



Design Review Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 16, 2022
7:30 PM

Board Members:

Mark Gluesing, Chair (P)
Bob Dermody, Board Member (P)
Susan Opton, Board Member (P)
Chad Reilly, Board Member (P)
Steve Tanner, Board Member (P)
Rana Mana-Doerfer, DRB Recording Secretary (P)
Elisa Litchman, Administrative Specialist, Planning & Community Development (P)

Applicants & Attendees:

1. Steve Schwede, FastSigns representing Needham Upholstery located at 81 Chapel Street and applying for signage.
2. 557 Highland Avenue LLC, The Bulfinch Companies owner of 557 Highland Avenue and applying for Site Plan Review.
 - Mark Diorio, General Counsel, Bulfinch Companies
 - Tim Sullivan, Goulston & Storrs, Attorney
 - Robert Schlager, Developer & President, Bulfinch Companies
 - Paul Finger, President, Principal, Paul Finger Associates Landscape Architect
 - Eric Weyant, Principal Stantec
 - Eric Joseph, Senior Program Manager, Paul Finger Associates
 - Kristen Weigel, Designer/Manager, Stantec
 - Tom Urtz, Senior Associate, Stantec

Mr. Chair called the meeting to order on May 16th, 2022, at 7:30 PM EST.

Mr. Chair notified attendees of new public meeting orders issued by the governor of Massachusetts.

Agenda Item 1:

FastSigns representing Needham Upholstery located at 81 Chapel Street and applying for signage. - Steve Schwede, FastSigns

Mr. Schwede came before the Board representing his client Needham Upholstery. They are seeking to install a 96 x 24 in sign at their store front. The sign is grey and black, with a chair logo left justified.

The sign is a 2” thick black aluminum bar frame, mounted flush to the building with galvanized L-brackets and hardware.

Mr. Tanner had one comment regarding the spacing of the letters “D” & “H” in the word Needham. He asked it to be spaced like the other letters. Otherwise, he had no issues with the sign.

Mr. Chair said he is worried about the four-inch letter’s being too small. But if the client is comfortable with it, so is he.

Motion to approve the sign with the condition to modify the spacing between the D & H in the word Needham by Mr. Tanner.

Motion seconded by Mr. Dermody.

Name	Aye	Nay
Mark Gluesing	Aye	
Bob Dermody	Aye	
Susan Opton	Aye	
Steve Tanner	Aye	

Agenda Item 2:

557 Highland Avenue LLC, The Bulfinch Companies owner of 557 Highland Avenue and applying for Site Plan Review.- Robert Schlager, President.

Mr. Schlager came before the Board to present his project, the development of 557 Highland Ave, formerly the Muzi Site.

Mr. Eric Weyant, Design Principal at Stantec took over the slide deck to walk the Board through the proposed design of the site. When they began the project, Stantec reviewed historic images of the site to understand the evolution of the site. Previously the primary access of the site was off of Highland Ave and through Gould Street, now there is only a primary access point on Gould.

The packet submitted to the Design Review Board includes conceptual diagrams for the project, the project will include a 3 story “South Building” primarily along Highland Avenue 42’ in height, there’s the “North Building” 5 stories high or 70’ in height, a connecting 2 story central atrium of 30’ height. There will also be a 5-story structured garage 5 stories high or 55’ high. The site includes a ½ mile fitness and walking path with passive style exercise stations, and there will also be a 10,000 square feet retail space and plaza that includes an outdoor seating area along Gould near Highland Avenue. The koi pond that was located along the corner for many years will be reinterpreted as a wayfinding and landmark element. The parking garage is a 5

story 55' in height. Overall, the project is a little of 500,000 square feet. Behind the garage will be a retention pond with a lookout bridge, which will have Koi fish in it.

There will be a new primary entry on Gould Street aligned with the Wingate entrance. It will be a signalized intersection. Gould Street will be widened with turning lanes added and bike lanes added. entry. There is a detention pond at the bottom corner of the site (TV Place and Rt 128).

The building exterior material will include charcoal grey ribbed metal mechanical screening on the roof, aluminum curtainwall systems with vision and spandrel panel glazing. It is essentially a punch window set within a terracotta toned building. The building finishes will include GRFC precast panels, Gypsum Fiber Reinforced Concrete pre-glazed with the windows. This material allows for a lot of different textures/finishes to happen with sandblasting and other techniques. It is very resilient. Various terrace locations for outdoor workspace are also proposed on the South Building.

The garage will use structural precast concrete spandrel panels, and an aluminum curtainwall system with vision and spandrel glazing at the stair and elevator enclosure at the entrance. The idea of using an exterior graphic banner to conceal some of the structured parking is proposed.

