



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS  
**PLANNING BOARD**  
CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

OFFICE OF CITY CLERK  
OCT 3 10 43 AM '80

September 22, 1980

CASE NO. PB-9  
PREMISES: 25 Webster Avenue and 199 Portland Street  
ZONING DISTRICT: Residence C-1  
PETITIONER: Urban Development and Investment Corporation  
APPLICATION DATE: August 8, 1980  
DATE OF HEARING: September 2, 1980  
PETITION: Townhouse special permit for 24 dwelling units, Article  
11.000, Section 11.12.  
DATE OF PLANNING BOARD DECISION: September 16, 1980

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## THE HEARING

At the September 2nd, 1980 public hearing, Douglas Bell of the Urban Development and Investment Corporation (UDIC) briefly presented the development proposal consisting of 24 townhouse units. He explained that the project was a joint venture involving his firm as the developer, the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) who are the present land-owners, and the Dante Allegheri Society who plan to build a cultural appreciation center on land abutting the proposed townhouse development. He also introduced Imre and Anthony Halasz, architects (of Imre and Anthony Halasz, Inc., Boston, MA) who drew the plans submitted to the Community Development Department on 8/8/80. Imre Halasz presented details of the plan outlining building arrangement, traffic and parking, building materials, landscaping, and treatment of paving. Most of the townhouse structures would be oriented toward a new private way between Portland Street and Webster Avenue. Following this presentation, Douglas Bell introduced another site plan (drawn by UDIC) showing a different lot boundary arrangement. This second plan delineated the center line of the traveled way as lot boundaries, in part, for the corresponding lots. The plan also differed from the Halasz plan with regard to individual lot areas and corresponding open space areas, landscaping and parking. In other respects, however, the two plans were similar. Mr. Bell then reviewed the violations cited by the CDD

staff. He informed the Board that UDIC hoped to submit a final plan containing no violations, if the special permit were approved. However, he did review the front yard setback question concerning those units fronting on Portland Street. He claimed that when the plans were drawn, the adjoining parcel to the southwest contained a building (since torn down) constructed on the front lot line. The staff cited a front yard setback violation for the particular structure in question.

The anticipated sales price of the units was also discussed. Mr. Bell felt the units would be marketed in the \$75,000-\$95,000 range. Jimmy Bentubo of the Wellington-Harrington Citizens Committee informed the Board that the committee wanted to go on record as being against the development due to the current price estimate. Mr. Bentubo explained that in earlier meetings with the UDIC and CRA, a selling price of between \$65,000-\$80,000 was quoted. He argued that the higher price range would make the housing unaffordable by people in the neighborhood. Other questions by the Board and staff addressed building orientation, drainage and fencing and were reviewed by the applicants. Finally, the staff notified the Board that it has received one telephone communication from Dan Braga, owner of property at 1357 Portsmouth Street. Mr. Braga stated that he would be in favor of the development as long as it did not turn into a subsidized low income project and provided that a high quality job was done on the landscaping.

PLANNING BOARD DISCUSSION

Following the hearing, the Board discussed the application. It was noted that selling price was an issue not within the Planning Board's purview. The Board also instructed the staff to contact UDIC and request one set of plans to clarify precisely what landscaping treatment was proposed. Finally, the Board recommended that the staff

request plans depicting an alternative building orientation for two buildings, to provide more southerly exposure for units #1-4 along Webster Avenue.

A letter was sent to UDIC outlining the Board's concerns. Prior outlining the Planning Board's meeting of 9/16/80, the staff received revised plans addressing those issues raised by the Board. Such plans were presented to the Board and discussed at their 9/16/80 meeting.

FINDINGS

After hearing the evidence presented at the public hearing and the subsequent meeting and considering staff review, the Board makes the following findings:

1.. In accordance with Section 10.43 of the Zoning Ordinance concerning criteria for granting special permits, the Board finds that:

- a. Except for a few minor violations (cited later in this decision) the proposed development will meet the dimensional requirements of the ordinance.
- b. In terms of traffic generated, the proposed development will not cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character.
- c. The proposed development will not adversely affect the continued operation or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance.
- d. The proposed development will not be detrimental to the occupants of the proposed use nor to the citizens of the City.

- e. The proposed development will not derogate from the intent and purpose of the ordinance.

