



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Urban Design Commission

MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the City of Newton Urban Design Commission (UDC) was held virtually on Wednesday, June 9th, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87874504640>

Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

The Chair, Michael Kaufman, called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

I. Roll Call

Barney Heath,
Director
Planning & Development

Those present were Michael Kaufman (Chair), Jim Doolin (Vice Chair), John Downie, Bill Winkler, Robert Linsky, and Carol Todreas. Shubee Sikka, Urban Designer, was also present.

Shubee Sikka,
Urban Designer
Planning & Development

II. Regular Agenda

Sign Permits

Members
Michael Kaufman, Chair
Jim Doolin
John Downie
Robert Linsky
Carol Todreas
William Winkler
Visda Saeyan

1. 1191 Chestnut Street – My Eye Dr.

Applicant: Andy Layman

Proposed Signs:

- One canopy principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 48 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern façade facing Chestnut Street.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the signs at 1191 Chestnut Street – My Eye Dr. Mr. Downie seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 6-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim Doolin, John Downie, Robert Linsky, Carol Todreas, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed.

4. 1239-1243 Centre Street – Tatte Bakery & Café

Business Owner: Kevin Vargas

Applicant: Daniel Brennan

Proposed Signs:

- Two wall mounted split principal signs, externally illuminated, with 7.5 sq. ft. each of sign area on the eastern façade facing Centre Street.
- One wall mounted secondary sign, externally illuminated, with approximately 7.5 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing the rear parking lot.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the signs at 1239-1243 Centre Street – Tatte Bakery & Café. Mr. Linsky seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 6-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim

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Doolin, John Downie, Robert Linsky, Carol Todreas, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed.

2. 1261-1269 Centre Street - Coldwell Banker Realty

Applicant: Burg

Proposed Signs:

- One replacement awning split principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 27 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing Centre Street.
- One replacement panel mounted split principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 14 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing Centre Street.
- One replacement wall mounted secondary sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 24 sq. ft. of sign area on the western building façade facing the rear parking lot.

Presentation and Discussion:

- Mr. Kaufman asked staff if a sign on the second floor was approved in the past and the staff informed the Commission that a permit could not be found. Mr. Kaufman recommended that the applicant could put the window sign behind the glass and cover the window up to 25% of the window area. The proposed window panel sign is not within a sign band that UDC would have approved.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the signs at 1261-1269 Centre Street – Coldwell Banker Realty. Mr. Winkler seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 6-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim Doolin, John Downie, Robert Linsky, Carol Todreas, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed. The Commission recommended approval of the following signs:

- One replacement awning principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 27 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing Centre Street.
- One replacement wall mounted secondary sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 24 sq. ft. of sign area on the western building façade facing the rear parking lot.

The UDC recommended **denial** of the following sign:

- One replacement panel mounted split principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 14 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing Centre Street.

The UDC recommended the applicant change the panel sign to a window sign that is allowed by right (covering up to 25% of the window area). The applicant informed staff by email on June 15, 2021 that they will not move forward with a window sign at this time.

3. 845 Washington Street – Clover Food Lab. – George Howell

Business Owner: Ayr Muir

Representative: Scott Lombardi

Proposed Signs:

- One perpendicular secondary blade sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 10 sq. ft. of sign area on the southeastern corner perpendicular to Washington Street and facing the internal plaza (sign “L3”).

Presentation and Discussion:

