



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

2009 SEP 23 P 4: 14
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS

Case No: 240
Address: 625 Putnam Avenue
Zoning: Residence C-1/Special District 8A
Owner: HRI Putnam, LLC, 280 Franklin Street, Cambridge, MA
Applicant: HRI Putnam, LLC, 280 Franklin Street, Cambridge, MA
Application Date: July 23, 2009
Public Hearing: August 18, 2009
Planning Board Decision: September 8, 2009
Date of Filing Decision: September 23, 2009

Application: Request for Multifamily Special Permit (Section 4.26 & 10.47), Side Yard Reduction (Section 5.24.4(3)); Parking waiver (Section 6.35.1(6)) and 10.45. the applicant requests a waiver of the Special Permit fee.

Decision: GRANTED with conditions.

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Office of the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized representative to the Planning Board:

For further information concerning this decision, please contact Liza Paden at 617 349 4647 or lpaden@cambridgema.gov.

APPLICATION MATERIALS SUBMITTED

Planning Board Special Permit application dated July 22, 2009, containing cover letter from Peter Daly, Executive Director of HRI, Project Narrative, Narrative Description, Response to Citywide Urban Design Guidelines, Dimensional Form, Ownership Certificate, and letter from David Lefcourt, City Arborist.

Drawings submitted, titled "Putnam Avenue Housing" dated July 23, 2009, of various scales, containing a survey, zoning diagram, location and linkage, existing site and context, existing and proposed views, site/landscape plan, parking levels through roof plan as appropriate for building 1 and 2, and typical wall section and unit plans.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED

Zoning history of the area, CDD staff, dated 9/8/09

Map titled "Allowed FAR and Height Special District 8A and Vicinity", dated 9/2/09 by the Community Development Department staff.

Memo from Susan Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, to the Planning Board, dated 8/18/09

Memo to the Planning Board from the Cambridge Bicycle Committee, dated 8/14/09

Copy of the Planning Board presentation dated 8/18/09

Email to L. Paden, for the Planning Board, from Roberta L. Rubin, dated 8/18/09

Email to L. Paden for the Planning Board, from Barbara and Harry Photopoulos, dated 8/18/09

Email to the Planning Board from Charles Marquardt, dated 8/30/09

Email to L. Paden, CDD staff, for the Planning Board from Esther Hanig, dated 8/21/09

Email to L. Paden, for the Planning Board from Debra Fox, HRI Board Member, dated 8/17/09

Email to the Planning Board from Tony Chao, dated 7/29/09

Memo from HRI to abutters and concerned residents dated August 2009

FINDINGS

After review and consideration of the application documents and supplemental documents submitted to the Board, testimony taken at the public hearing, and the general special permit criteria, the Board makes the following findings.

1. Section 10.47.4: Criteria for Approval of Multifamily Dwellings

a. Key features of the natural environment should be preserved to the maximum extent feasible. Tree removal should be minimized and other natural features of the site, such as slopes, should be maintained.

The development parcel consists of a single story vacant industrial building and open parking lot. There are no trees on the site.

b. New buildings should be related sensitively to the existing built environment. The location, orientation and massing of structures in the development should avoid overwhelming the existing buildings in the vicinity of the development. Visual and functional disruptions should be avoided.

The proposed buildings have been located to complement the existing residential uses along Sidney Street and Putnam Avenue. The three story building along Sidney Street is in keeping with the existing residential abutters, with individual front and rear doors. All parking is beneath the Putnam Avenue building to maximize the amount of green open space. The four story building provides a transition to the abutting building site with a 65 foot height limit in the Special District 8A district. The building is designed to provide a principal access of both a ramp and steps to the porch. The Putnam Avenue façade also contains the garage entrance. The Sidney Street building has front entrances on Sidney Street.

c. The location, arrangement, and landscaping of open space should provide some visual benefits to abutters and passersby as well as functional benefits to occupants of the development.

The developer will create green landscaped areas where none currently exist. There will be plantings along the public sidewalks on both Putnam Avenue and Sidney Street. The area abutting the residential buildings is being planted to provide a landscaped buffer between the project sidewalks and the abutting residential properties. There will also be an interior landscaped area within the development.

d. Parking areas, internal roadways and access/egress points should be safe and convenient.

