



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2009-47
Date: October 5, 2009
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 1366 Broadway – Clarendon Hill Towers

Applicant Name: Clarendon Hill Somerville, LP

Applicant Address: 8 Faneuil Hall Market Place, Boston, MA 02109

Property Owner Name: Clarendon Hill Towers Tenant Association, Inc.

Property Owner Address: 1307 Broadway, Somerville MA

Alderman: Robert Trane

Legal Notice: The Applicant/Owner is seeking a special permit (SZO §5.1) to construct a 3,800 sf structure for by-right offices and community gathering space on a lot with nonconforming structures (§4.4.1) and a special permit for shared parking (§9.13.e).

Zoning District/Ward: Residence C (RC) / 7

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit (§5.1 & §4.4.1)

Date of Application: September 17, 2009

Dates of Public Meeting • Hearing: Planning Board 10/22/09 • Zoning Board of Appeals 11/4/09

Date of Decision: N/A

Vote: N/A

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

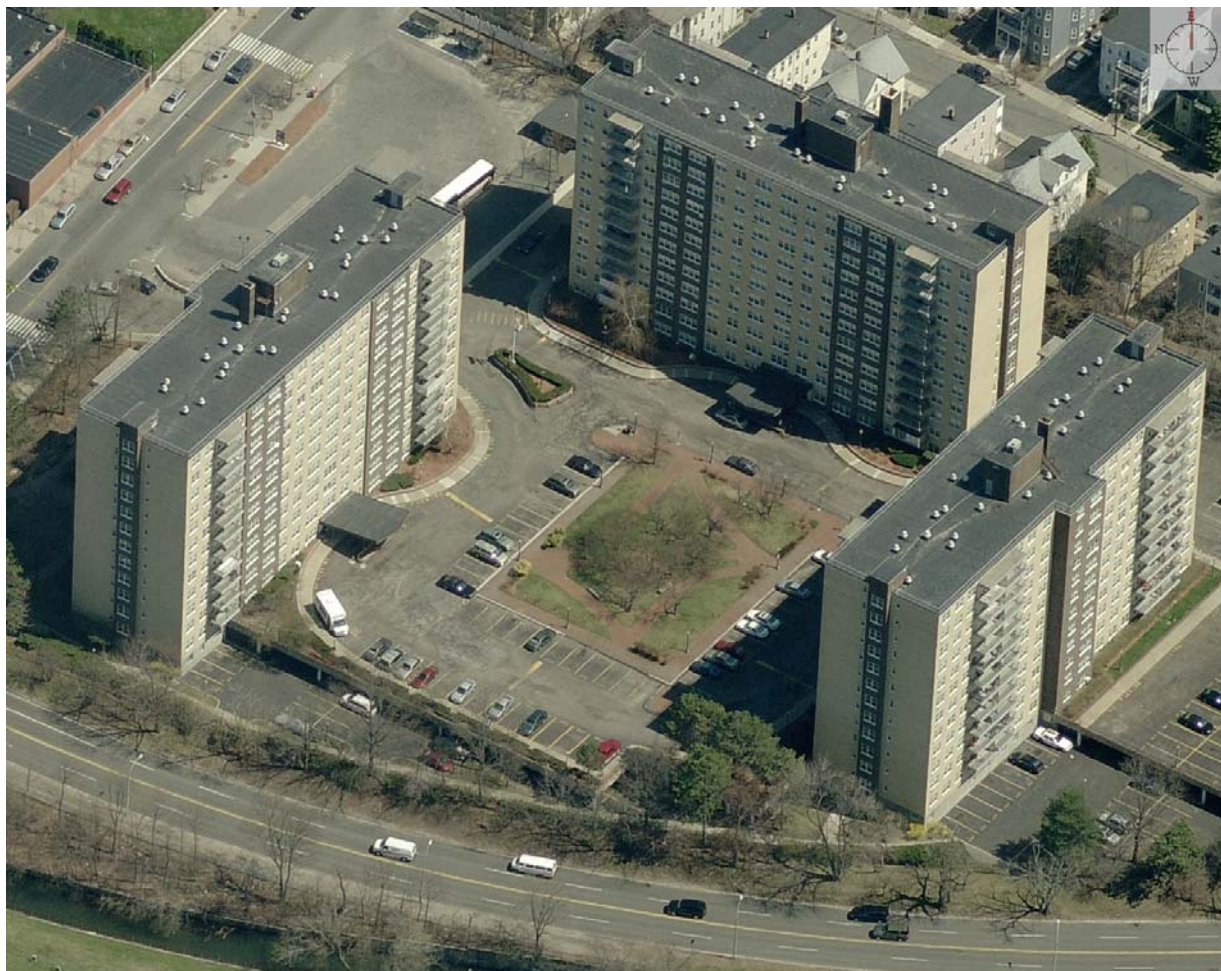
1. Subject Property: Clarendon Hill is a 501 dwelling-unit state family housing development located in West Somerville. There are three 12-story buildings of one, two, and three bedroom apartments as well as a community room. Four of the residential offices are currently used as office space for management of the complex. There is parking located at grade with the buildings and a parking deck below, with a total of 518 spaces. The lot area is 6 acres (265,321 sf). There is a landscaped courtyard in the center of the buildings.



