



Telephone
(617) 796-1120
Telefax
(617) 796-1142
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
www.newtonma.gov

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney S. Heath
Director

PUBLIC HEARING MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 10, 2024
MEETING DATE: July 16, 2024
TO: Zoning Board of Appeals
FROM: Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director of Planning and Development
Katie Whewell, Chief Planner for Current Planning
Alyssa Sandoval, Deputy Chief Planner for Current Planning

COPIED: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller
City Council

In response to questions raised at the Zoning Board of Appeals public hearing on June 3, 2024, as well as prior hearings, the Planning Department is providing the following information for the upcoming continued public hearing/working session. This information is supplemental to staff analysis previously provided at the public hearing.

PETITION #11-23

78 Crafts Street

Boylston Properties requesting a Comprehensive Permit, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40B, to construct four multifamily buildings as well as a separate two-story parking structure. The site comprises a total of 11 parcels fronting Crafts Street on a 4.76-acre site. There would be a total of 295 apartments (from 307 previously proposed) ranging from studios to three-bedroom apartments, of which 59 (20%) would be affordable at 50% of area median income (AMI).

The Zoning Board of Appeals (Board) opened the public hearing on this Comprehensive Permit application on January 10, 2024, which was held open for the petitioner to respond to questions and concerns raised in the Planning Department's Memorandum and at the public hearing by the Board as well as by members of the public. Previous Planning Department memos have focused on an overview of the project, the neighborhood context, zoning and recently approved projects in the project's vicinity, relevant planning studies, and documents, site design and building massing, stormwater and traffic.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Applicant, Boylston Properties, is seeking a Comprehensive Permit pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B, Sections 20 through 23, to develop 78 Crafts Street into an all-residential multifamily development. The subject site is located in Newtonville along the west side of Crafts Street between Court Street and Washington Street to the south and Watertown Street to the north. The subject properties are zoned Manufacturing (MAN) and Multi-Residence 1 (MR-1) and contain a variety of light industrial uses, such as automotive services, engineering office, as well as one two-family residence. To date, five public hearings have been held for this item.

The Applicant proposes a series of four multifamily buildings as well as a separate two-story parking structure. The site comprises a total of 11 parcels fronting Crafts Street on a 4.76-acre site. Based on conceptual plan revisions, there is now a total of 295 apartments ranging from studios to three-bedroom apartments, of which 59 (20%) would be affordable at 50% of area median income (AMI). Parking will be located within ground level parking garages of the residential buildings as well as a separate parking structure. The parking count has decreased to 278 parking stalls, from 284 parking stalls previously proposed.

The Applicant provided an updated package of conceptual schematics on July 2, 2024. While there have been no formally submitted Engineering-level or stamped architectural plans with the revisions shown, the City's peer reviewer for design, NBBJ, continues to provide feedback (**Attachment A**) on conceptual schemes provided by the Applicant. The project materials submitted for review can be found [here](#). It is still Planning's understanding that the Applicant is looking to receive feedback from the Board to finalize the building footprints and overall design of the project before producing revised Engineering-level and architectural plans for the Board. BETA, the City's transportation peer reviewer, has also issued a response memorandum to the Applicant's latest transportation memorandum.

In addition, Boylston Properties submitted new materials including materials that were requested by the ZBA at the previous hearing including:

- Memorandum from Vanasse & Associates Inc., dated June 24, 2024 submitted June 26, 2024
- Transportation Demand Management Program, dated June 2024, submitted June 26, 2024
- Redlined version of the Transportation Demand Management Program, dated June 2024, submitted June 26, 2024
- 78 Crafts Street Proposed Off Site Mitigation, submitted July 2, 2024
- 78 Crafts Street Underground Parking Narrative, submitted July 2, 2024

- 78 Crafts Street Design Submission for July 16, 2024, dated July 2 consisting of 38 pages

I. Analysis

A. Design

The Applicant uploaded a revised design submission of images without an accompanying narrative of changes made to the project. From the images, it appears that they have converted a portion of the previously designated garage space fronting Crafts Street in Building A to amenity space, but there is no label or designation on the conceptual plan (p. 9 of the submission). Planning requests the Applicant provide more information of this area's programming. Renderings (p. 13, 17) are also provided that show a more activated streetscape with large windows and a mural along the Crafts Street frontage, which responds to an ongoing request from Planning staff. Planning believes this is a significant improvement over the prior iteration that presented as a long uninterrupted wall along Crafts Street and the conversion to amenity space with large windows provides for a better streetscape and connection to the neighborhood.

