



ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

TOWN HALL • 525 WASHINGTON STREET • WELLESLEY, MA 02482-5992

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ZBA 2018-48

Petition of Hi Neighbor LLC

576-590 Washington Street & 39-43 Grove Street

Pursuant to due notice, the Special Permit Granting Authority held a Public Hearing on Thursday, July 12, 2018, at 7:30 p.m. in the Juliani Meeting Room, 525 Washington Street, Wellesley, on the petition of Hi Neighbor LLC requesting a Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section XXIIA and Section XXV of the Zoning Bylaw for installation of a standing sign with less than required setbacks and a maximum height that will exceed what is allowed by right, nine (9) awning signs with area that exceeds the maximum area allowed by right, and window signs for each of the ten commercial tenants, at 576 -590 Washington Street and 39-43 Grove Street, in the Wellesley Square Commercial District.

On June 7, 2018, the Petitioner filed a request for a hearing before this Authority, and thereafter, due notice of the hearing was given by mailing and publication.

Presenting the case at the hearing were Bart Steele, ViewPoint Sign and Awning, and Bernard Pucker, representing Hi Neighbor LLC, the Petitioner, and Retail at Belclare.

Mr. Steele said that the request is for relief for a 25 square foot, non-illuminated free standing sign that will be mounted behind the wall. He said that the location was suggested by the Design Review Board (DRB). He said that the sign will exceed the maximum height allowed by eight inches and will not meet the setback requirements. He said that the sign will be set back approximately three feet from the wall.

Mr. Pucker said that there are eight retail locations on the front side of the building on Washington Street. He said that the standing sign is proposed to be the main signage for 576 Washington Street a, b and c. He said that they are all set way back off of the street and it is very difficult to see them. He said that rather than asking to put a sign up on the building itself, the request to do something similar to what was done at Linden Square with a sign that shows what retailers exist on the premises. He said that where the condominiums and the porches come out above, there is an outdoor seating area with a brick patio. He said that on that side are five retail units, 582, 584, 586, 588 and 590 Washington Street. He said that on the back of the building are 39 and 41 Grove Street. He said that the request is to increase the size of the awning lettering in addition to window signage.

The Chairman said that the standing sign is intended to identify three commercial users. He said that the businesses will get an awning sign, a window sign and a standing sign in front of the building. He said that the window signs will not be visible. Mr. Pucker said that those businesses are located far back from the street, whereas all of the other retailers are directly on the street. He said that they were trying to standardize the window and awnings for all locations. He said that the free standing sign was a separate request to try to help the retailers that are set so far back.

Mr. Steele said that this application involves three separate elements, the standing sign to provide visibility for the three tenants around the side, and the awnings to provide a consistent sign presence and eliminate hodge podge by-right signage. He said that Design Review Board (DRB) wanted to eliminate signs on the building and have all of the copy on the valence of the awnings. He said that the window signs will be by-right signs. The Chairman said that they are part of the overall sign package.

Mr. Steele said that the request is for a 25 square foot non-illuminated standing sign that will be set back behind the wall. He said that, in lieu of putting signage on the building and to create a cohesive look along the building, they would like to put white lettering on the valences that is consistent for the whole building. He said that the valences will be eight inches high with proposed letter heights of 6.5 inches, as approved by DRB. He said that the widths will vary with the tenant names. He said that the signage might exceed 25 percent of the valence. He said that the valence signs are in lieu of a second by-right blade sign. He said that if they put signs up on the building, they will be in different spots. He said that the proposed signage will be consistent.

The Chairman questioned the need for an awning sign and a window sign. Mr. Steele said that window signs are usually for pedestrian traffic. He said that the tenant name will be on the awning. He said that the amount of proposed window signage will be far less than what would be allowed by right.

Mr. Pucker said that while the landlord wants to provide continuity in terms of the awnings, the retailer loses some identity by that process. He said that with window signs, the retailers can differentiate themselves with their own colors, hours of operation, and dot com or Instagram information. He said that as a landlord he has to balance the needs of the retail tenants with being a good neighbor to the residential tenants and the general community. A Board member said that there has been concern about the number of vacancies in downtown Wellesley. He said that the property owners think that signage is an important way to attract customers. He said that the Board has to balance that against a profusion of signage on Washington and Grove Streets. He said that these are narrow storefronts, so it seems like there are a lot more signs there.