All parking will be located below the multifamily building and accessed from Putnam Avenue. This access will be properly marked for pedestrian awareness.

e. Parking area landscaping should minimize the intrusion of onsite parking so that it does not substantially detract from the use and enjoyment of either the proposed development or neighboring properties.

All parking is below the building.

f. Service facilities such as trash collection apparatus and utility boxes should be located so that they are convenient for resident, yet unobtrusive.

The trash and recycling will be collected and stored within the building on the first floor of the Putnam Avenue building and moved to the street for regularly scheduled pick up. The trash and recycling for the 6 unit building on Sidney will be collected and stored in a designated location at the building.

2. Section 6.35.1(6) Reduction of Required Parking within a development providing affordable housing units

The Applicant presented research from other properties that they have developed and currently manage, as well as those of another nonprofit housing developer, which indicate a reduced demand for parking by

the households they serve. The existing parking use of those similar projects is below .6 spaces per unit; the proposed development will provide .7 spaces per unit. The MBTA Red Line (in Central Square) and Green Line (across the river in Boston) are within walking distance of the development and the area is served by an existing MBTA bus route as well as the EZ Ride shuttle. It is expected that the general pattern of auto ownership observed in those other developments will occur here as well. With the development of this project the City will be able to designate a number of existing on-street parking spaces, now unrestricted, as resident only parking that should benefit this development and existing neighborhood residential units.

With a reduced parking ratio, there will be significant savings in construction costs for providing the underground parking, as well as time devoted to construction, since the development is designed to excavate only the footprint of the Putnam Avenue building, and to locate the parking below only that building. Minimizing the expense of underground parking makes it possible to provide such a valuable design feature and allow substantial green landscaping at the ground level where surface parking would otherwise have to be located.

There is an additional benefit of constructing a smaller garage with fewer parking spaces: A superior landscaping plan with more mature trees and shrubs can be planted in soil rather than in fill over a garage.

As part of the Multifamily Special Permit, the Planning Board may grant any Board of Zoning Appeal Special Permit under Section 10.45 if it is within the scope of the Planning Board special permit as is the case with this special permit provision.

4. Section 5.24.4(3) Side yard Reduction to 10 feet

The design meets all zoning setback requirements with the exception of one portion of the multifamily building (at Putnam Avenue) along the northeasterly edge of the site, next to the existing vacant industrial building. The Board finds that the yard reduction at this location is reasonable, as it will be adequately landscaped and its impact is mitigated by setting back the fourth floor of the building. The yard reduction allows a shift in the location of the building on this portion of the site to provide a larger setback on the westerly side of the building next to the neighboring residential structure.

5. Conformance with General Special Permit Criteria in Section 10.43.

A special Permit will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when the particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:

a. It appears that the requirements of the ordinance cannot or will not be met.

The requirement of the Ordinance will be met with the granting of the relief being sought.

b. The traffic generated or patterns of access or egress will cause congestion hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character.

A single entrance will be provided to the underground parking, limiting the amount of disruption to the existing neighborhood traffic pattern. The modest number of units will not generate unreasonable amounts of new traffic to the area.

c. The continued operation of, or development of, adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use.

This residential development is consistent with the objectives of the Special District 8A to encourage the redevelopment of this previously industrial area to residential use. The new housing in this development will strengthen the residential character of the area to the benefit of already existing housing and will further encourage the transformation of the remaining industrial uses in the vicinity to residential use in the future.

d. Nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety, and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City

No nuisance or hazard will be created. The project will be extending the residential land use pattern of the adjacent established neighborhood into this transitional area and will make it more pleasant for existing and future residents to live and work in this area of Cambridgeport.

e. For other reasons the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance

The development fulfills the intent and purpose of the Special District 8A district and will reinforce and enhance the residential character of the adjacent residential blocks now zoned Residence C and Residence C-1.

f. The new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

(1) Section 19.31: New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.

The project extends the residential pattern of development found in the existing Cambridgeport neighborhood into this former industrial district, as intended by the creation of the Special District 8A.

