



PLANNING BOARD

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January 6, 2017

Jonathan Book
Zoning Board Appeals

Re: 384 Harvard Street (JCHE) Comprehensive Permit Application

Chairman Book,

The Planning Board is supportive of the proposed independent senior living community at 384 Harvard Street, which will replace Temple Kehillath Israel's Epstein building. The new building will be to the left of the Temple (west side) and attached to it via a one story connector. There will be 62 age-restricted units, all of which will be affordable, in a range from extremely low to low/moderate incomes. The project also includes ground floor retail space, community space and 14 parking spaces under the building, accessed via Williams Street. A combined loading and drop-off/pick-up space has been proposed in front of the building on Harvard Street. Although no on-site parking will be provided to residents, many other transportation options will be available to them.

The following are some of the issues that the Planning Board recommends that the Board of Appeals address during its hearings and after receiving reports from the parking and urban design peer reviewers.

Traffic and Parking

The applicant has agreed to peer review of the proposed parking, loading/drop-off area, and Transportation Demand Management Plan (TDMP), prepared by Stantec. When the peer review report is complete, it will be presented to the Board of Appeals and available to the public.

Because fourteen parking spaces should have a negligible traffic impact in this heavily travelled area, the peer reviewer has been asked to evaluate whether the on-site parking will adequately serve the uses in the building and not overly burden the public parking available in the area, both the on-street metered spaces and the nearby public parking lot on Fuller Street. Of the 14 spaces, three are allocated for Temple use, two for car share spaces, two for retail use, one accessible space, and 6 for JCHE employees. The Transportation Demand Management Plan (TDMP) details the many transportation options which will be available to the residents, including The Ride, two on-site car shares, Uber/Lyft, Brookline Elderly Taxi Service, Brookline ElderBus and a JCHE wheel chair accessible shuttle bus. Public transportation, including the bus and rapid transit, are located nearby. Many of the residents will have caregiver visits during the day and the Town has a policy that if a caregiver is going to be over two hours they can get a parking pass from the Transportation Department to park longer at meters. It is important to know the likely number of visitors and caregivers coming to the site to gauge the impact on the availability of parking in the Coolidge Corner area for the many other users.

The proposed access to the parking under the rear of the building would be from a new twenty foot driveway off of Williams Street. Although the Temple has an easement over the driveway to the

Centre/Williams Street Townhouses, it has agreed not to use it. A street tree on the public sidewalk blocks the new driveway entrance and would have to be removed. A meeting with the Town Tree Warden, Tom Brady, was held and after explaining the applicable state law that applies to public street trees, including for 40B projects, stated that the tree could be removed if replaced with four street trees, one on Williams Street, one on Harvard Street and two more in the general vicinity.

A loading area has been proposed for Harvard Street which would jointly be used for drop-off/pick-up and parking for delivery trucks. The latter would be primarily for the retail space. The creation of the loading area will mean the elimination of four or five metered parking spaces. The peer reviewer for parking has been asked to evaluate whether this space could be shorter in length and/or whether there are better options for locating this space.

Context and Streetscape

The proposed residential project at six stories is significantly taller than the Temple and its proposed addition at the opposite side of the Temple. The current design of the residential project has a first story retail space facing Harvard Street, extending out to the property line. This projection and the height of the retail space should be evaluated because, from the Coolidge Corner side of the project on the same side of the street as the Temple, the retail space obscures any view of the Temple and its grand entrance steps. With the sketch-up model that the Temple has submitted, it is possible to view the Temple from the Coolidge Corner side with the retail space eliminated; it demonstrates that if the retail space were pulled back somewhat, the Temple would have a greater presence on the street. The Planning Board looked favorably on the community and retail spaces on the first floor but would recommend that more information be provided on their use so that allocation of the retail vs. community space can be evaluated.

JCHE's residential building is taller than the Temple. Having the 6th floor set back is a good idea but whether the fifth floor should be pulled back as well, should be considered because this would expose more of the Temple building, a National Register eligible property.

A shadow study has been submitted and indicates that there should be no shadow impact on the homes on Williams Street or the buildings across Harvard Street.

Green Space

There are four areas of open and/or green space proposed: facing Harvard Street, in front of the connector link - a pocket park with public seating; behind the connector link, and between the new building and the Temple - a courtyard for the use of both buildings; facing Williams Street – seating in the area between the sidewalk and building; and a green roof, for which more detail is needed. The Planning Board emphasized that the landscaping in front of the connector link should transition well with the landscaping in front of the temple, and this should be shown on a landscaping plan. The Board also suggested that on the green roof, it would be a benefit to the residents to have a small section open for their use. This would require some means of access to this roof space from the second floor. The fifth floor roof space, which is accessible from a corridor, would also provide an opportunity for an outdoor space and/or winter garden for residents. If either of these outdoor spaces are provided, any railing should be pulled back from the face of the building for aesthetic reasons. The urban design peer reviewer should also comment on the proposed green space and evaluate whether these are the best locations and design.

Building Materials and Location of Utilities

The building materials proposed for the retail storefront are an aluminum curtain wall, metal panels and nichiha wood; for the apartments, fiberglass windows, fiber cement siding, and swisspearl fiber cement panels; and for the set-back top floor nichiha ribbed panels. The Planning Board would recommend that the architect show samples of the proposed materials and colors to the Board of Appeals. A green roof has been mentioned but no details have been given, and the location of the rooftop equipment also needs

to be shown on a roof/site plan and evaluated for possible noise or visual impacts.

Trash and Recycling

A written trash and recycling plan will be submitted. After discussion with Pat Maloney of the Brookline Health Department, the applicant agreed to use a private contractor for both trash and recycling pick-up, as is typically requested by the Town for large apartment buildings. Currently, JCHE plans show an internal trash/recycling room, complete with a compactor. JCHE is working with a private collector company on the details of its trash disposal for the 62 residential units and the retail use. A written report will be provided to the Health Department, who will also check on its efficacy when the residence is at 90% occupancy. The Planning Board understands that the Temple disposal plans are separate but think information should be provided about the Temple trash plan and how it relates to JCHE's.

In conclusion, the Planning Board believes that this is a wonderful project for the Town and those seniors who so desperately need affordable housing. The Planning Board does request, however, the opportunity to submit additional comments to the Board of Appeals after the design plans have been further developed with the help of the design peer reviewer.

Sincerely,

Linda Hamlin, Chairman
Planning Board