The Applicant also submitted renderings around Building B, specifically the outdoor space. Prior iterations show umbrellas and no barrier from the sidewalk or internal road. The revised renderings (p. 32, 34-36) show a black fence that delineates the space and provides a sense of enclosure and human scale, which is a positive change. Additionally, there are overhead trellises shown between the black fencing and parking spaces with benches. Planning anticipates seeing these structures on a revised plan set.

Additionally, the Applicant submitted colors and materials concepts. When the Applicant produces revised architectural plans, they should include the color scheme and each corresponding building within the architectural plan set.

NBBJ commented on the revised conceptual plans and noted the changes to the ground floor of Building A and B. NBBJ notes the much more active streetscape including an entrance on Crafts Street improves visibility to the "public" courtyard in Building A. NBBJ also requests information on how a non-resident visitor would enter the building from Crafts Street or guest parking on Maguire Court and access the elevator core in Building A without going into the garage or the proposed common area. It appears that a one-story portion of Building B has been eliminated and replaced with an open covered porch area. NBBJ also noted that the gate for the access road perpendicular to Court Street may present an obstacle to cyclists and recommend a wider gap between the gate and the curb to allow cyclists to pass on the paved portion of the emergency access driveway.

B. Signage and Lighting

There is a conceptual signage plan on pages 5-6 of the conceptual design document. The Chief Zoning Code Official reviewed the signage documents and notes that the submission is incomplete. A sign plan should be submitted that includes accurate locations of signs. For example, the submitted plan shows signs designated as building signs in the middle of the internal roadway. More information is needed to identify what, if any, zoning relief is required with the proposed signage. The Applicant should clarify the intent of interpretive signs so they can be correctly categorized in accordance with the types of signs in the Ordinance. The Applicant should also take care to ensure that the monument sign proposed at the driveway does not interfere with sight distances of vehicles on Crafts Street or entering/exiting the project site from Maguire Court. NBBJ notes that the proposed monument sign could be replaced with more typical building mounted address information as the sign appears oversized for a residential neighborhood, a change in sign type may also address sight line concerns.

The Applicant also submitted a conceptual lighting plan. This too is insufficient, and the City will need a photometric plan showing the illumination levels in footcandles, in accordance with the Ordinance. NBBJ also has suggestions around the proposed lighting, such as lighting the pedestrian pathway adjacent to the emergency access driveway with bollard lights to reduce impact to adjacent properties. The proponent may want to consider either ceiling mounted lights, pendants or a lower mounting height on walls and a more decorative fixture to achieve a wall washing effect as shown in the renderings. The Art Wall on Crafts Street would need a special linear lighting fixture to achieve the effect illustrated in the night rendering.

C. Stormwater and Engineering Peer Review

The previous Planning memorandum identified a remaining issue to be addressed is the Applicant's request for waiver for the City's Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Rules and Regulations, which requires the design to retain the volume of runoff equivalent to or greater than two (2") inches. After the working sessions with Horsley Witten and the DPW, the Applicant is working on changes to the stormwater management plan and continues to explore whether the Project can meet the City's required 2-inch-retention of stormwater runoff. Planning recommends that Horsley Witten reviews engineering-level plans and the updated stormwater management plan to verify that any changes meet the City's stormwater regulations.

The Applicant responded in a memorandum uploaded on June 4, 2024. The 20-page response addresses several questions put forth by the City's Engineering Division of DPW. It notes that nineteen underground storage tanks were removed from the site according

to MassDEP regulatory reports. The Engineering Division of DPW also noted that the culvert that runs across the site was constructed in 1925, thus is likely not able to withstand associated vehicular traffic and/or trucks associated with the proposed use (moving trucks, trash and recycling, firetrucks). The culvert is shallow and has approximately one foot of cover over the top and in some portions is fully exposed. The Engineering Division recommends replacement of the culvert that must be designed for H-20-wheel loading and/or design an encasement structure that would transfer the truck/traffic load off the existing culvert and transfer the anticipated loads to the surrounding soils. The Applicant responded that their structural engineer has performed an initial structural review of this condition. The engineer has concluded that a reinforced top slab will be required to accommodate the future loading condition, the proponent is requesting that the final structural design of these improvements be considered a Condition to commencement of construction set forth in the Comprehensive Permit. The City's Engineering Division will review this response.

Regarding the culvert that is located close to the proposed two-story parking garage, the Applicant states that the culvert is one-foot further south (away from the garage) than previously represented and will be subsequently updated in revised plans.

The memorandum consists of further clarifications around the driveway locations, signage, easements and other operations of the site.

