

WASHINGTON WESTMINSTER HOUSE

3012 WASHINGTON STREET, ROXBURY MA



Washington Street Elevation



Westminster Street Elevation

Application for Article 80 Small Project Review
Boston Redevelopment Authority
July 5, 2013

Owner: Elizabeth Stone House, Inc.
Architect: The Narrow Gate Architecture Ltd.
Development Consultant: Women's Institute
Legal Counsel: Rackemann Sawyer and Brewster

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Development Team

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Organizational Mission and History

The mission of the Elizabeth Stone House is to serve homeless families and individuals in a goal-oriented, outcome-driven service environment by resolving the issues that made them homeless—domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental illness—so that they can attain and maintain permanent housing, personal safety, and economic stability.

The Elizabeth Stone House (ESH) opened 39 years ago as an alternative to institutionalization for women with mental illness. ESH believed there was a better way to aid these women, far from the subpar “help” they received previously. From this singular purpose, a robust center for recovery and safe harbor took hold.

In the ensuing decades, ESH’s footprint extended to a domestic violence shelter, and then, a transitional housing facility. The latter bears the distinction of being the first transitional housing center in the U.S. for women concurrently affected by domestic violence, mental illness, and substance abuse, and netted ESH the United Nations Award for Excellence as a result. Its shelter was among the first in the nation to encourage survivors of domestic violence to bring their children into shelter with them, and another trail was blazed when ESH began accepting teenage boys when few other shelters would.

Over the years, ESH has expanded and strengthened its services. Wrap-around services, previously given only to ESH residents, were extended to neighborhood residents in 1995. Two years later, ESH opened a Parent-Child Center and the children of adult clients began receiving improved care to handle their trauma. Financial literacy classes became a part of ESH’s programming in 1998. Parenting classes were extended to men in 2007. The shelter bucked convention in 2009 by welcoming its first transgender resident. And in 2011, the residential programming went co-ed as ESH welcomed the first male resident into the transitional housing center.

ESH incorporates its decades of residential and transitional support services into a compelling purpose: to help clients find the confidence, learn the skills, and gain access to the resources needed to live competently, independently, and safely with their children.

The Elizabeth Stone House helps homeless and at-risk individuals and families heal from trauma, remain clean and sober, address their mental illness, and increase self-

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sufficiency so that they will be able to find safe, stable housing and keep it. To that end, we provide an emergency shelter for survivors of domestic violence and their

children; a transitional housing program for individuals and families; support groups and classes; financial assistance; services for the children of our adult clients; and intensive case management directed toward helping clients find, enroll in and complete GED, adult education, and job training programs. Our clients are overwhelmingly poor. They come primarily from Roxbury, and secondarily from Dorchester, Jamaica Plain and Mattapan.

Today, the organization has an annual operating budget of \$1.6 million, 30 dedicated staff members, more than 300 volunteers, and an impressive track record. In 2012, ESH helped 800 men, women, and children through its comprehensive programs.



Washington Westminster House Vision

In 2007, a fire claimed the building that housed the Elizabeth Stone House's domestic violence shelter and therapeutic community. After consolidating services into another cramped building, ESH began to envision the time when the agency would build a new home, one that would have the space and depth to support the full accomplishment of the agency's mission.

Because of the fire, the agency's residential mental health and substance abuse program was forced to close, and its domestic violence shelter had to relocate to ESH's current building in Roxbury. The move made it necessary to convert some transitional housing units into meeting, office and storage space. As a result, the number of individuals ESH housed in 2012 was 30% lower than in 2007. Staff had to be consolidated into a single building, compromising productivity and client confidentiality. Since reduced space limits the number of support groups and classes we can offer, we are unable to meet the demand from the community for these services.

In the years since the fire, the agency adapted and found ways to address program content, quality of service, and scale of operations. However, the whole of ESH's vision cannot be reached in its current facilities. ESH has set ambitious programmatic goals that call for a greater intensity of engagement for longer periods of time in order to solidify the gains clients make and to assure that the outcomes clients achieve with regard to safety, housing and financial stability are long-term. ESH has also set a goal of greatly expanding the number of clients it serves each year, because there is such a great need in the community. The organization cannot meet these goals in its current facility, because it has neither the office nor public program space that the goals require.

After a lengthy search, ESH found a site appropriate for the envisioned building - an integrated, supportive housing and community service complex for its clients and community members.

Project Description

The proposed project is a four-story building containing 27 apartments 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 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 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 site.

The preliminary design is the product of many hours of discussions with the architect and program staff, and early input from the DND and BRA architectural teams. In addition to the The Narrow Gate Architecture, a Boston based firm with extensive experience in designing supportive housing, Kim Vermeer of Urban Habitat Initiatives been engaged to help design an environment and resident friendly building that is meant to last, and to assist with the LEED requirements.

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After vetting the project with a number of stakeholders - the Boston Redevelopment Authority, City of Boston DND, CEDAC and key community groups - ESH secured site control and launched a comprehensive assessment of the site's environmental issues (there had previously been a DEP file number). With pro-bono legal assistance from the Mintz Levin environmental team, an experienced LSP and a site assessment funds from MassDevelopment, the team was able to quickly determine that the projected site clean-up costs were not prohibitive. They used the information gathered during the process to negotiate the purchase price down from \$1 million to \$724,000 --- and purchased the site with an acquisition loan from the Life Initiative in April 2013. They simultaneously secured a predevelopment loan from the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation.