The Chairman said that he is sympathetic to the argument for both an awning and a window sign but there is not much in the submittal package about the window signs. Mr. Steele said that information that was submitted indicated that the window signage will be to code and by-right. The Chairman said that does not get at what the window signage will look like. He said that the property is located in the center of town and the Board wants to make sure that this does not end up looking like 457 Washington Street with dozens of signs in the windows. Mr. Steele said that the proposed sign package is less offensive than the postage stamp and blade signs that would be allowed by right. He said that the proposal is for a consistent band. He said that it is very unusual to have ten different designs for window signs in this type of a setup.

The Chairman asked about the size of the windows. Mr. Pucker said that they are approximately 4 feet by 6 feet. The Chairman said that the bylaw talks about 10 square feet or 10 percent of the area of all exterior windows of the business establishment, whichever is less. He said that 10 percent of 24 square feet would be approximately 2.5 square feet. A Board member said that the window signs allow the retailers to individualize and are no worse than retailers putting merchandise on a shelf in the window.

The Chairman asked why the size of 6 feet 8 inches was chosen for the standing sign. Mr. Steele said that it will be similar to the signs that the Board approved at Church Square and Linden Square.

Ellen Staelin, 65 Grove Street, said that a 5 foot by 5 foot sign behind the fence was talked about. She asked what size the bylaw suggests that it could be. A Board member said that 25 square feet is allowed. He said that Zoning relief is being sought for the setback. He said that clearly a 15 foot setback would not work at this property.

Ms. Staelin asked about the decals that were talked about. A Board member said that those are window signs. He said that the bylaw has provisions that limit the size of them but allows up to 10 square feet or 10 percent of the window area, whichever is less. He said that a window could, but does not have to be, a decal. He said that the size is not limited if it is moved away from the window.

Ms. Staelin asked if there will be a separate discussion for Grove Street. The Chairman said that the signs on Grove Street are included in the sign package and are the same awnings and window signs that were discussed. Ms. Staelin confirmed that the awnings will project over the sidewalk. The Chairman said that there are restrictions on the height and how far the awnings can project over the public way.

Statement of Facts

The Petitioner is requesting a Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section XXIIA and Section XXV of the Zoning Bylaw for installation of a standing sign with less than required setbacks and a maximum height that will exceed what is allowed by right, nine (9) awning signs with area that exceeds the maximum area allowed by right, and window signs for each of the ten commercial tenants, at 576 -590 Washington Street and 39-43 Grove Street, in the Wellesley Square Commercial District.

Letter to Zoning Board of Appeals, dated 5/31/18, signed by Lauren Cronin, Permit Manager, Viewpoint Sign and Awning, Sign Information, Awning Concept – Washington Street, dated 3/29/18, revised 3/30/18, 4/19/18 and 5/1/18, Awnings Concept – Grove Street, dated 5/1/18, Site Map, dated 5/1/18, revised 5/31/18, and Building Directory (single-sided/non-lit), dated 3/5/18, revised 3/29/18, 4/20/18 and 5/1/18, prepared by ViewPoint Sign and Awning were submitted.

On May 23, 2018, the Design Review Board reviewed the application and voted unanimously to recommend approval of the proposed signage, subject to a condition.

On June 27, 2018, the Planning Board reviewed the petition and recommended that the Special Permit be granted, subject to conditions.

Decision

This Authority has made a careful study of the materials submitted and the information presented at the hearing. The subject signage is a standing sign with less than required setbacks and a maximum height that will exceed what is allowed by right, nine (9) awning signs with area that exceeds the maximum area allowed by right, and window signs for each of the ten commercial tenants, at 576 -590 Washington Street and 39-43 Grove Street, in the Wellesley Square Commercial District.

