

# Notes & Reports to Application



Prepared for: Cambridge Planning Board  
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# Notes & Reports to Application INDEX

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## Existing Site Conditions



# Site Planning and Zoning Context

## Site Location

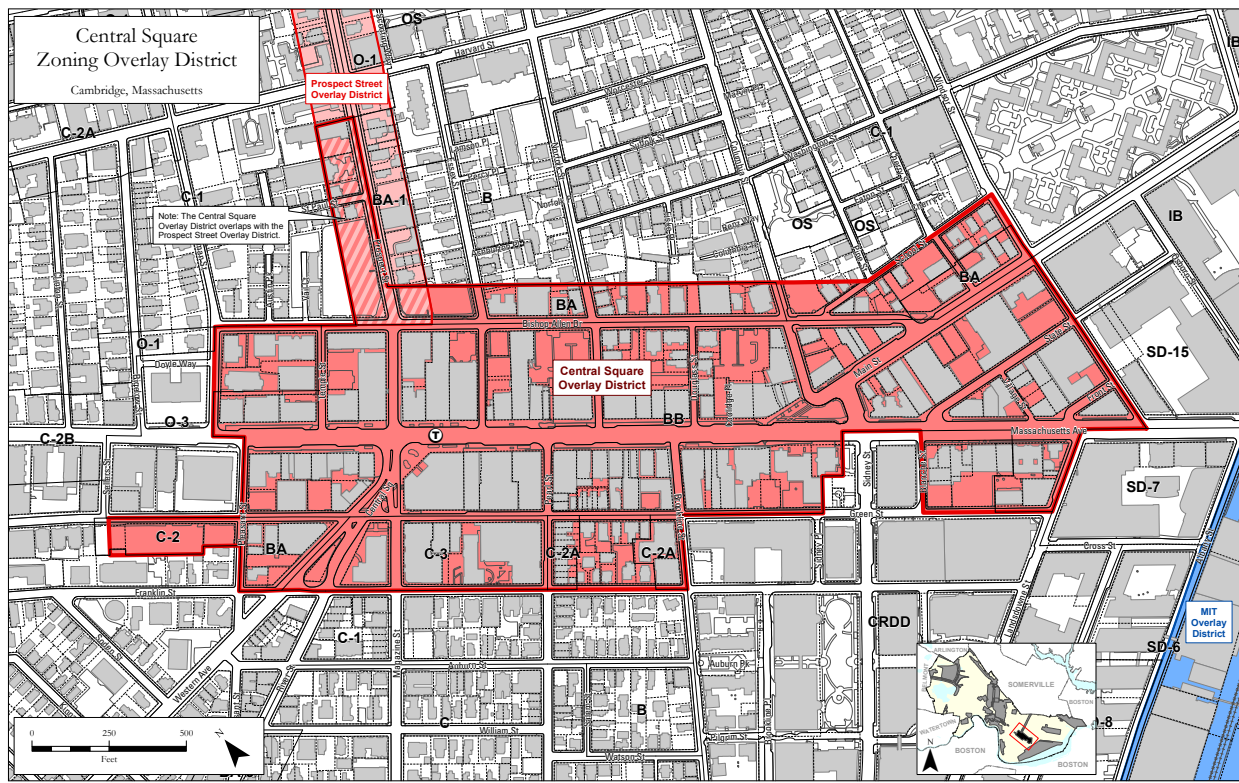
The site location is in the heart of Central Square on the southwestern side of Massachusetts Avenue between the intersections of Brookline Street and Pearl Street. This fully developed area of Central Square is one of Cambridge's densest commercial corridors. There are retail, restaurants, offices, and apartments along the entire south side of the street. The trend is recent multifamily residential buildings and additions of upper floors as the economics of development are compelling for the first time in several decades and can include the historic obsolete upper floors on the Southwestern Side of Mass Ave. This area benefits from its proximity to a radial network of public transit routes, including the Central station on the MBTA Red Line and several bus lines. This is ground zero for urban, public transit travel in Cambridge.



## 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 theaters. The BB and the Central Square Overlay 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.



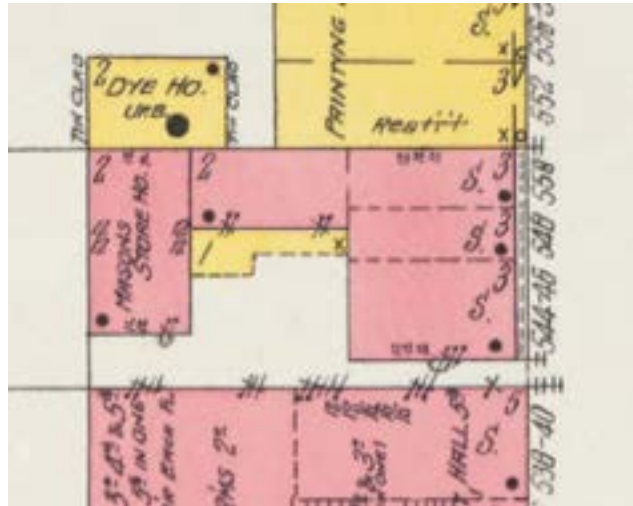
## Uses: History and Proposed

### Overview:

Central Square Redevelopment LLC, the owner, and developer of 544-550 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, are pleased to submit this proposal for a Special Permit to the City of Cambridge Planning Board for its consideration. The project involves the complete building renovation and an extension around an existing building's facade and retailers. The present building, of little character, replaced a historic building on the site in the early 20th Century when the original building collapsed. The property owned by the Adelson family for close to a century has long passed dilapidated into utter obsolescence, without a complete reconstruction. This plan is designed to make the necessary compromises for an infill lot in Central Square to be improved to the 21st Century while still honoring the legacy of the building, and some of the historic uses. There is nothing of merit to preserve, but the presence of the building's original lower facade, and more importantly the street level retail, will be a comforting reminder of the original building. This property at the center of Central Square achieves the stated goals of the Central Square Overlay, and other planning, strategic, and vision plans for the area, and, most importantly, it is a viable use. The product of over a year of planning, after a year of environmental remediation to remove leaking an underground petrochemical tank, to remediate the soils, to close the DEP files, and to plan a project which will not load-bear in this area due to the disturbed deep soils, the applicant proposed a 27 unit apartment project, of small scale, and the retention of the local ground floor retail spaces. As well the applicant, working with the Center for Marxist Education will create a dynamic library and ADA-compliant community meeting center, so the group may continue its advocacy and programming. The applicant will also work with the CME to update and diversify the programming with themes of extreme importance to the future of Cambridge, the Commonwealth, and the United States, such as Affordable Housing, Racial Harmony, Universal Health Care, and Income Inequity.

