



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Urban Design Commission

MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the City of Newton Urban Design Commission (UDC) was held virtually on Wednesday, **August 9, 2023** at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom
<https://newtonma-gov.zoom.us/j/88536423262>

Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

The Chair, Michael Kaufman, called the meeting to order.

I. Roll Call

Barney Heath,
Director
Planning & Development

Those present were Michael Kaufman (Chair), Jim Doolin, John Downie, and Bill Winkler. Katie Whewell, Chief Planner was also present.

Shubee Sikka,
Urban Designer
Planning & Development

II. Regular Agenda

Sign Permits

Mr. Kaufman asked if the Commission felt there were any applications they could approve without discussion. The Commission agreed to approve the following signs without discussion:

Members
Michael Kaufman, Chair
Jim Doolin, Vice Chair
John Downie
Robert Linsky
William Winkler
Visda Saeyan

3. 35-41 Lincoln Street – CG Color + Extensions

Proposed Signs:

- One awning principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 19 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing Lincoln Street.
- Two window signs, non-illuminated, with approximately 10 sq. ft. and 2 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing Lincoln Street.

4. 225 Needham Street - Lazzoni

Proposed Signs:

- One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 16 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing Needham Street.
- One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 16 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing the green space.
- One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 16 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern building façade facing the driveway.

1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459
T 617/796-1120
F 617/796-1142

www.newtonma.gov

5. 552-564 Commonwealth Avenue – Paggi Physical Therapy

Proposed Signs:

- Reface one wall mounted principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 36 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing Commonwealth Avenue.
- Reface one wall mounted principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 21 sq. ft. of sign area on the northeastern building façade facing Commonwealth Avenue.

6. 1345-1355 Washington Street – Dancer’s Image

Proposed Signs:

- One awning principal sign on the southern building façade facing Washington Street. The sign elements appear to measure approximately 87 square feet in total. The applicant should confirm the exact measurement of the logos on the awning.
- Two window signs, non-illuminated, on the southern façade facing Washington Street. The applicant has not provided the area of the window signs.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the signs at 35-41 Lincoln Street – CG Color + Extensions, 225 Needham Street – Lazzoni, 552-564 Commonwealth Avenue – Paggi Physical Therapy, 1345-1355 Washington Street – Dancer’s Image. Mr. Downie seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim Doolin, John Downie, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed.

1. 344-348 Walnut Street – Donut Villa

Applicant/Representative: Cathy Brown, The Sign Center

Proposed Signs:

- One wall mounted split principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 22 sq. ft. of sign area on the southwestern façade facing Walnut Street.
- One wall mounted split principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 44 sq. ft. of sign area on the western façade facing Walnut Street.

Presentation and Discussion:

- The applicant described the sign and reason for split sign is due to the corner location of the business. Donut Villa in all their other locations, they favor retro 50s style of décor, they have Formica tabletops and cabinets and swivel seats. Each location has a distinctive piece neon light inside of each store.
- Mr. Kaufman commented that Commission is concerned about what will be seen at night, how is the sign illuminated? The sign looks great but what will be seen at night. The applicant responded that text would pop-out. Mr. Kaufman asked if the white portion of the sign behind Villa will not illuminate? The applicant responded that it would have a sort of glow because of a little escape of light but the background is opaque and won’t light.
- UDC commented about font of Brunch sign, it doesn’t match aesthetic, rounded edges of sign as not reflective of 50s aesthetic. It doesn’t seem to be the right sign for that building. Mr. Kaufman commented that font used for Donut would probably be more fun than the font for Brunch.

- Mr. Doolin asked about the location of the sign relative to the door. The applicant responded it is in the second section of the frontage, the door is under the sign Brunch & Bar.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the signs at 344-348 Walnut Street – Donut Villa. Mr. Downie seconded the motion, and one opposed. All the members present voted, with a 3-1 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim Doolin, John Downie in favor and William Winkler opposed.

2. 456-460 Newtonville Ave – Nirvana Tattoo Studio

Applicant/Representative: Chris, OJ Awnings

Proposed Signs:

- One awning principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 6 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing Newtonville Ave.
- One window sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 16 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing Newtonville Ave.

Presentation and Discussion:

- Mr. Kaufman commented that there was a note in the staff memo that window sign was too large and asked the applicant if they have been able to reduce the size of the window sign. The applicant responded that they haven't been able to reduce the size of the window sign but will make sure it is less than 25% of the window area.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the signs with a condition at 456-460 Newtonville Ave – Nirvana Tattoo Studio. Mr. Downie seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim Doolin, John Downie, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed. The window sign was approved on the condition that the window sign is reduced to 25% of the window area.

7. 793-821 Washington Street – Natural Life

Applicant/Representative: Richard, Ardon Visual Communication

Proposed Sign:

- One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 19 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern building façade facing Watertown Street.

