

Arlington Special Town Meeting — Motion to Amend

ARTICLE NO. 12

Dated: October 19, 2023

I, Adam Lane, do hereby submit the following Motion to Amend the Redevelopment Board's (ARB) recommended vote under Article 12:

To modify the language within the ARB's amendment of Zoning Bylaw **Section 5.9.4.E Bonuses** thusly:

A.) Striking all occurrences of the following text from item 1: ", and the front yard setback requirement is reduced to 0 feet"

B.) Appending the following sentences to the end of the text of item 1:
"Furthermore, properties satisfying the nonresidential/commercial ground floor percentages stated above may avail themselves of a reduction in the front yard setback to 0 feet. In which case, however, their height shall not exceed 4 stories, 52 feet within the MBMF Overlay District on Massachusetts Avenue and 3 stories, 39 feet in the MBMF Overlay District on Broadway irrespective of their qualification for any additional bonuses described below."

C.) Inserting the following text after the word "bonuses" in item 4: "for all buildings with a minimum front yard setback of 15 feet"

Comment: The changes which this amendment, should it be approved, will effect in **Section 5.9.4.E. Bonuses** of the Zoning Bylaw can be seen in context here—

1) In the MBMF Overlay District, for properties abutting Massachusetts Avenue, where the ground floor at street level will be at least 60% occupied by eating and drinking establishments, businesses services, childcare, or retail uses, there are no residential units on the ground floor at street level, and the frontage is at least 80% occupied by said nonresidential uses, the maximum height is 6 stories and 78 feet, ~~and the front yard setback requirement is reduced to 0 feet.~~
In the MBMF Overlay District, for properties abutting Broadway, where the ground floor at street level will be at least 60% occupied by eating and drinking establishments, businesses services, childcare, or retail uses, there are no residential units on the ground floor at street level, and the frontage is at least 80% occupied by said non-residential uses, the maximum height is 5 stories and 65 feet, ~~and the front yard setback requirement is reduced to 0 feet.~~
Furthermore, properties satisfying the nonresidential/commercial ground floor percentages stated above may avail themselves of a reduction in the front yard setback to 0 feet. In which case, however, their height shall not exceed 4 stories, 52 feet within the MBMF Overlay District on Massachusetts Avenue and 3 stories, 39 feet in the MBMF Overlay District on Broadway irrespective of their qualification for any additional bonuses described below.

4) The height with all bonuses for all buildings with a minimum front yard setback of 15 feet shall not exceed 6 stories, 78 feet in the MBMF Overlay District on Massachusetts Avenue, 5 stories, 65 feet in the MBMF Overlay District on Broadway, and 3 stories, 35 feet in the NMF Overlay District.

The aims of the MBTA Communities Act Zoning Overlay are commendable, and the town's obligation to encourage denser (and more affordable) housing along public transit corridors clear. And yet, while in no way meaning to impugn the expertise of the Study Committee or the Redevelopment Board, some of their aesthetic choices seem questionable, and surely will lead to an unattractive and claustrophobic streetscape, reducing quality of life for all Arlingtonians, both present and future. Large buildings absolutely have their place in town and most already extant work well in our urban fabric, invariably because they are set back from the road and sidewalk. The changes within this amendment should have the effect of reducing the height of buildings to a more human scale where they are sited immediately adjacent to pedestrian walkways.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Adam Lane
Town Meeting Member,
Precinct 3

Action Taken: _____

Date Voted: _____