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# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: December 2, 2020

Re: Special Permit PB #369, 600 Massachusetts Avenue, (parcel address: 596 Massachusetts Avenue)

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Submission Type: Special Permit Application

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Applicant: Cifrino Mass Ave Realty LLC

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Zoning District(s): Business B (BB); Central Square Overlay District

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Proposal Summary: Partial demolition of existing building to add additional floors resulting in a six-story building with 46 dwelling units and commercial use with a total of 93,263 square feet of gross floor area (GFA) including basement and 60 long-term bicycle parking spaces.

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Special Permits Requested: Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20), Special Permit for exemption of basement area in calculation of Gross Floor Area (Article 2) and Central Square Overlay District Special Permits for additional building height, additional combined FAR, waiver of setback and open space requirements, and reduction of parking and loading requirements (Section 20.300). *A summary of the applicable special permit findings is listed on the following page. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.*

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Other City Permits Needed: Historic Commission Review; Central Square Advisory Committee Review

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Planning Board Action: Grant or deny requested special permits.

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Memo Contents: Review of area planning and zoning, comments on proposal addressing planning, zoning, and urban design.

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Other Staff Reports: Traffic, Parking and Transportation Dept. (TP+T), Department of Public Works (DPW), in separate documents.

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<b>Requested Special Permits</b>	<b>Summarized Findings</b> <i>(detailed zoning text on following pages)</i>
<p>Central Square Overlay District: Standards for Issuance of Special Permits (Section 20.305)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed development is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Central Square Action Plan:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ encourage responsible and orderly development;</li> <li>○ strengthen the retail base to more completely serve the needs of the neighborhoods;</li> <li>○ preserve the Square’s cultural diversity;</li> <li>○ create active people oriented spaces;</li> <li>○ improve the physical, and visual environment;</li> <li>○ provide retail establishments that serve people of diverse economic and social groups who live in the surrounding neighborhoods.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Building and site designs are consistent with “Urban Design Plan for Central Square” as outlined in the “Central Square Action Plan” and the “Central Square Development Guidelines” (see summary on following pages).</li> <li>• Building and site designs adequately screen the parking provided and are sensitive to the contributing buildings in the vicinity.</li> <li>• No National Register or contributing building is demolished or so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation (either now or within the past 5 years).</li> </ul>
<p>Central Square Overlay District: Building height up to 80 feet and combined residential and non-residential FAR up to 4.00 (Sections 20.304.2 &amp; 20.304.3)</p>	<p><i>Central Square Overlay District findings set forth above</i></p>
<p>Central Square Overlay District: Waiver of setback and open space requirements (Sections 20.304.4.1 &amp; 20.304.4.2)</p>	<p><i>Central Square Overlay District findings set forth above</i></p>
<p>Central Square Overlay District: Reduction of parking and loading requirement (Sections 20.304.6 &amp; 6.35.1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total development authorized on the site is reduced to 90% of the maximum permitted on the lot or a cash contribution is made to the Central Square Improvement Fund in an amount equal to fifty (50) percent of the cost of construction of the parking spaces not provided.</li> <li>• Subject lot is sufficiently small in size as to contribute to a development pattern of diverse, small scale, new structures and the retention of existing structures.</li> </ul>

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(detailed zoning text on following pages)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exemption from parking and loading requirements will result in a building design that is more appropriate to its location and the fabric of its neighborhood.</li> <li>• <i>Other Central Square Overlay District findings set forth above</i></li> </ul>
Special Permit for exemption of basement area in the calculation of Gross Floor Area (GFA)	The uses occupying such exempted GFA support the character of the neighborhood or district in which the applicable lot is located.
Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area, upon review of the traffic impact indicators analyzed in the Transportation Impact Study and mitigation efforts proposed.</li> <li>• The project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the City as set forth in Section 19.30 (see following page).</li> </ul>
General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	<p>Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or</li> <li>(b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or</li> <li>(c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or</li> <li>(d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or</li> <li>(e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and</li> </ul> <p>the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.</p>

