



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

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

**#145-21**

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Barney S. Heath  
Director

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## PUBLIC HEARING MEMORANDUM

Public Hearing Date:	June 8, 2021
Land Use Action Date:	August 24, 2021
City Council Action Date:	September 6, 2021
90-Day Expiration Date:	September 6, 2021

**DATE:** June 4, 2021

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development  
Neil Cronin, Chief Planner  
Michael Gleba, Senior Planner

**SUBJECT:** **Petition #145-21** for SPECIAL PERMIT/SITE PLAN APPROVAL to construct a 373 sq. ft. wall mounted secondary sign on the front façade at **2 Wells Avenue**, Ward 8, Newton Centre, on land known as Section 84 Block 34 Lot 2K, containing approximately 436,175 sq. ft. of land in a district zoned LIMITED MANUFACTURING. Ref: 7.3.3, 7.4, 5.2.8, 5.2.13 of the City of Newton Rev Zoning Ord, 2017.

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the City Council and the public with technical information and planning analysis conducted by the Planning Department. The Planning Department's intention is to provide a balanced review of the proposed project based on information it has at the time of the public hearing. Additional information about the project may be presented at or after the public hearing for consideration at a subsequent working session by the Land Use Committee of the City Council.



**2 Wells Avenue**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The subject property located at 2 Wells Avenue consists of a 436,175 square foot parcel located in a Limited Manufacturing (LM) zoning district, situated within the Wells Avenue office park. It is improved with a three-story office building and 477 surface parking stalls constructed under special permit.

The petitioner proposes to construct a 373 square foot wall mounted secondary sign along a 150-foot band on the parapet on the front façade. The proposed sign would replace an approximately 192 square foot sign in the same location.

Section 5.2.8 limits the size of a secondary wall sign to 1 square foot per linear foot of building wall or 50 square feet, whichever is less. As the building is 280 feet wide, resulting in a maximum size of 50 square feet by right, a special permit per Sections 5.2.8 and 5.2.13 of the Newton Zoning Ordinance is required to allow the proposed secondary sign.

The Urban Design Commission has recommended approval of the proposed sign, subject several conditions.

### I. SIGNIFICANT ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

When reviewing this request, the Council should consider whether:

- Granting an exception to limitations imposed by Section 5.2.8 limiting the size of a secondary wall sign to 1 square foot per linear foot of building wall or 50 square feet, whichever is less, would be the public interest given the nature of the use of the premises, the architecture of the building or its location with reference to the street (§5.2.13)

### II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE AND NEIGHBORHOOD

#### A. Neighborhood and Zoning

The site is located along Wells Avenue near the entrance to the Office Park and the intersection of the Wells Avenue loop. The subject property and other properties in the Office Park contain commercial uses, but are proximate to surrounding parcels with multi-family residential, open space, and non-profit organization uses (**Attachment A**). The entire Office Park, including the subject property, is zoned Limited Manufacturing (**Attachment B**). The zoning in the surrounding area consists of Single Residence 1, Multi-Residence 3, and Public Use districts. Additionally, much of the land within and surrounding the Office Park is constrained by wetlands, flood hazard areas, and a large conservation area.

#### B. Site

The subject property consists of a 436,175 square foot (approximately 10 acres) lot in the Wells Avenue office park improved with a three-story office building and 477 surface parking stalls constructed under special permit. Vehicular access is provided by two curb cuts off Wells Avenue.

The site, which is generally level, includes some rock outcroppings and wetlands. The

remaining portions of the site are landscaped or contain woodland vegetation; much of the property's perimeter is wooded with mature conifer and deciduous trees which partially screen the site.

### III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

#### A. Land Use

The principal use of the site would remain an office building with an on-site childcare center.

#### B. Building and Site Design

The petitioner proposes to construct a 373 square foot wall mounted secondary sign along a 150-foot band on the parapet on the front façade. The sign, with a tenant's name and logo, is visible in the below rendering.

This proposed sign would be larger than the existing sign, approximately twice the size (as measured by a "box" that encompasses the extent of the graphics), of the existing 192 square foot sign in the same location bearing the name and address of the building, "Two Wells."



**Existing**



**Proposed**

Given the context of the surrounding office park, the sign's orientation facing Wells Avenue, and its distance from that public way distance, the Planning Department is generally not concerned with the proposed sign.

C. Parking and Circulation

No changes to the property's parking or circulation are contemplated by this petition.

D. Landscaping

No changes to the property's landscaping are contemplated by this petition.