(2) Section 19.32: Development should be pedestrian and bicycle friendly, with positive relationship to its surroundings.

The development recreates a typical residential street pattern with landscaped front yards and building entries and creates a friendly and welcoming environment for pedestrians and bicyclists in a previously industrial environment.

(3) Section 19.33: The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.

The development creates a new residential environment where a vacant parking lot and industrial buildings previously existed. Extensive green landscaping will replace asphalt and engaging building facades will replace windowless industrial space. The environment will be substantially improved for existing residential properties.

(4) Section 19.34: Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.

The project will not overburden city infrastructure. In fact the city has recently invested substantial sums in significantly upgrading the roadway network in the vicinity of the project.

(5) Section 19.35: New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.

This project is in an area of the city that has been in transition for more than forty years. Residential development is the preferred use in this formerly industrial portion of Cambridgeport and that development form and this project will reinforce and enhance the existing residential neighborhood where in the past it interfaced with heavy industrial activities.

(6) Section 19.36: Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.

The project introduces a significant component of affordable housing to the city's inventory.


(7) Section 19.37: Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.

The site will be devoted to private residential development with no component of publically accessible open space. However, a substantial portion of the site will be green and landscaped, replacing asphalt and industrial buildings that now occupy the site.

DECISION


Based on a review of the application documents, comments made at the public hearing, and the above findings, the Planning Board **GRANTS** the requested Special Permits and the Special Permit fee, subject to the following conditions and limitations:

1. All uses, building construction and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the plans and application documents submitted to the Planning Board as referenced above, dated July 23, 2009. Appendix I summarizes the dimensional features of the Project as approved.
2. The project shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department (CDD). Before issuance of the Building Permit for the project, the CDD shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the final plans submitted to secure the Building Permit are consistent with and meet all conditions of this permit.
3. All authorized development shall conform to the requirements of the City of Cambridge Noise Control Ordinance, Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code.
4. Before issuance of a Building Permit for construction authorized by this Special Permit, the Permittee shall prepare a Construction Management Plan consistent with the requirements of Section 18.20 of the Zoning Ordinance, which Plan shall be submitted to the Community Development Department for review and approval.



Voting in the Affirmative to **GRANT** the Special Permit were Planning Board Members W. Tibbs, P. Winters, T. Cohen, T. Anninger, H. Russell, S. Winter, and P. Singer, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Planning Board, necessary to grant a Special Permit.

For the Planning Board,



William Tibbs, Chair


A copy of this decision #240 shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on September 23, 2009, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of the decision. No appeal has been filed.

DATE:

City Clerk of Cambridge



Appendix I – Dimensional Form

Special Permit #240

Address: 625 Putnam Avenue

	Allowed/Required	Existing	Proposed	Granted
	Res C-1/SD8A	Res C-1/SD8A	Res C-1/SD8A	Res C-1/SD8A
Total FAR	.98/1.95		.98/1.95	.98/1.95
Residential	.75/1.50	0/0/	.75/1.5	.75/1.5
Non-Residential	/1.0			
Inclusionary Bonus			.3	.3
Total GFA in Sq. Ft.	10,124/34,293		7,191/37,112	7,191/37,112
Residential			7,191/37,112	7,191/37,112
Non-Residential			0/0	
Inclusionary Bonus				
Max. Height	35/45		35/45	35/45
Range of heights				
Lot Size	5,000	10,384/17,586	10,384/17,586	10,384/17,586
Lot area/du	1,500/700		1,500/700	1,500/700
Total Dwelling Units		0	6/34	6/34
Base units				
Inclusionary units				
Min. Lot Width	50/50		89/141	89/141
Min. Yard Setbacks				
Front	H+L/4 0		10/10	10/10
Side, Left	H+L/5 H+L/7		10'8"/10	10'8"/10
Side, Right	H+L/5 H+L/7		12'1"/10'	12'1"/10'
Rear	H+L/4 H+L/5		NA/NA	NA/NA
Total % Open Space	30%/15%			
Usable			27,970	27,970
Other				
Off Street Parking	1 per unit		28	28
Min #				
Max #				
Handicapped			3	3
Bicycle Spaces			20	20
Loading Bays	NA		NA	NA