**19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]**

Objective	Indicators
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods</li> <li>• Consistency with established streetscape</li> <li>• Compatibility with adjacent uses</li> <li>• Consideration of nearby historic buildings</li> </ul>
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inhabited ground floor spaces</li> <li>• Discouraged ground-floor parking</li> <li>• Windows on ground floor</li> <li>• Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways</li> <li>• Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access</li> </ul>
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location/impact of mechanical equipment</li> <li>• Location/impact of loading and trash handling</li> <li>• Stormwater management</li> <li>• Shadow impacts</li> <li>• Retaining walls, if provided</li> <li>• Building scale and wall treatment</li> <li>• Outdoor lighting</li> <li>• Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)</li> </ul>
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management</li> <li>• Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service</li> <li>• Efficient design (LEED standards)</li> </ul>
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional use focused on existing campuses</li> <li>• Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed</li> <li>• Preservation of historic structures and environment</li> <li>• Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities</li> </ul>
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing as a component of large, multi-building development</li> <li>• Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families</li> </ul>
Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development</li> <li>• Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks</li> <li>• Provide wider range of activities</li> </ul>

## Area Planning and Zoning

### *Site Context*

This site is located in the heart of Central Square on the southwestern side of Massachusetts Avenue just east of its intersection with River Street and Western Avenue (see Image 1). This area is one of Cambridge’s most prominent commercial corridors, with retail shops and restaurants lining the ground stories of most buildings. Offices and other commercial uses dominate the area, though the site is on the same block as the Holmes Building and across the street from Ten Essex, both more recent multifamily residential buildings. This area is also defined by its proximity to well-served public transit routes, including the Central station on the MBTA Red Line and several bus lines.

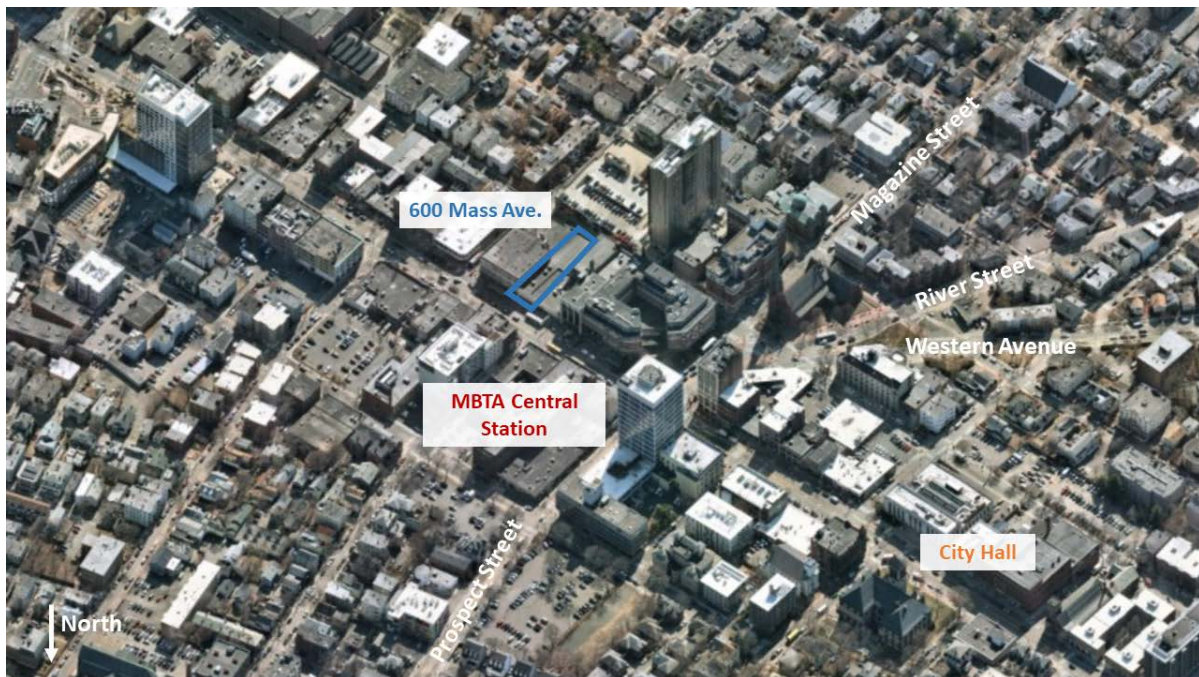


Image 1: Aerial photograph of the area surrounding 600 Massachusetts Avenue dated March 9, 2020 (Source: Nearmap).