- The UDC asked staff about decision at the last meeting when other Clover Food Lab. signs were discussed. Staff reminded the Commission that UDC has approved four signs for Clover Food Lab., 1 sign facing Washington Street, 2nd sign is perpendicular to Washington Street, 3rd sign facing the plaza, and the 4th sign facing rear parking lot. Staff also reminded the Commission that UDC has reviewed a sign for George Howell in the past but didn't recommend it for approval.
- The UDC asked the applicant if there was any new information about the updated proposed sign that they would like to share. The applicant mentioned that they came up with the idea of putting a kiosk inside of the restaurant. There will an espresso bar, typically Clover Food Lab. doesn't serve espresso drinks but only pour over coffee, but Clover Food Lab. is working with George Howell for an espresso bar. It's essential from George's standpoint that there is some signage for people to recognize that the kiosk is in place. It will be important for wayfinding to have a sign for George Howell kiosk otherwise it will be very confusing for people to find the kiosk.
- The UDC asked about the possibility of taking the sign inside the window, hang the sign inside the window, so it is 6 inches away from the window, perhaps 2 window signs, the top panel of the windows at the corner, one on Washington Street and one facing the courtyard so its clear that George Howell is inside Clover Food Lab. (CFL). The applicant responded that they considered that option, but you can't see through the glass, so the sign won't be very visible. There is a heavy awning, which casts a shadow, so the sign won't be visible due to the shadow. The UDC recommended that the sign could be illuminated. The applicant also commented that the kiosk is down the plaza, so the kiosk is not in that corner. The primary door is where the sign “L4” is shown, the kiosk is on the left of the primary door. The applicant also commented that there is a giant community table at that corner with a beautiful, intricate chandelier with hundreds of points of light that are hanging above it and the reason for that is when you look at the restaurant from outside, you see that very inviting space so CFL would not want to block that view and overall presentation of that space. The UDC commented that maybe the sign could be lower than the chandelier.
- The UDC commented that the George Howell (GH) sign at the corner is very confusing, the sign is nowhere close to where the GH kiosk is. The sign should be closer to the kiosk, maybe it can be a window sign where the kiosk is.
- The UDC also suggested to maybe propose a sign next to L4 since that's the location of the kiosk.
- The UDC also suggested to maybe combine signs L2 (blade sign perpendicular to Washington Street) and L3 signs that maybe said “George Howell Coffee in Clover Food Lab.”
- The UDC also suggested that a perpendicular sign will be helpful next to L4 sign.
- There was also discussion about perpendicular sign at the corner. As per section 5.2.3. “A perpendicular wall sign shall be attached at a right angle to the wall of a building; it shall have no more than 2 faces; and it shall not project in any linear dimension more than 6

feet, subject to the provisions of Revised Ordinances Chapter 26, Sections 26-1 to 26-6. When a projecting sign is closer than 12 feet to the corner of a building, its projection shall be no more than a distance equal to 1/2 the horizontal distance from the sign to that building corner.”

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the sign at 845 Walnut Street – George Howell Coffee at a different location than submitted. Mr. Downie seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 6-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim Doolin, John Downie, Robert Linsky, Carol Todreas, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed. The UDC recommended the applicant move the location of the proposed sign to the eastern façade. The applicant resubmitted a new location and a revised sign design by email to staff on June 17th, 2021. Staff heard back from the following members to approve the sign as resubmitted with a condition: Carol Todreas, James Doolin, John Doolin, and William Winkler. The UDC recommends the sign for approval with a condition that the light parts of the sign (light blue background) be screened to keep the sign from being overly bright.

The Commission recommended approval of the following sign via email:

- One perpendicular secondary blade sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 3.5 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern façade facing the internal plaza.

5. 1261-1269 Beacon Street – Stretchmed

Business Owner: Jamie Lee

Applicant: Jeff Kwass, ViewPoint Sign and Awning

Proposed Signs:

- One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 15 sq. ft. of sign area on the southeastern building façade facing Beacon Street and Centre Street.
- One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 15 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern building façade facing Beacon Street.
- One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 15 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing Centre Street.

Presentation and Discussion:

- The applicant described the application and the changes that have been made since the last time UDC reviewed this sign application.
- The Commission commented that the new revised signs look good. Some of the members commented that it may help to go with warmer grey color than a cool grey. One member commented that cool grey may be better.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the signs at 1261 Centre Street – Stretchmed as resubmitted. Mr. Doolin seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 6-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim Doolin, John Downie, Robert Linsky, Carol Todreas, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed. The UDC recommended to make the background color of the signs a warmer grey instead of a cooler grey.

