

# Dispute over hotel planned for Needham business park goes to court

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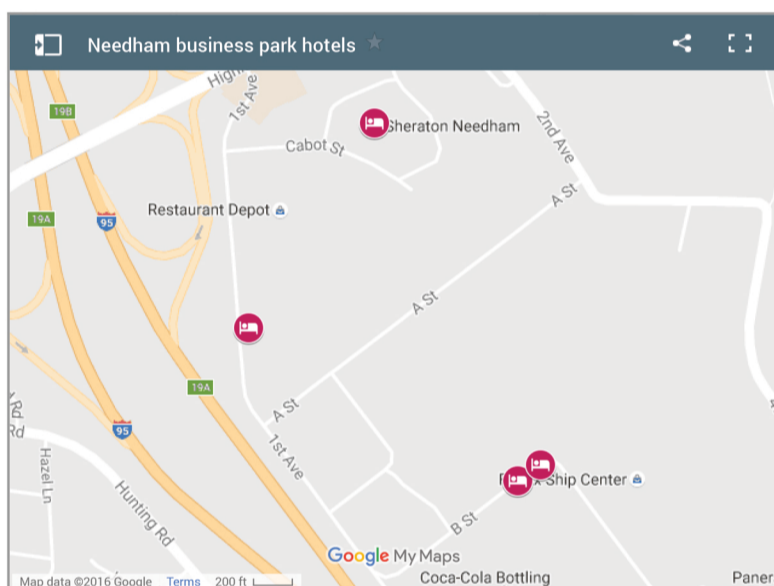
By Emma R. Murphy

The owner of the Residence Inn Marriott at 80 B Street is suing to block construction of a competing hotel on nearby First Avenue.

SXC Needham Inn, LLC, has requested that Norfolk Superior Court annul the Needham Planning Board's decision to grant a special permit to allow Claremont Needham Suites, LLC, to construct a hotel in the New England Business Center Zoning District, according to court documents.

SXC's lawsuit claims that the hotel would be harmful to them and the neighborhood, that it would impact traffic and that its approval violates goals for the district outlined in a land use, zoning and traffic study for the area conducted in 2001 by a consultant.

In addition to the Residence Inn Marriott and Sheraton Needham Hotel on Cabot Street currently operating in the district, and Normandy Real Estate Partner's proposed hotel for B Street, Claremont's plan would bring the number of hotels in the district to four.



Claremont's hotel would be four stories tall and would offer 134 guest units and parking for 146 vehicles.

According to court documents, the Planning Board unanimously approved the special permit in August.

According to the permit, the site currently holds an empty office building built in 1957. The town had previously permitted the building for demolition to make way for the construction of a three-story fitness club but the project never happened.

In issuing then special permit, the Planning Board gave Claremont relief from lot line setbacks, floor area ratio requirements and parking area setback requirements.

The Planning Board determined that Claremont does not need to pay a traffic impact fee because resulting traffic would not require additional mitigation.

"It is Claremont's position that the Planning Board appropriately issued a special permit for the construction of a hotel in the Needham Business Center, which is a mixed-use zoning district," said Claremont's attorney Daniel Dain.

In a letter to the court, Dain said SXC is "another developer using a zoning appeal to try to stop a competing major hotel development in the New England Business Center.

Both David Tobin, attorney for the Planning Board, and SXC's attorney, Ellen Shapiro, declined to comment.