### *Site Zoning*

The site is located in the Business B (BB) base zoning district and the Central Square Overlay District. BB allows a wide range of typical neighborhood business uses, such as convenience stores, pharmacies, and restaurants, as well as office and residential uses. It also allows institutional uses, such as schools, government buildings, and health care facilities, as well as hotels and theatres. The BB district development standards promote high-density development, with maximum heights up to 80 feet and floor-area ratios (FAR) up to 4.00. BB districts are primarily located in Central Square and Harvard Square, where overlay districts further modify the base zoning.

In the case of this site, the Central Square Overlay District as codified in Section 20.300 of the Zoning Ordinance modifies many base zoning provisions. Notably, zoning in Central Square imposes stricter as-of-right limits on both use and development regulations, while allowing increases in height and density and a broader range of uses through a Planning Board special permit. Applicants for a special permit

through Section 20.300 are required to follow the Central Square Standards for Issuance of Special Permits in addition to other relevant criteria.

### ***Area Planning Studies***

The [Central Square Action Plan](#) (1987) informed the creation of the Central Square Overlay District. The goals of that plan are reflected in the special permit criteria for the district (see page 2). Following this plan a set of [Central Square Development Guidelines](#) (1989) were created with design principles and guidelines for stores and storefronts, housing, parking and service areas, streets and sidewalks, and elements of built form.

The [Kendall Square Central Square \(K2C2\) Planning Study](#) (2011-2012) resulted in a final report issued by the Central Square Advisory Committee that identified five goals for the area:

- Public Places to Build Community;
- Retail, Cultural, and Non-Profit Diversity;
- Increase Housing Stock and Promote Residential Diversity;
- Connecting People to the Square; and
- A Sustainable Future for Central Square.

Based on these goals, the Committee established various recommendations, such as the creation of indoor public gathering spaces, the activation of ground floors with retail spaces, the elimination of minimum parking requirements to support infill housing development, the incentivization of affordable and middle-income housing, the improvement of pedestrian connections, and the reduction of heat islands through building and site cooling strategies. The Central Square final report also identified zoning recommendations, some of which were included in the Central Square Restoration (Sater, et al.) Zoning Petition. Ordained by the City Council in February 2017, this zoning petition sought to revitalize Central Square by increasing the potential for housing, expanding the local retail footprint, enlivening side streets, and activating the streetscape.

The [Envision Cambridge](#) (2019) comprehensive plan established city-wide planning goals and recommendations, designating this area as one of several “Squares and Major Mixed-Use Corridors.” Envision Cambridge called for a balanced mix of development types that are sensitive to their context while still advancing the City’s goals in providing affordable housing, environmental resilience, cohesive urban form, and community wellbeing. It advocated for providing both commercial and residential development, as well as preserving and expanding the city’s open space network. In general, Envision Cambridge noted that any redevelopment of sites located in Squares and Major Mixed-Use Corridors should accommodate greater densities than surrounding neighborhoods to incentivize affordable housing, sustainable transportation modes, and a mix of uses. It also identified the importance of supporting independent retail businesses and improving the public realm to sustain thriving commercial districts.

## **Comments on Development Proposal**

### ***Zoning Standards***

#### Overall

The applicant proposes to demolish a portion of the existing 57,915-square-foot building at 600 Massachusetts Avenue from the Massachusetts Avenue elevation through to Green Street in order to construct a building containing 46 residential dwelling units and ground story commercial spaces. The project will add 35,348 square feet to the site for a total of 93,263 square feet. This project is taking advantage of numerous provisions included in the Central Square Overlay District zoning that allow additional development and relaxed development standards to serve a particular purpose. Before granting any of these special permits or waivers, the Planning Board must make findings specific to Central Square according to Section 20.305 of the Zoning Ordinance, in addition to the general special permit criteria found in Section 10.40.

In February 2019, the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) held a hearing under the demolition delay ordinance and found the building at 600 Massachusetts Avenue to be significant, but not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement project. CHC staff believe that the design of the replacement project has evolved in a positive direction and that a demolition permit can be issued at the appropriate time. Although initial plans included preservation of the façade of the one-story brick building on Green Street, CHC staff consider that structure to be not significant under the demolition delay ordinance. However, they request that the Planning Board condition its approval on CHC staff review of the masonry of the replica façade.

