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STAFF MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: **Wednesday, November 8, 2023**
DATE: November 3, 2023
TO: Urban Design Commission
FROM: Shubee Sikka, Urban Designer
SUBJECT: **Additional Review Information**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the members of the Urban Design Commission (UDC) and the public with technical information and planning analysis which may be useful in the review and decision-making process of the UDC. The Department of Planning and Development's intention is to provide a balanced view of the issues with the information it has at the time of the application's review. Additional information may be presented at the meeting that the UDC can take into consideration when discussing Sign Permit, Fence Appeal applications or Design Reviews.

Dear UDC Members,

The following is a brief discussion of the sign permit applications that you should have received in your meeting packet and staff's recommendations for these items.

I. Roll Call

II. Regular Agenda

Sign Permits

1. 303-321 Washington Street - Adecco

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 303-321 Washington Street is within a Business 1 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 5 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing Washington Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed wall mounted principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 44 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 100 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the proposed principal sign.

2. 793-821 Washington Street – Feast & Fettle

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 793-821 Washington Street is within Business 1 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, externally illuminated, with approximately 54 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing Washington Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed wall mounted principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 26 feet 5 inches, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 78 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the principal sign as proposed.

3. 60 Austin Street – Russian School of Math

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 60 Austin Street is within a Business 5 zoning district and has a special permit. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. One free-standing principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 30 sq. ft. of sign area in the front perpendicular to Austin Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 19 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing Austin Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed free-standing principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one free-standing principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 35 sq. ft. and height of 16 feet, which the applicant is also not exceeding. Per Zoning ordinance §5.2.13 “A. *In particular instances, the City Council may grant a special permit to allow free-standing signs and exceptions to the limitations imposed by this Sec. 5.2 on the number, size, location and height of signs where it is determined that the nature of the use of the premises, the architecture of the building or its location with reference to the street is such that free-standing signs or exceptions should be permitted in the public interest.*
B. *In granting such a permit, the City Council shall specify the size, type and location and shall impose such other terms and restrictions as it may deem to be in the public interest and in accordance with the 780 CMR. All free-standing signs shall not exceed 35 square feet in area, or 10 feet in any linear dimension, or 16 feet in height from the ground, except as further described in Sec. 5.2.7.”*
- The proposed secondary sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, two secondary signs are allowed, which the

applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 103 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 50 sq. ft. each, which the applicant is also not exceeding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff seeks recommendation regarding from UDC to the Land Use Committee of the City Council regarding the proposed free-standing principal sign and secondary sign. Applicant will need a special permit to allow the free-standing sign.

4. 1010 Chestnut Street – Citgo

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 1010 Chestnut Street is within a Business 1 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. Reface one free-standing principal sign, externally illuminated, with approximately 24 sq. ft. of sign area located perpendicular to Chestnut Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 30 square feet of sign area on the southern façade facing Chestnut Street.
3. One canopy secondary sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 13 square feet of sign area on the southern façade facing Chestnut Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The applicant has indicated that the free-standing sign is a reface of the existing free-standing sign. Staff has not been able to locate a special permit allowing the free-standing sign and the applicant has not been able to provide a copy of the special permit either. Since there is no special permit found allowing the free-standing sign, the applicant will need to apply for a special permit.
- The proposed free-standing principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one free-standing principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 35 sq. ft. and height of 16 feet, which the applicant is also not exceeding. Per Zoning ordinance §5.2.13 “A. *In particular instances, the City Council may grant a special permit to allow free-standing signs and exceptions to the limitations imposed by this Sec. 5.2 on the number, size, location and height of signs where it is determined that the nature of the use of the premises, the architecture of the building or its location with reference to the street is such that free-standing signs or exceptions should be permitted in the public interest.* B. *In granting such a permit, the City Council shall specify the size, type and location and shall impose such other terms and restrictions as it may deem to be in the public interest and in accordance with the 780 CMR. All free-standing signs shall not exceed 35 square feet in area, or 10 feet in any linear dimension, or 16 feet in height from the ground, except as further described in Sec. 5.2.7.”*
- Both the proposed secondary signs appear to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, two secondary signs are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 164 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 50 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.
- This property is also in the Newton Upper Falls Historic District and the proposed signs were approved by the Commission on September 14.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff seeks recommendation from UDC regarding the free-standing sign to the Land Use Committee of the City Council. Staff recommends approval of both proposed secondary signs.

5. 230 Needham Street – Carpet Studio

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 230 Needham Street is within a Mixed Use 1 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. Reface one wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 19 sq. ft. of sign area on the western façade facing Needham Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 38 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 100 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.
- The Commission reviewed and pre-approved the overall sign design guidelines for this location consisting of several buildings as outlined in “Sign Design Guidelines and Review Process for: Home Design Place, Needham Street” in 2004. Staff has not been able to find the drawing showing the sign band, but the proposed sign is in the same location as previously approved Ideal Tile sign.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the proposed principal sign.