Green aspects of the project include electric vehicle charging stations, rainwater collection and reuse, hybrid electric heating, the garage may have a solar canopy, as well as LEED lighting throughout the buildings. Many features proposed are focused on sustainability and a LEED Gold approach.

Mr. Weyant also explained that they are proposing numerous traffic upgrades as well.

Mr. Finger explained more of the landscaping. There will be a water feature/fountain where the Muzi koi pond had been located. There will also be hardscape areas with pavers, tables, an area for gathering, dining, and sitting. Some of the plantings will include shade trees, ornamental trees, evergreens, shrubs, pin oaks, honey locusts, serviceberries, dogwoods, sweet bay magnolias and more. The details of which plantings will be where was not developed at this time. The applicant proposes 3.5-4" caliper trees.

Mr. Joseph went through the listing of various types of plantings that are proposed and Mr. Schlager noted that the colors of the plantings would change with the seasons.

Mr. Chair asked Mr. Schlager about joint planning efforts with neighbors for the landscaping. Mr. Schlager said they are working with the community regarding the landscaping. Various ideas such as a pickleball court have been suggested, along with green lawn, and a community garden. They are continuing to refine the ideas as they get close to the public hearing with the Planning Board on June 7th. Mr. Chair said the plans submitted show mostly trees and grass and he would like to see more development of plantings and beds. Mr. Chair stated that they should come back to do a final review of the landscaping once they have finalized their plans and have more detail.

Ms. Opton had some general comments regarding the fitness path and the landscaping around it, she is hoping the path itself can be buffered from the street and highway traffic with more robust and interesting landscaping, trying to use native plants.

Mr. Tanner concurred with Ms. Opton's comments. He would like to see more details, including actual samples of the building materials. Mr. Schlager said that sample materials would be sent to the Planning Office for review by DRB members.

Mr. Dermody said he would like to see some grasses that are not lawn grass. He was worried how the illumination at night will be. The project will be using dark sky lighting. All the lighting will be digitally controlled, the lighting in the garage will be operated via solar energy, the light will be dim at about 10/15% most of the time, and it will adjust its brightness based on activity levels in the garage.

Mr. Dermody suggested a lighter screening color for the mechanical screening on the roof. He also asked whether the solar array is on the top tray of the parking garage. Mr. Weyant confirmed that is what is proposed is checking the zoning but they propose that it is on the entire footprint of the garage. Mr. Dermody expressed a concerned about glare and how it is framed.

Mr. Chair thought the site works well, but he would like to see more variety in the planting schemes, including the lawn areas. Lawn areas seem to conflict with the sustainability aspect of the project. He was concerned about the 50-foot setback wasn't very street friendly in the zoning at the corner of Gould Street and Highland Avenue and he is pleased it is being developed as something different than just landscape space but an amenity of outdoor seating. The water feature will be appreciated since there was a strong tradition of the koi pond. He stated that the building design is a comfortable mix of materials that are well proportioned and scaled. A few concerns he had are that the parking garage doors are big, flat grey panels that could have some detail. As for the parking garage he is concerned about the screening to be used. He suggested using a second layer and second type of screening, and use the support framing to add some 3-dimensional diversity. Sometimes the spandrel panels can go above the roof a bit. He suggested using more of this along the Gould Street side where it is quite visible.

Mr. Reilly had some concerns regarding the outdoor seating area is a heavily trafficked idling area so having more screening would make it more pleasant area. He wondered if the new intersection across from Wingate is too close to the Highland Avenue intersection and there might be back-up there. Mr. Weyant explained the traffic modeling. The garage that is visible from the highway should be considered how it appears, that this is different than how the neighbors on Gould Street will see it.

Mr. Chair said he looks forward to reviewing the landscaping plan in more detail once they have finalized their plans, as well as the site lighting, and to include more information on the building materials and samples if available. A site plan review will be written and forwarded to the Planning Board.

Minutes:

No review of minutes until the 6/6/22 meeting.

Motion to Adjourn:

Motion to adjourn the Design Review Board meeting by Mr. Tanner.

Motion was seconded by Mr. Reilly.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Name	Aye	Nay
Mark Gluesing	Aye	
Bob Dermody	Aye	
Chad Reilly	Aye	
Susan Opton	Aye	
Steve Tanner	Aye	

Future Meetings:

June 27, 2022	Via Zoom
July 11, 2022	Via Zoom
July 25, 2022	Via Zoom
Aug. 8, 2022	Via Zoom
Aug. 22, 2022	Via Zoom
September 12, 2022	Via Zoom
October 3, 2022	Via Zoom
October 17, 2022	Via Zoom
November 7, 2022	Via Zoom
December 5, 2022	Via Zoom
December 19, 2022	Via Zoom