History of 544-550 Mass Ave: According to the HDC, the original circa 1830's general store which was located on the site collapsed in 1902 and was replaced by the current structure. The building was purchased by the Adelson family more 100 years ago, and the family shoe store remains there to this day, Teddy's Shoes operated by Stevie Adelson. The other retail space has changed use dozens of times over the Century, most recently Shalimar Indian Restaurant, now Five Spices. At 550 The Center for Marxist Education, opened 46 years ago as a campaign office for the Communist Party USA Candidate to unseat, unsuccessfully, Tip O'Neill in the 11th and then 8th Districts. It operates as a Marxist Center and Bookstore to this day one of the last in the United States.

## Uses: History and Proposed (Cont)



1900 Site Plan before 1902 Building Collapse



Present View Interior ArcView 2016

## Uses: History and Proposed (Cont)

Edward C. Wheeler, executor of the estate of the late B. P. Clark, has sold Nos. 544 to 550 Massachusetts avenue to Charles R. Lamb. The lot contains about 4,400 feet of land, upon which is a three-story brick building, containing two stores and two tenements. The property is assessed for \$16,000. T. H. Raymond was the broker.

cc March 24, 1900

**ANOTHER STORE.**

The building at 544 and 550 Massachusetts avenue is to be renovated and remodeled, and by the first of November will be occupied by Farnsworth & McMullin, of Boston, as a five and ten cent store. This company has a large store of this kind in Boston and their plans for expansion has been manifest in the above enterprise. It is possible that the upper portion of the building may be fitted for offices, but this is not decided upon. Undertaker Judson Litchfield, P. Drebbin's shoe store, and Professor Joe, the bootblack, will be forced to move by the last of this month.

CC August 16, 1902

**BUILDING PERMITS.**

5689—Charles Lamb owner, Charles N. Cogswell architect, W. Fillmore & Co. builder, 544 Massachusetts avenue, ward 6; store, \$6000.

9690—Charles Linehan owner and build-

CC August 30, 1902

**EXTENSIVE REPAIRS.**

W. Fillmore Co. has the contract for remodeling the lower floor at 544, 546 and 548 Massachusetts avenue. Three apartments and one large store will be the result of the transformation. A 5 and 10 cent store will be established there by the first of November. The store will extend 88 feet back from the street and will be 44 feet wide in front. The entire front of the building will be changed materially and the entrance will be practically in the center, while the hall and stairway leading to the second story will be on the end at number 544 instead of in the center. Two large plate glass windows will take the place of three smaller ones and the store will be modernized in many ways.

CC Sept. 6, 1902



## Uses: History and Proposed (Cont)

**BUSINESS BLOCK  
A MASS OF RUINS.**  
Collapses While Repairs Are  
Being Made—Weak Props  
Supposed to Be the Cause—  
Several Narrow Escapes.

An unoccupied three-story building at 544-546 Massachusetts avenue collapsed yesterday afternoon, entailing a loss of about \$3000. What was a few minutes before a fairly respectable structure became in an instant a mass of ruins. The lower floor was being remodelled and workmen were engaged there when the crash came, but all had miraculous escapes. Other men were employed on the upper floors, but they, too, made good their escape just in time.

The ruined building stood between the Odd Fellows block and the structure on the corner of the avenue and Pearl street. The occupants a few weeks ago had been ordered out and extensive changes had been planned. Carpenters and others had been employed for some time and the work was progressing favorably.

At just five minutes past four o'clock, with a crash that could be heard a long distance, the front of the structure caved in, followed by the other parts of the building. Several side windows in Rosenberg's shoe store in Odd Fellows block were broken, and an awning on the corner building was somewhat twisted, but this was the extent of damage to other property. When the crash came a crowd quickly gathered and a fire alarm was given, but when the apparatus arrived there was nothing for it to do. The board of health ambulance also came upon the scene, but was not needed.

Of the men in the building, P. B. McNamara, of this city, a plumber in the employ of H. L. Rome, had one of the narrowest escapes. He was at work near the roof when he saw what was coming and he jumped onto the eil of the neighboring building, a distance of 20 feet. He landed fairly and beyond a shaking up suffered no inconvenience.

**Collapse!!**  
**Chaos!**  
**\$3,000!!**

W. W. Betts, of 9 Watson street, had a very narrow escape. He was near the front on the first floor. He heard a crash and tried to run to the rear, but did not reach there in time. A side wall which held some of the flying debris, alone saved Mr. Betts, and he succeeded in crawling through this tunnel a distance of four feet to a place of safety. He was not injured in the least. He says the affair came so quickly he failed to see how he or any of the men escaped.

The other men were also on the street floor, but so well in the rear as to escape in time. They were W. S. Merrill, of this city, Samuel J. Leavis, of Somerville, Fred Crocker, of Malden, and John Clark, of Roxbury. There were also two men in the basement, mixing mortar, who were uninjured. Luckily there was no one on the sidewalk in front of the building when it fell. The cause of the collapse is unknown, although it would seem that the posts in the front of the building were weak, as they were the first to give way. The building is owned by Charles R. Lamb, of 159 Brattle street, a dry goods commission merchant at 31 Bedford street, Boston. T. H. Raymond has charge of the building, while the contractor is Wellington, Fillmore & Co., 25 Cherry street, this city. Mr. Fillmore was seen shortly after the accident but refused to say more than that he had no idea how it happened. William H. Gray, superintendent of public buildings, said that he was unable to tell how it occurred, although it looked to him as though the building gave way in front, indicating weakness there.

It was intended that Farnsworth & McMullen should occupy the first floor Nov. 1, for a five and ten cent store. The two upper floors were to be used as apartments.

CC October 4, 1902

## Uses: History and Proposed (Cont)

**“Never in the History of Cambridge has so much excitement attended the advent of a new enterprise!!**

**NEW FIVE AND TEN CENT STORE.**



**INTERIOR OF FARNSWORTH & McMULLEN'S STORE.**

Never in the history of Cambridge has so much excitement attended the advent of a new enterprise as that which attended the opening of the Farnsworth & McMullen five and ten cent store, at 50 Massachusetts avenue.

On Friday evening, from 7 to 10 o'clock, the store was open to the public for inspection and over three thousand persons visited the store and inspected the beautiful collection of choice china, glassware, crockery, etc. During the evening an orchestra stationed in the centre of the store played choice selections.

