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Candace Havens  
Director

**WORKING SESSION MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** October 8, 2013  
**TO:** Land Use Committee of the Board of Aldermen  
**FROM:** CHavens, Director of Planning and Development  
Alexandra Ananth, Chief Planner for Current Planning  
Stephen Pantalone, Senior Planner  
**CC:** Petitioner

In response to questions raised at the Land Use Committee public hearings, and/or staff technical reviews, the Planning Department is providing the following information for the upcoming working session. This information is supplemental to staff analysis previously provided at the public hearing.

**PETITION #237-13**

**75-77 Auburn Street**

Request for Special Permit/Site Plan Approval to reconfigure an existing two-family dwelling into three units with 2-car garages, and to construct two additional attached dwellings units with 2-car garages at the rear for a total of five units at 75-77 Auburn Street.

A public hearing for this project was held on September 10, 2013.

**Dimensional Requirements**

The Planning Department suggested that the petitioner reduce the number of units or the size of the units to comply with side setback and lot coverage requirements. While the zoning relief requested by the petitioner was minor, the Planning Department memo noted language from Section 30(9)(b)(5)(b) which allows exceptions to dimensional controls for single-family attached dwellings if literal compliance is impractical due to the nature of the lot, or if the exceptions would be in the public interest.



At the public hearing, the petitioner indicated that constructing five units makes it economically viable to preserve the historic structure that is valued by the neighborhood and the City, and would generate a cash payment of approximately \$100,000 from the developer to the City's Affordable Housing Trust under the City's inclusionary housing requirements. The petitioner also noted that this

project would contribute to the City's goal of increasing the housing stock, that the sizes of some of the units are relatively modest in comparison to other new residential structures in Newton, and that the proposed setbacks meet MR-1 requirements.

In response to the Planning Department's suggestion to reduce the number or size of the units, the petitioner chose to reduce the size of the units by a total of 722 square feet. The largest reduction is in Unit 2 which was 3,500 square feet and has been reduced to 3,197 square feet. The Planning Department has not received the revised site plan showing the reduction in unit sizes. However, based on the information provided by the petitioner, a waiver from the lot coverage requirement is no longer necessary. The Planning Department will verify the reduction in unit sizes in the site plan prior to the working session.

The Planning Department believes that the petitioner has identified several public benefits from this project that warrant an exception to the dimensional requirements for single-family attached dwellings.

#### **Mass of the Proposed Structures**

At the public hearing the Land Use Committee and the community raised some concern over the mass of the proposed project and how it would fit into the neighborhood.

The petitioner argued that the proposed project is less dense than surrounding lots on a lot-area-per-unit ratio, and that they've mitigated the impact of the additional mass by recessing the structure and reducing the roof line towards the rear. The Planning Department also notes that the landscaping plan will mask some of the new mass from the public view and from the abutters.

The Planning Department acknowledges that the proposed buildings will be different in character and mass than other structures on the street, particularly on the west side where there will be three structures back-to-back that extend approximately 138 feet in length. However, the Planning Department believes that the additional mass has been sufficiently mitigated through architectural design and landscaping. The Planning Department believes that the proposed project will not adversely affect the neighborhood, and that the preservation of the front façade of the existing structure is beneficial to the streetscape.

**Recommendation.** Staff recommends **approval with conditions.**

**ATTACHMENT A:           UNIT SIZES**

75 AUBURN STREET

LOT COVERAGE AND FAR CALCULATION - 09-11-2013

	<u>1ST FLOOR FOOTPRINT</u>	<u>1ST FLOOR (INCL GARAGE)</u>	<u>1ST FLOOR (EXCL GARAGE)</u>	<u>2ND FLOOR</u>	<u>ATTIC</u>	<u>TOTAL AREA EXCL GARAGE</u>	<u>TOTAL AREA INCL GARAGE</u>
<u>UNIT #1</u>	1,777	1,346	904	1,277	0	2,181	2,623
<u>UNIT #2</u>	1,546	1,520	974	1,385	292	2,651	3,197
<u>UNIT #3</u>	1,522	1,463	1,053	1,047	442	2,542	2,952
<u>UNIT #4</u>	1,507	1,463	1,053	1,047	404	2,504	2,914
<u>UNIT #5</u>	1,509	1,466	1,056	1,047	442	2,545	2,955
	<b>7,861</b>					<b>12,423</b>	<b>14,641</b>

7,861 / 31,437 = 25%

14,641 / 31,437 = FAR 46.5%