11, and the Town of Arlington Zoning Bylaw Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review. The applicant seeks approval of signage that exceeds the allowed signage in the R2 Two-Family District. The opening of the Special Permit is to allow the Board to review and approve the signage under Section 6.2, Signs.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application include:

- Application for EDR Special Permit,
- Impact statement;
- Dimensional information of the proposed signage, and
- Renderings of signage.

The property at 86 River Street has been used for many years as an automotive business although located in an R2 Two-Family District. The current owner of the property has redeveloped the site and continued the automotive use of the property. Section 6.2, Signs, directs the Redevelopment Board to review any requests for sign special permits via

Environmental Design Review. The Zoning Board of Appeals is not given the authority to grant sign special permits in Section 6.2.

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.

This automotive use has been established at this site for many years, and is a pre-existing, non-conforming use for the R2 Two-Family District. 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.

Automotive-related businesses have operated in this location for many years, and this business provides a service for the community. The recent redevelopment of the site is an improvement over the previous condition. 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.

Only the signage is subject to review. The improvements to the site completed by the owner do not create undue traffic congestion or 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.

The automotive use does not overload any municipal systems. 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.

No special regulations are applicable to the proposal. 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 use does 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 that 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 new signage. The previous redevelopment of the property improved the site's condition. 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 new signage. The previous redevelopment of the property improved the site's condition. 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.

Open space was created as part of the previous redevelopment of the property. 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.

The previous redevelopment of the site improved the circulation. The addition of signage does not change 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 insure 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 as a result of this proposal. The previous redevelopment of the site included drainage improvements. 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.

Being located in an R2 Two-Family District, this business is at a disadvantage relative to the signage allowed. In order to allow this business signage that exceeds what is allowed in this location, the Residential Sign District as defined by Section 6.2, a special permit has been requested. Per section 6.2.2(C), the ARB may grant a special permit to allow additional signage, a greater number of signs, or in a location that is otherwise not 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."

The building is oriented toward the intersection of River Street and the Mystic Valley Parkway, a major intersection and facing away from the residential properties on River Street. The site has been the location of automotive businesses in the past and the redevelopment of the site has improved the condition of the property. In order to adequately find the business, the larger signs are in the public's interest. The proposal includes a wall sign and a canopy sign consistent with the requirements of the Business Sign District, which encompasses the B2A, B3, B4, and B5 districts.

The wall sign will be mounted on the façade of the building facing Mystic Valley Parkway. The sign is approximately 36 square feet and is mounted to the building at a height less than 25 feet as the building is 22 feet tall. The letters of Smooth Automotive (without the tire marks) will be internally illuminated. The letters will appear black during the day, but when illuminated the letters will appear white. The sign will be bracketed to the wall.

The canopy sign will face River Street. The sign is approximately 19.4 square feet and each letter is mounted to the top of a structural awning above the customer entrance.

Each letter is individually cut brushed aluminum letters. The applicant should clarify the mounting height as the bottom of the sign should be no more than 8 feet to the sidewalk elevation adjacent to the building. This sign is not illuminated.

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 at 86 River Street is not listed on the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington*.

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 an additional sign and signs of a larger size 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

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.