The greatest excitement was on Saturday morning, when the doors were opened for business, and long before the hour appointed the people began to gather, till over two thousand were in waiting when the doors were opened.

During the first three hours of the day about five thousand patrons were waited on by the sixty salesladies in attendance.

The enterprise is a good one and will supply a long-felt want to the people of Cambridge. The store is the most complete in our city, being equipped in the most modern manner with every convenience for the comfort of patrons. The cash system of the Lawson company's overhead service and since the National cash register are in use. The lighting is by the Phoenix Gas Light Co., using the Kinnman light.

The Farnsworth & McMullen syndicate intend to make their Cambridge store the best of all their stores and lovers of choice china, glassware, crockery, tinware, dry goods, notions, etc., will always find in stock the best the market affords.

Miss Addie F. Fish, the superintendent, is a most competent person, and will see that every detail for the comfort of the patrons is carried out.

Success to the enterprise.

CC May 9, 1903

## Uses: History and Proposed (Cont)

**The Apartments:** The proposed 27-unit apartment building will consist of smaller studios of approximately 400 square feet, with built in millwork furniture and optimized for small scale living. The units will be located on the 2-6th floor. There will be a common roof deck and equipment located on roof. Although the units will use passive energy plans efficient HVAC, lighting, and cooking to ensure a very low monthly cost and consumption for the future residents.

**The Retail:** Presently located in the building is Teddy's Shoes that has been in this location for nearly 100 years, and Five Spices, a new Asian Restaurant, which occupies the former Shalimar space and the rear out-massing which contains their kitchen. Also in the building is The Center for Marxist Education which has been located on the second floor for over 46 years. The upper floors are now vacant. The future plan will include spaces for the two ground floor retailers and a new community room/library space accessible by elevator to accommodate the CME, or other programming, and the apartments.

**The Architect** - Carr, Lynch & Sandell The firm was founded in 1977 as a partnership between the late Kevin Lynch, noted MIT professor of Urban Studies and Planning, and the architect/planner/public space designer Stephen Carr. In 1980 it was incorporated Carr, Lynch Associates. James Sandell joined as a principle in 1987 after nearly 20 years of collaborative efforts. In 1999 Jean Hermann became a principle after 13 years as an architect providing technical coordination and guidance for the firm's built projects. Steven Carr retired from the firm in 2001. Peter Martin re-joined the firm in 1999 and became a principle in 2002, providing leadership as an architect/planner/urban designer and exhibit designer. John Hecker rejoined CLS in 2006 as an associate to build on his specific experience in the restoration, preservation, and reuse of historic buildings.

**Owner and Developer** – Central Square Redevelopment LLC, Development Partnership: Cliff Schorer is the founder and manager of the 501(c)3 Nantucket Homes for People Inc, which built the first affordable home-ownership opportunities for qualified buyers on Nantucket Island, among the least affordable housing markets in America. The project is a successful model of how to harness good planning, and the overheated market forces to create ownership opportunities protected forever as affordable housing. Mr. Schorer also turned around The Chester, an affordable housing project on Massachusetts Avenue in Boston. He brought it back from bankruptcy, through prudent management, and ensured over 77 units of excellent quality affordable housing for the next 30 years and continuing. Mr. Schorer has also been involved in a number of historic renovations of buildings by Walter Gropius and McKim, Mead and White. Jim Gaklis is a builder and developer of fine homes and developments, and has projects as diverse as historic mill buildings converted to contemporary use, and new build high craftsmanship homes in communities including the South End, Charlestown, Nantucket, and the suburbs.

## Design Narrative

544-550 Massachusetts Avenue's is best positioned to continue the use as retail shops and has an opportunity to make a more significant contribution to the number of smaller studio residential units in the Square. The stock of studio apartments in the Square area has fallen well below demand, and from an affordability standpoint, these small units are the best solution to those displaced by the loss of lodging house units and the student demand that has put increased pressure on larger, multi-bedroom units in the square. As there are few incentives to create studio units, and even a penalty in terms of the rents that may be charged on smaller units, very few are being created. There was a 12% drop in permit applications for small units with the introduction of the reduced 25% income threshold for Affordable Studios. The projects' plan retains the existing street level mix of spaces, and adds building height, and setback to create 27 new studio apartments. The design is a compromise, to preserve the parts of the building that support the present retail and restaurant uses, and to stay well back from the rear lot line with the height increase to prevent the creation of a cavern in the rear yard of the houses on Green St. the compromise is to increase the height and reduce the upper floor massing. The height variance is one of these compromises to create less impact on the abutters. The street level facade would be dramatically improved. There is presently a rusted steel beam visible that supports the front facade of the building, and the brick is in disrepair. This will be full repointed and encapsulated and there will be an opportunity for less "after-thought" signage on the facade. The plan will also create a fully ADA compliant building which is not presently the case, and will create a secure entrance for the residential units. With the adjacent T Station and the new underground bicycle parking, the project will knit well into the transportation network and is located in a "Walker's Paradise" with all of the local food, shopping, educational and medical services.

## Copy of Community Meeting Presentation

A community meeting was held at the Cambridgeport Community Association meeting at the LBJ Apartments on January 28, 2020 at 6:00PM, and a second noticed meeting was held via Zoom on July 28th at 4:00PM. Meetings were properly noticed and abutters were invited along with the relevant Neighborhood Associations. In light of the feedback received during the first meeting, we have made a number of changes to the design and programming of the project. These changes are outlined in **Revisions to Plan after Community Meetings 2019 and 2020**. We believe we have responded to all of the objections raised to the plan with modifications to satisfy those constituents.

### See Attached PDF - Community Meeting

544-550 Mass Ave

## Central Square Redevelopment



## **Zoning Criteria and Compliance**

### **Zoning Variance**

This project is presently seeking a single Zoning Variance for Dwelling Unit per Lot Area from the by-right 20 units to 27 units to allow for smaller units. This Variance must be approved by the BZA based on hardship. The subsurface conditions are a hardship due to underground soil conditions including extensively remediated, previously petrochemical contaminated soils, the disturbance of deep soil to fully remediate the site contamination leading to unsuitable footing material, the lot size and shape, the pre-existing historical easements that prevent use of a portion of the lot, and small footprint of the building necessitate the limiting of the individual unit sizes to very small floor-plate sizes. The application for this relief is presently before the BZA, but the applicant has been advised by the BZA to continue that meeting until the Planning Board has the opportunity to fully review the application and then we may return to the BZA with the PB decision and they will consider the application. This process will allow the Planning Board's determinations and directions to take priority over the BZA process.