#### Uses

The existing building is a one-story, early-20<sup>th</sup> century building with three primary commercial spaces along Massachusetts Avenue. One space is currently unoccupied, but was most recently a mattress store; the other two are occupied by a Chipotle restaurant and Supreme Liquors. A Tae Kwon Do martial arts facility that is also located in the building is accessed from an entrance off of Green Street. The scope of work for this project is concentrated on the southeastern half of the building, where there is a vacant retail storefront; according to project plans, the Chipotle restaurant and the Supreme Liquors will remain.

The applicant proposes to provide retail uses at the ground story of the building facing Massachusetts Avenue and add residential units on the upper stories, with some residential amenities located in the basement. It is unclear from the application if there will also be an office use located in the new building or if the renovated office spaces that will be accessed from the new building's entrance on Green Street will be located in a different building. While the project plans clearly distinguish non-residential and residential uses, it would be helpful to have more clarity on the breakdown of those non-residential uses between retail and office. It is also important that the applicant ensures that new retail spaces are properly vented for food-related or other future uses.

### GFA & FAR

Three of the special permits that the applicant is seeking pertain to gross floor area (GFA) and floor-area ratio (FAR) limits, two of which are imposed by the Central Square Overlay District. The overlay zoning allows an FAR of 4.0 as-of-right for all residential uses in the Business B base zoning district, but requires a special permit under Section 20.304.3 to allow a total FAR of 4.0 for non-residential and residential uses combined (not including the additional 30% GFA allowed for Inclusionary Housing projects, which would increase the total maximum FAR to 5.2). This special permit requires that the maximum FAR permitted for non-residential uses does not exceed the limitation on non-residential FAR applicable in the base zoning district and that the proposed FAR of all non-residential uses on the lot does not exceed the proposed FAR of all residential uses on the lot. In this case, the applicant proposes 46,476 square feet of non-residential uses and 46,787 square feet of residential uses. This means that the non-residential FAR is 2.19, which is below the Business B district FAR limit of 2.75 for non-residential uses and less than the proposed FAR for residential uses, 2.20.

The applicant is also seeking a special permit to exempt the basement GFA from the total GFA calculation for the project when determining zoning limitations. The site will contain 93,263 square feet between the existing and new buildings, including 14,060 square feet of basement GFA, for an FAR of 4.39. By exempting the basement GFA, the site's FAR will be 3.73. Under Article 2.000, in order to grant this special permit, the Planning Board must find that the uses occupying the basement "support the character of the neighborhood or district in which the applicable lot is located." The applicant anticipates moving the existing Tae Kwon Do operation to the basement and using the remainder of the space for the residents' fitness room, retail back-of-house operations, and building system uses. This will allow an existing tenant to remain in the building and will support the building's residential units, both of which are consistent with area planning objectives.

The applicant is also seeking a GFA exemption for residential balconies and terraces, which is allowed in the Business B district through Section 20.304.3 of the Central Square Overlay District zoning. This provision allows an as-of-right exemption for the GFA of balconies that are accessory to residential uses and less than six feet in depth, and terraces that are open to the sky and at least eight feet in depth. The applicant's plans demonstrate that all balconies and terraces meet these requirements. This exemption is not a special permit and therefore does not require any action on the part of the Planning Board.

### Building Height

The applicant is requesting a special permit to increase the building height under Section 20.304.2(2)(a). As noted earlier, the Central Square Overlay District zoning imposes a stricter as-of-right height limit of 55 feet in this area, while allowing increases of up to 80 feet (in BB) or 120 feet (in Residence C-3), provided that the portions of the building above 60 feet in height are set back from the street line by at least 10 feet and are designed to meet a 45° bulk control plane (which can be modified by the Planning Board). The rationale behind this strategy is that it gives the Planning Board the ability to review new buildings of significant height that might not otherwise be required to receive a special permit. It is also important to note that residential uses in Business B must follow the dimensional requirements and other restrictions for residential uses in the Residence C-3 district per Section 5.28.1(c) of the Zoning Ordinance.



