

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

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OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

## NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No.: 244

Address: 181 Walden Street, also known as Lincoln Way

Owners/Applicant: Gregory R. Russ, Executive Director, Cambridge Housing Authority, 675  
Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139

Zoning District: Residence C-1 & C-2

Application Date: January 27, 2010

Planning Board Hearing Date: February 16, 2010

Planning Board Decision: February 16, 2010

Filing Planning Board Decision: March 3, 2010

**APPLICATION:** Special Permit for Multifamily Housing (Section 4.26) for 70 units of housing and  
Reduction of Required Parking to 60 spaces (Section 6.35.1).

**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 of the Planning Board

For further information concerning this decision, please call Liza Paden at 349-4647, TTY: 349-4621, email [lpaden@ci.cambridge.ma.us](mailto:lpaden@ci.cambridge.ma.us).

## DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Special Permit application, dated January 2010, containing Table of Contents, Letter to the Planning Board from Gregory P. Russ Executive Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) dated 1/19/10, Special Permit Cover Sheet, Summary of Application, Ownership Certificate, Dimensional Form, and photographs.

Special Permit application plans, date January 15, 2010, with plans by Baker/Wohl Architects, assorted scales.

Revised Special Permit application plans dated 2/16/10, submitted 2/11/10 showing building elevations.

Letter to the Planning Board from CHA, dated 2/16/10, outlining the Special Permit criteria and how the application meets those requirements.

Letter to the Planning Board from Sue Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, dated 2/16/10.

## FINDINGS

Based on the review of the application documents, testimony at the public hearing, and review of the relevant special permit criteria, the Planning Board makes the following findings in support of granting the Multifamily Special Permit and Reduction of Required Parking.

### **Conformance with Multifamily Special Permit Criteria in Section 4.26:**

The Planning Board finds the proposal is 70 units of housing located within the Residence C-1 District and subject to Section 4.26, the Multifamily Special Permit.

### **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":

- *It appears that the requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met,*

With the granting of this special permit, the Ordinance will be met.

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

The CHA's proposed plan has been developed in conjunction with the Cambridge Traffic, Transportation and Parking Department as well as the Lincoln Way Tenants' Council and

abutters and is an improvement over the current condition. The site will continue to be residential.

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

The existing character and uses will remain the same, a Multifamily Residential development.

- *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, or*

The reconstruction of 70 units of affordable housing using current standards of “green” building development will create a healthier and improved living situation for residents of Lincoln Way.

- *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, and*

The CHA’s proposal is to replace outdated and obsolete housing with family housing that compliments the existing neighborhood, and is developed in cooperation with and input from current residents and abutters to the site.

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

The Urban Design Objectives have been met as outlined below.

### **Conformance with Urban Design Findings Section 19.30 – Citywide Urban Design Objectives**

- *19.31: New project should be responsive to the existing or the anticipated pattern of development.*

The design of the new buildings reflects the heights and densities of the existing C-1 neighborhood while creating a smaller neighborhood within Lincoln Way.

- *19.32: Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with positive relationship to its surroundings.*

The site plans show extensive sidewalk connections made between units as well as to the neighborhood. There will be convenient and secure bike racks throughout the site and as part of individual units; great care has been taken to accommodate families with small children.

- *19.33: The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.*

Trees will be maintained to create screening between neighbors. The traffic pattern has been developed to prevent non-local traffic from cutting through the site. The building heights are similar to those along Walden and Raymond Streets.

- 19.34: *Projects should not overburden the city infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system and sewer system.*

The project has been reviewed by the appropriate City departments and, through the use of Green building practices and low flow appliances, will have fewer vehicle trips than the existing development.

- 19.35: *New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.*

This location has been an active Cambridge Housing Authority site since construction in 1950; it will continue to provide affordable housing opportunities in this neighborhood.

- 19.36: *Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.*

70 new units will be developed on this site, replacing the 60 existing units. This project, in combination with the CHA's Jackson Garden renovation, will retain the existing number of Housing Authority units currently available in Cambridge.

- 19.37: *Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.*

There will be large open spaces, accessible from individual units, providing small children with safe and secure areas for active play. Lincoln Way is across Walden Street from Raymond Park, with active play areas for older children. Much of the design has incorporated open spaces as well as green areas for walkways in and out of the site.

#### **Section 10.47.4: Criteria for Approval of Townhouse Development and Multifamily Dwellings**

- *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.*

Perimeter trees will be preserved. Interior trees must be removed to accommodate the new construction. The site's slope from Walden Street to Building #5 will be maintained with re-grading for the new construction.

- *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 new construction will be at a scale consistent with abutting properties as well as conforming to the dimensional regulations for Floor Area Ratio and height limits. The allowable number of units is 115; the CHA proposes 70 units believing this number and unit mix to be more appropriate for blending with the surrounding neighborhood.

- *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 new construction will maintain the existing trees at the Walden Street frontage, with new landscaping added to the façade of the proposed Building 1 that will front on Walden Street. The location of each proposed new building has been based on the results of several meetings attended by the CHA, the Lincoln Way residents and immediate abutters. For example, Buildings 3 and 4 have been positioned to face inward with backyards and green space facing abutters.