It is the opinion of this Authority that installation of a standing sign with less than required setbacks and a maximum height that will exceed what is allowed by right, nine (9) awning signs with area that exceeds the maximum area allowed by right, and window signs for each of the ten commercial tenants will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of Section XXIIA of the Zoning Bylaw, as the sign scale will be in reasonable relation to development scale, viewer distance and travel speed, and sign sizes on nearby structures; sign size, shape, and placement will serve to define or enhance architectural elements of the building and will not unreasonably interrupt, obscure or hide them; sign design will be in reasonable continuity with the mounting location, height, proportions and materials of other signage on the same or adjacent structures; sign materials, colors, lettering style, illumination and form are reasonably compatible with building design, neighborhood context and use; and sign size, location design and illumination are not judged to present a safety hazard to vehicular or pedestrian traffic.

Therefore, a Special Permit is granted for installation of a standing sign with less than required setbacks and a maximum height that will exceed what is allowed by right, nine (9) awning signs with area that exceeds the maximum area allowed by right, and window signs for each of the ten commercial tenants, subject to the following condition:

- The awning signs shall not exceed 6.5 inches in height and shall not exceed 7 feet in length.

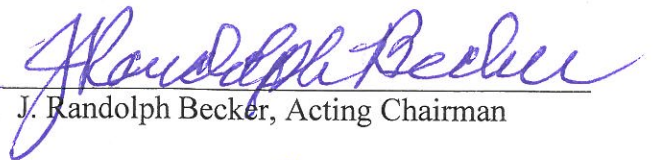
The Inspector of Buildings is hereby authorized to issue a permit for the sign upon receipt and approval of a sign application and any other materials he may require. No sign shall be installed until said permit has been issued.

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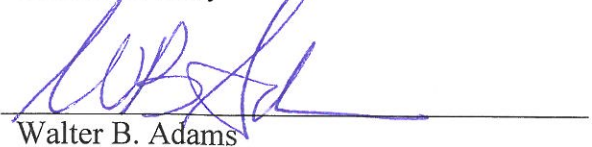
APPEALS FROM THIS DECISION,
IF ANY, SHALL BE MADE PURSUANT
TO GENERAL LAWS, CHAPTER 40A,
SECTION 17, AND SHALL BE FILED
WITHIN 20 DAYS AFTER THE DATE
OF FILING OF THIS DECISION IN THE
OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK.