2. In accordance with Section 10.464 of the Zoning Ordinance concerning additional criteria for approval of townhouses, the Board finds that:

- a. Tree removal will be minimized to the maximum extent feasible.
- b. New buildings will relate sensitively to the existing built environment. The location, orientation and massing of structures in the development will be satisfactory and will avoid overwhelming the existing two and three story dwellings in the vicinity of the development.
- c. The location, arrangement, and landscaping of open space will be satisfactory.
- d. Points of ingress and egress will be safe if traffic signs are provided.
- e. On-site parking will be adequately screened and will not substantially detract from the use and enjoyment of either the proposed development or neighboring properties.
- f. Trash removal location for the residents will be somewhat inconvenient but will be adequate.

3. In his letter to the Board, Lauren Preston of the Department of Traffic and Parking, cited three problems. These were; insufficient curb radii, lack of a raised curb for pedestrian protection, and lack of visitor parking. The Board finds that proper turning radii are necessary. The Board also finds that the lack of a sidewalk with raised curb and designated visitor parking will not seriously impair the usability of the development. It could create a pedestrian plaza type of environment.

4.. The revised development plan as submitted (received by the CDD on 9/12/80 and drawn by Douglas E. Bell, registered architect of ADIC on 9/10/80) contains the following zoning violations which customarily would require a variance:

- a. Units #18, 19, and 20 of Building G violate the front yard setback requirement, subsection 11.154(1) as follows:

<u>Unit #</u>	<u>Requirement</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
18	10'	6.5' - 7.0'
19	10'	6.5' - 7.0'
20	10'	6.5' - 7.0'

- b. Parking spaces for units #1 and 3 (shown on alternate layout for buildings A and B) don't contain a minimum five feet setback from the street line, section 6.56. The plans show only a three feet setback.

- c. As lots will be subdivided, 25% of each such subdivided lot must be dedicated as usable open space. Six of the units (lots) do not meet this requirement, subsection 11.155 (2):

<u>Unit #</u>	<u>open space Requirement</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
8	474'	423'
12	400'	340'
20	556'	537'
22	399'	340'
23	384'	340'
24	623'	510'

The revised plans contain optional grade level decks for the above units. The purpose here was to accumulate additional open space area that would qualify as "usable" given the dimensional requirements of

the ordinance. However, none of these "decks" would remedy the open space deficiency because all (except those for units #22 and 23) exceed 25% of the total usable open space for each particular lot (section 5.22 (1)). Decks for units #22 and 23 wouldn't qualify either because they could be considered walkways or part of the traveled way.

#### PLANNING BOARD DECISION

Based on the information presented at the public hearing and at the Board's meeting of 9/16/80, the Planning Board voted unanimously (7 members) to GRANT a special permit with the following conditions:

- 1.. The development shall be constructed according to the alternate layout for buildings A and B as depicted on "alternate plan #1" drawn on 9/10/80 by Douglas E. Bell, registered architect of UDIC and submitted to the Community Development Department on 9/12/80.
- 2.. All trees provided as landscaping for the development shall have a minimum caliper of three inches at the time of planting. A suggested list of trees is contained in section 11.164, (4)(b), second paragraph.
- 3.. The development shall contain a "ONE-WAY" sign at the point of entry at Webster Avenue and a "DO NOT ENTER" sign at the point of exit at Portland Street. The signs are to be standard City traffic signs.
- 4.. The development shall contain minimum curb radii of ten feet (10') at the intersection of the private traveled way and Webster Avenue and the intersection of the aforementioned way and Portland Street.
- 5.. Under the authority granted by Section 11.125 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Board may allow zoning violations customarily requiring a variance, other than a use variance. The final plans and actual development shall contain only those violations explicitly cited in 4 a, b, and c of the findings of this decision.

6. The final plans and actual development, except as modified above, shall conform in all aspects to the revised plans submitted to the Community Development Department on 9/12/80, drawn on 9/10/80 by Douglas E. Bell, registered architect of UDIC.

Respectfully submitted,

For the Planning Board

*Arthur C. Parris*  
Arthur C. Parris  
Chairman

Attest: A true and correct copy of the decision filed with the offices of the City Clerk on October 3, 1980 by Elizabeth McCarty authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board.

Twenty days have elapsed since the date of filing this decision. No appeal has been filed \_\_\_\_\_. Appeal filed and dismissed or denied \_\_\_\_\_.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk, City of Cambridge