In this case, the proposed building height, 70.2 feet, is under the maximum height limit. The proposed plans show that the building is also in conformance with the standards for bulk control.

#### Yard Setbacks and Open Space

The applicant is seeking two special permits under Section 20.304.4, one to waive the yard setback requirement and the other to waive the private open space requirement. While the Business B district does not require any yard setbacks or private open space for non-residential uses, residential uses in Business B must follow the dimensional requirements and other restrictions for residential uses in the Residence C-3 district. The existing building does not have any setbacks since it extends to the lot line on both the Massachusetts Avenue and Green Street frontages, and shares a party wall with buildings on its other two elevations. As the application states, this is characteristic of other buildings on the block and in Central Square generally.

The proposed building will include approximately 3,442 square feet of open space (approximately 16% of the lot area) through the provision of balconies, roof decks, and the Green Street forecourt, though not all of these spaces qualify as Private Open Space under Article 2.000 and Section 5.22 of the Zoning Ordinance. As a result, the applicant is seeking a special permit to waive the private open space requirement for residential uses in the Residence C-3 district. In granting this special permit, the Planning Board must determine that the Central Square Overlay District urban design objectives are met.

#### Off-Street Parking

The applicant is seeking a waiver of parking and loading requirements under Section 20.304.6(3)(b) since they do not plan to provide any off-street parking on-site. Uses in existing buildings are not required to provide any new parking, but for new buildings the Planning Board may waive the parking and loading requirements set forth in Section 6.36 by special permit. A per-parking-space payment to a Central Square Improvement Fund is required unless the total GFA of a new development is no greater than 90% of the maximum development allowed on the lot. In granting a special permit, the Planning Board must find that the lot, especially one over 10,000 square feet, is small enough to encourage a diverse development pattern, and that the building design will be more in conformance with the Central Square Development Guidelines and therefore be more appropriate to the neighborhood fabric. While this lot is slightly over 20,000 square feet, the proposed development will only occur on approximately half of the lot and will be under the 90% threshold. In comparison, the properties on either side of 600 Massachusetts Avenue are approximately 16,500 square feet and approximately 10,000 square feet in lot area.

Please see the separate memo from the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation (TP&T) Department for additional comments on the parking proposal.

#### Bicycle Parking

The applicant proposes providing 60 long-term bicycle parking spaces and no short-term bicycle parking spaces on-site. Pursuant to Section 6.104.2(b) of the Zoning Ordinance, the applicant will provide a payment to the City in lieu of providing the required short-term bicycle parking spaces on-site.

Please see the separate memo from the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation (TP&T) Department for additional comments on the bicycle parking proposal.

### Housing

The unit mix as presented is, as stated by the applicant, estimated and subject to change. As presented, the size (square feet) and layouts of the units seem reasonable. It is preferable that the size of the units are not decreased in the final layouts. In terms of number of bedrooms, one third of the units will be two- and three-bedroom units. The inclusionary requirement regarding three-bedroom units will apply and one of the three-bedroom units will be affordable.

### ***Special Permits***

In addition to the special permits mentioned above, this project requires a Project Review Special Permit as the new construction exceeds 50,000 square feet in GFA, which requires review of the transportation impacts (discussed in the TP+T memo) and urban design characteristics (discussed in the next section of this memo) of the project.

### **Urban Design Comments**

The project team has had several meetings with urban design staff to review and discuss the proposal. Staff supports the design approach taken with this project, and feels that it will contribute to the character of the neighborhood while providing additional housing in the heart of Central Square.

### ***Built Form - Massing***

Central Square's buildings primarily date from the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. While their substantial and richly detailed streetwall facades vary in style, materials, and color, they share a consistent alignment along the sidewalk, addressing the street with their primary facades and activating it with ground floor retail space.

In its basic form and massing, the proposed building is compatible with the buildings of Central Square, and generally follows the Central Square Design Guidelines. It is a party wall building on Massachusetts Avenue, directly adjoining its neighbors. Its Massachusetts Avenue façade is aligned with the adjoining facades and together with them frames the street. Its height is within the range of the heights of nearby buildings. The transparently glazed ground floor on Massachusetts Avenue is primarily dedicated to retail space. As the site is well served by public transportation, the project's provision of residential uses at a relatively high density accords with the recommendations of the Envision Cambridge Master Plan.

