



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: Claire Ricker, Secretary Ex-Officio
Subject: Environmental Design Review, 22-24 Belknap Street, Arlington, MA
Docket #3723
Date: November 3, 2022

I. Docket Summary

This is an application filed on October 12, 2022, by 22-24 Belknap Street, LLC, 13 Tech Circle, Natick, MA, 01760 to renovate and construct a large addition to the existing two-family building at 22-24 Belknap Street, Arlington, MA. The building is in the R2 Two-Family District. The opening of Special Permit Docket #3704 will allow the Board to review and approve the project under Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review.

The Applicant proposes to renovate and construct a large addition to an existing two-family residential building; the use will remain as a two-family building, which is allowed by right in the R2 Two-Family Zoning District. The renovation includes the demolition of the existing front porch, additions to each side of the property, and addition of a half story to the top floor. The application is before the Board because the rear property line abuts the Minuteman Bikeway, and a special permit is required for the addition of 750 or more square feet (e.g., "large addition").

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

- Application for EDR Special Permit and Impact Statement, dated October 12, 2022;
- Existing and Proposed Site Plans, floor plans, and elevations, dated October 12, 2022; and
- Photographs of the existing structure and adjacent structures, dated October 12, 2022.

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 site is currently located in the R2 Two-Family zoning district. The R2 district is intended for two-family or duplex dwellings, which are allowed by right in the district. 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 use of a two-family building is appropriately located in the R2 zoning district. 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.

The proposed two-family residential use is the same as the pre-existing, conforming use. As such, it will not create any additional traffic or pedestrian safety impacts in the area. 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 two-family use is the same as what has been in this location since the building was constructed in the 1920s, and has not overloaded any public utilities. 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 requested 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 requested 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.

The Applicant proposes to construct an addition to each side of the existing structure, which will result in a reduction of landscaped open space from 6,303 to 5,767 square feet (-536 square feet, or from 144% to 103% of gross floor area), however the total amount of landscaped open space significantly exceeds the required 10% minimum for the R2 district. The current usable open space will remain at 2,442 square feet (a reduction from 55.8% to 43.6% of gross floor area), but still exceeds the 30% minimum for the R2 district. 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.

The Applicant proposes to convert the building from a stacked duplex to a side-by-side duplex through additions to the sides of the structure and the addition of a half story. The total square footage of the additions will increase the gross floor area of the structure from 4,376 to 5,600 square feet (+1,224 square feet).

The property is currently nonconforming with regard to the frontage. The proposed additions will not increase the existing nonconformity, nor will they introduce any new nonconformities. All setbacks conform to the dimensional requirements of the Zoning Bylaw, and the addition to the third floor complies with the definition of a half story.

The existing structure features a ground-level front porch; it appears that at some point the second-level front porch was enclosed and a shed dormer was introduced to the third floor.

Overall, the Applicant proposes to introduce a more balanced façade and improve the roof lines of the property. The existing dormer will be replaced by dual dormers set back from the principal façade, and located immediately above the two new front entries. The front entries are set back from the principal façade, reducing the visual massing from the street. New walkways will lead from the front doors of each unit to their respective tandem driveways. The existing “pork chop” eaves on the gable roof will be eliminated, and the roof style will be changed to a gambrel roof.

The proposed additions are in keeping with several properties in the neighborhood, as there is a mix of side-by-side duplexes, stacked duplexes, single-family homes, and apartment buildings on Belknap and adjacent streets.

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.

As described in the response to EDR criterion 1, while there is a reduction in the overall amount of landscaped open space, both the landscaped and usable open space significantly exceed the minimum required by the Zoning Bylaw. 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.

Four parking spaces (two tandem spaces per unit) will be provided on either side of the structure via existing curb cuts. While the Zoning Bylaw does not provide parking minimums for townhome structures, the Applicant is providing two parking spaces per unit, which exceeds the minimum number of parking spaces required.

The Applicant has not proposed exterior bicycle parking spaces, however per Section 6.1.12 there is no minimum number of long or short term bicycle parking spaces required for townhouse structures.

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.

The proposal includes a 406 square foot increase in the building footprint. As such, according to Town Bylaw Title V, Article 15, the final design materials must be submitted for review and approval by the Town Engineer.

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.

Utility access will not change 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.

This is a residential project. There will be no signage or advertising features on the property. The Board can find that this condition is met.

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.

This is a residential project. There are no special features 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.

The existing building provides safe and convenient access into and around the property. 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 not listed on the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington*. 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.

There are no proposed changes that would affect the microclimate. 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.

A LEED checklist was not provided.

IV. Conditions

A. 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. 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.
4. The Applicant shall provide evidence that a final plan for drainage and surface water removal has been reviewed and approved by the Town Engineer.