



Planning Department

CITY of BOSTON

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sherry Dong
Chairwoman, City of Boston Board of Appeal

FROM: Joanne Marques
Planning Department

DATE: August 13, 2026

RE: Planning Department Recommendations

Please find attached, for your information, Planning Department recommendations for the August 20, 2026 Board of Appeals Hearing.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.



Case	BOA1822390
ZBA Submitted Date	2026-02-19
ZBA Hearing Date	2026-08-20
Address	276 to 278 Washington ST Boston 02109
Parcel ID	0303903000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	Sky-Low-DT (Formerly Midtown Cultural District)
Zoning Article	Article 38
Project Description	Change of use from a retail chocolate store to a cafe and coffee shop with takeout.
Relief Type	Conditional Use
Violations	Use: Conditional

Planning Context:

The proposed project at 276-278 Washington Street sits in what was formerly the Midtown Cultural district, now SKY-LOW-DT, and was regulated by Article 38 of the Boston Zoning Code. Skyline districts are those that the city has identified as being high-activity areas, with potential to support a vibrant mix of uses. The proponent, Blank Street Coffee, is a popular retail cafe chain with ten existing locations across Boston, Cambridge, and Wellesley. Located within the landmark Winthrop-Carter building, the proposed project sits at the heart of Downtown Boston. The surrounding areas feature ground-floor restaurants and cafes with mid-rise office and residential spaces above. The proposed use sits directly on Washington Street, a highly trafficked pedestrian corridor in Downtown Crossing. Additionally, the site is well-connected to transit, located just a few hundred feet from the MBTA Orange and Blue line entrances and 0.15 miles from the Red and Green line stations.

Zoning Analysis:

The refusal letter for the proposed project was issued on August 20, 2025, and cited the need for a Conditional Use permit for fast food/take out use under Article 38, Section 18. Updated zoning for the Downtown areas was codified on October 22, 2025, which made the take out use Allowed as of right for all Skyline districts (now Article 31). This change was made to reform outdated rules that limited establishments like cafes, bakeries, and restaurants in areas that support lively pedestrian corridors. These changes make it easier for retail businesses to open quickly without going through the lengthy and expensive variance process.



Zoning relief is appropriate and is aligned with the updated zoning code and use changes that went into effect as a part of PLAN:Downtown.

Plans were produced by Colliers Engineering & Design and are dated 03/28/25.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1822390, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1839200
ZBA Submitted Date	2026-04-14
ZBA Hearing Date	2026-08-20
Address	587 to 587A E Broadway South Boston 02127
Parcel ID	0602104000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	South Boston Neighborhood MFR/LS
Zoning Article	68
Project Description	Remodel a basement egress.
Relief Type	Variance
Violations	Side Yard Insufficient

Planning Context:

587-587A E Broadway is a three-story rowhouse with a party wall condition on either side. The proposed project seeks to remodel the interior portion of a basement entrance by adding insulation, a new wall where the bulkhead will be placed, and demolishing an existing window and wall. The project is minimally invasive for an existing basement unit.

Zoning Analysis:

According to Article 68, side yards needs a minimum of 3 feet in MFR subdistricts in South Boston, yet, the majority of the established and existing sites along E Broadway, H Street, E 3rd Street, 1 Street, and Emerson Street are all noncompliant and described as “existing two hour party wall[s]”, suggesting a code that is overdue for reform. According to the refusal letter, this is the only violation the changes proposed in this project are aligned with the overall character of the street, and will be contextual in design.

The plans reviewed are titled, " New Basement Bulkhead Egress 587 E Broadway Boston, MA 02127" and were prepared by Mark Schryver and dated 11/17/2025.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1839200, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.



Planning Department

CITY of BOSTON

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1807140
ZBA Submitted Date	2025-12-18
ZBA Hearing Date	2026-08-20
Address	269 Silver ST South Boston 02127
Parcel ID	0601118000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	South Boston Neighborhood MFR
Zoning Article	68
Project Description	The project intends to add a curb cut and grading to create a driveway for the lot. The owners reside in an abutting lot and want to use the project parcel as ancillary parking.
Relief Type	Variance, Conditional Use
Violations	Parking or Loading Insufficient Conditional use permit required

Planning Context:

269 Silver Street sits in a dense mixed use part of the South Boston neighborhood, one block off Broadway, the main commercial and transit corridor in South Boston. The project abuts the rear of 122 F Street, where the owner of both lots lives. The owner intends to use the project site as ancillary parking for their residence. The project intends to add a 10 foot curb cut to the sidewalk fronting Silver Street and add a grade to create a driveway entrance. This curb cut will not affect the existing conditions of the sidewalk, including street trees and utility poles. While there are few driveways in this area, there are many similar curb cuts along this street alone to provide vehicle access to other parking lots and side streets. Additionally, the size of the curb cut is equivalent to just one on-street parking spot and the building is located in a transit-rich area within walking distance two MBTA Red Line stations and the MBTA #9 and #11 buses.

