



Town of Brookline Massachusetts

PLANNING BOARD

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MEETING MINUTES BROOKLINE PLANNING BOARD AND 21 CROWNINSHIELD DESIGN REVIEW TEAM

**Room 111, First Floor, Brookline Town Hall
December 1, 2015 – 7:30 p.m.**

Board Present: Linda Hamlin*, Steven Heikin*, Robert Cook, Blair Hines,
Sergio Modigliani, Mark Zarrillo*
Design Review David Jack, Barbara Sherman, Elton Elperin
Team Present:
Staff Present: Polly Selkoe and Maria Morelli
Project: 21 Crown: Chapter 40B Rental Housing at 21 Crowninshield Road

**Planning Board member serving on DRT*

Chair Linda Hamlin called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

The purpose of the meeting was for the applicant, Bob Basile, to present a concept that is more compatible with the single-family neighborhood; namely, an eight-unit townhouse configuration

BACKGROUND

The applicant submitted application to ZBA for a 20-unit apartment building on November 13, 2015. In response to ongoing community dissatisfaction, the applicant met with neighborhood residents and confirmed that a townhouse concept would be acceptable. On November 29, neighborhood residents reviewed plans for an eight-unit townhouse concept that was widely supported, with the understanding the architectural details would need to be refined.

On November 30 Attorney Jason Talerman submitted a letter to the Planning Department on behalf of Crowninshield neighborhood residents advocating that the townhouse option be submitted as an amendment to the ZBA application.

Consultant Geoff Engler confirmed that if the application is modified, the applicant would not need to return to subsidizing agency MassHousing for a revised project eligibility letter.

PRESENTATION AND PROJECT SPECS

In addition to owners, Robert W. Basile and J. Robert Basile, the development team consists of Attorney Robert Allen, 40B Consultant Geoff Engler of SEB, Inc., architect Andy Zalewski of MZO Design, and landscape architect Phil Pryor.

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|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Zoning District | S-7 (LHD) | Height / Stories | 2 buildings - 43 feet / 4 stories |
| Lot Size | 15,556 sf | Bedrooms / Type | |
| Units | 8 rental residential | 3-bed | 24 (2 bed + 1 loft) |
| Parking Spaces | 16 | Size of units | 2268 sf |
| Gross Floor Area | 18,144 sf | Footprint of Each Bldg. | 2615 sf (5230 sf total) |

Applicant Bob Basile and architect Andy Zalewski presented the plans for the townhouse option, along with a chart that compares the initial proposal submitted to the ZBA with the 8-unit version as summarized below:

- Two buildings with four attached townhouses in each replace the four-story apartment building.
- Townhouse concept is more compatible with the single-family neighborhood.
- Each unit has one dedicated parking space (at grade). The driveway leading to the garage can serve as a second parking spot.
- At grade patios replace balconies/porches.
- Driveway no longer aligned with Adams Street or the abutting single-family home on the left; it would be located at the center of the site and partially screened by a low wall and trees.
- Front yard setback increased by two feet.
- Left side yard setback would be considerably reduced; however, new location of Building 1 would better screen hospital.

PLANNING BOARD / DESIGN REVIEW TEAM COMMENTS

The Planning Board and Design Review Team were supportive of the proposed concept of eight-unit townhouses and the revised site configuration but recommended working with the project team to further refine the height, roof massing, and architectural details.

The Planning Board and Design Review Team conveyed initial recommendations to adjust the scale of the building and better separate pedestrian access from vehicular circulation on the site. The Board emphasized that a 3D model of the revised proposal, including the context of the surrounding single-family homes, is critical for a more thorough analysis.

Barbara Sherman and David Jack, neighborhood representatives serving on the Design Review Team, emphasized the importance of evaluating the impact on sight lines and the need to ensure that architectural details are compatible with the Crowninshield Local Historical District. A framework, such as the one provided in Planning's September 3, 2015 presentation, would be helpful in establishing design review standards. The neighborhood representatives stated that more visuals, such as a 3D model, would help the community understand what the project would look like.

Site Configuration

Create pedestrian pathways: Because the entrances to the units face the motor courtyard between the two buildings, pedestrian pathways should be created to separate pedestrian and vehicular access. One way to

do this is to use a change in materials, or a continuation of the decorative pavers used in the courtyard entry area, to create a visual reference— not a change in elevation like a raised sidewalk.

It will also enhance the aesthetics to use 4 foot strips of permeable concrete pavers to define the edges of the driveway, with maybe 14-16 feet of asphalt in the middle, assuming the whole driveway is about 22 - 24 feet wide. The whole courtyard needs to be drivable for maneuvering.

Another option is to relocate the front entrances to the respective side yards of each building to create an even greater separation between pedestrian access and the motor court. (This suggestion was retracted after the December 1 meeting.)

Architecture and Massing

Height and Roof Massing

The building still seems tall and top-heavy. Adjustments to the roof massing and loft-level will mitigate this effect.

- Eliminate unused space in the loft level to reduce height and roof massing.
- Adjust the shape of the dormers to de-emphasize the strong verticality of the building; consider designing shed dormers instead of steeply sloped gable dormers.
- Consider putting the paired dormers in the center of the row of dormers for better balance. Another option is to design one large bay instead of paired dormers in the center to create more variety.
- Reduce the size of the lofts to reduce the massing of the upper floor.
- Consider reducing the eave line on the front façade by creating a hip roof with a dormer; this treatment will reduce the visual effect of the four-story structure.

Front entrance

- Adjust the proportions of the portico, which seems too wide and shallow.
- Consider designing front steps that lead up to the front entrance. Locating the front entrance at ground level emphasizes verticality of the building.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Barbara Scotto, Crowninshield Road: Will the landscaping sufficiently screen the hospital?

Kate Poverman, Adams Street: On behalf of Janis Bellow, immediate abutter to the left of the proposed project, will the landscaping at the left rear corner of the property sufficiently screen the hospital?

Ms. Poverman was concerned about the overall height of the building, which she considered similar to the initial proposal.

Landscape architect Phil Pryor responded that the arborvitae and evergreens would grow to about 20 feet tall and were specifically chosen to effectively screen the project and the hospital.

Resident Bob Miller asked why the two dormers at the end of the row of dormers on the left façade were paired. Architect Andy Zalewski stated that he wanted to avoid a monotonous row of dormers.

Resident Charlotte Mao had trouble visualizing the roof massing from the elevations presented. Planner Maria Morelli stated that a 3D model would be required and would help participants better visualize and analyze the massing and scale of the project.

NEXT STEPS

At its December 17, 2015 meeting, the Planning Board will review a draft letter to the ZBA stating its support for the townhouse option, along with its initial comments on the design and a recommendation that the developer continue to work with the Board and Design Review Team to refine massing and architectural details. It is apparent that the scheduled date for opening the ZBA public hearing, January 7, 2016, will still be met.

The Planning Department will submit a summary of the recommendations conveyed at the December 1 with 48 hours to the project team so that they may incorporate these changes, as agreed. The Planning Department would be happy to schedule a staff meeting with the project team before the ZBA opens the public hearing on January 7, 2016, if that would be helpful.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Submitted,
Maria Morelli, Planner