J. Randolph Becker, Acting Chairman



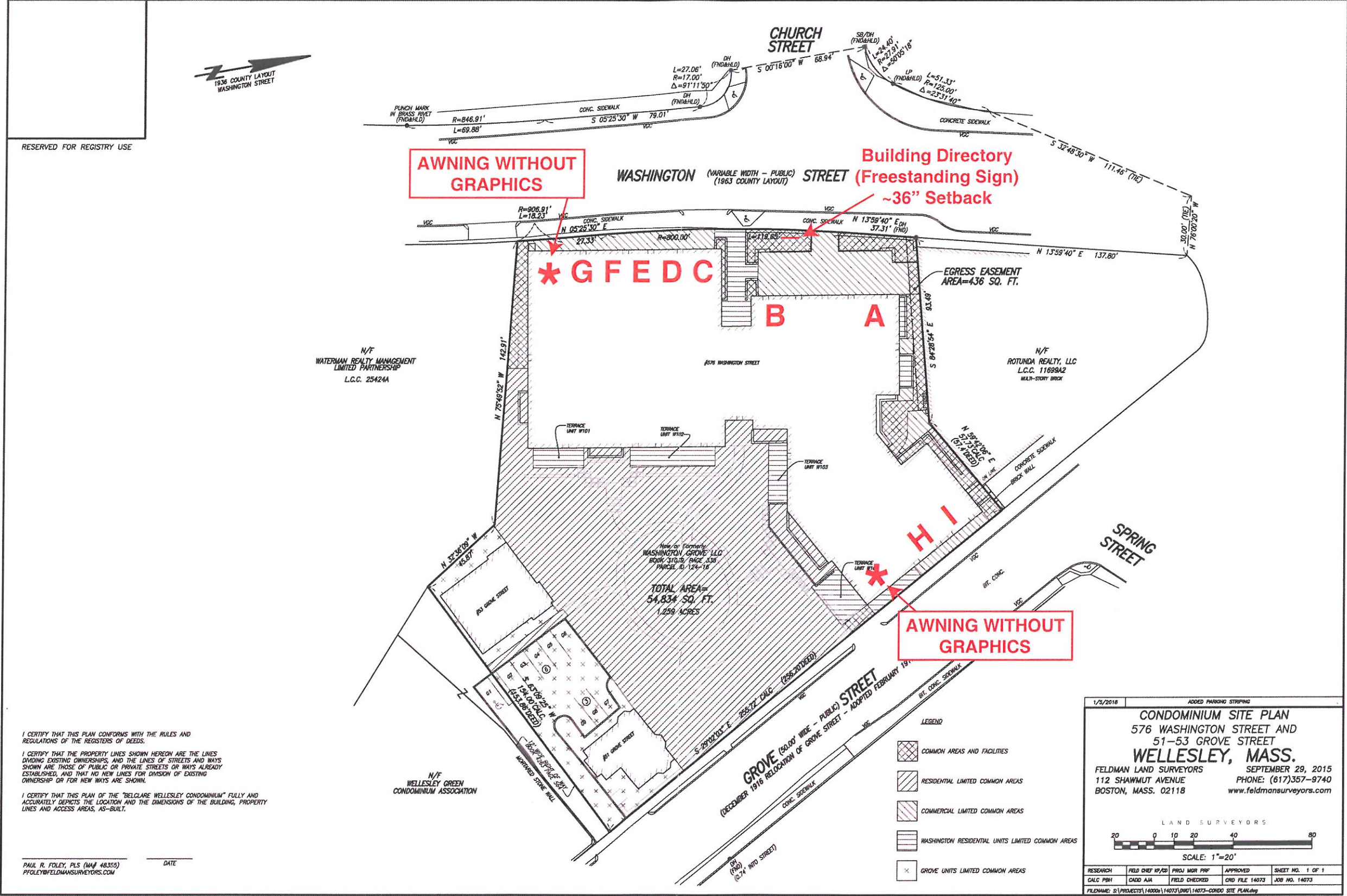
Robert W. Levy



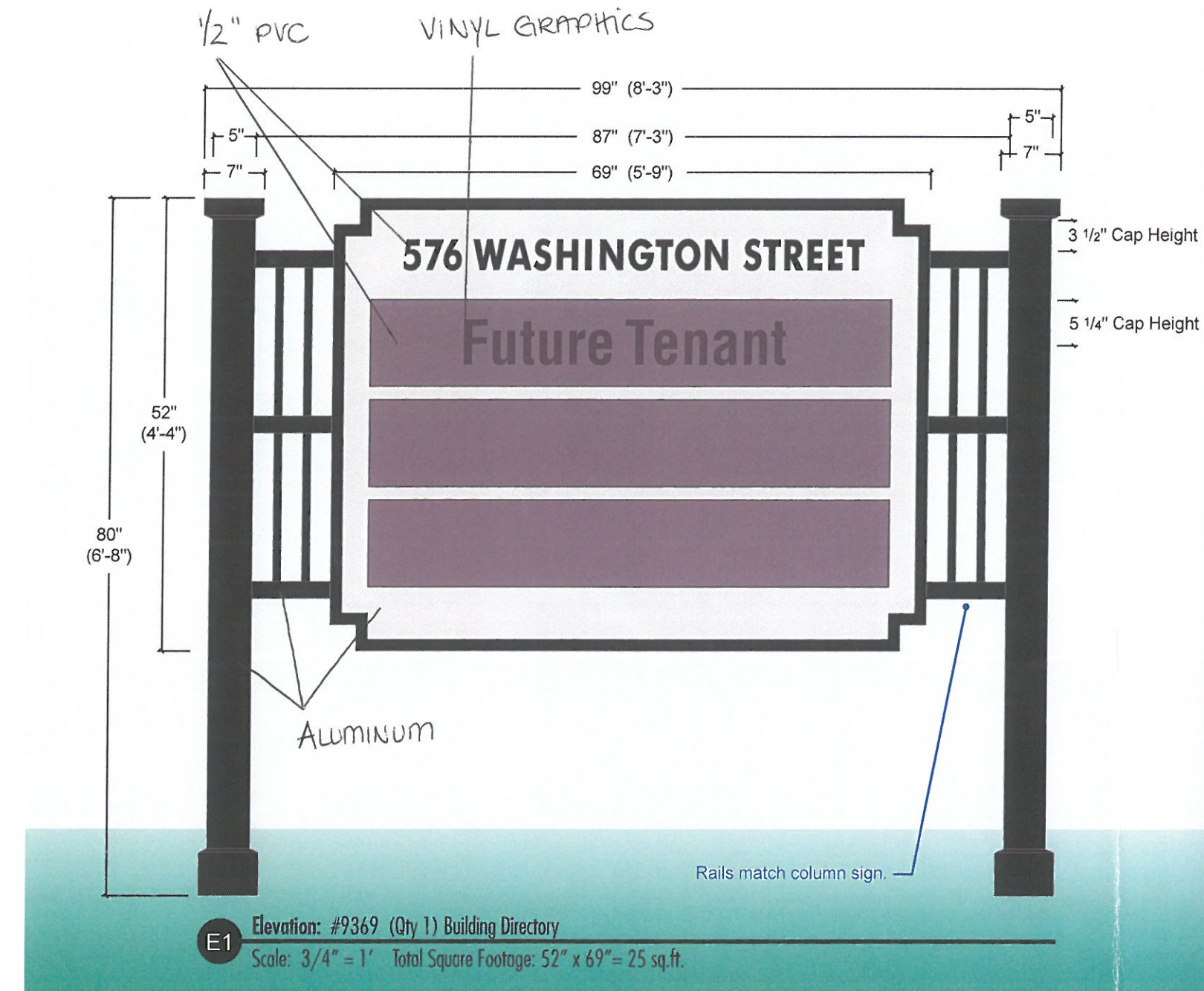
Walter B. Adams

cc: Planning Board
Inspector of Buildings
lrm

Site Map

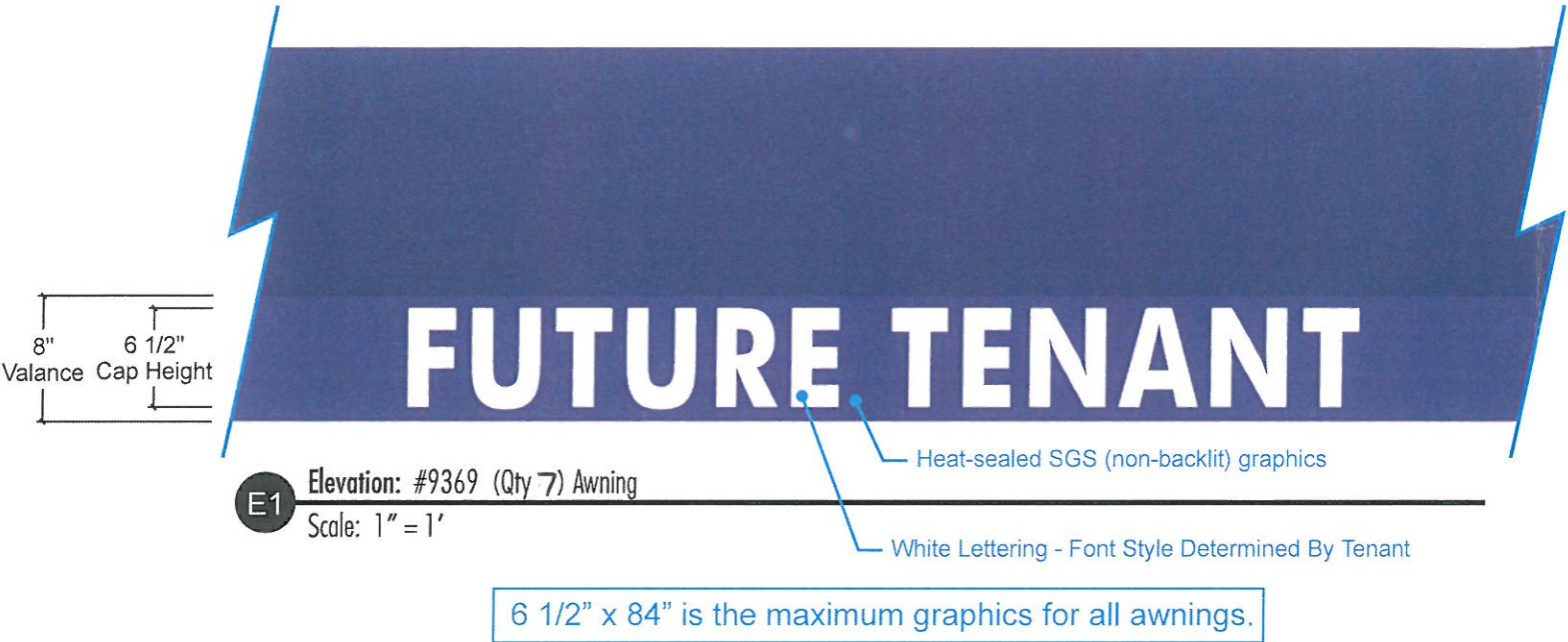