While the Central Square Design Guidelines suggest lower building heights on streets facing the surrounding residential neighborhoods, the building's south façade on Green Street seems compatible with the city owned parking garage and the Manning residential tower immediately across the street, and its height is similar to that of the Holmes Building at the west end of the block.

Staff supports the building's siting and general massing; comments on the project have mostly to do with details of the building's façades, in particular the Massachusetts Avenue façade.

### ***Façade Design and Details***

#### Massachusetts Avenue Façade:

The building's Massachusetts Avenue façade, with its brick clad second to fifth floors, punched and vertically grouped windows, and glazed retail ground floor, is compatible with the prevalent façade typologies of Central Square. The widths of the façade's three structural bays relate to the pedestrian scale, and the multi-floor window groupings give the façade hierarchy and presence. As on many of the nearby buildings, the proposed Massachusetts Avenue façade is treated as a distinct street-facing plane, distinguished from the building's side and rear facades by color and material, thereby helping frame Massachusetts Avenue as legible room-like civic space.

Consideration could be given to refining the proportions of the façade's openings and the expressive character of its wall surface. While the vertically grouped second, third, and fourth floor windows are reminiscent of those of the nearby Barron Building and of 492-496 Massachusetts Avenue, their details and proportions, and the development of the wall surface around them, could be further studied. Possibilities include adjusting the dimensions of the window openings to give them a more vertical proportion, reducing the vertical dimension of the spandrel panels, selecting colors and materials to create a stronger relationship between the window mullion system and the spandrel panels, modulating the plane of the grouped windows or of the masonry wall at their perimeters to further emphasize their bay window-like expression, and resolving their relationship to the grey clad first floor storefront façade immediately below them. To further enhance the civic presence of the Massachusetts Avenue façade, consideration could be given to also grouping the right hand windows on the second, third, and fourth floors into a bay window-like expression, similar to that of the façade's left hand and middle bays.

On the first floor façade, consideration could be given to further refinements, such as the delineation of the upper edge of the grey tile wall surface, the design of the storefront mullion system, and the design of the canopy at the residential/retail entrance.

During the design process, the possibility was raised of creating a new stair down to the Red Line subway platform. It would be located within the building's volume, replacing a portion of the proposed retail frontage, and would allow the existing stair in the sidewalk at the east end of the building's Massachusetts Avenue frontage to be eliminated. While this would result in reduced retail frontage, it seems worth considering for the improvement it would make to the streetscape. Of course, it would only be done as part of improvements by the MBTA. To facilitate the construction of the stair at a future date, appropriate structural provisions could be included in the base building.

Many of the nearby Massachusetts Avenue facades incorporate some kind of special treatment at their tops (either their entire top floors, or the upper portion of their top floors) such as a change in materials or their pattern, a cornice, or increased detail. Further consideration could be given to the fifth floor's materials and articulation, including potential adjustments to the arrangement of openings, the development of the wall surface, and the form and projection of the proposed metal cornice at the sixth floor.

While the sixth floor façade facing Massachusetts Avenue will be stepped back from the typical face of wall below, it will be visible obliquely from street level. Increased articulation or three-dimensional relief could be considered, in addition to its color, joint patterns, and details.

Side Facades:

As noted above, the use of a contrasting material on the building's side façades differentiates them from the Massachusetts Avenue façade and thereby emphasizes the latter's role in framing Massachusetts Avenue. The proposed lap siding on the side facades is atypical in the Central Square context; a cladding material with a more substantial appearance would be preferable, but not essential. Consideration could be given to more consistently aligning the heads and sills of the windows and balcony openings on the building's side façade, and to removing the roofs over the sixth floor balconies to break up the mass of the sixth floor and to give it a more active and articulate roofline.

Green Street Façade:

Staff is pleased to see that that the project preserves/reconstructs the existing brick façade on Green Street, thereby maintaining something of the texture and history of the street. The proposed patinaed metal clad stair tower adds visual interest to the interior of the block, and enlivens the narrow and deep Green Street entry courtyard.