Presentation and Discussion:

- Mr. Kaufman commented that there was no picture of the sign located on the building façade and asked the applicant to provide a picture or drawing. The picture submitted appeared to be on a different building façade. The applicant shared their screen and showed a picture. Mr. Kaufman commented that the building shown is not the correct building, not sure whose building is shown but its not the right building, it appears to be in Boston.
- Mr. Kaufman and other commissioners requested the applicant to come back to the next meeting with a picture of the sign shown on the correct building façade. Materials were not submitted correctly.
- Later in the meeting, the applicant shared their screen showing the correct building façade. Mr. Kaufman asked about the illumination. The applicant responded that the

sign is illuminated, halo glow around it, white natural outline plus a glow around it, letters remain dark.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the sign at 793-821 Washington Street – Natural Life. Mr. Winkler seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim Doolin, John Downie, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed.

8. 417-427 Lexington Street – KDR Medspa + Wellness

Proposed Sign: Kathryn Russo

- One wall mounted principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 32 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing Lexington Street.
- One wall mounted secondary sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 12 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing the side driveway.

Presentation and Discussion:

- Mr. Kaufman commented that there was no picture of the sign located on the building façade and asked the applicant to provide a picture or drawing.
- Mr. Kaufman requested the applicant to provide a picture of the sign shown on the building façade. The applicant sent an image later in the meeting to staff by email. Staff shared her screen with the pictures received but it still didn't show a picture of the signs on the building. Mr. Kaufman asked the applicant to come back to the next month's meeting with a complete application so everything is presented properly so the Commission can understand the application and vote on it.

Design Review

1. 35 Middle Street Design Review

Applicant/Representative:

Laurance Lee, Attorney

Ron Jarek, MGD+

Marianna Dagatti, MGD+

Documents Presented: Context plan figure ground, context photos, site plan, site sections, elevations, floor plans, 3D renderings.

Project Summary:

The project site is in Business 2 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to demolish the existing two-family building and build new construction, multi-family building, including six units, and under the building parking garage in a BU-2 district. It will require the continuation of the non-conformity for residential use in a business district zone and a waiver to reduce the number of required parking spaces.

Presentation and Discussion:

The applicant summarized the design and commented:

- Continue a nonconforming residential use in BU zone
- New construction, one building, 100% residential

- 3 townhouse units and 3 apartment units
- Access from Middle Street to 5 surface parking stalls, 3 garage stalls tandem style with 3 of the surface spaces, including one accessible stall; 8 stalls total

The Urban Design Commission had the following comments and recommendations:

Mr. Winkler asked what is the rear setback and existing condition? The applicant responded that they think it is 5 feet, they didn't have the dimensions, but they are meeting the minimum requirements for rear setback.

Mr. Winkler also asked if one apartment will need to park on the street? The applicant responded there are providing two additional spaces in addition to the 6 parking spaces for the townhouses. City council and members of the community wanted open space over more parking. One of the apartments will not have a designated parking spot, not because there is no capacity to accommodate it, but a choice was made at the moment.

Mr. Doolin commented that additional parking would result in increased impervious area, which is high. He asked about the landscape plan, about existing and proposed trees. The applicant responded that there will be plantings separating the property from the neighbors and lower plantings at driveway with sight distance. The applicant also mentioned that they are intending to preserve two existing trees next to the property line. Mr. Doolin encourages to evolve landscape plan to specify canopy tree or medium size tree, encourage seating area to be other than hard paved.

Mr. Doolin also requested for a dimensioned site plan in design review proposals, showing existing conditions showing abutting properties, dimensions of the building to the street, to the lot line, to the rear lot line, need context of area and neighborhood.

Mr. Kaufman commented that he is concerned about the other parking space, if one unit didn't have a designated parking, not sure how that will work. Applicant commented that they will come back to UDC with the additional information requested. Applicant also commented that in terms of parking, what the city council has done with multifamily buildings is that to the extent that is possible based on the design, applicant is asked to sort of uncouple or decouple the parking with the units to encourage them being separated such that, they can be sold separately, assigned separately and there's a push for fewer cars. And so folks who are buying into this property, they may not want to have a parking spot. And that's something that's being discussed as a hot topic, particularly in this area of town, which some of the neighbors are going to probably speak up on. But that's something that the applicant wanted UDC members to know that sometimes the city council members ask applicants to decouple the two things. Mr. Kaufman commented that the townhouses get two spaces each and the apartments get less than one. Applicant responded that they would continue to work on this.

Mr. Kaufman asked about the materials on the exterior. The applicant responded that it will be traditional materials like fiber cement, clapboard, areas where they think they can

enhance some elements, they plan to go with more than that. In terms of color, they are planning to go with a gray color palette, enhanced with flower planters that will bring color. Also, the proportions of openings and solid will help to provide with a lot of lighting that is coming from inside the unit.

Mr. Kaufman asked about the windows if they will be double hung or casement? The applicant responded that they are proposing two over two so they could be double hung, not that far in specifics yet. The applicant also responded that they are proposing Juliet balconies, to provide an extension of an openness and that's another characteristic of the units.

