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STAFF MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: **Wednesday, April 10, 2019**

DATE: April 1, 2019

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 or Fence Appeal applications.

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. 33 Austin Street – People's United Bank

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 33 Austin Street is within a Business 2 district. The applicant is proposing to replace and install the following sign:

1. One free-standing principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 25 sq. ft. of sign area facing Austin Street.
2. One secondary sign, illuminated, with approximately 9 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern building façade facing Austin Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- Both the principal and secondary signs are face replacements of existing signs.
- 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. All free-standing sign shall not exceed 35 square feet in area, which the applicant is also not exceeding.
- 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 212 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 the free-standing principal and secondary signs as proposed.

2. 275 Centre Street – Palm Beach Tan

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 275 Centre Street is within a Business 1 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to replace and install the following sign:

1. One principal sign, illuminated, with approximately 28 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing the parking lot.

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 35 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 principal sign as proposed.

3. 43 Boylston Street - Peloton

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 43 Boylston Street is within a Business 4 zoning district and has a comprehensive sign package authorized by a special permit via Board Order # 417-12. The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 14 sq. ft. of sign area on the southeastern building façade facing the front parking lot.

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 25 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 75 square feet, which the applicant is also not exceeding. The sign also appears to be consistent with the comprehensive sign package.

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

4. 148 California Street – Newton Nail Bar & Spa

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 148 California Street is within a Manufacturing district. The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 50 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing the parking lot.

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 35 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 principal sign as proposed.

Design review

1. 156 Oak Street – Northland Design Review

The petitioner has applied to re-zone and seek Special Permits from the City Council for the property located at 156 Oak Street for mixed-use buildings (commercial and housing).

The petitioner has presented twice to UDC in June and October 2018. The petitioner has revised plans and will be presenting at the UDC meeting on April 10th. Attached are the notes from the previous two meetings (attachment A).

Staff is waiting to hear back from the applicant regarding a revised summary of the project program.

The Planning Department encourages the UDC to review the project with regards to, site access, streetscapes, and public spaces. The petitioner is also in the process of developing revised design guidelines and is expected to come to UDC in the future to present.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CITY OF NEWTON

Massachusetts

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE – DESIGN REVIEW

DATE: November 13, 2018
TO: Jennifer Caira, Chief Planner
Michael Gleba, Senior Land Use Planner
CC: Land Use Committee of the City Council
Petitioner
FROM: Urban Design Commission
RE: 156 Oak Street – Northland Design Review

At the request of the Department of Planning and Development, the Urban Design Commission has reviewed and provides the following comments to the Department of Planning and Development regarding the proposed special permit project at 156 Oak Street. The following information is intended to give advice on specific matters affecting urban design and beautification for the project.

156 OAK STREET

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) has held two meetings (June and October 2018) to review the proposed Northland project at 156 Oak Street.

The Urban Design Commission supports the general idea and the approach of the design. A few recommendations that were made during the discussion in June and October 2018 are as follows:

Site Design, Scale and Massing

- When there is a large site like Northland, it is important to break down the proposed blocks like the existing city grid. The UDC recommended to break-down the mega blocks in the same way as surrounding city blocks.
- The proposed blocks are huge, unbroken, very long, even the town house building is very long. It will be a long walk to go around these blocks. The UDC recommended to utilize architectural ways to make the blocks smaller by creating pedestrian ways. An example is Walnut Street in Newtonville, where there 2-3 pedestrian ways in the block to walk to the parking in the rear.
- The proposed buildings at the Northland site are significantly larger than the surrounding buildings, there are 7 story buildings in a sea of 1,2 or 3 story buildings on Needham Street and in the neighborhood. It's a significant change in the overall density, height and block size.
- The UDC was concerned about building 4 and the parking lot next to building 4, it is the only parking lot off a street. The UDC commented that building 4 is a very large building and needs

to be smaller. The UDC also commented that the parking lot facing Oak Street is not a good location for a parking lot.

- The UDC recommended to create a visual and physical connection through the existing Mill building, to connect Oak Street to the Village Green.
- The UDC commented that the architecture, massing and facades of the building will need to be worked out and thought through more.

Road Network and Access

- The UDC recommended to continue plaza at the end of Main Street between buildings 11 and 12 across the Upper Falls Greenway to Chestnut Street to connect to the city streets. Even if it is a pedestrian connection now, in the future it can be a vehicular connection. It is important to connect this new development to the existing street network. It is important to think in the large context. The UDC also recommended to place the buildings so a future street connection is possible.
- The UDC was concerned about the additional traffic that the project will generate and would like to study the traffic report.
- The UDC also commented that the internal circulation within the blocks will need to be worked out.

Built Form

- The UDC recommended to make sure that Needham Street (especially building 7) is activated with entrances.
- The UDC is concerned with the bulk of the parking garages that are wrapped in a veneer of residential units and the quality of the single orientation units, especially for building 6.
- The UDC recommended to ensure that there is affordable retail, for example: barber shop, dry cleaning shop, etc.

Future-proofing

- The UDC recommended to future-proof the parking garage, by providing floor to floor height that can be converted to another use in the future when there won't be a need for so many cars.
- The UDC recommended to future proof the streets and have flexibility to have bike lanes on Main Street instead of parking on one side of the street (when there may not be a need for as much parking along the streets in the future).

The Urban Design Commission pointed out that this development will set a precedent for future development, hence it is very important to make sure that it sets a good precedent for Needham Street.