IV. TECHNICAL REVIEW

A. Technical Considerations (Chapter 30, Newton Zoning Ordinance):

The Zoning Review Memorandum provides an analysis of the proposal with regard to zoning (**Attachment C**). Based on the completed Zoning Review Memorandum, the petitioner is seeking the following relief:

- Special Permit per §7.3.3 to allow a secondary sign in excess of 50 square feet (§5.2.8, §5.2.13)

B. Engineering Review

Review of the proposal by the Engineering Division is not required.

C. Urban Design Commission

As discussed in its attached memorandum (**Attachment D**), the Urban Design Commission reviewed the proposal and recommended approval of the proposed secondary sign subject to the conditions, including that in the event the building has more than one tenant the sign should be changed so as to reflect the building name or address, not the name(s) of one or more tenant.

V. PETITIONER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The petition is considered complete at this time.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Attachment A:** Land Use Map  
**Attachment B:** Zoning Map  
**Attachment C:** Zoning Review memorandum  
**Attachment D:** Urban Design Commission memorandum

# ATTACHMENT A

## Land Use

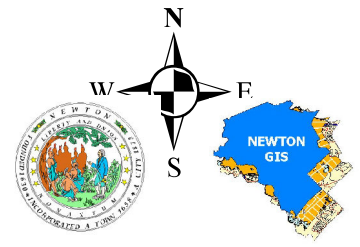
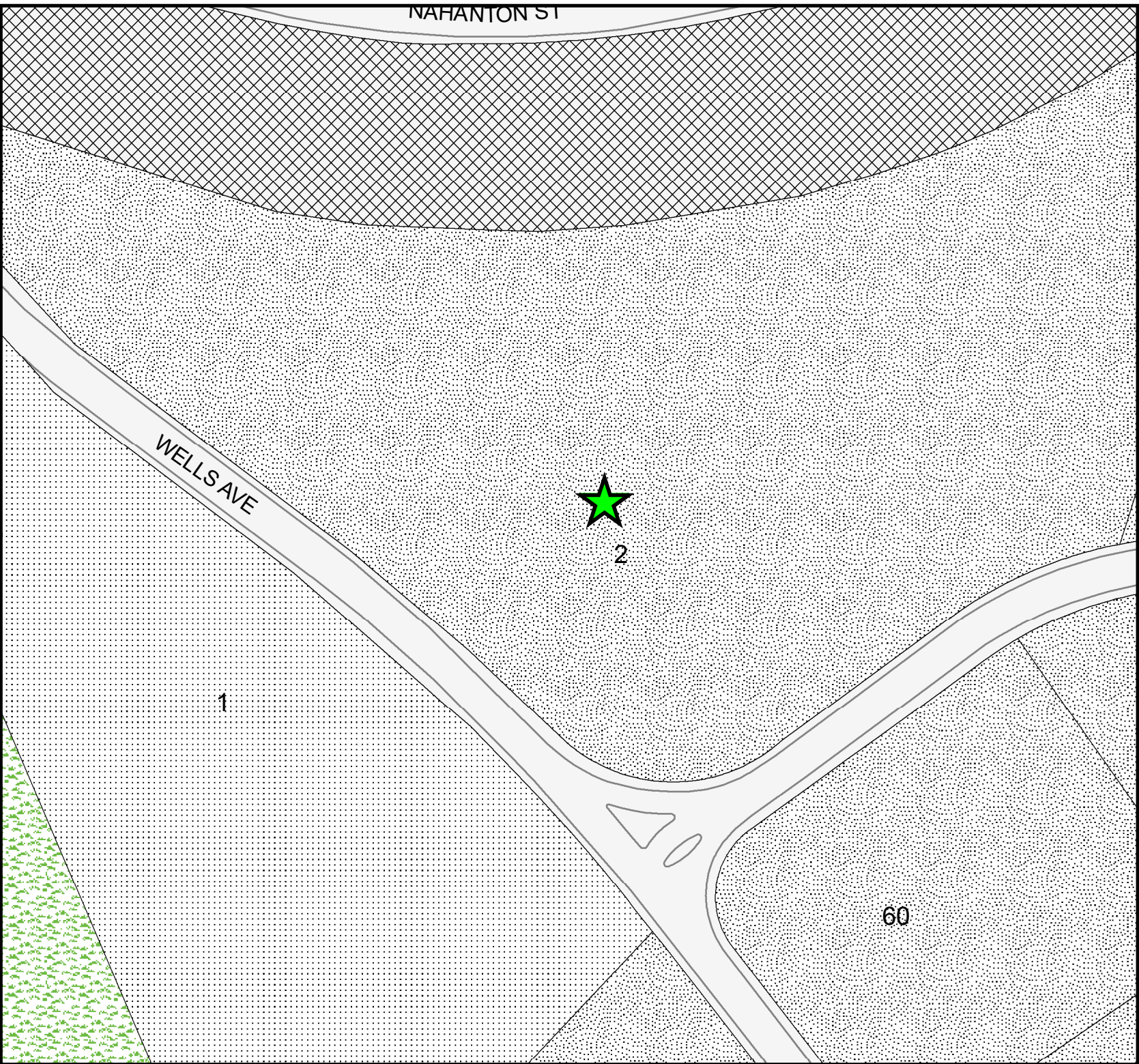
### 2 Wells Ave.

