



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case Number:	316
Address:	305 Webster Avenue
Zoning:	Business A
Owner and Applicant:	M&H Realty Trust c/o Sean Hope, Esq. P.O. Box 410189, Cambridge, MA
Application Date:	August 9, 2016
Date of Planning Board Public Hearing:	September 27, 2016
Date of Planning Board Decision:	September 27, 2016
Date of Filing Planning Board Decision:	November 10, 2016

Application: Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20) to construct a new four-story mixed-use building with total gross floor area of 37,510 square feet containing thirty-five (35) dwelling units and a small ground floor commercial space.

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 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 Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board: Swaathi Joseph

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

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
2016 NOV 10 PM 2:40

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Application Documents and Supporting Material

1. Special Permit application submitted August 24, 2016, containing the Special Permit Cover Sheet, Ownership Certificate, Dimensional Form, Narrative, receipts of plans, and Tree Mitigation plan dated 12/2/14 by Blair Hines Design Associates, and attached graphic materials dated 8/17/16 including cover sheet, site plan, area plans, garage plan, floor plans for floors 1-4, roof plan, elevations, perspectives, zoning plans, zoning perspective, site context and landscape plan dated 8/23/16.

Other Documents

2. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Community Development Department staff, dated 9/21/2016.

SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

305 Webster Ave is a triangular lot situated at the corner of Webster Avenue and Columbia Street and just north of Cambridge Street. The city boundary with Somerville is a short distance to the north. The lot contains an existing one-to-two story commercial building, which has been used for various commercial operations over time. The proposal is to demolish the existing structure and construct a new mixed use structure to match the street-edge setbacks of the existing structure on all sides of the property. The new building with a total height of four stories will contain 35 dwelling units and other residential amenities. Accessory parking and bicycle parking would be located in the existing basement space and accessed from Columbia Street. A small commercial space would be created at the ground floor with an adjacent outdoor landscaped plaza at the acute corner of the lot closest to Cambridge Street. The Board of Zoning Appeal has granted a variance from setback requirements to build the proposed structure at the property line.

FINDINGS

After review of the Application Documents and other documents submitted to the Planning Board, testimony given at the public hearing, and review and consideration of the applicable requirements and criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance with regard to the relief being sought, the Planning Board makes the following Findings:

1. Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)

The project requires a Project Review Special Permit by exceeding the threshold of twenty thousand (20,000) square feet of Gross Floor Area applicable in the Business A district.

However, the project does not exceed the fifty thousand (50,000) square-foot threshold that would require a Traffic Study. Therefore, only the urban design component of the Project Review Special Permit is applicable to this project. In considering the standards for issuance of a special permit, the Board is guided by the provisions of Section 19.25.2 and the Citywide Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

(19.25.2) Urban Design Findings. The Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the city as set forth in Section 19.30. In making that determination the Board may be guided by or make reference to urban design guidelines or planning reports that may have been developed for specific areas of the city and shall apply the standards herein contained in a reasonable manner to nonprofit religious and educational organizations in light of the special circumstances applicable to nonprofit religious and educational activities.

The Board finds that the proposed project is consistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30, as described below.

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

The project is located in a somewhat eclectic mixed-use area between rail lines and industrial districts in Somerville and residential neighborhoods in Cambridge. The site is surrounded by uses including retail, office, residential, manufacturing and auto-related uses. In the Somerville portion of the area, where the future Union Square MBTA station is planned, a number of projects have converted former commercial sites to residential buildings. Because of the close proximity to a future public transit station as well as bus service, retail and other amenities, the City's growth policies suggest that this is a good location for the development of housing at a moderately high urban scale and density. In addition, the inclusion of ground-floor commercial space is critical to support the feeling of a connected urban streetscape from the future MBTA station to the Cambridge Street mixed-use corridor.