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2. Proposal: The proposal is to construct a 3,800 square foot, one-story structure in the landscaped courtyard. The program for the space is tenant offices (350 nsf), management offices (1075 nsf), a small kitchen, bathrooms and a multipurpose room (~600 nsf) with a main lobby. The structure would be used by management, tenant management and tenants only. The offices would be moving from the residential buildings to the new space. The old offices would revert back to four apartments.

The new structure would be clad in metal "Rheinzink" and glazing. There would be aluminum shade devices on the south, east and west and three covered canopies and recessed areas at the entries. Sixty percent of the courtyard would be redesigned and remain as landscaped space. There would be minimal driveway modifications and the number of parking spaces and location would not change.

The new structure would have a green roof; however, this would not count towards the landscape requirement. In order to add additional landscaping 1,210 square feet of landscaping would be added to paved areas by the ramp to the lower level parking and on newly created traffic control islands around the site. The Applicants stated that they cannot find more space to add landscaping without eliminating required parking, fire lanes and maneuvering area.



*Location of
proposed
landscaping
(l), Location
of proposed
building (r)*

3. Nature of Application: The site is currently nonconforming with several dimensional requirements, including landscaped area, lot area per dwelling unit, building height, and side yard setbacks.

The proposed addition would increase the nonconforming landscaped area. The existing landscaped area is 23% and this would decrease by 1%; the minimum in this district is 25%.

The existing nonconformities require the Applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO). Lawfully existing nonconforming structures other than one- and two- family dwellings may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered only by special permit authorized by the SPGA.

The proposed uses are by-right: office SZO §7.11.7.1.a and a non-profit community center §7.11.5.a.

The site is currently nonconforming in terms of parking requirements; however, new floor area must comply with parking requirements. The new space would require 4 parking spaces based on the following figures:

Office space parking requirements = 1/500sf

New office space = 1075 nsf + 350 nsf = 1425 nsf --- 1425/500 = 2.85 = 3 parking spaces

Community center parking requirements = 1 per 6 seats in the main auditorium or assembly area, based on design occupancy

New community space = 600 nsf, design occupancy = 6 people --- 6/6seats = 1 parking space

The Applicant is applying for a shared parking under SZO §9.13.e. Parking for the office space would be required during the day when many residents would be taking their cars to work off-site. Also the community space would only be used by tenants, who would already be at the site. The Applicants submitted the following information regarding parking. They will be submitting a memo from a traffic engineer justifying shared parking.

Present Condition

- 518 parking spaces
- 501 apartments, of which 4 units are utilized as offices; still configured as apartments

Planned—With New Administrative Building/Club House

- 518 parking spaces

- 501 apartments
- 0 units utilized as offices
- 1 administrative building that contains office space

Parking Space Utilization (518 spaces)

- 411 presently assigned to residents
- 19 staff spaces, which residents can use at night
- 88 vacant, including 17 visitor spaces

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The property is on the Somerville/Arlington city line. The Alewife Brook Parkway is adjacent to the site to the west. There is a residential neighborhood comprised mostly of two- and three-family houses to the east. To the north is a supermarket.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The additional space would provide the residents of Clarendon Hill with an additional amenity of a community gathering space. The decreased landscaping is the only foreseen negative impact; however, people looking out onto the courtyard would continue to see a green area because of the green roof on the new structure. There is also another landscaped area for people to utilize in the northern section of the property.

6. Green Building Practices: The developer will aim to achieve LEED Gold Certification of the building. The following green building practices were listed on the application: a green roof (indicated on the landscaping plan), green building materials, HVAC efficiency, water saving efficiency, solar, ventilation, and shading devices.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Fire Prevention will need more information on the project before making final comments. Information including the use group classification given by the Inspectional Services Division, the occupancy load and whether food and/or drink will be served. The plans submitted do not show fire prevention and/or fire suppression devices on them. At a minimum a code compliant fire alarm system will be have to be installed.