In all other regards, this project conforms to the applicable Cambridge Zoning Ordinance requirements for this Business B District within the Central Square Overlay District.

This Matter is before the Zoning Board of Appeals as:

**BZA-017219-2019**

**CENTRAL SQUARE REDEVELOPMENT LLC**

**Variance: To build a 27-unit micro-studio apartment building.**

**Art. 5.000, Sec. 5.33 (Table of Dimensional Requirements) & Art. 10.000,  
Sec. 10.30 (Variance)**

## Stormwater Management Notes

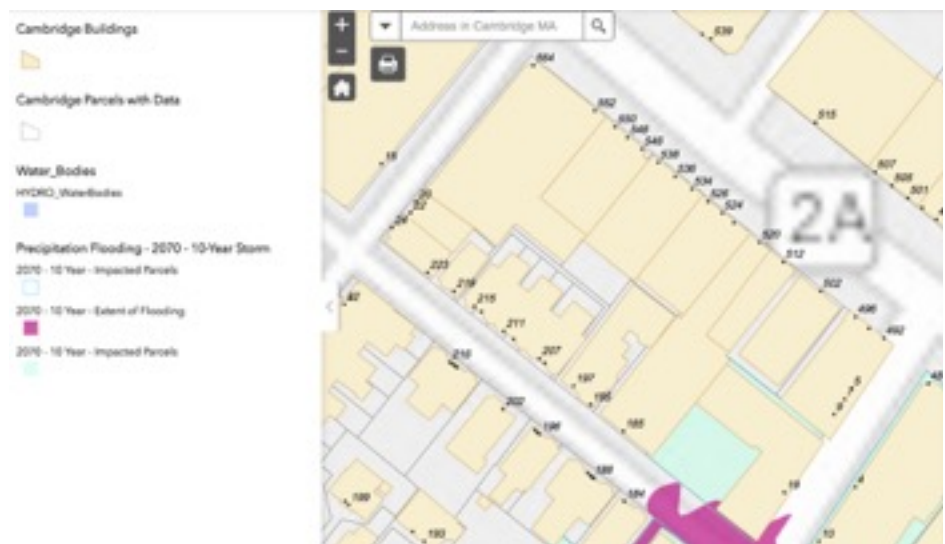
Under the City Land Disturbance Regulations, although the site is under all other thresholds, due to the project requiring a Special Permit from the Planning Board, the Applicant will need to obtain a Stormwater Control Permit from the Department of Public Works. The permit requirements cover the design standards and long term operation and maintenance of a management system for the project site, as well as the construction phase erosion and sedimentation control plans.

The applicant will submit the required Stormwater Control Permit application and detail for thorough review of the design. This will be completed at the time of Building Permit submission and Stormwater Control Permit submission.

Additional study data for underground soil conditions at the site are to be included in the BZA application regarding unique subsurface conditions at the site.

## Notes to 2015 Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment & Storm Watch

The project parcel has not been identified as one with increased flood elevations associated with future projected design storm events as presented in the November 2015 Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment. There are no known or expected flood event possibilities in the area of the property. Dataset: City of Cambridge Flood Viewer 2021



## Utility Provision

The site is provided with all necessary utilities and has recently undergone subsurface construction and the creation of a vault under the sidewalk to provide necessary sprinkler water supply and new gas lines. This urban Infill Development is consistent with strategic planning and development plans for Central Square as, “it requires far less new infrastructure, public or private, to serve the occupants within a fully developed network of utility services, transit and diverse community resources.”

## Built Form Massing

Central Square’s buildings primarily date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The general Mass Avenue façades are 1-5 story with a number of taller buildings representing periods of prosperity and dynamism in Central Square. The large number of single story buildings represent periods when the economic sustainability of the upper stories was uncertain or impossible, and owners decided to reduce the scale of their own buildings to reduce costs from unproductive upper floors, or more often, the dilapidated buildings needed to be deconstructed to allow an owner to generate revenue from the ground floor as public transit made Central Square a destination for great shopping in the 20th Century. The diversity of styles and materials creates a dynamic streetscape, if dated, and with the alignment and zero lot line setbacks, a very urban context, creating an inviting retail mix.

The proposed infill development is completely consistent in its basic form and massing with the previously established streetscape of Central Square, and generally follows the Central Square Design Guidelines. The shared firewall design and the zero lot lines, and the height consistent with the adjacent buildings, including the immediate neighbor, are completely consistent with the neighborhood. Ground floor retail on a small and local scale with glazed facades and quirky design are also part of the DNA of the neighborhood. The only novel concept that has been added to the design guidelines in the recent decades is the step-back of the upper floors to break up the verticality. This design complies with those ideas, and the “contemporary” views on urban quality of life as buildings exceed the previous height limitations. In this case it also provides a demarcation between the old and the new, in a subtle way, that demonstrates the evolution of the urban façade.

With an expectation that in some prosperous future moment for Central Square, when the opportunity arises, the Target site will represent a prime opportunity to create additional developed space consistent with the Envision Plan and future plans for Central Square, and therefore until that day, the large exposed façade facing Mass Ave will be an opportunity for some public art rather than a wall of windows that will one day be blocked by future development. At present there is an exposed wall on the Dance Complex building, and the lower wall on 544-550 Mass Ave that have been magnets for graffiti for decades. This infill vertical wall will provide an opportunity for a signature work to channel some of that artistic energy.



## Façade Designs and Details

### Massachusetts Avenue Façade:

The building's Massachusetts Avenue façade, with its brick and keystone design cladding second to the third floor, punched and vertically grouped windows, and glazed retail ground floor, is compatible with the prevalent façades of Central Square. The building is approximately 45' across which naturally breaks into three 15' vignettes to reduce scale. This has been the historical arrangement since the construction of the building circa 1902, after the collapse of the early 19th Century historic building on this site. The triple bay style windows above and the pedestrian entrance to access the upper floor offices will be retained. The proportions will also be maintained at street level, to retain the character of this "expected" old friend. The delineation from old to new will be broken by the step back on the upper floors and despite the replacement of all window, and extensive repairs to the façade, the streetscape will feel improved but familiar.

