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STAFF MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: **Wednesday, September 11, 2019**

DATE: September 5, 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. 43 Boylston Street – Sukker & Sweet

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 43 Boylston Street is within a Business 4 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 10 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern building façade facing Boylston 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 29 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 87 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

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

2. 84 Needham Street – EverPresent

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 84 Needham Street is within a Mixed Use 2 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. One awning principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 14 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern 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 96 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.

3. 714-724 Beacon Street – US Postal Service

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 714-724 Beacon Street is within Business 2 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. One wall mounted split principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 37 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern façade facing Beacon Street.
2. One blade split principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 6 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern façade perpendicular to Beacon Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- As per §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.”* Both the proposed 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 total maximum size of the sign allowed is 100 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of both the proposed split principal signs.

4. 40 Austin Street – Rockland Trust

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 40 Austin Street is within Business 5 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. One free-standing principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 20 sq. ft. of sign area perpendicular to Austin Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 32 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern façade facing Austin Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed free-standing principal sign appears to be not 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. Per §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.”* The staff has spoken to the applicant about applying for a Special Permit to the Land Use Committee of the City Council.
- 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 38 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 38 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the proposed secondary sign. Staff recommends the applicant to apply for a Special Permit to the Land Use Committee of the City Council.

5. 260 Needham Street – Marshall’s

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 260 Needham Street is within Mixed Use 1 zoning district and has a free-standing sign authorized by a special permit via Board Order # 192-96. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. One free-standing principal sign, **internally illuminated**, with approximately 38 sq. ft. of sign area perpendicular to Needham Street.

2. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 47 sq. ft. of sign area on the northwestern façade facing Needham Street.
3. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 47 sq. ft. of sign area on the northeastern façade facing Charlemont Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The free-standing sign is a face replacement of the old sign and is approved by a special permit via Board Order # 192-96.
- 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 120 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 the proposed principal sign and both secondary signs.

6. 1349 Centre Street - Mathnasium

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 1349 Centre Street is within Business 2 zoning district and has a free-standing sign authorized by a special permit via Board Order #179-15. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. One free-standing principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 2 sq. ft. of sign area perpendicular to Centre Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 25 sq. ft. of sign area on the southwestern façade facing Trowbridge Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The free-standing sign is a face replacement of the old sign and is approved by a special permit via Board Order # 179-15.
- The staff has spoken to the applicant about exact dimensions of the façade length and the sign.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the free-standing sign. Staff will have a recommendation about the secondary sign at the UDC September 11th meeting.

7. 200-220 Boylston Street – Fidelity Investments

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 200-220 Boylston Street is within a Business 4 district and has a comprehensive sign package authorized by a special permit via Board Order # 214-10(2). The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 46 sq. ft. of sign area on the northeastern façade facing Boylston Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 46 sq. ft. of sign area on the southwestern façade facing the rear 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 61 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 100 sq. ft., 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 61 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 the proposed principal sign and the secondary sign.

8. 130 Needham Street – Loyal Companion

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 130 Needham Street is within Mixed Use 2 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 99.7 sq. ft. of sign area on the northwestern facing Needham Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 49.5 sq. ft. of sign area on the southwestern façade facing the side parking lot.
3. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 49.5 sq. ft. of sign area on the northeastern façade facing Rockland 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 60 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 100 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.
- 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 95 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 the proposed principal sign and both secondary signs.

9. 84 Needham Street - 84

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 84 Needham Street is within Business 4 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. One free-standing principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 16 sq. ft. of sign area perpendicular to Needham Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 48 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern façade facing Needham Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The staff is looking for the Board Order regarding the free-standing sign and will have a recommendation about the proposed signs at the UDC September 11th meeting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff will have a recommendation about both the proposed signs at the September 11th meeting.

10.286 Centre Street – Neighborhood Barbers

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 286 Centre Street is within Business 4 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 23 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing Centre 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 108 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.

Design Review

1. 355 Grove Street and 399 Grove Street – Riverside Design Review

The Petitioner is proposing a new mixed-use development consisting of ten buildings that are designed to maximize the principle of walkability on site and to create a vibrant, transit-oriented hub. The petitioner presented to Urban Design Commission in May 2020. Attached are the notes from that meeting. The petitioner has revised the proposed program for the Riverside site. The revised program would incorporate 523,509 square feet of office space,

524 residential units, 71,070 square feet of retail space, and a 154-key hotel. The revised program has changes in the following buildings:

- Building 1: Office space has decreased from 418,673 to 361,833 GFA and 4,500 GFA of retail has been added.
- Garage 1: MBTA space has decreased from 9,394 to 7,500 GFA.
- Building 2: The residential units have been eliminated from this building and hotel space has decreased from 111,039 to 79,683 GFA.
- Building 3: Office space has decreased from 144,248 to 161,676 GFA.
- Building 4: Residential space has decreased from 152,783 to 121,709 GFA and 3,668 GFA of retail has been added.
- Building 5: Residential space has decreased from 66,385 to 65,729 GFA.
- Building 6: Residential space has decreased from 92,902 to 73,854 GFA and retail has decreased from 16,031 to 15,903 GFA.
- Building 7: No change
- Building 8: Residential space has decreased from 77,013 to 66,351 GFA and no change to retail and MBTA space.
- Building 9: No change
- Building 10: Residential space has decreased from 165,197 to 151,428 GFA.

