

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

2016 NOV 30 AM 9:24
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case Number:	317
Address:	300 Putnam Avenue and 357-363 Allston Street
Zoning:	Residence C-1 (C-1)/ Business A-3 (BA-3)
Applicant:	Biotech Realty Investors, LLC. 30 Bow Street, Somerville, MA 02143
Owner:	300 Putnam Ave, LLC 24 Fairmont Street, Cambridge, MA 02139 Biotech Realty Investors, LLC. 30 Bow Street, Somerville, MA 02143
Application Date:	September 1, 2016
Date of Planning Board Public Hearing:	October 18, 2016
Date of Planning Board Decision:	October 18, 2016
Date of Filing Planning Board Decision:	November 30, 2016
Application:	Multifamily Special Permit (Section 4.26.1) and special permit to exempt basement area from the calculation of Gross Floor Area (Article 2.000, Definition of Gross Floor Area) to construct two new three-story buildings with total Gross Floor Area of 23,254 square feet containing 16 residential units, above-grade parking for 16 cars, and two sheds for 16 long-term bicycle parking spaces.
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.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Application Documents and Supporting Material

1. Special Permit Application submitted on 9/1/2016, containing the Special Permit Cover Sheet, Dimensional Form, Ownership Certificates, Community Outreach Summary, Project Narrative, plan set entitled 300 Putnam Ave. & 357-363 Allston St., prepared by Boyes-Watson Architects, dated 8/25/2016.
2. Revised plan set entitled 300 Putnam Ave. & 357-363 Allston St., prepared by Boyes-Watson Architects, dated 9/27/2016.
3. Revised plan set entitled 300 Putnam Ave. & 357-363 Allston St., prepared by Boyes-Watson Architects, dated 10/18/2016.

Other Documents

4. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Community Development Department staff, dated 10/12/2016.
5. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Department of Public Works staff, dated 10/12/2016.
6. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department staff, dated 10/13/2016.

Other Documents

7. Letter to the Planning Board from Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association, dated 10/7/2016.
8. Letter to the Planning Board from Jason Slavick, received 10/10/2016.
9. Letter to the Planning Board from Tamar Schapiro, dated 10/11/2016.
10. Email communication to the Planning Board from Gregory Katz, dated 10/11/2016.
11. Email communication to the Planning Board from David Solomon, dated 10/10/2016.
12. Email communication to the Planning Board from Mark Mulligan, dated 10/18/2016.
13. Email communication to the Planning Board from Christian Grippo, dated 10/16/2016.
14. Email communication to the Planning Board from Juan Carlos Serna, dated 10/16/2016.

APPLICATION SUMMARY

The Applicant proposes to demolish the existing single-story non-residential buildings on the two corner lots to construct two new three-story buildings, each with 8 residential units, above-grade parking for 16 cars, and two sheds for 16 long-term bicycle parking spaces. The proposal also includes addition of landscaped yards along the sidewalks where the lots front on River Street, Putnam Avenue, Allston Street, and Fairmont Avenue. 300 Putnam Avenue is located mostly in the Residence C-1 District except for the first 100 feet along Putnam Avenue, which is in the Business A-3 District. 357-363 Allston Street is located entirely in the Residence C-1 District. The Applicant reviewed the proposal with staff at the Cambridge Historical Commission, who did not find the existing buildings to be significant and therefore no demolition review hearing was required. The requested special permits are discussed in detail in the Findings below.

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. Multifamily Dwelling in Residence C-1 District (Section 4.26.1)

4.26.1 The construction of a multifamily dwelling containing twelve (12) or more dwelling units or of elderly oriented congregate housing containing twenty-four (24) or more separate living spaces in a Residence C, Residence C-1, Residence C-1A, Office 1, Business A-1, or Business A-3 district shall require a special permit granted by the Planning Board.

10.47.4 Criteria for approval of Townhouses and Multifamily Dwellings. In reviewing applications for townhouse developments and multifamily dwelling, the special permit granting authority shall consider and address the following site plan criteria as applicable:

(1) Key features of the natural landscape 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.

At present, the site has large building footprints on both parcels and paved areas with limited natural landscape features and very few trees over three inch caliper. The proposed development, with a smaller building footprint and multiple trees in the setbacks and on the sidewalk, will increase the landscaped areas on the site and improve site drainage conditions.

(2) 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 scale and massing of the two new buildings blends with their respective street frontages. The buildings will provide a transition between residential and commercial uses in the area with a streetscape treatment and landscaped rear yard setback that is responsive to the surrounding neighborhood character. The two proposed buildings utilize a variety of architectural scaling elements to help reduce visual bulk and to sensitively respond to the existing pattern of development in the area.

- (3) *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 proposed development will create landscaped front yards along four streets, which will provide visual benefits to the residents of the buildings and to the general public. The gardens in the rear will be private outdoor amenity for the residents and will be sensitively landscaped to benefit abutters.

- (4) *Parking areas, internal roadways and access/egress points should be safe and convenient.*

All parking spaces are accommodated in a surface lot, partially concealed below the second floors of the buildings. A communication from TP&T dated October 13, 2016 indicates that the final driveway design needs additional review to be approved by TP&T. The applicant after discussion with TP&T has proposed a new curb cut on Putnam Avenue instead of reusing the existing curb cut at the corner of Putnam Avenue and Allston Street. TP&T has approved the location of the new curb cut along with the proposed sidewalk improvements.

- (5) *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 spaces are tucked under the buildings and accessed via a central driveway with minimum impact to the neighboring properties. The front entrances of the residential units along the streets are not impacted by the location of the parking area on the site.

