



## DRB Memorandum - 400 Mass Ave

Project Location: 400 Mass Ave (Across from Roche Bros Plaza), Acton, MA

Architectural Plans: Site Plan dated 11-5-14; Perspective dated 11-5-14; Precedents & Perspectives dated 11-5-14,

Architect: PCA Architects / Eric Brown AIA

Civil Engineering Firm: Bohler Engineering / no one in attendance

Developer: TRB Development Group / Timothy Boisvert President

Property Owner: Vinnie Cuttone

Date of DRB Review: 11-05-2014

The DRB met on the above date for an informal review of progress drawings for 400 Mass Avenue, a very prominent site ready for redevelopment within the Kelley's Corner Study area. The site has one existing business - TD Bank - and a CVS is currently under construction. The proposed plans include retail and parking that wraps around the side and back of the existing buildings. It was reported that Carol Johnson Landscape Architects have been assisting in the design of the site plan.

The DRB greatly appreciates the opportunity to review the project at this early stage in the design process. The high quality of drawings for the development and the 3-D renderings greatly enhanced our understanding of the general feel and scale of the proposed development. The DRB makes the following comments:

### Site Layout:

- In general, the site plan still appears to be more oriented for vehicular circulation and convenience rather than as an approachable/walkable shopping district.
- There are four curb cuts shown along Massachusetts Avenue. Curb cuts have a direct effect on walkability. The DRB strongly suggests an alteration which will eliminate one of these curb cuts.
- The DRB supports the overall layout of the site, but suggest reworking the vehicular circulation so that it all works together rather than having the proposed parking work separately from the CVS parking. Readjusting the circulation of the parking to work as a whole could potentially allow for elimination of one curb cut and the removal of the access drive in front of CVS.
- In the next submittal it would be helpful to show the proposed site in relation to the surrounding neighborhood and existing streets. This will help in evaluating its

impact on the adjacent residential neighborhood and how the new traffic patterns will work (or not work) with the existing traffic.

- In addition, in following drawings, the DRB suggests showing the topography and elevational changes on the site. (i.e. the proponent should provide site cross sections from Mass Avenue to the rear of the site to explain the grade changes).
- The 3' to 4' retaining wall between CVS and TD Bank, and the retaining wall between TD Bank and the proposed parking and building to the rear will help to break up the field of parking and roads. The DRB recommends the walls be built of materials that are attractive.
- The DRB would like to see how the back of the building and access road will be buffered from the adjacent residential neighborhood. No buffer is shown on the submitted drawings.
- The DRB stated concerns of noise pollution to the neighborhood from loading traffic on the access road, but the Developer confirmed that no loading will take place in the back.
- The DRB suggests the emergency access drive to the adjacent neighborhood be paved in a different material (perhaps in a pedestrian paver) so that it is clear that it is not a through road.
- The DRB suggests that the green space towards the rear of the site which currently shows dumpster storage be better utilized as it is prominent visual corner between the two retail blocks. This portion of the site would appear a very strong candidate for an outdoor seating/patio space for patrons of the potential future restaurants or coffee/takeout food shops
- The DRB fully supports the proposed wide sidewalks and areas for outdoor dining. We suggest that the sidewalk at the main entry drive be accented visually along its length, and 'celebrated' where it meets Mass Ave. to clearly identify the pedestrian entry points. The DRB supports the planned use of pedestrian scale lighting along the sidewalks.

#### Building Exteriors:

- The design will have a more historic design and materials palette (rather than a modern motif) which should fit well within the Kelley's Corner District.
- The DRB supports the use of varied materials and building heights to provide individuality to each store.
- The DRB suggests that the back side of both buildings, especially the building that will be seen from all vehicles entering Mass Ave, be designed with detailing so that it doesn't look like the back of the building. This is especially true at the front corner.

The DRB thanks the proponent's team for sharing the project development drawings. We recommend a review after the plans have been developed further that also includes the recommended site drawings to depict topography, planting proposals and site context.

Respectfully Submitted,

## Design Review Board

Members in attendance: David Honn, RA; Holly Ben-Joseph, ASLA; Peter Darlow, AIA; Janet Adachi (Bos Liaison), partial attendance.