2. Review of Draft Northland Design Guidelines (with staff)

The proposed project is of a much larger scale than typical Special Permit projects, which submit very detailed plans for review and then must remain consistent with these plans throughout development of construction documents. Given the scale of the project site and that the project would be built over several years it did not seem feasible, nor desired, for the petitioner to submit plans that included the level of detail typically expected of a Special Permit project (material finishings, exact fenestration, open space furnishings, signs, etc). Designing a project to this level of detail now would make inevitable revisions throughout the Special Permit process more difficult, would result in more significant changes during development of construction documents (and potential amendments to the Special Permit), and could result in the design looking outdated, rather than as if it evolved over time. These details are extremely important to the success of the project, however. For this reason, the Planning Department and their peer reviewer, Form + Place have developed design guidelines that will provide a framework for the incremental execution of the development. The goal of the guidelines is to provide a degree of flexibility in the architectural details, to respond to evolving development realities, and to ensure the project as built matches the expectations set

forth in the petitioner's master plan as well as in the Needham Street Area Vision Plan. For example, the Petitioner has committed to pursuing Passive House certification for a portion of the buildings onsite, which may require alterations to the design and materials.

The Design Guidelines are intended to guide small changes to the project as a result of evolution from conceptual design to final design and to ensure the details that are not yet shown meet the City's high expectations for quality design. If approved, many elements of the project will be considered fixed, and could not be significantly changed as a result of the Design Guidelines. For example, no increases to the building heights, number of units, affordable units, overall size of the project, or commitments to transportation demand management measures, or community benefits could be done without returning to City Council to amend the Special Permit. Additionally, only minor changes to building locations, footprints, program, driveway location, parking stalls, interior road network, and open spaces could be expected without needed to amend the Special Permit. What the guidelines will regulate is types of materials, overall fenestration, building entrance location and design, wayfinding and building signage, location and treatment of loading and trash, street treatments including furniture, landscaping, and paving materials, and detailed design of amenity and open space areas. It is also anticipated that if the petitioner were to return to make significant changes to the project as an amendment to the Special Permit, the design guidelines would be used to guide those changes as well.

The Design Guidelines are intended to find a balance between the specificity and flexibility. The guidelines are broken down into three categories, District Design, Block Design and Building Design to allow for consideration of the development at a variety of scales. The district level guidelines consider the project holistically; how it fits into the surrounding context and the overall quality of the public realm within the project. The district level guidelines include some elements that will likely be fixed in place by the submitted Special Permit plans, if the project is approved. These guidelines are intended to ensure small changes to the project maintain consistency with the holistic vision and will also guide the process if larger changes are requested in the future. The block level guidelines take a more detailed look at place-making and architectural qualities of individual blocks, which may vary in their design throughout the development. The building level design criteria include many of the details that are not included in the proposed plans: material choice, articulation of buildings, fenestration, etc. All three levels include guidelines for the public realm, wayfinding, and sustainability.

The Planning Department proposes a review process for the design guidelines that is similar to the Special Permit consistency review that happens today. The submitted plans for building permit must be consistent with the approved Special Permit plans and the Design Guidelines and also must fulfill all applicable conditions from the Council Order. Prior to submitting for a building permit for site-wide or individual elements of the proposed development, the petitioner would review the applicable guidelines and fill out the evaluation form. A few sample pages of the evaluation template are attached. The form requires the petitioner to consider the overall goals for each category as well as how the proposed project complies with individual guidelines. The template also has space for references to the plan sheets that illustrate how the project meets said guideline. City staff (and potentially peer reviewers) would review in detail and the petitioner would also be required to present to the Urban Design Commission for their assessment of consistency with the Design Guidelines. It is anticipated that most building permit requests would then be presented to the Land Use Committee of the City Council (as is done for other consistency rulings) for the committee's review and recommendation to the Commissioner of Inspectional Services. The Planning Department recommends that minor permit requests (retail tenant fit outs, etc.) that are consistent with the Design Guidelines may be able to request a consistency from the Commissioner with just a staff recommendation.