On the newly added upper floors as the building steps back both over the exit easement and the residential spaces, the materials have been chosen to minimize the visual impact and conflict with the historic red brick. A gray palette of smooth and glazed flat materials, in essentially two tones of gray/taupe and a window scape that echoes the arrangement below will keep the upper floors from screaming out for attention. An entirely different approach would be taken for ground up construction, with opportunities for bolder design, but as the existing retailers are to remain, and the effort will be made to restore the existing façade, this is the solution that fits the practical requirement, and given the constraints,, although there is no great nostalgic love for this generic building, the HDC favors this approach. The historic Signage from Teddy's Shoes will remain at the discretion of the retailer, as they own these brands and signage.

### Visible Side Façade:

The facade facing Mass Ave above the 2nd story will be partially visible from Mass Ave heading to the river and from the upper stories of the buildings down Mass Ave. This will be a minimally fenestrated smooth wall and will accommodate a large public art installation. The development will seek input from community stakeholders and artists on the best utilization of this space. The ownership is committed to public art, and will pursue this opportunity as the project is developed.

### Green Street Façade:

There will be little to no visibility from the rear of the property as there is solid row of facades facing Green Street to to rear of the building. Also with the Target Store out-massing and the backyards of the houses on Green the setback from Green such that the historic townhouse façades will completely retain the historic character and appearance of Green Street.

## Side Elevations, Surrounding Future Development

As has been mentioned the opportunity to utilize the Harvard facing façade above the 2nd story for more elaborate architecture, fenestration, or outdoor spaces or terraces has been ruled out as in a few decades there may be an increase in height at 564 Mass Ave, a much larger and deeper site that encloses 544-550 on two sides. The decision therefore has been taken to leave this elevation as a space for public art until future development on the adjacent site. Conversations were held between the owners in 2019 to explore the options of a joint project on the upper floors, but as there are long-term leases in place at 564 and extensive mechanical on the roof of that building, there was little that could happen economically until a distant future date.



## Green Street Backyards and Shadow Minimization

It has been determined through a simple shadow projection that there will be little to no impact on the adjacent properties including the row-houses on Green Street which have small backyards. The entirety of the shadow impact on the three sides of the building other than the Mass Ave Façade, which is here addressed separately, all shadow will be cast onto roadway and adjacent roof surfaces. This can easily be demonstrated by the setback on three sides of the property which is greater than 70 feet or exceeded in height by adjacent structures. There can therefore definitely be no impacting any residential neighbor. On the Mass Ave facade, using the step-back and proposed elevation, the shadow cast to the centerline of Mass Avenue will be extended by approximately 8' on the Spring and Fall Equinox at 3:00PM. This shadow will not reach the opposite sidewalk as it does not now, and will be approximately 8' shorter than the shadow presently cast by 536 Mass Ave, the Dance Complex Building, due to the step-backs of the upper floors. In Winter on the Solstice at 12:00PM, there will be a narrow angled sliver of shadow in the middle of Mass Ave adjacent to the Dance Complex Shadow, and at 3:00PM, the most extreme shadow event of the year, the shadow will extend approximately 6 feet further onto the roof of 541 Mass Ave, which it presently reaches and covers approximately 9'. No known Registered Solar System is affected by the proposed building.

### Most Extreme Shadow Impacts During the Year



Existing Shadow  
Equinox 3:00 PM



Proposed Shadow  
Equinox 3:00 PM



Existing Shadow  
Solstice 3:00 PM



Proposed Shadow  
Solstice 3:00 PM

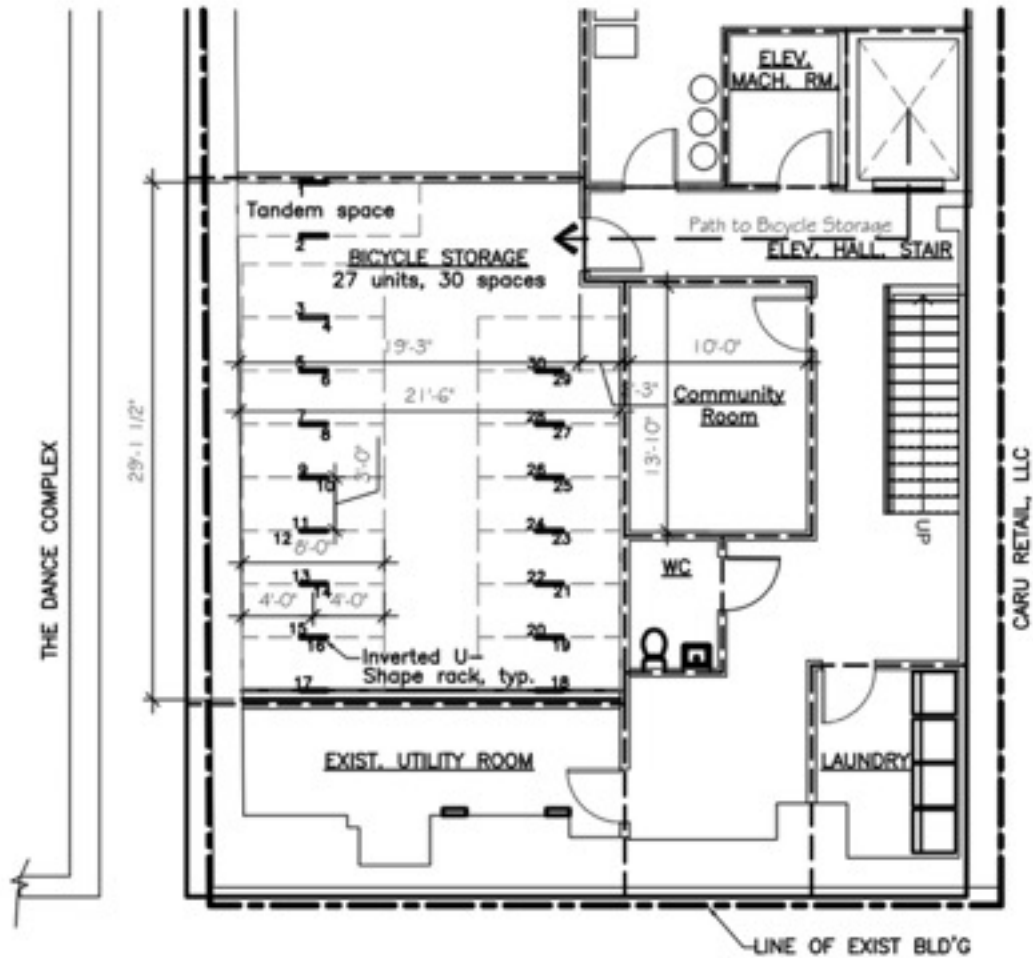
## Sidewalk improvements and Vault

The sidewalk has recently been disturbed by the replacement of an underground vault and utilities and a temporary sidewalk resurfacing was done by the City of Cambridge. We have been assured that the final replacement sidewalk will address the uneven surface and non-ADA compliant slope at the sidewalk. We will coordinate those repairs so there will be no further disturbance of the work contemplated as part of the sidewalk plan. The plan includes a new interface with the sidewalk to create a completely ADA compliant entrance to the elevator lobby at 550 Mass Ave and the retail entrances. As has previously been approved the restaurant ADA entrance may need to remain as at present, unless grade changes will allow a revised slope to the front entrance of the existing Five Spices Restaurant.