D. Transportation, Traffic Analysis Review and Mitigation

The Applicant responded on June 24, 2024 to BETA's review of traffic analysis of the proposed project dated May 10, 2024. BETA reviewed the responses and issued a subsequent memorandum on July 10, 2024 (Attachment B). Pending issues to be resolved are mitigation, specifically, BETA recommends suggested mitigation measures be considered to reduce impacts to side street traffic as well as overall delay at the intersection of Washington Street and Crafts Street. BETA also suggests traffic calming measures for the following streets: Ashmont Avenue and other roadways located east of Crafts Street (Adams Street, Hawthorn Street, Lincoln Road, and Clinton Street). BETA also recommends that the Applicant consider pedestrian improvements, such as countdown pedestrian signals and filling sidewalk gaps.

There are several items BETA has requested that will be forthcoming once the Applicant submits a revised plan set. These include turning truck turning radii, Building B driveway, sidewalks, control gate, and bicycle parking. BETA also notes the proposed sign package includes signs that are placed incorrectly. BETA also requests more information about visitor parking and whether six spaces are sufficient and how it will be managed (passes,

time limits). City staff questions whether there will be excess parking on site and if additional parking could be designated as visitor parking.

On July 2, the Applicant submitted a list of potential mitigation measures to be considered for the project, should the project be approved. Based off the I&I (inflow and infiltration fee), the amount allocated to off-site improvements is \$2,164,913, which represents 75% of the fee. The other 25% is designated towards the City's sewer inflow and infiltration improvement fund. The proposed list of potential mitigation measures includes intersection improvements to Crafts Street and Washington Street. These improvements were initially proposed by a neighboring special permit that has since been delayed and many, including local councilors and city staff would like to see those improvements constructed. The intersection improvements consist of "bumping out" the northeast and northwest corners of the intersection, which results in shorter crossing distances for pedestrians and reducing the corner radii. The improvements may also include an aesthetic treatment within the intersection and a tree buffer along the sidewalk in front of 647 Washington Street.

The Applicant is also proposing traffic signal improvements, three raised crossings and two radar speed signs. They are also proposing capturing the reinforcement of ~400 feet over city culvert within the Project site to accommodate H-20 loading. Planning staff will review the mitigation measures with BETA, and the City's DPW Divisions of Engineering and Transportation and provide recommendations in advance of a subsequent hearing. Preliminary input from DPW is that many of the items on the proposed mitigation measures list are high priority particularly the improvements proposed for the Crafts Street and Washington Street intersection. DPW was not supportive of including the aesthetic imprint paving in this intersection given the cost associated with it and future maintenance costs.

Transportation Demand Management

The Applicant provided an updated transportation demand management plan which states that the project will consist of on-site parking for 278 vehicles, with a parking ratio of .94 stalls per unit. The Applicant is also proposing a measure that has been previously incorporated into other Comprehensive Permit projects that allows for increased flexibility of a transit fund with the intent to reduce vehicular trips. The fund would include \$150,000 to be funded over three years and could be used for MBTA transit passes, bike share programs, car share programs and similar alternative transportation methods to reduce single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips for all residents. The onsite management team would be responsible for administering this fund and ensure all units and residents have access to it. The development would be required to submit an annual

reporting of how the fund is expended. Their TDM program also includes an on-site Transportation Demand Management Coordinator to serve as the single point of contact for residents, and the City around transportation initiatives. They also propose to post information around transit schedules, fares, and maps, as well as the location of bicycle areas, stations, and car sharing information. They also propose a monitoring program to identify commuting modes of residents and evaluate the success of the proposed TDM measures. Staff is still reviewing the proposed TDM measures and will provide further feedback at the next hearing.

E. Sustainability

The City of Newton Climate and Sustainability Team's reviewed the project in a memo dated May 2, 2024 Passive House. The Applicant responded to the memo noting that the project will have the following sustainability features:

- Project designed to meet one of the two Passive House standards (PHIUS or PHI) with the final certification path for the project to be determined.
- a solar feasibility study for the roofs of the residential buildings as well as the garage parking structure
- infrastructure for future charger-ready parking spaces

The Sustainability Team reviewed the Applicant responses to the memo and recommends that the Applicant conduct a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), which is now a requirement for special permit projects over 50,000 sq ft. The Applicant confirmed they would be conducting an LCA and revised their Sustainability Narrative accordingly.