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

The proposal includes an enclosed trash room at the parking level of one of the buildings that will be obscured from the residents of the building and its neighbors. The trash room has been located so that it is easily accessible for use by residents and for servicing of trash pickup through the parking area. An electrical transformer vault is proposed to be

located below the access driveway to reduce the visual impact; however, the location of the transformer is subject to Eversource's approval.

2. Definition of Gross Floor Area (Article 2.000)

The Zoning Ordinance allows that the definition of Gross Floor Area may be modified by special permit as set forth below.

Gross Floor Area shall not include: ...

- (15) *Any basement or cellar living space in any single-family or two-family home.*
- (16) *Any basement or cellar living space in any other type of structure with the issuance of a special permit. In granting such a special permit, the permit granting authority may approved the exemption of any portion of Gross Floor Area (GFA) located in a basement or cellar from the calculation of GFA, provided the permit granting authority finds that the uses occupying such exempted GFA support the character of the neighborhood or district in which the applicable lot is located.*

The project is designed such that each individual dwelling unit spans multiple floors from the bottom to the top of the building, and therefore each unit includes some living space located at the basement level. The Board finds the uses proposed for the basement area of the project to be generally consistent with the character of the neighborhood for lower-scale residential buildings.

3. General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit (Section 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 ...*

Upon granting of the requested special permits, it appears that the requirements of the Ordinance 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 construction of 16 new dwelling units with 16 off-street parking spaces is not anticipated to cause particular congestion or hazard. TP&T has approved the new

access from Putnam Avenue as an improvement for pedestrian and vehicular movement in the neighborhood and assessed the project to have only a minor vehicle traffic impact in the neighborhood.

- (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 complies with allowed uses in this district, and hence will not adversely affect adjacent uses that exist or are anticipated in the future. The proposed project will improve the streetscape with landscape improvements.

- (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 uses will not create nuisance or hazard, and all development activity will adhere to applicable health and safety regulations.

- (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 ...*

The proposed use is encouraged by City plans for the area and the Zoning Ordinance. The neighborhood is witnessing an increase in residential use including a variety of multi-family dwellings, as allowed in the district. The proposed multi-family development of 16 dwellings would fit this existing and anticipated pattern of development.

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

The Board finds no inconsistency with the citywide urban design objectives. The urban design objectives are generally supported in the proposal through the expansion of the inventory of housing, improved streetscape appearance and pedestrian amenity, consistency with the pattern of development in the area, minimal environmental impacts on abutters and minimal impact on City infrastructure.

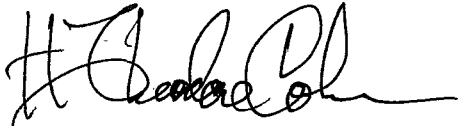
DECISION

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 Permits subject to the following conditions and limitations. Hereinafter, for purposes of this Decision, the Permittee shall mean the Applicant for the requested Special Permits 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 are Site Development Plans dated 10/18/2016, which indicates the location of a new curb cut on Putnam Avenue, and not the reuse of the existing curb cut at the corner of Putnam Avenue and Allston Street. 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 prior to issuance of Building Permit:
 - a. Selection of all exterior materials, colors, and details.
 - b. The first story treatment of the rear elevation of Building 2, closest to River Street.
 - c. The landscape details, particularly associated with plantings, screening elements, fencing, the brick retaining wall/planter on the corner of Putnam Avenue and River Street, and hardscape materials.
 - d. Screening treatment of parking spaces and garages.
 - e. Details of rooftop HVAC or mechanical equipment, including location and screening.
 - f. The final location of the electrical transformer.
 - g. The final design of sidewalk, curb cut, parking, bicycle parking, trash collection, access and egress (also to be reviewed and approved by Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department staff).
 - h. The final stormwater management plan shall be reviewed and approved by 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).

Voting in the affirmative to approve the requested special permits were Planning Board Members Louis Bacci, Jr., Steven Cohen, H Theodore Cohen, Tom Sieniewicz, Mary Flynn, Hugh Russell, and Associate Member Thacher Tiffany, appointed by the Chair to act on this 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', written over a horizontal line.

H Theodore Cohen, Chair.

A copy of this decision PB #317 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 30, 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)	23,851	5,000	No Change	No Change
Lot Width (ft)	> 50	50	No Change	No Change
Total GFA (sq ft)	13,035	23,254	23,254	23,254
Residential Base	0	17,888	17,888	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Non-Residential Base	13,035	N/A	0	
Inclusionary Bonus	N/A	5,366	5,366	
Total FAR	0.55	0.975	0.975	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Residential Base	N/A	0.75	0.75	
Non-Residential Base	0.55	N/A	0	
Inclusionary Bonus	N/A	0.225	0.225	
Total Dwelling Units	0	21	16	16
Base Units	0	16	12	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Inclusionary Bonus Units	N/A	5	4	
Base Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	N/A	1,500	1,988	
Total Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	N/A	1,154	1,529	
Height (ft)	15 / 12	35	35	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Front Setbacks (ft)	0	10 (min); (H+L)/6	10	
Side Setback (ft)	0; 9.9	7.5 (min); (H+L)/7	7.7; 8.5	
Rear Setback (ft)	0	N/A	N/A	
Open Space (% of Lot Area)	0	30	30	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Private Open Space	0	15	15	
Permeable Open Space	0	15	15	
Off-Street Parking Spaces	0	16	16	16
Long-Term Bicycle Parking	0	16	16	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Short-Term Bicycle Parking	0	2	2	
Loading Bays	0	N/A	0	