

MEMORANDUM

AUGUST 15, 2013

TO: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND
PETER MEADE, DIRECTOR

FROM: HEATHER CAMPISANO, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT
REVIEW
DANA WHITESIDE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR COMMUNITY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
MICHEAL CANNIZZO, SENIOR ARCHITECT
LANCE CAMPBELL, SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER

SUBJECT: WESTMINSTER HOUSE PROJECT, 3012 WASHINGTON STREET,
ROXBURY

SUMMARY: This Memorandum requests that the Boston Redevelopment Authority (“BRA”): (1) issue a Certification of Approval for the Westminster House Project, located at 3012 Washington Street in Roxbury, which includes the construction of a new four-story building containing 27 affordable rental units on the top three floors and 13,000 square feet of public meeting space and classroom, staff offices, conference areas, and a childcare facility on the ground floor with off-street parking for twenty (20) vehicles (the “Proposed Project”), in accordance with Article 80E, Small Project Review of the Boston Zoning Code (the “Code”); and (2) recommend approval to the Zoning Board of Appeal on Petition BZC- 33003 for zoning relief necessary to construct the Proposed Project.

PROJECT SITE

3012 Washington Street is located in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. It is bounded to the west by a City of Boston Municipal parking lot and Washington Street to the east, by Westminster Terrace to the south, by a mix of residential structures and Walnut Park to the west, and to the north by the intersections of Washington Street and Westminster Avenue (“Project Site”).

The Proposed Project site currently houses an abandoned and dilapidated warehouse building with an overgrown and unimproved yard including a steep hill with large mature trees.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The Proposed Project calls for the construction of a new four-story building containing 27 affordable rental units on the top three floors and 13,000 square feet of public meeting space and classrooms, staff offices, conference areas, and a childcare facility on the ground floor. After a three-year search for an appropriate site (large enough to accommodate the structure, zoned appropriately, and located in the same neighborhood) the organization found a one-acre parcel that was large enough, would require minimal zoning variances, and allowed Elizabeth Stone House ("ESH" or the "Developer") to retain its historic ties to the Roxbury and Jamaica Plain neighborhoods.

The residential portion will contain a mix of 1-, 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom apartments, and will include a mix of transitional and permanent units. The residential portion of the building will have its own entrance on Westminster Street, separate from the Washington Street entrance to the community space. The housing will serve families that are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless (the new facility will allow ESH to move its existing 14 units to the new site once constructed and to provide 13 additional apartments).

The ground floor space will house ESH office and program staff, an expanded Parent Child Center and new community spaces.

The Project Site has been designed to include new parking, landscaping and outdoor use areas, including a rooftop children's play area. The parking area with 20 new spaces is designed to serve the program and residential units and new landscaping will screen parking from adjacent properties and enhance the natural green spaces. New street trees are proposed to add relief to the Westminster Avenue edge. The plan also creates a wheelchair accessible path to a patio set back from the street for residents and staff to enjoy. An "urban wild" consisting of a sloping landscaped hill with mature trees will afford the residents a place of calm and beauty in the midst of the city. Careful grading and drainage plans have been designed to work with the certain challenges of the steep contours on the Project Site.

The Developer plans to begin construction of the Proposed Project in March 2015 with an estimated March 2016 completion schedule, with a total development cost of approximately \$14,800,000 million. The Proposed Project will create approximately 50 construction jobs.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The development team consists of Maryann Chaisson, Director of Operations of Elizabeth Stone House, Inc.; Rose White, Managing Director of Real Estate of the Women's Institute as the development consultant ; Kitty Ryan, Principal of The Narrow

Gate Architecture Ltd., as project architect; Maryann Civitello of Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky, and Popeo, P.C. as project attorney (acquisition/ ownership); Kurt James and Louis Miller of Rackemann, Sawyer and Brewster as project attorney (transaction/ zoning); Jennifer Pinck of Pinck and Company as project construction advisor; and Kimberly Vermeer of Urban Habitat Initiatives as project LEED design consultant.

ZONING

The Project Site is located within a Neighborhood Shopping Subdistrict ("NS-1") in the Roxbury Neighborhood District. The Proposed Project will require zoning variances for the following: (1) Uses Business Sub Dist: Office Use, Conditional, First Floor; (2) Uses Business Sub Dist: Accessory Food Bank: Conditional; (3) Floor Area Ratio Excessive; (4) Building Height Excessive; and (5) Off-Street Parking Insufficient. Enforcement is evidenced by a rejection letter issued by ISD attached as Exhibit A.

PUBLIC PROCESS

On July 5, 2013, the Developer filed a Small Project Review application with the BRA for the Proposed Project, pursuant to Article 80E of the Boston Zoning Code (the "Code"). On July 31, 2013, the BRA hosted a community meeting at the Egleston Square YMCA, located at 3134 Washington Street in Roxbury. The meeting was advertised in the Bay State Banner.

RECOMMENDATION

The Proposed Project complies with the requirements set forth in Section 80E of the Code for Small Project Review. Therefore, staff recommends that the Director be authorized to: (1) issue a Certification of Approval for the Proposed Project in accordance with Article 80E, Small Project Review, of the Code; and (2) recommend approval to the Zoning Board of Appeal on Petition BZC-33003 for zoning relief necessary to construct the Proposed Project.

Appropriate votes follow:

VOTED: That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to issue a Certification of Approval for the Westminster House Project, proposed by Elizabeth Stone House, Inc., for the provision of the construction of a new four-story building containing 27 affordable rental units on the top three floors and 13,000 square feet of public meeting space and classrooms, staff offices, conference areas, and a childcare facility on the ground floor with off-street parking for twenty (20) vehicles and related site improvements

(“Proposed Project”), in accordance with Article 80E, Small Project Review of the Boston Zoning Code (the “Code”); and

FURTHER

VOTED: In reference to Petition BZC-33003, the Westminster House Project, Roxbury to erect a new, four (4) story, approximately 48,598 square foot, building and site improvements as per plans, for zoning relief necessary in a NS-1 subdistrict, the BRA recommends **APPROVAL WITH PROVISO:** that plans be submitted to the Authority for design review approval.