There are several one and two-story structures on site that have some contextual significance related to the historical auto-parts and recycling uses that were a major feature of the neighborhood. In response to these development patterns, the project proposes a design solution that both retains the site's industrial character and accommodates its new residential function within a mixed-use area.

(19.32) Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings. . . .

By adding residential uses and ground floor commercial space, the project should contribute positively to establishing a safe and attractive pedestrian connection from Cambridge Street to the planned MBTA station. The building design will promote active uses and transparency on the ground floor, particularly at the corner commercial space. The project will also include improvements to the public pedestrian environment

surrounding the site, in coordination with the Department of Public Works and the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department.

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

Rooftop mechanical equipment will be located and screened to minimize views from the street and neighboring abutters, and will be subject to compliance with the City's Noise Ordinance. Trash will be handled and stored inside the building and taken out to curbside only on trash day. A Stormwater Management Plan has been developed to be in compliance with the City of Cambridge Stormwater Policy and State Regulations and will be subject to continuing review by the Department of Public Works. Low Impact Development design features are employed. No substantial shadow impacts on abutters will be caused by the new construction and none of the adjacent uses have a registered solar energy system. Architectural lighting will be dark sky compliant and designed to shield lamps from view and minimize light pollution. Pedestrian lighting along the front and side yard areas and driveway will provide safe lighting enhancing the visual landscape in the evenings. The existing site does not contain trees, and new trees and landscaping will be planted according to a plan that has been reviewed with the City Arborist and will be subject to continuing review by appropriate City departments. An extensive green roof will also be utilized, which will assist with reducing energy consumption and managing stormwater flows.

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

The Department of Public Works has indicated that the project is anticipated to be able to meet applicable standards for utilities and infrastructure and will be subject to ongoing review by the Department of Public Works at the building permit phase. The project will also be subject to the City's Green Building Requirements.

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

The project will transform a currently underutilized site into a new residential block with a small node of retail activity, resulting in the creation of a more pleasant and lively pedestrian environment. The project is located in an area undergoing significant redevelopment and transformation from more marginal uses such as auto repair, storage and manufacturing to a broader mix of uses that includes housing, office and retail. The height and form of the project is consistent with the scale of recent housing projects in the area. The new building, which generally has the same scale and massing as the existing structure, has many positive aspects, including the open space at the apex of the triangle, the small retail node, the storefront windows along each street, and streetscape improvements that have the potential to significantly improve pedestrian connections around the site.

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

The project will create thirty-five (35) new dwelling units, and shall provide affordable units in compliance with the City's inclusionary housing requirements.

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

The project increases the open space on the site, and includes the creation of a small landscaped plaza at the corner of Webster Avenue and Columbia Street that will serve as a visual amenity to residents and passersby, and has the potential to be activated by the adjacent commercial space proposed within the project. The project will also provide green roof decks as an open space amenity for occupants of the building.

2. General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit (10.43)

The Planning Board finds that the project meets the General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit, as set forth below.

10.43 Criteria. Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when 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 requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or ...

With the requested special permit, the Ordinance requirements will be met.

(b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or ...

The proposed use and scale of development are permitted in the district and the project will not generate adverse traffic impacts.

(c) 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 proposed residential use conforms to the district requirements and will not adversely impact the operation or development of adjacent uses, which are predominantly office or other commercial.

(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, or ...

The proposed residential use will not result in any nuisance or hazard. The development will be required to conform to all applicable health and safety codes.

(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, and ...

As discussed elsewhere in these Findings, the proposed use and development are consistent with the character of this evolving, mixed-use district.

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

Consistency with the urban design objectives is discussed in detail in the Project Review Special Permit section of these Findings.

DECISION

Based on a review of the Application Documents, testimony given at the public hearings, and the above Findings, the Planning Board hereby GRANTS the requested Special Permit subject to the following conditions and limitations. Hereinafter, for purposes of this Decision, the Permittee shall mean the Applicant for the requested Special Permit and any successor or successors in interest.