Design Review

1. 1114 Beacon Street Design Review

Owner/Applicant: Ron Simon

Representatives:

Franklin Schwarzer, Schlesinger and Buchbinder, LLP
Ed Numes, Architect

Documents Presented: Assessor's map, site plan, floor plans, elevations, and renderings.

Project Summary: The applicant is proposing to construct a new building with 34 residential condominium units, of which 6 would be inclusionary units. Multifamily residential uses are allowed as-of-right in a BU-2 zoning district above the ground floor. The petitioner is seeking a special permit to authorize residential units on the ground floor. The proposed project will provide 50 parking stalls on site. 46 of these stalls would be in an underground parking garage.

The petitioner is seeking a special permit to allow:

1. residential use at the ground floor pursuant to Section 4.4.1.
2. a development of 20,000 square feet or more of new gross floor area pursuant to Section 4.1.2.B.1
3. a four-story structure up to 48 (47.17) feet in height pursuant to Sections 4.1.2.B.3 and 4.1.3
4. FAR of up to 2.0 (1.078) pursuant to Sections 4.1.2.B.3 and 4.1.3
5. 1.25 parking stalls per unit pursuant to Sections 5.1.4.A and 5.1.13
6. parking in the side setback pursuant to Sections 5.1.7.A and 5.1.13; and
7. a waiver of the minimum stall depth requirements pursuant to Sections 5.1.8.B.2 and 5.1.13.

Presentation & Discussion:

The UDC commented this is a big improvement since last time UDC reviewed this project. The UDC also commented that the design has come a long way. It has advanced very nicely on many fronts.

Building Massing, Height and Architecture

- The large archway is only to access 5 parking spaces, it seems a little grand for what it is serving. It seems to be announcing something bigger than parking. The UDC recommended to tone it down, make it less grand.

Landscape, Streetscape and Public Open Space

- The UDC recommended to provide landscaping in front of the building. One of the members commented to make it look like the dentist office down the street. The UDC asked if there will be enough space to make it look somewhat like the dentist office down the street? The applicant responded that they have a landscape architect and plan to make this a beautiful building. The UDC asked about a site plan showing landscape area. The applicant commented that there are a few trees in the front. The UDC commented it's important to know if there is enough space to have trees in the front. The two buildings down the street are very different in character with landscaped green spaces in front of the buildings, sidewalks, and tree lawns. This building should be in keeping with those two buildings which are pedestrian-oriented and not the adjacent single-story commercial buildings with parking instead of green space in front.
- The applicant commented that there is a 10 feet setback from the back of the sidewalk to the edge of the projecting bay windows which project about 3-4 feet. The remainder of the

building is setback another 3-4 feet so there is some substantial green space between the edge of the sidewalk and the building. The applicant commented that there will be a lawn and landscaped area, it will be a rich, soft landscaped area.

- The UDC recommended to make the landscaping for the main pedestrian entrance different than the residential units on the right. It will be helpful to provide more trees and may be no fence in that area, so the entrance is distinctive from the units to the right of it.
- The UDC commented that the front entrance and the community room in that location is a very good solution, it presents itself well to the street. The large arch shouldn't compete with the main entrance. Grand arch for visitor parking spaces is very confusing.

2. 967 Washington Street Design Review

Representatives:

Terry Morris, Attorney

Alan Mayer, Mayer + Associates Architects

Documents Presented: Context plan, topographic plan, site plan, floor plans, elevations, renderings, and context photos.

Project Summary: The applicant is proposing a 28-unit residential condominium building. The site currently consists of 3 lots on the corner of Washington Street and Walker Street. The lot on Washington Street is currently retail while the 2 lots on Walker Street are residential. The project is ¼ mile to the Newtonville T stop. One block to the east there is a brick multi-unit apartment building and across Walker Street there is a brick 2 ½ story apartment building. The number of units allowed by zoning is 28 units for the combined parcels. The applicant is requesting relief on FAR for the MR-3 zoning district.

Presentation & Discussion: The applicant's representative provided a summary of the project (see above). The Urban Design Commission had the following comments and recommendations:

The UDC commented that the project has come a long way, it is a tremendous improvement since UDC last reviewed this project. It will be a nice addition to the neighborhood.