*City of Newton,  
Massachusetts*

## Land Use

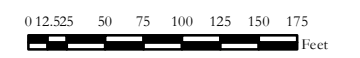
### Land Use

-  Multi-Family Residential
-  Commercial
-  Open Space
-  Private Educational



The information on this map is from the Newton Geographic Information System (GIS). The City of Newton cannot guarantee the accuracy of this information. Each user of this map is responsible for determining its suitability for his or her intended purpose. City departments will not necessarily approve applications based solely on GIS data.

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS  
Mayor - Ruthanne Fuller  
GIS Administrator - Douglas Greenfield

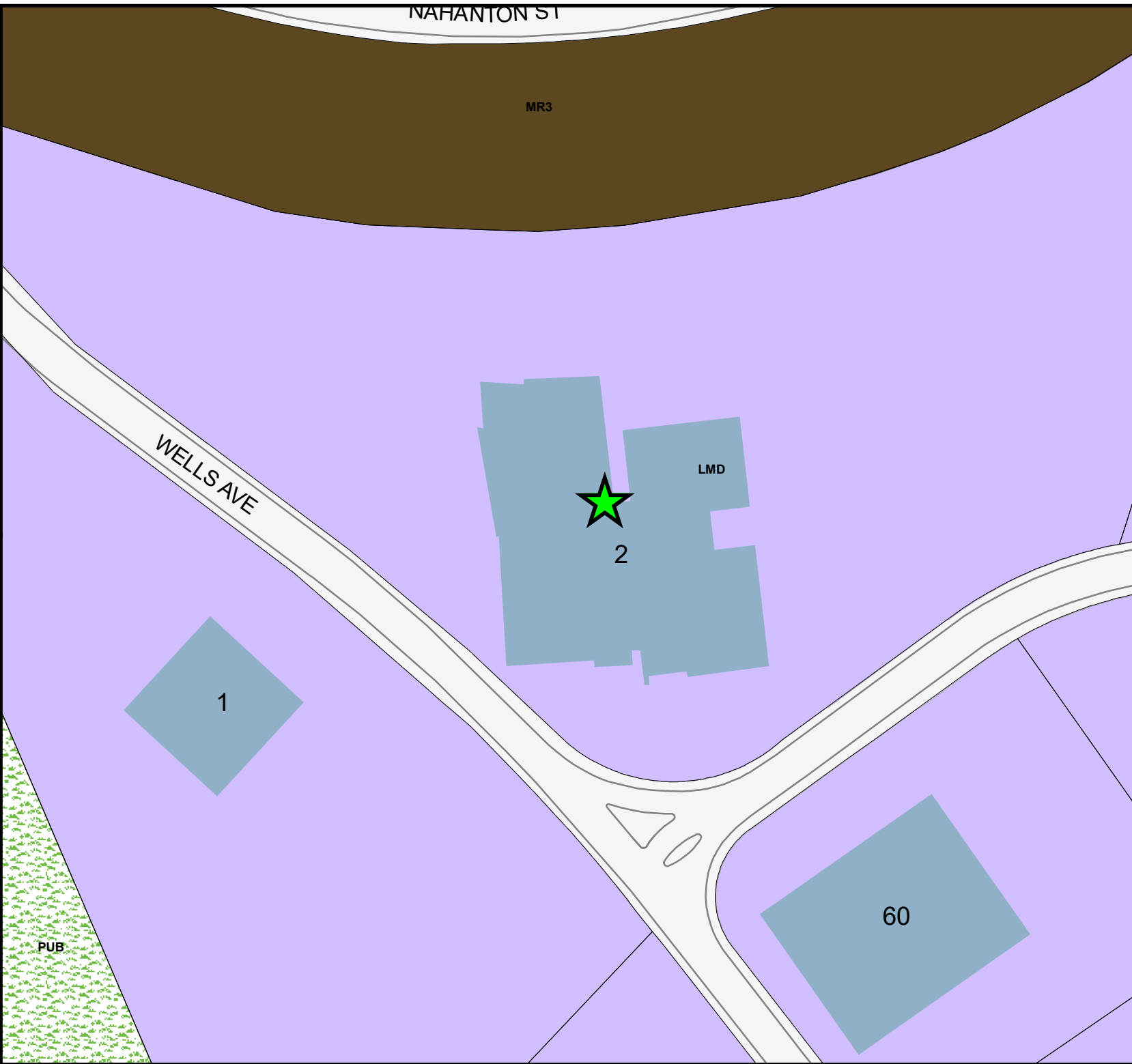







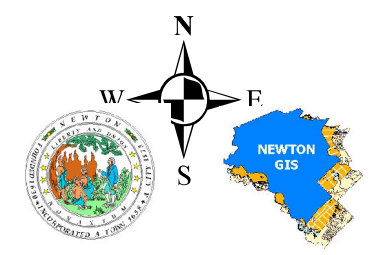
Zoning

2 Wells Ave.

City of Newton,  
Massachusetts

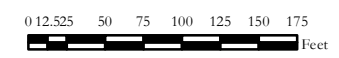


-  Multi-Residence 3
-  Limited Manufacturing
-  Public Use



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CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS  
 Mayor - Ruthanne Fuller  
 GIS Administrator - Douglas Greenfield





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Mayor

ATTACHMENT C

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Barney S. Heath  
Director

**ZONING REVIEW MEMORANDUM**

Date: March 16, 2021

To: John Lojek, Commissioner of Inspectional Services

From: Jane Santosuosso, Chief Zoning Code Official  
Neil Cronin, Chief Planner for Current Planning

Cc: Two Wells Ave Equity Ind. Part., Applicant  
Steven Geller, Bright Horizons  
Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development  
Jonah Temple, Assistant City Solicitor

RE: **Special Permit to allow an oversized secondary wall sign**

Applicant: Bright Horizons Day Care	
Site: 2 Wells Ave	SBL: 84034 0002K
Zoning: LM	Lot Area: 436,175 square feet
Current use: Office	Proposed use: Office and day care center

**BACKGROUND:**

The property at 2 Wells Avenue consists 436,175 square feet in the Limited Manufacturing zone in the Wells Avenue office park. It is improved with a three-story office building and 477 surface parking stalls constructed under special permit. The petitioner proposes to construct a 373 square foot wall mounted secondary sign on the front façade.

The following review is based on plans and materials submitted to date as noted below.

- Zoning Review Application, prepared by Steven Geller, Bright Horizons, dated 2/4/2021