1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the Application Documents and other supporting materials submitted to the Planning Board, and the additional Conditions of this Special Permit Decision. The project plans hereby approved by the Planning Board include plan set titled 305 Webster Avenue Residences, dated August 17, 2016 and landscape plan revised through August 23, 2016. 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, 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 Decision. As part of CDD's administrative review of the project, and prior to any certification to the Superintendent of Buildings, CDD may present any design changes made subsequent to this Decision to the Planning Board for its review and comment.
3. The Permittee shall address the following design comments through the continuing design review process set forth above. Each of the below items shall be subject to CDD review and approval of the final design details:
 - a. Selection of all exterior materials, colors, and details – including awning size and design.
 - b. The landscape details, particularly associated with screening elements, fencing and hardscape materials.
 - c. The proposed location and screening of the electrical transformer, which should be improved to be more visually appealing.
 - d. The final design of sidewalk, street trees, tree pits, parking, bicycle parking, access and egress, which shall also be reviewed and approved by Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TP&T) Department staff and Department of Public Works (DPW) staff.
4. All authorized development shall abide by all applicable City of Cambridge Ordinances, including the Noise Ordinance (Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code).
5. Throughout design development and construction, the project shall conform to the Green Building Requirements set forth in Section 22.20 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. CDD shall certify that the applicable requirements are met prior to issuance of a building permit, and again prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy, for development authorized by this special permit.

6. Prior to the final selection of colors and textures for façade materials, the Permittee shall erect a mock-up(s) of an exterior wall section on or near the building site to be reviewed by CDD for comment. Members of the Planning Board shall be notified when the mock-up is erected and given an opportunity to view the materials and transmit any comments to CDD.

Voting in the affirmative to GRANT the Special Permit were Planning Board Members Louis Bacci, Jr., H Theodore Cohen, Steven Cohen, Catherine Preston Connolly, Hugh Russell, and Associate Members Ahmed Nur and Thacher Tiffany, appointed by the Chair to act on the case, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board, necessary to grant a special permit.

For the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H Theodore Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

H Theodore Cohen, Chair.

A copy of this decision PB #316 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 November 10, 2016, by Swaathi Joseph, 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: Approved Dimensional Chart

	Existing	Allowed or Required	Proposed	Permitted
Lot Area (sq ft)	18,140	5,000 min	No Change	No Change
Lot Width (ft)	varies	50	No Change	
Total GFA (sq ft)	15,446	38,999	37,510	37,510
Residential Base	0	28,630	27,719	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Non-Residential Base	15,446	1,780	1,546	
Inclusionary Bonus	N/A	8,589	8,245	
Total FAR	0.85	2.14	2.10	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Residential Base	0	1.75	1.55	
Non-Residential Base	0.85	1.0	0.085	
Inclusionary Bonus	N/A	30%	0.525	
Total Dwelling Units	0	39	35	35
Base Units	N/A	30	27	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Inclusionary Bonus Units	N/A	9	8	
Base Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	N/A	604	671	
Total Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	N/A	465	518	
Height (ft)	25'-8"	45	40	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Front Setback – Webster (ft)	0	10 (min)	See below ¹	
Front Setback – Columbia (ft)	0	10 (min)	See below ¹	
Side Setback (ft)	varies	See below ¹	See below ¹	
Open Space (% of Lot Area)	0	15%	See below ²	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Private Open Space (sq ft)	0	2612	See below ²	
Permeable Open Space (sq ft)	0	None	2626	
Off-Street Parking Spaces	N/A	35	35	Consistent with Application Documents, PTDM and other applicable requirements
Long-Term Bicycle Parking	N/A	36	40	
Short-Term Bicycle Parking	N/A	4	6	
Loading Bays	N/A	0	0	

¹ BZA variance required from Section 5.32.1, footnotes (a) and (k) to rebuild the ground floor to match the footprint of the existing structure.

² BZA variance relief required from private open space requirements in Section 5.22.