

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CITY OF NEWTON

Massachusetts

DATE: September 26, 2024

TO: City Council

FROM: Katie Whewell, Chief Planner for Current Planning
Alyssa Sandoval, Deputy Chief Planner
Cat Kemmett, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Consistency Request CR-24-24
Special Permit #40-97

Background: The subject property consists of 489,460 square feet of land in a Business Use 4 district in Auburndale. The lot is improved with two multi-tenanted office buildings and accessory parking, known collectively as the Riverside Center. The Riverside Center was constructed in 2000 after being granted Special Permit #40-97, which allowed the zone change to BU-4, and #40-97 (2) which permitted the office building as designed. The site currently has special permit relief for several items including the following: relief for a multi-level accessory parking facility, to allow a four-story office building, to allow an accessory restaurant with more than 50 seats, and parking relief.

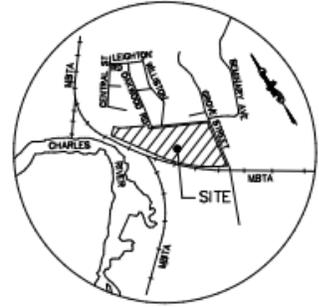
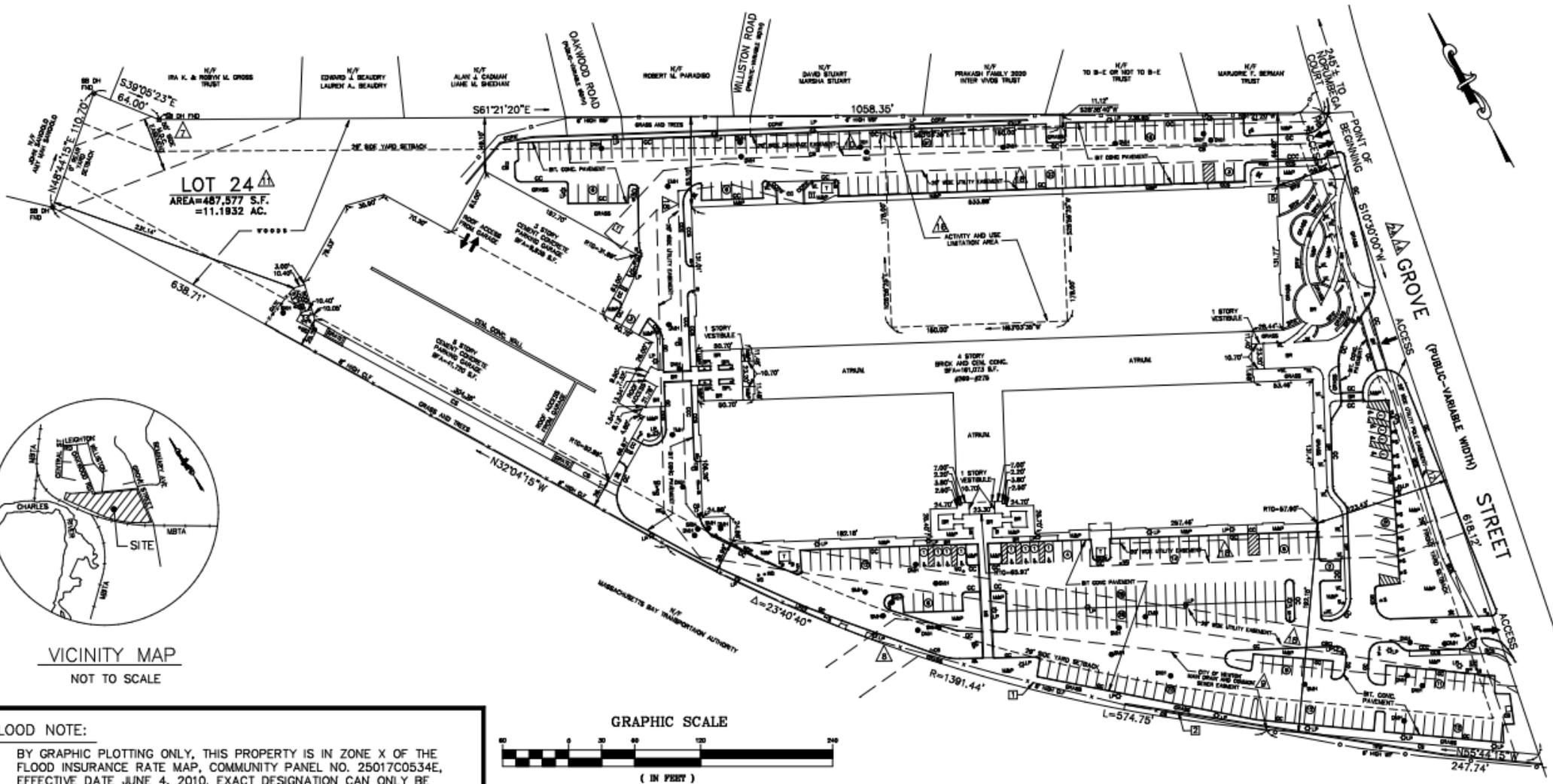
The owners of the building have applied for a building permit to renovate several aspects of the exterior of the building and grounds. The scope of work includes three main changes: painting mullions on doors and windows black, new signage, and a new landscaping plan. The petitioner has requested a consistency ruling from the Commissioner of Inspectional Services for the work proposed where it deviates from the approved Special Permit plans. On September 9, 2024, the Commissioner issued a memo approving one aspect of the proposed changes, painting the metal mullions around the windows and doors black. This aesthetic change was approved on the grounds that it is a minor alteration and is consistent with the intent and purpose of Special Permit #40-97.