Mr. Kaufman commented that in terms of openness, it seems that the units don't have any open space except for the balconies which is a concern. Maybe the walkway could move closer to the property line so there is more open space assigned to some of the units but that is the back of the garages, so it will need to be worked out. Mr. Kaufman also asked where will all the condensers be? The applicant responded that will be planned around small flat areas that will be over the roof. Mr. Kaufman responded that's a good location.

The applicant commented that they will provide EV stations for all the cars, there will be provision for bike storage, and all the roofs will be solar ready (meaning solar panels can be accommodated). The bike storage will be provided under the overhang of the building for apartments and each of the townhouse will have opportunity for bike parking the garage.

Mr. Kaufman commented that the design presents very nicely and it's a nice design that seems to fit in the neighborhood. There are some questions that still need to be answered, particularly questions about open space and setbacks.

Mr. Doolin commented that it's a handsome design but the amount of site coverage (about 90% here) and continuing non-conforming use is of concern. Looking at the aerial photo for this area, while the individual projects and non-conforming use need setback requirements, there's a disconnect between residential use and using commercial building setbacks. Conclusion from that is this project is too big for the site.

Mr. Kaufman asked if these are for sale or rentals? Applicant responded that it is market driven, the intention here is for sale. If this project were to be approved, and after its built, the owner at that point will have to decide at that point whether to sell them or rent them.

Mr. Winkler commented that since the townhouse units are at least three-bedroom units. We can probably expect that there are some children in this building, and there is really zero sight stuff that the kids could do. Maybe the applicant could shoot basketball. It's a concern that there is nothing for kids here.

Public Comments

Terry Sauro, 44 Cook Street

Ms. Sauro asked about the size of the lot? The applicant responded the size is about 7,915 sq. ft. She commented that this is a residential area and its like Taj Mahal is coming to Middle Street, its too large. It doesn't fit into the neighborhood. There are not enough parking

spaces. She commented that she spoke to Lawrence Lee about another project on Lincoln and Craft Street. Jeanine, who is also on this call, took a picture of Middle Street at 5:30 tonight and you can't even park on Middle Street. This doesn't fit into the lot, its too big, its like a monstrosity. The neighborhood will not support this, its too large. Hopefully, we can work with Laurance Lee and the developer. This is too big with six units on less than 8,000 sq. ft. Some other projects were – Clinton Street with 10,000 sq. ft. with only four units, One on Chapel Street with three units on 8,000 sq. ft. Now all of a sudden, we are going to put 6 units with an underground garage. We need open space and trees; they are cutting trees. Ms. Sauro commented that she has lived here all her life. It went from Lincoln Road to Cook Street and understand that needs to be changed but this is a residential area and it's getting out of hand and hopefully some changes will be made.

Janine Stewart, 251 Adam Street

Ms. Stewart commented that she lives at 251 Adam Street, which is directly across from McGuire Plumbing, which abuts this property. It's way too big. She commented if someone were to put in a monstrosity like this so close to her house, it would be that they are encroaching on her. There's a little area shown with a table with four chairs. There are six units with one little table with four chairs. She commented that she wished she could show the cars parked on Middle Street right now. It's not just this property, there are six units here, another three down the street, that's another 9 units. People who live in Newton and can afford to live in Newton, they all have a car. She also commented that she has MBTA stop at the end of her driveway, only one person takes the bus, very few people take the bus. That's the excuse that is given every time that people won't have cars, but everybody has a car.

Paula, 161 Chapel Street

Ms. Paula commented that she wanted to chime in alongside of Terry Saura and Janine Stewart. First, this does not fit this neighborhood. The design looks obnoxious to be next to that property to the right, which used to be owned by her cousin. She would like to also let this committee know she lives at 161 Chapel Street, and they put a monstrosity next door to her which used to be the piney property at 165 Chapel Street, she has to keep her shades down. So they can't see her eating dinner. That's how close this property is because they went right to the edge. And I understand the need for having to make changes in the area. But we have parking as a premium in this area because everybody comes in, dumps their cars on the streets and takes off. And as far as the MBTA goes, it's not reliable. They need to first fix the MBTA problem before they start fixing the need for not having cars attached to these new structures.

Mr. Kaufman commented to the applicant that hopefully they will be able to accommodate UDC's comments and come back to UDC with the next iteration of this.

Mr. Doolin asked the applicant where they are in the process? The applicant responded this is preliminary, nothing has been filed with the City Council yet. As with every special permit, we like to get feedback from various sources. And we collect everything and try to incorporate as much as we possibly can. It is a balancing act. So, the next step is to meet with Terry and

other neighbors as well as a follow up meeting with our counselor so once we get beyond that, then we will proceed with the with the process. So, nothing has been officially filed yet.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kaufman made a motion to adjourn the meeting and there was general agreement among the members.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Shubee Sikka

Approved on December 13, 2023