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PROPOSED BUILDING AREA TABLE

LOT SIZE: Total Area (2) Lots:

EXISTING BUILDING (TO BE DEMOLISHED): 20,080

PROPOSED BUILDING SIZE:

Ground Floor	9,205
First Floor	5,866
Second Floor	11,269
Third Floor	11,147
Fourth Floor	11,111
TOTAL BUILDING AREA:	48,598

F.A.R. CALCULATION (gross with exemption):

F.A.R. = Building Area/Lot Area

F.A.R. = 48,598/44,030

F.A.R. = 1.10 (exceeds maximum F.A.R. of 1.0)

HEIGHT:

Maximum allowed per zoning: 45 feet

As proposed: 51 feet

See full Zoning Analysis for details in Appendix C

PROJECT SITE & NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The Elizabeth Stone House Washington/Westminster project site is a key parcel in Roxbury's Egleston Square business district located at the northern edge of the Square's commercial area on Washington Street. The site currently houses an abandoned and dilapidated warehouse building with an overgrown and unimproved yard including a steep hill with large mature trees.

The frontage along Washington Street is a mixture of retail and institutional uses along a corridor connecting Egleston Square to Downtown Crossing traveling north and Route 128 traveling south. Washington Street has been designated a Boulevard Planning District given its significance as a major connector within Boston. The project site is located within one half mile of two MBTA orange line stations as well as being located on several MBTA bus lines. The site is also within a half mile of Franklin Park and several other small playgrounds and parks. The immediate area on the east side of Washington Street adjacent to the project site includes a municipal parking lot, a one storey laundromat and Rent-A-Center business building and a Sovereign bank and Mc Donald's restaurant in a one storey complex immediately within Egleston Square. The area north of the site includes a private parking lot and low-rise daycare building. Directly across Washington Street from the site is the Boston Neighborhood Network media center building and a five storey mixed use building with the 826 Boston non-profit teen writing program and a dental office on the ground floor. A Citgo gas station occupies the triangle between Washington Street and Columbus Avenue.

Westminster Avenue transitions from commercial uses at Washington Street to residential with buildings of varying densities ranging from single family wood frame houses to large scale masonry residential blocks as Westminster approaches Walnut Avenue.

The Elizabeth Stone House development plan will continue and anchor the commercial edge of the district as well as providing density and new activity to the neighborhood. The new four storey building will complement the massing of the buildings directly across Washington Street and the brick construction at this edge is appropriate for the higher traffic mixed use corridor. The Elizabeth Stone House main entrance plaza and community meeting spaces occupy the Washington Street frontage providing lively and active uses. As the new building extends up Westminster Avenue, the architecture transitions from masonry to a softer panel system with material changes and bays to complement the street's residential scale and character. The building is set back from

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the property line to allow for a street trees and a wider sidewalk leading to the residential entry on Westminster Avenue.

The on-site automobile parking will be placed behind the building, shielded from the street and the adjacent property with landscape buffers and new trees. The hilly green space on the south edge of the site will be planted and maintained as open space for the residents, a children's play area and an attractive natural buffer to the residences on Walnut Park. Vehicular access will be from Westminster Avenue, but the volume of vehicle traffic generated by the new development is expected to be low due to the nature of the residents and the proximity of excellent public transportation connections.

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NEIGHBORHOOD MAP



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SITE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS



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NEIGHBORHOOD PHOTOGRAPHS



SITE FROM WASHINGTON ST.



SITE FROM WASHINGTON ST.



SITE FROM WASHINGTON ST.



SITE FROM WESTMINSTER AVE.



SITE FROM WESTMINSTER AVE.

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WESTMINSTER AVE. RESIDENCES



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WASHINGTON ST. TOWARD EGLESTON



WASHINGTON ST. TOWARD EGLESTON

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WASHINGTON ST. 5 STORY MIXED USE BLDG AND BNN CABLE BLDG



WASHINGTON ST. OPPOSITE SITE

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FROM EGELSTON SQUARE TOWARD SITE



FROM WASHINGTON ST. TOWARD SITE

PUBLIC BENEFITS

The project will result in the elimination of an unsightly and unsafe structure that has been problematic for the neighborhood for decades. The crumbling existing masonry structure has not been properly maintained or secured and so has been a major concern for abutters, businesses and the police. Since Elizabeth Stone House purchased the building (in April 2013) they have improved the site as much as possible by cutting the overgrown weeds, clearing out a large amount of hazardous debris from both inside and outside of the building, and erected a security fence to keep unauthorized people out.

ESH and its team will create an attractive new building of an appropriate scale that will be:

- Built to last for many years with durable materials
- Professionally managed
- Well-lit
- Designed so that the ground floor spaces visible from Washington Street are actively used
- Designed so that the entrance on Washington Street is welcoming and acknowledges Elizabeth Stone House as the important community resource that it is

The building will provide benefits to residents who live in the community as well. The public space that fronts Washington Street will be available for community meetings and social gatherings, and local organizations will be welcome to use the space when Elizabeth Stone House programs are not making use of it. Neighborhood residents will also be eligible to participate in Elizabeth Stone House community-based services that help build stronger families, encourage financial stability, support sobriety, and promote safety for those facing abuse at home.