The second proposed change is to the signage on site. The petitioner plans to replace one principal sign, add four new additional business signs mounted to the existing stone wall, replace all directional signs, and install three new entrance signs. These revised signs are designed to comply with the City's sign regulations and will be subject to the review of the Urban Design Commission. However, the plan also includes a freestanding sign for the restaurant tenant. This freestanding sign will require an amendment in the future to Special Permit #40-97 and cannot be approved via consistency or by right.

The Commissioner is seeking guidance from the Land Use Committee regarding the third change, the proposed landscaping redesign. The consistency ruling request can be accessed [here](#).

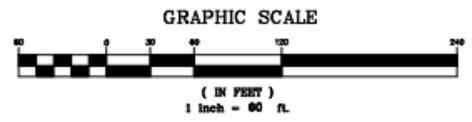
The petitioner proposes a new landscaping plan that deviates from existing conditions in several ways specifically in the northeast corner of the site. The owner plans to create an outdoor patio area and usable outdoor space. Several areas that are now lawn and gravel along the Grove Street frontage will be replaced with brick pavers, with the amount of brick paving in that area increasing from 3,600 square feet to 4,600 square feet. The work will result in an addition of roughly 1,000 square feet of impervious cover. The existing retaining wall be slightly expanded, going from 290 linear feet long to 325 feet long. New outdoor furniture will be installed throughout the patio area. Two existing trees in this area will be removed, with the total amount of trees in the area decreasing from 31 to 29. The proposed landscaping plan shows new evergreen plantings will be added along the street frontage, and other plantings including shrubs, perennials, and grasses will be added around the perimeter of this renovated outdoor area. No changes are proposed elsewhere on the site at this time.

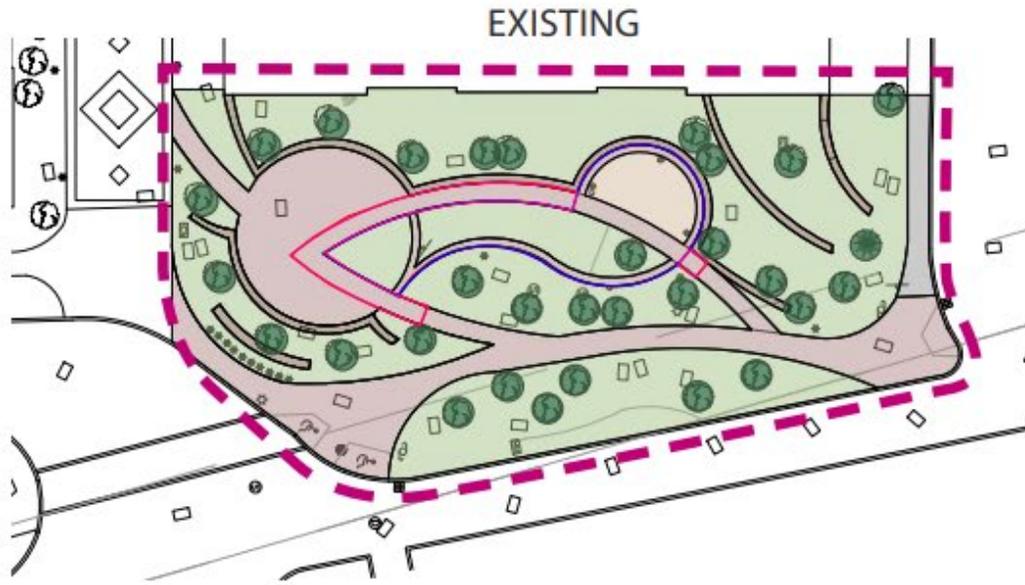
Attachment A: Comparison of special permit approved plans and proposed plans



VICINITY MAP
NOT TO SCALE

FLOOD NOTE:
 BY GRAPHIC PLOTTING ONLY, THIS PROPERTY IS IN ZONE X OF THE FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAP, COMMUNITY PANEL NO. 25017C0534E, EFFECTIVE DATE JUNE 4, 2010. EXACT DESIGNATION CAN ONLY BE DETERMINED BY AN ELEVATION CERTIFICATE.





- BRICK: 3,600 SF
- LANDSCAPE: 7,700 SF
- WALL: 325 LF
- GRAVEL: 290 SF
- TREES: 31



- BRICK: 4,600 SF
- EXISTING LANDSCAPE TO REMAIN: 3,400 SF
- PROPOSED LANDSCAPE: 3,300 SF
- WALL: 325 LF
- TREES: 29