The grey siding appears to be quite dark on the renderings, consideration could be given to using the lighter colored siding proposed on the west side façade visible from Massachusetts Avenue. As on the other facades, consideration could be given to raising the heads of the windows and reducing the amount of spandrel between them. Consideration could be given to articulating the Green Street façade as distinct from the building's side elevations.

***Mechanical Equipment and Services***

The elevations do not show through-wall vents; presumably kitchen, bathroom, and laundry exhausts are vented at roof level. This accords with staff's preference to avoid them, particularly on primary facades. The possibility of enlarging the fairly small portions of the roof designated as "solar ready" could be considered. The route from the trash/recycling room in the basement to the pickup location should be clarified, and clearances should be checked.

***Open Space, Public Realm, and Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections***

The possibility of adding sidewalk trees both on Massachusetts Avenue and on Green Street should be investigated in coordination with city staff. The south courtyard, lined by the reconstructed brick wall, will add visual interest to Green Street; plantings could be considered to further enrich it. More direct pedestrian access to the proposed first floor retail space on Green Street could be considered.

Widths and clearances in the bicycle storage room and on the route to it should be checked, and the provision of extra wide doors along the route should be considered.

### ***Sustainability***

The proposed project is subject to the Green Building Requirements in Section 22.20 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. According to the Green Building submission, the project is currently designed to achieve a LEED Gold standard under LEED v4 Multifamily Homes Midrise, with 75 “Yes” credit points, and an additional 19 points designated as “possible.” As required, the submission includes a Net Zero Narrative providing details of design considerations to reduce energy use with regard to building envelope, HVAC systems, hot water systems, and renewable energy.

The project is also pursuing LEED’s Integrative Design Process credit, which promotes high-performance, cost-effective project outcomes through the early analysis, synergies across disciplines and building systems, assembling and involving the Project Team early in the design and development process, and engaging in design charrettes and trades training sessions. Staff supports this approach to the design and construction of green buildings. The project is integrating positive features in the proposed mechanical system including, including a heat pump system for space heating and cooling and fitting each unit with electric water heater for domestic hot water use. It is also using LED for interior and exterior lighting. Other positive features include using energy recovery ventilation (ERV) equipment to save energy to heat precondition air and improve indoor air quality, and using EPA’s WaterSense labeled plumbing fixtures, and ENERGY STAR appliances.

Beyond meeting the minimum Green Building Requirements, this project is expected to reduce energy consumption by more than 28% and cut on-site fossil fuel consumption by more than 28%. Additional improvements that could be sought as the project is further refined include the following:

- Additional points for Rainwater Management credit in Sustainable Sites category.
- Additional points for Indoor Water Use credit in Water Efficiency category.
- Additional points for Efficient Hot Water Distribution System credit in Energy and Atmosphere category.
- Additional points for Environmentally Preferable Products credit in Materials and Resources category.
- Additional points in Indoor Environmental Quality category.
- Additional points for Regional Priority credits.

The proposal’s Net Zero Narrative also includes a study of the solar energy potential of the site, indicating that the roof will be “solar-ready” and could accommodate a 29 kW photovoltaic panel array. Installation of such an array is not currently proposed, but staff recommends pursuing this as a possibility.

Staff will continue to work with the Applicant through continuing design review. The project will be reviewed again at the building permit and certificate of occupancy stages to certify that it remains in compliance with the Green Building Requirements

### **Continuing Review**

CDD staff have met with the project team on multiple occasions to discuss the proposal and provide comments. Staff are appreciative of the project team’s efforts to shape this proposal, and look forward to continued collaboration as the project moves forward.

The following is a summary of issues that may be addressed further at the public hearing, or may be incorporated into conditions for continuing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- CHC staff review of the masonry of the replica façade of the one-story brick building on Green Street.
- Review of the building façades if further refinements are suggested.
- Review of the entry canopy on Massachusetts Avenue.
- Review of dimensions and clearances in the bicycle storage area and on the route to it.
- A materials/colors mock-up of all exterior wall assemblies for review before the purchase of materials.
- Review of the materials and joint system of the panelized cladding system.
- Review of rooftop mechanical equipment heights and the height of screening.
- Review of exterior lighting.
- Review of location, size, species, and planting standards of street trees if any can be added.