Zoning Analysis:

This project has two violations and requires both a variance and a conditional use permit.

It is in violation of Article 68, Section 33, which states that two parking spots are required for the dwelling this project is ancillary to. Given that this project is located in a transit rich area, one parking spot is sufficient for the main dwelling unit.



The project also requires a conditional use permit as an ancillary use is not an allowed use. The current lot is empty, so the proposed project will not change or detract from the current character or services of the neighborhood. There is also minimal construction required to add the proposed curb cut and driveway.

Plans reviewed are titled "269 Silver Street Boston, MA" and were reviewed 10/09/25.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1807140, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1829000
ZBA Submitted Date	2026-03-18
ZBA Hearing Date	2026-08-20
Address	1411 to 1413 Dorchester AV Dorchester 02122
Parcel ID	1500532000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	Dorchester Neighborhood MFR/LS
Zoning Article	65
Project Description	Renovate an existing furniture store to a coffee shop which will include takeout service.
Relief Type	Conditional Use
Violations	Conditional Use

Planning Context:

The proposed project site is located in Fields Corner about a six-minute walk from Fields Corner MBTA Station and Ronan Park. Dorchester Avenue serves as a neighborhood resource corridor with retail and services available to nearby residents as well as the broader neighborhood. This area of Dorchester Avenue has mostly ground floor retail, often with two- to three- stories of residential uses above.

Zoning Analysis:

The proposed project is a renovation of an existing commercial space to a coffee shop which would offer takeout service. According to Article 65-8, takeout is a conditional use.

According to Article 6-3, the standards for recommending approval of a conditional use are broadly that the proposed use at the proposed location will not adversely affect the neighborhood, create any hazards, or fail to comply with the provisions of applicable zoning overlays. The project location is appropriate for the proposed use as takeout is already prevalent in this area. This is a completely internal renovation which will have no effect on the physical urban landscape and will serve to activate an existing retail corridor. Therefore, the conditional use citation is recommended for approval.

Plans reviewed are titled "Vietnamese Coffee" by JHK Design, and dated 11/24/25.

Recommendation:



In reference to BOA1829000, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1833903
ZBA Submitted Date	2026-03-27
ZBA Hearing Date	2026-08-20
Address	107 Russett RD West Roxbury 02132
Parcel ID	2006185000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	West Roxbury Neighborhood 1F-6000
Zoning Article	56
Project Description	Proposal asks to add a dormer on each side of the roof to create a habitable space in the attic.
Relief Type	Variance
Violations	Height Excessive (stories) Side Yard Insufficient FAR Excessive

Planning Context:

107 Russett Rd is located in a medium-density residential area of West Roxbury, with nearly all homes being 2.5 to 3 stories. The existing structure is a two-unit, 2.5-story building that is proposing adding two dormers to the east and west of the roof. The renovated house will remain two-unit, while adding two bedrooms, a family room, and a bathroom which would make the structure go up to 3 stories. The proposed dormers span almost the entire east and west sides of the roof, and are significantly larger than the established pattern of dormers in the neighborhood. Furthermore, the west side dormer faces Schirmer Rd, meaning the dormer will also be highly visible on a public way. Dormers are common on this street, however, the size of the dormers on the proposed project does not match the surrounding dormers.

The Zoning Reform team just released new draft residential zoning for West Roxbury, Roslindale, and Hyde Park as part of the Neighborhood Housing Initiative. The parcel will eventually sit in a Dormer-3 district and based on the dimensions given from the plan seems to align with the new Neighborhood Housing Regulations.

Zoning Analysis:

The refusal letter states three (3) violations of the Zoning Code: Side Yard Insufficient (Article 56 Section 8), Floor Area Insufficient (Article 56 Section 8), and Building Height Excessive - Stories (Article 56, Section 8).



The violation of Side Yard Insufficient is an existing nonconformity and the proposed project is not worsening the nonconformity of the side yards.

The maximum FAR for this lot 0.4, the existing structure is already over the maximum FAR as it sits at 0.44. The addition of the two dormers would increase the FAR to 0.53. However, this addition does not increase the lot coverage and instead increases, and enhances, the livable space. The improvements to the living space are not disruptive to the neighborhood context or compromise the minimum open space.

The maximum height (stories) allowed in this subdistrict is 2.5 stories, but the proposed plans show that the new height will be 3 stories. Furthermore, the size of the dormers can be redesigned to match the context of the surrounding neighborhood. Design review focusing on the height and size of the dormers is recommended.

The plans reviewed are titled Plans for "ZBA REFUSED EPLANS_107 RUSSETT RD_ALT1772395" and were reviewed on 3/16/26. The plans were prepared by Lux Design Group.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1833903, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL WITH PROVISIO/S: that plans be submitted to the Planning Department for design review to focus on the redesign of the height and size of the dormers.

Reviewed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katherine Onuf".

Deputy Director of Zoning