## Bicycle Parking and Storage

The proposed new building will accommodate 27 residential units and street level retail and a total of 30 bicycle parking spaces in a one-level, below-grade basement area created for the purpose which meets specifications for long term bicycle and transient bicycle storage. In addition the project will provide payment in lieu for guest parking racks through the City. With the adjacent T Station and the new underground bicycle parking, the project will knit well into the transportation network and is located in a “Walker’s Paradise” with all of the local food, shopping, educational and medical services.



## Central Square Business Improvement District

The new owners of the building were early supporters of the Central Square BID, and gladly signed the petitions and agreements. We feel it has done some excellent work, especially during Covid, to help businesses during this challenging period for retailers and local residents. The outreach to the homeless is an area we care deeply about as well, and have been pleased with some of the local initiatives. We will continue to offer our support to the BID team!

### Housing Type, Need and Affordability

The project converts 8,000 square feet of obsolete and functionally obsolescent office space: when completed, there will be approximately 15,000 square feet of newly built apartments. The design creates (27) 400 +/- square foot studio apartments with built in mill-worked features to allow for efficient small scale living.

There is no doubt that allowing these additional twenty seven smaller housing units will provide a dramatic social good, and have no demonstrable downside from a housing perspective, and are perfectly located in the Square which was the historic center of lodging, rooming, and SRO housing. As every study demonstrates more units, especially rental units, will ease housing pressure, and not every one of them can be \$4,000 - \$6,000 per month, multi-bedroom, luxury units, as most new development is offering.

### Cambridge Zoning Ordinance Special Permit Criteria Notes to Special Permits Requested

Planning Board Special Permit relief is requested pursuant to Central Square Overlay District provisions set forth in CZO Section 20.304 as follows (see additional narrative on additional Special Permits Requested in Section 1 of submittal):

**A.** Project requires special permit relief pursuant to Sec. 20.304.3.4 to allow for a total FAR of 4.0 for non-residential and residential uses combined, and meets all of the requirements of this provision, as further described below.

Note: In order to grant the Special Permit, this Project requires the Planning Board in accordance with the following sections and to exclude them from floor area calculations:

- (i) ground-floor retail spaces equal to or less than 1,500 square feet – under Sec. 20.304.3.7. Existing Teddy's Shoes, Ground Floor, 1059 square feet.

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(ii) balconies -- exempt under Sec. 20.304.3.5.

(iii) rooftop spaces – exempt under Sec. 20.304.3.6.

(iv) basement areas - exempt for community uses- Article 2.000

### **NOTES TO 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). 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. For a full and accurate calculation of FAR and GFA see FAR Calculations Worksheet.

## Cambridge Zoning Ordinance Special Permit Criteria Notes to Special Permits Requested (Cont.)

**B.** The project requires special permit relief pursuant to Sec. 20.304.2.2.a to increase the height of the building to 69'6".

### NOTES TO BUILDING HEIGHT

The applicant is requesting a special permit to increase the building height under Section 20.304.2(2)(a). The Central Square Overlay District zoning imposes an 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, 69.5 feet, is under the maximum height limit. The proposed plans show that the building is also in conformance with the other standards

**C.** Project requires special permit waiver of yard setbacks and open-space requirements under Section 20.304.4:

### NOTES TO YARD SETBACK 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. Although 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 the Massachusetts Avenue frontage, and shares a party wall with buildings on its other three elevations. As the application states, this is characteristic of other buildings on the block and in Central Square generally.

The proposed building will include balconies and roof deck. 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.



## Cambridge Zoning Ordinance Special Permit Criteria Notes to Special Permits Requested (Cont.)

D. Project requires special permit waiver of parking and loading requirements pursuant to Sec. 20.304.6.3. With no on-site parking, the project will seek special permit waivers based on:

- (i) exemption for parking and loading for uses proposed within the existing building (constructed prior to 1940), and the total development authorized on the site is reduced to ninety (90) percent of the maximum permitted on the lot.

### NOTES TO OFF-STREET PARKING AND LOADING

The applicant is seeking a waiver of parking and loading requirements under Section 20.304.6(3)(b) since there is no opportunity to provide parking or loading. 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. As this lot is under 5,000 square feet, has never had parking, nor access to a roadway for vehicular parking, and will be under the 90% threshold, the applicant meets the requirements of the Special Permit. The proposed use will reduce the actual traffic in the area from the existing uses, will create small units near transportation hubs, and will intentionally discourage vehicle ownership by residents through incentives to use public transportation and bicycles. As the project is creating additional inclusionary units, providing new bicycle parking, and providing a net reduction in traffic to the site, the applicant seeks to waive any discretionary fees to create or encourage off-site parking.

Please see the separate information in the Traffic Study for additional comments on the parking proposal.

### Bicycle Parking

The applicant will provide 30 long-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, at the City's direction.