Ward Alderman: Has been contacted but has not provided comments.

Traffic and Parking: Has requested a memo from a traffic engineer justifying shared parking.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §5.1 & 4.4.1 & 9.13):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.1.4 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.1.4 in detail.

1. Information Supplied: The Staff find that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.1.2 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permits.

2. Compliance with Standards: The Applicant must comply "with such criteria or standards as may be set forth in this Ordinance which refer to the granting of the requested special permit."

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structures. The decreased landscaping is the only foreseen negative impact; however, people looking out onto the courtyard would still see a green area with the green roof on the new structure. There is also another landscaped area for people to utilize in the northern section of the property.

In considering a special permit under §9.13 of the SZO the Applicant must be able to demonstrate that granting the requested special permit would not cause detriment to the surrounding neighborhood through any of the criteria as set forth under SZO §9.13, which are as follows:

- 1) increase in traffic volumes;
- 2) increased traffic congestion or queuing of vehicles;
- 3) change in the type(s) of traffic;
- 4) change in traffic patterns and access to the site;
- 5) reduction in on-street parking;
- 6) unsafe conflict of motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

Based on the number of designated parking spaces for each use at the site and the number of vacant spaces, there is sufficient parking for the existing and proposed uses on the site. The required spaces could be shared spaces if the demand for the parking spaces increased in the future. Times when staff park at the site, during office hours, is opposite when residents, that typically drive to work, would park at the site. The Traffic and Parking Department is waiting for a memo from a traffic engineer justifying the shared parking.

3. Consistency with Purposes: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with (1) the general purposes of this Ordinance as set forth in Article 1, and (2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those purposes at the beginning of the various Articles."

The proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the City and preserving and increasing the amenities of the municipality. The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district, which is to establish and preserve a district for multi-family residential and other compatible uses which are of particular use and convenient to the residents of the district. The community space would be convenient to the residents and the office space would provide needed space from which to run the apartments.

In considering a special permit under §9.13 of the SZO the SPGA may grant such a special permit only when consistent with the purposes set forth in Section 9.1. Staff find that the proposal is consistent with the purpose of the section. Shared parking would be an efficient use of parking. Also, it would not increase hazards to pedestrians and it would prevent more of an expanse of pavement and a reduction in landscaping.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."

The building would be a LEED certified building with metal siding. It would be small and add an interesting structure to the brick building complex built in 1968. The structure would not disrupt the flow

of pedestrian or vehicular travel. The use of the space as offices and a community space would be compatible with the dense residential buildings surrounding it.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §5.1 & 4.4.1 & 9.13

Based on the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes														
1	Approval is for the construction of a 3,800 sf structure for by-right offices and community gathering space. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	PIng.															
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>Sep 17, 2009</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>Apr 29, 2008 (Oct 16, 2009)</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (existing site plan)</td></tr><tr><td>2/23/09: L-0.2 3/4/09: L2.1, C-2, C-3, A1.0, A2.0 (Oct 16, 2009)</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Perimeter Planting: L-0.2, Garden Grading & Planting: L2.1, Site Layout: C-2, First floor & Roof: A1.0, Elevations: A2.0)</td></tr><tr><td>(Oct 16, 2009)</td><td>Renderings of Elevations</td></tr><tr><td>TBD - Traffic Memo</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>TBD – revised landscape plan with additional sf</td><td></td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	Sep 17, 2009	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	Apr 29, 2008 (Oct 16, 2009)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (existing site plan)	2/23/09: L-0.2 3/4/09: L2.1, C-2, C-3, A1.0, A2.0 (Oct 16, 2009)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Perimeter Planting: L-0.2, Garden Grading & Planting: L2.1, Site Layout: C-2, First floor & Roof: A1.0, Elevations: A2.0)	(Oct 16, 2009)	Renderings of Elevations	TBD - Traffic Memo		TBD – revised landscape plan with additional sf	
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive ZBA approval.																		
2	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.	CO	FP															
3	Applicant will screen the dumpster with fencing that blocks any view of the dumpster itself.	CO	PIng.															
4	Applicant will supply at least 1 bicycle parking space, which can be satisfied with a U-type bicycle rack.	CO	PIng.															

5	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well kept and in good and safe working order.	Cont.	ISD	
6	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P	
7	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final sign-off on the building permit to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	Final sign off	Plng.	