6. 612 Washington Street – Artee Fabrics

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 612 Washington Street is within a Business 2 zoning district and has a comprehensive sign package approved by UDC. The applicant is proposing to replace and reface the following signs:

1. Reface one wall mounted split principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 30 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing Washington Street.
2. Reface one wall mounted split principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 17 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing Washington Street.
3. Reface one awning sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 3.5 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing Washington Street.
4. Reface one wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 16 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern building façade facing the rear parking lot and Massachusetts Turnpike.
5. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 29 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing the driveway.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- Both the proposed wall mounted split principal signs appear to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, two split principal signs are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 50 feet, the maximum size of the total signage allowed is 100 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding. Per Zoning Ordinance §5.2.8, *“In particular instances, due to the nature of the use of the premises, the architecture of the building, or its location with reference to the street, the total allowable sign area may be divided between two wall signs which together constitute the principal wall sign.”*
- The awning sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, awning signs that cover less than 20% of the awning are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding.
- Both secondary signs appear to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, two secondary signs are allowed, which the applicant is

not exceeding, and on this façade of 50 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 50 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of both split principal signs, both secondary signs, and the awning sign as proposed.

7. 14 Collins Road – Union Church in Waban

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 14 Collins Road is within a Single Residence 2 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. One free-standing principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 37 sq. ft. of sign area at the intersection of Beacon Street and Collins Road.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed free-standing principal sign appears to be not consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.7. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and the maximum size of the sign allowed is 20 sq. ft., which the applicant is exceeding. However, Union Church probably qualifies as a “Dover” institution, the applicant will need to seek a “Dover waiver” to allow a free-standing sign area than would be allowed by §5.2.7.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the proposed free-standing principal sign on the condition that the Commissioner grants a waiver.

Comprehensive Sign Package

1. 1-55 Boylston Street – The Street

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 1-55 Boylston Street is within Business 4 zoning district and has a comprehensive sign package authorized by a special permit via Board Order #218-22.

The Street Comprehensive Sign Package was first developed and approved through special permit in February of 2013. The package was amended in April of 2020 and then in 2022 with a refreshed set of free-standing signs and re-organized set of wall sign elevations. The Urban Design Commission previously approved of changes to the Comprehensive Sign Package in May of 2023. These previously approved changes are clouded in purple on pages 5-8 and also include sign M8 on page 27 of the sign package.

New proposed signs from this previous May approval have been clouded in green on pages 5-8 and on page 27 and are listed out below. All the proposed changes are related to the 27 Boylston building. The applicant is proposing to amend the special permit for the following signs:

27 Boylston North Elevation

- Wall Directory Signage on the old theater overhang (W5).
- A directory sign including the individual name of each tenant within the interior passage. This would be in place of the one tenant band sign indicating the collective group of tenants within the interior passage.

27 Boylston East Elevation

- Wall Directory Signage on the old theater overhang (W5).

27 Boylston South Elevation

- A blade sign indicating the collective group of tenants within the interior passage.
- Extension of the existing sign band to accommodate an additional 27 Boylston courtyard tenant.
- A new free-standing pedestrian directory sign (E12). Staff could not find the dimensions for this sign.

27 Boylston West Elevation

- No change

As per the Waivers in the previously approved Comprehensive Sign Package, Wall Directory Signs and Blade Panel and Column Signs are described as:

Wall Directory Signs

Wall directory signs may include multiple tenant names of tenants within any building on the property. The selection of tenant names may change at the discretion of the owner. Each tenant sign may be up to 100 square feet.

Blade Panel and Column Capital Signs

Subject to conformity to the maximum area requirements established by special permit waiver, blade panel and column capital signs may change at the discretion of the owner following review and approval by the Owner and the Planning Department, following consultation with the Urban Design Commission.”

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The wall directory signs, blade sign, and column capital signs do not appear to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. The applicant will need to apply for an amendment to the City Council for these signs.
- The applicant will also need to apply for an amendment for extensions of the sign bands and tenant sign locations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff seeks recommendation regarding the changes from UDC to the Land Use Committee of the City Council.

Design Review

1. 209-211 Adams Street

The project site is located in Business 2 zoning district. The project involves the demolition of the existing structure and the construction of five 3-story townhouses with ten off-street parking spaces and private outdoor roof deck spaces via glass hatch.

The applicant is seeking the following Special Permit relief:

- Parking space/ aisle dimensional relief,
- Height (greater than 24 feet),
- Number of stories (great than 2), and
- Residential use on the first floor.

At the request of the Planning Department, the petitioner has been asked to present the project proposal to the UDC for consideration. The Planning Department encourages the UDC to review the project with regards to, but not limited to, the following: the proposed site plan; the building's design; bulk and massing; and relationship to context and the street.

III. Old/New Business

1. Approval of Minutes

Staff will email meeting minutes before the meeting.