- 2 Wells Ave Sign powerpoint, prepared by Steven Geller, Bright Horizons, dated 2/4/2021

**ADMINISTRATIVE DETERMINATIONS:**

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1. Section 5.2.8 limits the size of a secondary wall sign to 1 square foot per linear foot of building wall or 50 square feet, whichever is less. The building is 280 feet wide, resulting in a maximum size of 50 square feet. The petitioner proposes a 373 square foot wall-mounted sign along a 150-foot band on the parapet of the building. A special permit per sections 5.2.8 and 5.2.13 is required to allow a secondary sign in excess of 50 square feet.

<b>Administrative Site Plan Review</b>		
<b>Ordinance</b>		<b>Action Required</b>
§5.2.8 §5.2.13	Request to allow a secondary sign in excess of 50 square feet	S.P. per §7.3.3





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ATTACHMENT D

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**Barney Heath**  
Director

**DATE:** December 23, 2020  
**TO:** Neil Cronin, Chief Planner  
Jane Santosuosso, Chief Zoning Code Official  
**FROM:** Urban Design Commission  
**RE:** 2 Wells Avenue  
**CC:** Land Use Committee of the City Council  
Petitioner

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 and the Land Use Committee of the City Council regarding the secondary sign at 2 Wells Avenue. The following members were present at the UDC meeting: Jim Doolin, John Downie, Robert Linsky, Carol Todreas, and William Winkler. The following information is intended to give advice on specific matters affecting the secondary sign.

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**2 WELLS AVENUE - SECONDARY SIGN**

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At its regularly scheduled meeting on December 16<sup>th</sup>, the Urban Design Commission (UDC) reviewed the proposed Signage at 2 Wells Avenue for:

- One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 373 sq. ft. of sign area facing Wells Avenue.

Based on the signage submitted and the presentations by the applicant, the Urban Design Commission recommends approval of the proposed secondary sign subject to the following conditions:

- If another tenant is ever added, the applicant must re-apply for review and approval
- This sign would then be amended to a building identity sign, and
- Signage will be restricted to only 1 sign on that portion of the façade (either a single tenant business sign or a building identification sign)