- The UDC asked how the revised proposal compares to Washington Street Vision Plan. The applicant responded that this site is shown as 3 stories in the Plan, the dimensional requirements of the Vision Plan have been met.
- It will help to provide balconies, more articulation on the façade facing the house on Walker Street.
- Provide windows on the first floor, it will help to light up the garage but be careful to provide appropriate interior lighting for the garage, so it doesn't appear to be too harsh through the windows.
- Split the garage door in to two, it will be better visually and physically too. A large garage door going up and down will be very loud, especially for the unit above the garage door. If the doors are smaller, they will be less noisy. The applicant responded that they have space to provide it and it will also look better.
- The entrance feels like a suburban office building. It appears that the doors are very deep into the building. It will be more welcoming if the main entrance doors can move closer to the

street. The applicant responded that there are two issues with it, one is the ramp length, and the other one is lot coverage. The UDC commented that maybe a porch could come forward.

- It is disappointing that there is no main entrance to this building from Washington Street, all the precedents shown in the neighborhood have doors on Washington Street. The applicant responded that there are three private unit entrances on Washington Street. The UDC responded that it is better to have public entrance into the building on Washington Street.
- The way the Washington Street building is setup. It has broken down the mass beautifully. The second story step down is good. The UDC also appreciates the scale reference drawings, they are very informative. Renderings really help to understand the project better.
- The UDC recommended to look at the fenestration at the main entrance and make it more residential, make it more friendly from the street. There could also be some landscape elements that could come out to the street, so if a pedestrian is on Washington Street, it will be easier to see the entrance. Also, the windows above could look more like other windows. There is a pattern on the top floor that could be replicated around the corner.
- The flatness of the roof is bothersome, it doesn't relate to the other buildings on Washington Street. It was also commented that the parapet as shown in the rendering is taller and brighter than anticipated, it could be softened, parapet could be shorter, there could be a pattern in it, so it is less of a block top. It will also help to make that element darker with lighter trim.

3. 1149, 1151, 1157, 1169, 1171-1173, 1179, and 1185 Washington Street, 32 and 34 Dunstan Street, 12, 18, 24, and 25 Kempton Place - Dunstan East Design Review

Owner/Applicant: Robert Korff, Mark Development

Representatives:

Steve Buchbinder, Schlesinger and Buchbinder, LLP

John Martin, Elkus Manfredi

Documents Presented: Site plan, parking plan, building reconfiguration plan, floor plans, perspectives, and comparison chart.

Project Summary: The Petitioner is seeking an amendment to the comprehensive permit issued in July 2020 to develop a mixed-use project on Washington Street in West Newton.

Below is a list of revisions from the applicant since UDC last reviewed the project in April:

- Added 1950 SF retail space at Level one fronting on Washington Street
- Rearranged the distribution of the floor areas, extending the top floor along Kempton Place to allow the massing to step down along Washington Street
- toward the Armory
- Increased the massing step downs along Kempton Place
- Provided step backs in the massing along Kempton place to widen the street
- section, opening it up toward the Cheesecake Brook
- Added windows to the east facing facades

Presentation & Discussion: The applicant's representative provided a summary of the project (see above). The Urban Design Commission had the following comments and recommendations:

Building Massing, Height and Architecture

- The UDC is concerned about the project, it is very big and bulky.
- The Commission commented that they would like to see a section of Kempton Place with the two buildings. Buildings 2 and 3 are two long buildings facing each other all the way down the street. The UDC asked about the height of the buildings. The applicant responded that the buildings are six stories tall, about 65 feet tall. The UDC raised concerns about the relationship of street width and building height.
- The UDC commented that it is important to see the elevation and how it transitions down to the neighborhood, especially to the east. On the east side, there is Armory then Trader Joes building, then residential portion of the neighborhood. The UDC commented that Trader Joes site will probably not be developed as a 6-story building for a long time. It will be important to see how this transitions down towards the residential neighborhood.
- It will be important to see the relation of the proposed building to the Armory. According to the Armory studies, the building will likely stay in place or at least the front façade of the Armory will stay in place. It will be important to relate the new additional building to the scale of the Armory. It will help to bring the scale down of the additional building next to the Armory. Other parts of the project have some four-story portions, it will be helpful to have a 4-story portion next to the Armory. It will help if the top grey portion of the building steps back. The applicant responded that the Armory is not only smaller, but it is also setback from the street which makes it even more diminutive. The UDC recommended the new additional building to relate more to the historical Armory building which will most likely stay in place for the foreseeable future.
- The Commission observed that according to the Washington Street Vision Plan, this site is in the 3-6 story height range. The Commission commented that they would like to see more variety in building height.
- The UDC asked about the challenge of flipping the open space and turning the building the other way. The new open space is a private space and not shared by the public street. It will be helpful to get some breaks in this long building along the street. It will be helpful if the open space privileged the public street rather than face the Armory. The applicant responded that there are two reasons that they are not able to flip the courtyard, first, the courtyard is on top of the garage. If the courtyard is flipped, there will still be a full 1 story retaining wall by the time it got to the parking garage entry. The second and primary reason is if it is flipped then the wall would be 5 feet from the property line and could not have windows on that side.
- Treatment of Cheesecake Brook is terrific and will be a good addition.
- The UDC recommended to articulate building 3 like building 1 is articulated in the front along Washington Street and building 2 in the back, facing Cheesecake Brook. It will help to reduce the scale of the building, buildings 1 and 2 have a break in massing vertically and they are also stepped back. It will help to break the massing, so it looks like series of smaller building rather than 1 big mass.
- The UDC commented that Kempton Place is getting like a canyon. There was concern if the units in the middle will receive any natural light. The applicant commented that it is a north-south road so the units will get sunlight.

- The UDC recommended the applicant work with an acoustical engineer because of proximity of buildings 2 and 3, Turnpike noise, and trains nearby to check the noise bouncing that could happen between both the buildings.
- The UDC commented that a 3D visualization walking down Kempton Place will be helpful. The applicant responded that a video model was done for buildings 1 and 2 and they could update the video for building 3 as well.
- The UDC asked if the applicant explored any strategy to make the extremely long corridor in building 3 not feel so long. The applicant responded that it has a turn in it and there are two elevators on either ends so the residents will probably need to walk a maximum of 100 feet to get to their units.
- The UDC asked if there was any strategy to get natural light in the corridors. The applicant responded that they will explore options to create an indentation or a setback in the Kempton Street wall, it can become a common area on each floor that could allow some natural light into the corridor.

Retail

- The UDC asked about retail along Washington Street. The applicant responded there is about 6,000 square feet of retail combined in buildings 1 and 2. There is potential for retail in building 3 but it is not proposed currently. The retail market is very difficult currently. There will be opportunity to convert some of the amenity space if there is demand for retail in the future.
- The UDC recommended to have some retail in building 3 so there is some activity in that area as well.
- The UDC recommended to have smaller retail spaces along front of Washington Street (instead of 1 large store that goes all the way back) so it makes it lively.

Additional materials requested

- Context figure ground plan
- Elevation for building 3 – especially Washington Street elevation extending down towards the residential neighborhood and Kempton Place elevation
- Street sections, especially between buildings 2 and 3

Public Comment

The UDC also heard from the following member of the public:

Schuyler Larrabee: Mr. Larrabee commented that this presentation is incomplete without the elevations. The 2 parallel walls, for full length of Dunstan are over-bearing. The height of the buildings is about 1.5 times the width of the street and that is intensely urban. Mr. Larrabee suggested that the applicant consider to either reverse the C-shaped building and put courtyard on the street or straighten out the plan of the vertical lane and create a triangular space that opens to Washington Street, it will help to make it more pleasant, some landscaping will also help. The acoustics of open windows can create a problem when it is only 50 feet to the building across, the echoes may be a problem. Mr. Larrabee also commented that a common area on each floor will help to build a community for the people who live on that floor.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kaufman made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Doolin seconded and there was general agreement among the members.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Shubee Sikka

Approved on August 11, 2021.