# Compliance with Citywide Urban Design Objectives

## 19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives

Objective	Indicators
<p>New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.</p>	Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods
	• Consistency with established streetscape
	• Compatibility with adjacent uses
<p>Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.</p>	• Consistent with historic con
	• Active ground floor spaces
	• Discouraged ground-floor parking
	• Ground floor 50% plus transparent
	• Provide safe pedestrian pathways
<p>The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.</p>	• Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
	• Location/impact of mechanical equipment
	• Location/impact of loading and trash handling
	• Stormwater management
	• Shadow impacts
	• Hiding trash storage
	• Building scale and wall treatment
	• Outdoor lighting
• Attractive streetscape, plantings where possible	

## Central Square Action Plan and Development Guidelines, 1987 – Summary of Relevant Design Principles and Guidelines

Objective	Indicators
This Building is listed as #33 in the chart of potential development sites in “Central Square to MIT”, underutilized with an FAR of 2.0	Maintain a strong retail frontage
	Encourage Residential and Mixed Uses
	Improve streetscape and walkability
	Retain most important historic buildings
Encourage ground level retail on Mass Ave and discourage surrounding retail to limit complaints from neighborhood	Focus on Mass Ave for Retail
	Improved walkability
	Reduce Noise in the Neighborhood
	MBTA Enhancements
	Complimentary business signage
Encourage Mixed income development with incentives, Raise building heights to 85’ and FAR to 4.0 in this area. Raise unit count per lot area.	Meets 85’ maximum recommendation
	FAR 4.0 plus inclusionary incentives
	Increased unit count per lot area
	Reduces parking needs, especially transient
	Meets all limits suggested by plan
	Plan outlines became de facto Zoning
	Meets all goals and objectives

## Envision Cambridge 2019 - Summary of Relevant Design Principles and Guidelines

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. In these areas the plan asserts that, “Any redevelopment should affirm the squares and corridors as the mixed-use centers of civic life, accommodating greater densities than the surrounding neighborhoods to strengthen the mix of uses and incentivize sustainable transportation choices such as walking, bicycling, and public transit. In addition, new development along the corridors can support Cambridge’s independent retail businesses.” The plan specifically calls for housing above ground floor retail, affordable housing, and greater densities to achieve these goals. It recognizes the need to restore older buildings and for changes or use, mixes use, and creative redevelopment to be part of the future of these districts.

Envision provides graphics and states that the scale of development in the Squares should reference and compliment the scale of existing buildings.

This project meets all the stated design objectives in the plan and further significantly reduces the per capita greenhouse gas impacts and environmental goals of the plan through smaller units per person, efficient design, environmental remediation of existing contaminated site and knits perfectly into the fiber of Cambridge’s celebrated Squares and Major Mixed Use Corridors, of which Central Square is and should remain the transportation hub and the actual *Heart of the City*.



## Special Permit for Increase in Building Height and FAR in Central Square Overlay District

**20.304.2 Building Height Limitations.** The maximum height of buildings in the Central Square Overlay District shall be governed by the requirements of this Section 20.304.2; however, at locations where the base zoning district establishes a more restrictive height limitation, the more restrictive shall apply.

1. *As of Right Height Limitations.* The maximum height of any building shall be fifty-five (55) feet except as further limited below:

(a) Where the lot abuts Bishop Allen Drive or Prospect Street between Bishop Allen Drive and Harvard Street, any portion of the building above forty-five (45) feet shall be set back behind a forty-five degree (45°) bulk control plane beginning at an elevation of forty-five (45) feet above the front lot lines on Bishop Allen Drive and/or Prospect Street and rising over one or more lots at a forty-five degree (45°) angle.

(b) Where the Residence C-2A district serves as the base district, the maximum height shall be forty-five feet. No additional height shall be permitted in this district notwithstanding any provision in Paragraph 2 below.

2. *Special Permit for Additional Height.* Additional height may be permitted as follows:

(a) The maximum allowable height in the Central Square Overlay District may be increased up to eighty (80) feet upon issuance of a Special Permit by the Planning Board provided that those portions in excess of sixty (60) feet are set back from the street line at least ten (10) feet and that those portions are also set back from one or more forty-five degree (45°) bulk control planes beginning sixty (60) feet above any streetline in the district and rising over one or more lots at a forty-five degree (45°) angle.

(b) Where the lot abuts Bishop Allen Drive, or Prospect Street where the lot lies in a Business A District, and where the lot lies within a Business A District, any portion of the building above forty-five (45) feet shall be set back behind a forty-five degree (45°) bulk control plane beginning at an elevation of forty-five (45) feet above (1) the front lot lines on Bishop Allen Drive and/or Prospect Street and (2) any residential zoning district line abutting the Business A District, and rising over one or more lots at a forty-five degree (45°) angle.

3. The bulk control plane restrictions of Paragraphs 1 and 2 above may be waived by the Planning Board upon issuance of a Special Permit.

# Special Permit for Waiver of Setback and Open Space Requirements in Central Square Overlay District

## 20.304.4 *Waiver of Setback and Open Space Requirements.*

1. *Yard Setbacks.* Upon issuance of a special permit from the Planning Board the yard requirements of a base zoning district may be waived except where such yard abuts a lot, but not a public way, outside the Overlay District. However, in waiving or reducing a front yard setback, the Planning Board shall take into account the width of the adjacent public sidewalk and may limit the reduction of the setback in order to provide additional sidewalk width within the front yard setback where appropriate, taking into account applicable City standards and expected pedestrian traffic on the street.

2. *Private Open Space.* Open Space shall be provided as required in the Base Zoning District, however the Planning Board may allow, by Special Permit, the reduction of required Open Space, and permit such Open Space to be located at levels other than at grade if the applicant can demonstrate that the urban design objectives as set forth in the Central Square Overlay District can be met.

## Special Permit for Waiver of Parking & Loading Requirements in Central Square Overlay District

**20.304.6** Parking and Loading Requirements. The provisions set forth in Article 6.000 shall apply except as modified by the provisions set below.

1. Maximum Parking. Where any of the following listed uses are established in the Central Square Overlay District as of August 1, 2016, the accessory off-street parking for such uses shall be limited by the maximum rates set forth below. For uses not listed below, any maximum rate set forth in Article 6.000 shall apply. Exceeding the maximum allowed parking shall require a waiver of maximum parking under the general provisions of Article 6.000.

(a) Residential Uses (6.36.1), excluding Hotel and Motel (i-2 and i-3): 0.75 space per dwelling unit

(b) Hotel or Motel Uses (6.36.1 i-2 or i-3): 0.25 space per sleeping room

(c) Office Uses (6.36.4), excluding Technical Office (f): 0.90 space per 1,000 square feet

(d) Technical Office Uses (6.36.4 f): 0.80 space per 1,000 square feet

(e) Retail and Consumer Service Establishments (6.36.5): 0.50 space per 1,000 square feet

2. Minimum Parking and Loading. The minimum parking and loading requirements as specified in Section 6.36 Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements shall apply except as set forth below:

(a) For Residential Uses (6.36.1), excluding Hotel and Motel (i-2 and i-3), the minimum required parking ratio shall be 0.50 space per dwelling unit.

(b) Where the minimum number of parking spaces derived from the requirements of Article 6.000 is greater than the maximum number of parking spaces derived from Paragraph 1 above, the minimum required number of parking spaces shall be reduced to the greatest number that conforms to the maximum requirements derived from Paragraph 1 above.