Building Directory (single-sided/non-lit)



~36" Setback (See Site Map Drawing)

Awnings Concept - Washington Street



AWNING WITHOUT GRAPHICS

Window Graphics:
10 sq.ft. or 10% of all exterior windows, excluding doors, 8" max letter height, whichever is less.

Door Hours: 1 sq.ft. Allowed

Courtyard Side



A

Courtyard Side



B

Street Side



C

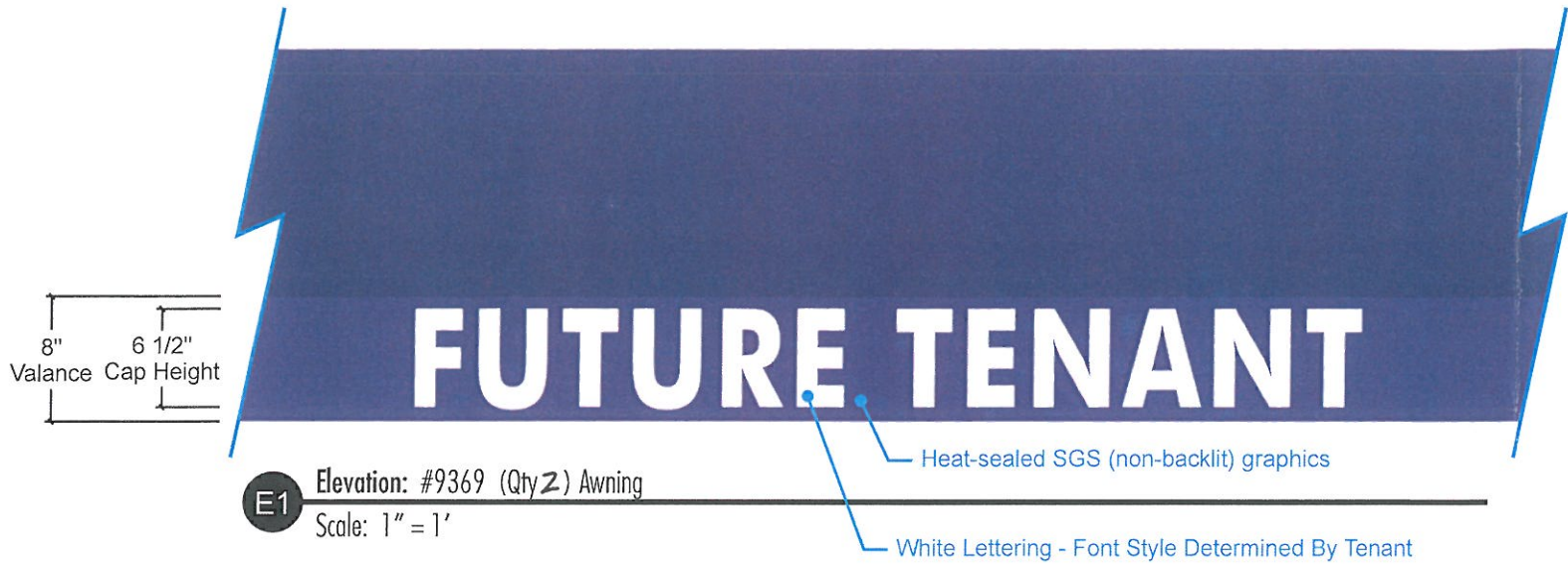
D

E

F

G

*



6 1/2" x 84" is the maximum graphics for all awnings.

AWNING WITHOUT GRAPHICS

