



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 V. Ricker, Secretary Ex-Officio

Subject: Environmental Design Review, 149 Pleasant Street, Arlington, MA
Docket #3810

Date: August 1, 2024

I. Docket Summary

This is an application filed on July 8, 2024, by Stephen Doherty, FTO Realty Trust, 109 Blanchard Road, Lawrence, MA 01843 to demolish the existing single-family house on a corner lot located at 149 Pleasant Street, Arlington, MA, and build a new three-family residential building within the R4 Townhouse District. The opening of Special Permit Docket #3810 will allow the Board to review and approve the project under §3.4, Environmental Design Review.

The Applicant proposes to construct a new three-family residential building on the site of an existing single-family house in the R4 Townhouse District, which allows three-family residential use via special permit. In addition to the demolition and new construction, the project proposes to relocate the existing driveway and curb cut on Pleasant St and add a second driveway and curb cut on Gray Street, to provide a total of six vehicle parking spaces. The application is before the Redevelopment Board due to the project's location on Pleasant Street.

The applicant is seeking relief from the following requirements of the Zoning Bylaw:

- §5.4.3 Use Regulations for Residential Districts – the applicant requests a special permit to construct a three-family residential building in the R4 district.

- §6.1.10.A Location of Parking Spaces – the applicant is proposing two separate driveways which is allowable should the Board make a finding that the second driveway may be added.
- §5.3.16 Yards or Setbacks for Lots Adjoining a Street or Public Open Space – the applicant is requesting that a finding be made to allow parking within the front yard setback from Gray Street for both the upper and lower driveways due to site conditions.
- §2 Definitions, Open Space: Useable – the applicant is requesting that a finding be made to waive useable open space requirements given the 16% grade of the project site.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

- Application for EDR Special Permit and Impact Statement, dated July 8, 2024;
- LEED Checklist, dated July 8, 2024;
- Stormwater Report, dated June 24, 2024;
- Arlington Historic Districts Commission Certificate of Appropriateness, dated March 21, 2024;
- Neighborhood Plan, dated June 20, 2024;
- Existing and Proposed Site Plans, dated June 20, 2024;
- Floor Plans and Elevations, dated June 20, 2024;
- Existing Conditions Photos, dated June 20, 2024;
- Streetscape study, undated; and
- Product and materials list, undated.

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 located in the R4 Townhouse District at 149 Pleasant Street. A single-family house was originally constructed on the site around 1947. The applicant is proposing to raze the single-family house and build a three-family residence which is an allowable use in the R4 district via special permit per §5.4.3 of the Zoning Bylaw.

There is a steep downward slope from west to east on the site. A proposed second driveway is required to meet the special permit criteria specified in §6.1.10.A. The applicant is also requesting relief via §5.3.16 from requirements that prohibit parking in the required front yard setback.

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 neighborhood is zoned R4, which generally allows one- and two-family dwellings by right, and three-family dwellings or more via special permit. The project will construct 3 units of housing, including one accessible unit, which will contribute to the availability and diversity of housing options in the Town. 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 three-family residential use is consistent with the pre-existing single-family residential use but with increased density. The addition of two units and thus four parking spaces will increase entry and exit movements to and from the site but will likely not create notable traffic congestion 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 project site is in a residential area on a major street with underground 8" water and 10" sewer distribution lines. The proposed three-unit residential use will likely not overload 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 use regulations are applicable to the proposal. The Board can find 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 neighborhood is zoned R4, which generally allows three-family dwellings or more via special permit. The proposed three-family residential building does not impair the integrity or character of the neighborhood as other styles and types of multi-family housing currently exist in the immediate area including across the street from the project site. 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 proposed residential use is in keeping with the residential neighborhood and will not cause an excess of use. 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 is a significant 16% slope to the overall site which will be retained as no major site grading is proposed. Two parking areas will be created via retaining walls and soil addition or removal as is appropriate without substantial change to the site slope. The applicant should be prepared to discuss the driveway slope and able to confirm that it does not exceed a 15% downward slope, which would require additional relief per §6.1.10.A.

The applicant proposes removing three of five mature pine trees on the site. The relocation of the curb cut on Pleasant Street will also require removal of an immature but established street tree. The Board may consider requesting a more detailed landscape plan that shows all existing landscaping to be removed and includes a list of new plant materials and locations to be planted. Staff notes that §6.1.10.A requires a vegetated buffer for side yards used for parking when abutting a residential lot.

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 property is located in the Pleasant Street Historic District. The pre-existing 1947 house is not of the character or scale of other residential property in the neighborhood and is not considered a contributing structure to the Historic District. The proposed Italian Renaissance Revival design and overall massing of the three-family residence is more in line with the existing architectural vernacular in the District and received a Certificate of Appropriateness with conditions from the Arlington Historic Districts Commission on March 21, 2024. 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.

By definition, there is currently no conforming, useable open space on the site given the 16% grade. The applicant does not propose new useable open space. 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.

Six parking spaces (two tandem spaces per unit) are proposed. Four of the proposed parking spaces are located at the rear of the site on a proposed second driveway with access to Gray Street. Two of the spaces are located on a reconfigured primary driveway with access to Pleasant Street. The Pleasant Street driveway is designed with a turn-around to prevent cars from needing to back onto Pleasant Street, which is highly travelled. Each of the spaces will be assigned to a dwelling unit to ensure orderly vehicular circulation.

The applicant proposes to move the existing curb cut on Pleasant Street closer to the intersection of Pleasant and Gray Street and restore the concrete sidewalk to Town of Arlington specifications. In consultation with the Building Commissioner, it was determined that since parking is not allowed within twenty feet of an unsignalized intersection, generally a driveway should be at least 20 feet from the intersection as well. The applicant should be prepared to give the measurements of each proposed driveway to the curb line of the intersecting street.

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 stormwater report and site drainage plan. The Gray Street driveway is designed to drain into an infiltration trench that diverts stormwater to a dry well. Likewise, the roof drains and Pleasant Street driveway will drain to a second drywell. The addition of landscaped areas will also assist with stormwater drainage and retention. This should improve surface water drainage over existing conditions. 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.

Currently electrical, telephone and cable services are delivered to the project site above ground as is typical for Pleasant Street. The applicant has requested that those existing services remain overhead. The proposal includes new sanitary sewer and water hook-ups underground and a new manhole for sewer service.

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 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 both Gray and Pleasant Streets. 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 property is located in the Pleasant Street Historic District. The applicant received a Certificate of Appropriateness with conditions for the proposed project from the Arlington Historic Districts Commission on March 21, 2024. 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 provided although LEED certification will not be pursued for the project. The Board can find this condition is met.

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. 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.