

To: John Gunn, Chair, and the City of Beacon Planning Board
Date: December 6, 2019
Re: **2 Cross Street, Special Permit and Site Plan**

I have reviewed a November 14, 2019 response letter from Hudson Todd LLC and revised Full EAF Part 1, dated October 29, 2019. No new plans have been submitted, so I will repeat the comments made in my November 8, 2019 memo to the Planning Board. The most appropriate approach to the project may be more evident after the applicant's requested presentation to the City Council.

Proposal

The applicant is proposing to construct a 3- to 4-story mixed-use building, incorporating an undeveloped lot and two existing buildings into the design. The 4 Cross Street portion is in the PB district and the Main Street frontage in the Central Main Street (CMS) district and in the Historic District and Landmark Overlay (HDLO) zone. A six-month moratorium was recently adopted by the City Council, so no approvals can be granted for this proposal until the moratorium is lifted.

Comments and Recommendations

1. The applicant has made a persuasive argument that the proposal is compatible in many ways with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, but it is inconsistent with several key zoning requirements. Office and multifamily are not currently permitted in the PB district and the PB building height is limited to 2½ stories. The applicant could request that the City Council rezone the northern PB portion of the site into the CMS district, now that the three parcels have been combined into one property with a frontage on Main Street. This would eliminate these zoning conflicts.
2. Under existing zoning, the approval process for the proposal involves multiple actions, including:
 - Designation by the City Council of the 4 Cross Street into the HDLO;
 - Special permit from the City Council to allow office and multifamily uses on the PB/HDLO site;
 - ZBA area variance for 3 stories in the PB district, where 2½ stories are permitted;
 - ZBA area variance to avoid 15-foot setbacks for the 4th story in the CMS district;
 - Special permit from the City Council for the proposed 4th floor; and
 - Site plan and certificate of appropriateness approval from the Planning Board.Given these options, the applicant might consider another presentation at a City Council workshop to see if a rezoning or special permit approach is likely to be supported. The addition of affordable housing and a public plaza space are cited in Section 223-41.18 E(7) as positive factors for consideration during the special permit review process.
3. If the 4 Cross Street building was included in the HDLO district, I could not likely recommend changing the 2-story structure with a gable roof into a 3-story attached building with a flat roof. Similarly, adding two floors to the historically significant 172 Main Street, without at least a setback, would be difficult to justify. The applicant should consider architectural modifications consistent with the design criteria in the Historic Preservation chapter, most specifically in Section 134-7 B(2).

4. The applicant should be prepared to explain how the existing floor heights in 172 Main Street can be reconciled with the 4-story proposal.
5. If the 4th floor includes the 15-foot stepback from Main and Cross streets, around 2,000 square feet of top-floor office space would be eliminated from the proposal. The first floor of 4 Cross Street could be used for replacement office space. The new building could also be extended toward the rear parking spaces behind 4 Cross Street, reclaiming most or all of the office space lost to the stepback. The stepback area would offer attractive green terraces overlooking Main Street for the residents and employees.
6. Based on the senior units and square footage, with deductions for utility and circulation space, the applicant has calculated the required parking at 36 total spaces. This based on the CMS district standards, but will need to factor in the different PB parking standards in 223-26 F. The applicant has requested a lower parking count under the provisions in 223-41.18 G(3).
7. The Off-Site parking Plan on Sheet GU-1 should show the proposed parking spaces behind 174 Main Street and all the spaces at the 152 Main Street parcel to see how the spaces will be integrated into the existing site. Also, under Section 223-41.18 G(3)(b), the contractually obligated off-site parking must be within the CMS or PB districts, not the R1-5 district.
8. Future submittals will need a full landscaping plan, lighting plan with fixture specifications, trash disposal methods, and elevations with materials and colors noted.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me.

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