- *Parking areas, internal roadways and access/egress points should be safe and convenient.* The new site plan will create better circulation and site access for the residents and visitors, as well as for public safety and emergency access. Residents will be able to park close to their homes. Outside access will be from Wood and Raymond Streets. The site will have a central pedestrian walkway from Walden Street to Building 5 at the opposite end of the development. All outdoor areas will have greater visibility and surveillance opportunities for residents.
- *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.*

Trees will be planted in the small landscaped islands of the parking areas throughout the site. The entire site will be ringed with a minimum 5 foot buffer at the property line consisting of landscaping, often trees, providing screening and environmental benefit to the Lincoln Way residents and their immediate neighbors.

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

Each of the 6 new buildings at Lincoln Way will have its own enclosed trash building accessible only to residents of that building. Trash and recycling will be brought to the street on the appropriate day for municipal service.

### **3. Section 11.16.2 (4): Required Parking On-Street**

- *Lack of off-street parking will not unreasonably reduce the quantity of on-street parking in the area*

Based on the CHA's extensive experience with multiple properties over a number of years, the past experience at Lincoln Way, and the support voiced in the 2/16/10 letter from Sue Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, the Planning Board finds that the reduction of the parking requirement is reasonable and will not reduce the quantity of the on-street parking in the neighborhood. The provision of bike racks in convenient common area locations as well as at individual units encourages the use of bicycles as transportation. The site is approximately a half mile walk from the Porter Square MBTA subway and close to bus routes along Concord Avenue and Rindge Avenue. Overall, the decrease in the number of parking spaces increases the amount of green open space for the residents of the entire neighborhood. Furthermore, the Planning Board is prepared to allow a greater reduction in parking than requested by the applicant, to 54 spaces, to give the project flexibility in meeting actual demand for parking at the site and to provide an opportunity for increasing the amount of green space provided.

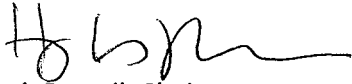
### **DECISION**

Based on the above findings, the Planning Board **GRANTS** the requested Multifamily Special Permit and Reduction of Parking Special Permit subject to the following conditions:

1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the original plans submitted to the Planning Board as referenced above and dated January 15, 2010 as they are modified by revised plans dated February 11, 2010. 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 each 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. The project shall be subject to the Transportation Demand Management Measures outlined in Sue Clippinger's letter of 2/16/10, by providing MBTA maps, schedules and fares as well as available pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the vicinity of the project, carpool/vanpool information offered by Mass Rides, CRTMA or other ride-matching organizations, and "Getting Around Cambridge" maps available at the Community Development Department.
4. The proponent will pursue a further reduction in the number of parking spaces provided on site, potentially decreasing the number of spaces to 54 and expanding and/or improving the open space plan with more green areas, to the extent the Permittee finds such a further reduction consistent with on-site parking demand and impact on adjacent public streets.
5. All authorized development shall conform to the requirements of the City of Cambridge Noise Control Ordinance, Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code.

Voting in the affirmative to grant the Special Permit were H. Russell, P. Winters, W. Tibbs, T. Anninger, S. Winter, P. Singer and C. Studen, Associate member appointed to act on this petition, constituting more than the two thirds of the members of the Board necessary to grant a special permit.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Russell', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hugh Russell, Chair

A copy of this decision #244 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 March 3, 2010, by Elizabeth M. Paden, 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.

**Appendix I – Dimensional Form**

**Special Permit # 244**

**Address: Lincoln Way/181 Walden Street**

	<b>Allowed/Required</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Granted</b>
<b>Total FAR</b>	1.221	.665	.787	.787
<b>Residential</b>	.94	.656	.766	
<b>Non-Residential</b>	0	.007	.21	
<b>Inclusionary Bonus</b>	.282			
<b>Total GFA in Sq. Ft.</b>	165,322	89,970	106,555	106,555
<b>Residential</b>	127,171	88,970	103,733	103,733
<b>Non-Residential</b>		1,000	2,822	2,822
<b>Inclusionary Bonus</b>	38,151			
<b>Max. Height</b>	35 (C-)	28	34.9	35
<b>Range of heights</b>				
<b>Lot Size</b>	135,356	135,356	135,356	135,356
<b>Lot area/du</b>	1,177	2,256	1,934	1,934
<b>Total Dwelling Units</b>	115	60	70	70
<b>Base units</b>				
<b>Inclusionary units</b>				70
<b>Min. Lot Width</b>	50	126	126	126
<b>Min. Yard Setbacks</b>				
<b>Front</b>	10	42.2 (Walden)	15.5 (Walden)	15.5 (Walden)
<b>Side, Left</b>	9.4	13.5	12 (Bldg 1)	12 (bldg 1)
<b>Side, Right</b>	18.6	5 (Sheridan)	22.9 (Bldg 2)	22.9 (bldg 2)
<b>Rear</b>				
<b>Total % Open Space</b>	27.2	40	31.7	31.7
<b>Usable</b>	13.6		14.8	14.8
<b>Other</b>	13.6		17	17.0
<b>Off Street Parking</b>	70	45	60	54**
<b>Min #</b>				
<b>Max #</b>				
<b>Handicapped</b>	3	0	5	5
<b>Bicycle Spaces</b>	35	0	35	35
<b>Loading Bays</b>	0	0	0	0

**\*\*Approved plans show 60 spaces, per Condition 4 in this decision, the applicant will pursue decreasing the number of onsite spaces to 54 and expanding the green area for open space.**