II. Next Steps

Planning recommends that the Applicant provide the following:

- Complete revised plan set (civil, architectural, photometric, signage, landscape)
- 3-D model for viewing at next ZBA hearing
- Responses in writing to issues raised in this memorandum by Planning and/or the on call consultants and written narratives accompanying any further project changes.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: NBBJ memorandum dated July 9, 2024

Attachment B: BETA memorandum dated July 10, 2024



www.nbbj.com

July 9, 2024

Ms. Alyssa Sandoval
Deputy Chief Planner
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459

Subject: 78 Crafts Street 40B Design Review (MEMO #4)

Dear Ms. Sandoval

This is a fourth memo to address plan updates that have been submitted to the City after the drafting of our initial comments submitted February 15, 2024 and another set of comments on April 17 and a presentation to the Board on June 3rd. We have received updates to the original set of drawings from Boylston Properties that include:

- Design Submission for July 16th 2024 ZBA Hearing (Uploaded 7/2/2024)
- ZBA Hearing Graphics for 6/3/2024 ZBA Hearing
- Information Submission Memo 5/20/2024
- Crafts Street ZBA Presentation (uploaded 4/28/2024)
- Crafts Street ZBA Plan Changes (uploaded 4/8/2024)
- Renderings of Abutting Neighborhood Streets (uploaded 3/28/2024)
- Residential Plan Changes 3/27/2024

Project Understanding

The most recent updates to the plan include a modification to the ground floor of Building A and B to respond to comments about ground level activation on Crafts Street. Building A now includes a common area located on half the frontage of Crafts Street adjacent to Maguire Court. Building B has been modified by a slight reduction in size to the indoor common area and the introduction of a covered porch facing on to Maguire Court. Additionally, the proponent has supplied graphics on the emergency access driveway, a

signage and wayfinding plan, a conceptual lighting plan and colors and materials concept palette.

Height:

- No changes to building heights.

Building Setbacks:

- Building B common areas have been set back behind an arcade and roof overhang, creating an ideal location for seating and interaction with the sidewalk and Maguire Court.

Land Use:

- Proponent has replaced an unknown number of parking spaces with an indoor common area along Crafts Street.
- This allows for much more active streetscape including an entrance on Crafts Street and improves visibility to the “public” courtyard in Building A.
- It remains unclear how a non-resident visitor would enter the building from Crafts Street or guest parking on Maguire Court and access the elevator core in Building A without going into the garage or the proposed common area.

Massing:

- The only change to massing appears to be the removal of a one-story portion of Building B and replacement with an open covered porch area.
- This appears to be an improvement by increasing the outdoor space available to tenants and additional shaded and weather protected areas for summer and shoulder seasons.

Housing Density:

- No change

Mobility and Connectivity

- We note illustration of the proposed vehicle gate at the emergency access driveway leading to Court Street as requested by the Newton fire department.
- The gate as shown will create a barrier for cyclists who are otherwise invited to ride in Maguire Court to reach Court Street.
- The gate will force cyclists to ride onto the sidewalk and create potential conflicts with pedestrians.

- We recommend a wider gap between the gate and the curb, with a bollard if necessary, to allow cyclists to pass on the paved portion of the emergency access driveway.

Signage and Wayfinding

- The proponent has illustrated a monument sign on Crafts Street approximately 12 feet wide by 5 feet high.
- We recommend that this sign be replaced with more typical building mounted address information as the sign appears oversized for a residential neighborhood.
- Is the delivery and drop off, noted at Building C, intended to receive packages for the entire project rather than delivery at each building separately?
- We would like more understanding of why each of buildings could not have distinct addresses on Maguire Court to ease wayfinding for visitors and delivery vehicles.

Historic Resources

- Proponent has produced a study of colors and materials with historic precedents in regional context. We defer to the ZBA on color selection.

Open Space

- We note that the proponent has added additional open space (covered) in the courtyard of Building B.
- We concur that this type of open space is more valuable and useful for tenants than the enclosed space previously proposed.

Site Lighting

- Pole lighting is proposed on Maguire Court, the emergency access driveway and on the free-standing parking structure.
- Pole lighting on the garage may spill into adjacent parcels and be visible from adjacent residences. Photometrics may be needed to determine the impact.
- Bollard lighting is proposed within courtyards only.
- The proponent may wish to consider lighting the pedestrian pathway adjacent to the emergency access driveway with bollard lights to reduce impact to adjacent properties.
- We also recommend that the bollards and gate at the emergency access driveway be sufficiently lighted to prevent collisions in dark conditions with faster moving cyclists.

