

To: MVC Commissioners

From: Mark London

Re: **DRI 612: Bradley Square
Preliminary Design Analysis in Relation to Area**

Date: May 28, 2008

In order to analyze whether or not the Bradley Square project fits into the neighborhood, in terms of scale and design, it would be useful to carry out a detailed study to identify the defining characteristics of the area. Ideally, sometime in the future, Island towns would carry out this kind of analysis, at least for the more critical areas such as historic areas, possibly with the help of the Martha's Vineyard Commission.

Though MVC does not currently have time to carry out a full-fledged analysis of this area, MVC staff has prepared a summary analysis which could prove useful for evaluating the Bradley Square project, as well as for evaluating another proposal farther down the street that will be reviewed by the Commission. This analysis looks at an area that appears to possess a distinct character, namely Dukes County Avenue and the cross streets between Oakland and Vineyard Avenues.

The Island Plan Built Environment Work Group is identifying historic areas on the Island, those with a high concentration of 100 year-old, or at least pre-World-War-II, buildings. There, it is suggested that that new buildings should fit into the historic character set by the older buildings, while allowing for some harmonious variation. A preliminary mapping of the Island suggests that this part of Dukes County Avenue be considered an historic area. Since both the business and residential zoning in this area would allow much larger buildings than those that exist, attempting to make new buildings fit into the existing pattern would end up being more restrictive than the zoning.

The following is a preliminary list of observations, comparing Bradley Square to the defining characteristics of the pre-World-War-II buildings in this area. The proposed new Bradley Square buildings clearly have considerably more floor space than typical older buildings in this area; however, the following analysis concentrates on dimensions and other external physical features, which is what is generally perceived most directly.

Each of the two new Bradley Square buildings is architecturally expressed, to a great extent, as twin volumes, each of which has defining characteristics similar to other buildings in the area, even though together, they have more than twice the floor space and have wider overall facades than typical buildings.

- Almost all buildings are gable-roofed, with the gable ends facing the road; there are a few smaller buildings with hip roofs. Each new Bradley Square building is made up of a main gable volume in one direction, each of which has two smaller, perpendicular gables. (The clarity of this traditional shape is masked somewhat by the presence of two-story projections on the building corners.)
- The heights of the buildings in the area are mostly 1½ to 2½ stories high (the ½ floor represents occupied floor space within the volume of the sloping roofs, with

windows in the gable ends and/or in dormers); a few buildings are 1 story high. Bradley Square is 2½ stories high.

- The proportions of the gabled ends of the new Bradley buildings are similar to other traditional buildings in the neighborhood and the height is at the upper end of the range of other buildings. The length of the side façade falls within the range of façade lengths of main building volumes of the traditional buildings in the area, whereas the overall width of the main facades (including both sides of the “twin” volumes and the central stairs) are somewhat greater. The combination of the above-average height and width will make the buildings, individually and especially together, appear somewhat larger than the existing average in the neighborhood.
- Virtually all traditional buildings more than one story high have a one-story projection at the front, usually either an open porch or an enclosed sunroom. The new Bradley Square buildings have similar one-story enclosed projections.
- Virtually all windows are double-hung (typically 2 panes over 2 panes) with a height about double the width. Bradley Square has a similar proportion and type of windows as well as square and horizontal window openings that are (or could be with minimal changes to the detailing) expressed as groupings of two or four double-hung windows in a row.
- Buildings are clad primarily in cedar shingles, mostly natural and some of them painted. Many buildings incorporate limited areas of horizontal siding (painted or natural wood) or wood paneling, such as projections or the street façades of some buildings. Bradley Square is made up of primarily natural cedar shingles, with limited areas of wood paneling. The projecting corners referred to above have vertical siding, not found on traditional buildings.

In summary, the new Bradley buildings generally conform to the architectural characteristics of traditional buildings of the area with the following main exceptions.

- The overall width of the main facades is greater, though to a certain extent, this will be perceived as two narrower volumes whose width is at the low end of typical façade widths in the area.
- The partially enclosed exit stairs at the rear are a feature not seen elsewhere in the neighborhood. They add to the bulkiness of the buildings (and the cost). It would be desirable to eliminate or minimize these enclosures if the building code permits this.
- The two-story corner projections with vertical siding adds to the visual bulkiness and increase the distinction between the project and the rest of the neighborhood.

Though individually the Bradley Square buildings are not very different in design harmony with the largest traditional buildings in the neighborhood, the side-by-side presence of the two new buildings along with the existing Denniston Building will certainly make the project’s presence felt. The Commission will have to balance this impact with the other benefits and detriments of the project.

Defining Characteristics of Dukes County Avenue Area

(based on pre-World-War-II Buildings between Oakland and Vineyard Avenues on Dukes County Avenue and side streets)

Feature	Dukes County Avenue Area	Bradley Square (new buildings)
<i>Setback of main façade from east side of Dukes County Avenue</i>	20-25'	25'
<i>Height of gable end (feet)</i>	18-38'	32'
<i>Height – as seen from street – stories</i>	1 to 2½ stories*	2½ stories
<i>Height – side walls (from eaves to ground)</i>	1 to 2 stories	2 stories
<i>Width of gable (street) end</i>	15'-31'	two 15' volumes; 50' overall
<i>Length of side wall of main building (excluding projections)</i>	18- 42'	31'
<i>Shape of main façade – ratio of height to width other than one-story</i>	1.0-2.0	1.0
<i>Roof shape</i>	Mostly Gable. A few Hip.	Gable with Cross Gables
<i>Window types</i>	Double-hung (mostly 2 over 2)	Double-hung, square (paired double-hung), and horizontal (4 double-hung)
<i>Exterior wall materials</i>	Naturally weathered cedar shingles (a few buildings have painted shingles or limited areas of natural wood siding)	Naturally weathered cedar shingles.
<i>Projections</i>	Virtually all buildings more than one story high have a one-story projection at the front, usually either an open porch or an enclosed sunroom	One-story front projections
* i.e. they have second floors with floor space within sloping roofs using windows in gable end or in dormers		
Note: all dimensions are scaled from aerial photos and are considered accurate ±3 feet.		