- Wall lights are proposed in numerous locations.
- It appears that the mounting height of 12' would make these lights ceiling mounted in the areas under projecting porches as illustrated in the renderings.
- The proponent may want to consider either ceiling mounted lights, pendants or a lower mounting height on walls and a more decorative fixture to achieve a wall washing effect as shown in the renderings.
- The Art Wall on Crafts Street would need a special linear lighting fixture to achieve the effect illustrated in the night rendering.

Parking

- We note that the proponent has reduced the total number of parking spaces in Building A. We do not know if they have increased parking elsewhere to make up for this reduction.

We truly appreciate the opportunity to offer design review service to the City of Newton.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Mountjoy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "M".

Alan Mountjoy, Principal, NBBJ



July 10, 2024

Alyssa Sandoval
Deputy Chief Planner
Department of Planning & Development
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, Massachusetts 02459

**Re: Proposed Multifamily Residential Development Transportation Peer Review
Comments and Responses to VAI June 24, 2024, Letter**

Dear Ms. Sandoval:

BETA Group, Inc. (BETA) has provided comments and responses to the Responses to Transportation Peer Review #2 letter dated June 24, 2024, by Vanasse & Associates, Inc. (VAI) regarding the proposed Multifamily residential development at 78 Crafts Street in Newton, MA. We have also reviewed the following documents:

- Transportation Demand Management Program, Proposed Multifamily Residential Development, 78 Crafts Street, Newton, MA, VAI June 2024.
- 78 Crafts Street Development, Design Submission for July 16, 2024, ZBA Hearing, July 2, 2024.

The revised VAI responses #2 have adequately responded to the BETA comments dated May 10, 2024. Additional comments are provided below.

Previous BETA Comments 1, 19, 27, 29:

BETA had identified off-site traffic mitigation measures to consider at the following locations:

- Washington Street and Crafts Streets
- Ashmont Avenue, Adams Street, Hawthorn Street, Lincoln Rad, and Clinton Street
- Washington Street at Adams Street and Lewis Terrace
- Route 16 (Watertown Street) and Crafts Street
- Crafts Street and Maguire Court

VAI Response: VAI has provided the following response to comments regarding off-site transportation mitigation measures:

The Applicant will continue to work with the City of Newton Planning & Development Department and DPW to identify appropriate mitigation and traffic calming measures for Crafts Street and the intersecting roadways identified by BETA.

BETA Response: **Comments addressed.**

Previous BETA Comments 41, 42, 45, 50, 52:

BETA had requested information on truck turning radii, Building B driveway, sidewalks, control gate, and bicycle parking.

W&S Response: The updated Site Plan and information will be included with the final submission of technical documents.

BETA Response: **Comments addressed.**

Previous BETA Comment 39:

BETA had requested information and an updated site plan showing visitor parking spaces.

W&S Response: An updated Site Plan exhibit is attached that shows the designated visitor spaces.

BETA Response: **A total of six designated visitor spaces are shown in the updated Site Plan exhibit. Will visitors be able to park in other external surface areas including the three spaces in the traffic circle and three spaces in front of Building A? What is the potential maximum number of spaces available to visitors? Will the Applicant/Manager have the flexibility to accommodate additional visitor parking to meet demand?**

Previous BETA Comment 66:

Provide information on the adequacy of the proposed parking supply to meet anticipated parking demand by both residents and visitors.

BP Response: The parking demand results at these facilities (TRIO and s8 Austin Street) do not include visitor demand. By expanding the Garage E footprint and depressing the lower level by approximately three feet, we were able to add 15 net new parking spaces to the Project, resulting in 278 total parking spaces for 295 apartment homes. This equates to a parking ratio of 0.94 parking spaces per apartment home. The Proponent and City Planning Staff believe that this parking ratio is adequate to meet the needs of residents and visitors based on parking data at comparable sites, namely TRIO Newton, 28 Austin Street, and multifamily assets that were studied as part of the WestMetro Parking Utilization Study Perfect Fit Parking Initiative Phase 4 analysis.

BETA Response: The currently proposed parking ratio 284 spaces per 295 dwelling units (0.94) is generally adequate to meet anticipated parking demand based on comparable developments in the area and regional parking analysis findings. However, it appears that the total parking supply has been reduced from 284 spaces (0.96 spaces/DU) to 278 total parking spaces (0.94 spaces/DU). Where and why were spaces eliminated?

New BETA Comment:

Several of the sign locations shown in the Signage Wayfinding Plan appear to be located incorrectly.

If we can be of any further assistance regarding this matter, please contact us at our office.

Very truly yours,
BETA Group, Inc.



Jeffrey Maxtutis
Senior Associate

Project No: 10337.03