3. Waiver of Parking and Loading Requirements. Uses in the Central Square Overlay District which meet the following requirements shall be exempt from the parking and loading requirements as specified in Section 6.36 - Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements and the minimum requirements set forth in Paragraph 2 above. (a) The use is contained within a structure or portion of a structure in existence on or before June 1, 1940 or if constructed later is identified as a National Register or contributing building; or

## Special Permit for Waiver of Parking & Loading Requirements in Central Square Overlay District

(cont.)

(b) The use is contained in a new structure or new addition to a structure identified in (1.) above, after the issuance of a special permit by the Planning Board provided:

- (i) The total development authorized on the site is reduced to ninety (90) percent of the maximum permitted on the lot; or a cash contribution is made to the Central Square Improvement Fund to be established by the City of Cambridge in an amount equal to fifty (50) percent of the cost of construction of the parking spaces not provided, said contribution to be used by the City of Cambridge for one or more of the following improvements in the Central Square Overlay District:
  - (1) Provision of public parking, preferably for short term users;
  - (2) Programming, events, and infrastructure that contribute to the Cultural District established in Central Square;
  - (3) Improvements to public parks, or restoration of historic structures, monuments and other features owned by the City of Cambridge or other public agency or a nonprofit organization;
  - (4) Improvements to public pedestrian and bicycle facilities such as sidewalks, crosswalks, dedicated cycling paths and bicycle parking.

The Central Square Advisory Committee shall receive and make comments on any proposal for the expenditure of such cash contributions. The funds shall not be used for ordinary maintenance activities normally undertaken by the City of Cambridge. The value of the cash contribution shall be determined by the Community Development Department assuming equivalent structured parking spaces and using generally accepted cost estimation methods customarily used by architects and engineers or using actual construction costs for comparable contemporary parking construction in Cambridge.

- (ii) The 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 (for lots exceeding 10,000 square feet a specific finding shall be made that this objective has been met).
- (iii) The Planning Board shall specifically find that an 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 and that it is in conformance with the objectives and criteria contained in Central Square Development Guidelines.



## Special Permit for Waiver of Parking & Loading Requirements in Central Square Overlay District (cont.)

- (iv) No National Register or contributing building is demolished or so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation as a National Register or contributing building; and
- (v) No National Register or contributing building has been demolished or altered so as to terminate or preclude its designation within the five (5) years preceding the application.

**6.35.1** Reduction of Required Parking. Any minimum required amount of parking may be reduced only upon issuance of a special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeals. A special permit shall be granted only if the Board determines and cites evidence in its decision that the lesser amount of parking will not cause excessive congestion, endanger public safety, substantially reduce parking availability for other uses or otherwise adversely impact the neighborhood, or that such lesser amount of parking will provide positive environmental or other benefits to the users of the lot and the neighborhood, including specifically, among other benefits, assisting in the provision of affordable housing units. In making such a determination the Board shall also consider whether or not less off street parking is reasonable in light of the following:

(1) The availability of surplus off street parking in the vicinity of the use being served and/or the proximity of an MBTA transit station.

(2) The availability of public or commercial parking facilities in the vicinity of the use being served provided the requirements of Section 6.23 are satisfied.

(3) Shared use of off street parking spaces serving other uses having peak user demands at different times, provided that no more than seventy-five (75) percent of the lesser minimum parking requirements for each use shall be satisfied with such shared spaces and that the requirements of Subsection 6.23 are satisfied.

(4) Age or other occupancy restrictions which are likely to result in a lower level of auto usage; and

(5) Impact of the parking requirement on the physical environment of the affected lot or the adjacent lots including reduction in green space, destruction of significant existing trees and other vegetation, destruction of existing dwelling units, significant negative impact on the historic resources on the lot, impairment of the urban design objectives of the city as set forth in Section 19.30 of the Zoning Ordinance, or loss of pedestrian amenities along public ways.

(6) The provision of required parking for developments containing affordable housing units, and especially for developments employing the increased FAR and Dwelling unit density provisions of Section 11.200, will increase the cost of the development, will require variance relief from other zoning requirements applicable to the development because of limitations of space on the lot, or will significantly diminish the environmental quality for all residents of the development.

## Special Permit for Exemption of Basement Area in the Calculation of Gross Floor Area

### 2.000 DEFINITIONS:

*Floor Area Gross*

*Gross Floor Area shall not include:*

- (15) Any basement or cellar living space in any single-family or two-family home.
- (16) Any basement or cellar living space in any other type of structure with the issuance of a special permit. In granting such a special permit, the permit granting authority may approved the exemption of any portion of Gross Floor Area (GFA) located in a basement or cellar from the calculation of GFA, provided the permit granting authority finds that 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 – Traffic Impact Findings

**19.25.1** Traffic Impact Findings. Where a Traffic Study is required as set forth in Section 19.24 (3) above the Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area as analyzed in the Traffic Study. Substantial adverse impact on city traffic shall be measured by reference to the traffic impact indicators set forth in Section 19.25.11 below.

In areas where the Planning Board determines that area-specific traffic guidelines have been established in the Ordinance, the Board recognizes written agreements between project proponents and the City dealing with transportation mitigation strategies.

**19.25.11** Traffic Impact Indicators. In determining whether a proposal has substantial adverse impacts on city traffic the Planning Board shall apply the following indicators. When one or more of the indicators is exceeded, it will be indicative of potentially substantial adverse impact on city traffic. In making its findings, however, the Planning Board shall consider the mitigation efforts proposed, their anticipated effectiveness, and other supplemental information that identifies circumstances or actions that will result in a reduction in adverse traffic impacts. Such efforts and actions may include, but are not limited to, transportation demand management plans; roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities improvements; measures to reduce traffic on residential streets; and measures undertaken to improve safety for pedestrians and vehicles, particularly at intersections identified in the Traffic Study as having a history of high crash rates.

The indicators are: (1) Project vehicle trip generation weekdays and weekends for a twenty-four hour period and A. M. and P.M. peak vehicle trips generated; (2) Change in level of service at identified signalized intersections; (3) Increased volume of trips on residential streets; (4) Increase of length of vehicle queues at identified signalized intersections; and (5) Lack of sufficient pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The precise numerical values that will be deemed to indicate potentially substantial adverse impact for each of these indicators shall be adopted from time to time by the Planning Board in consultation with the TPTD, published and made available to all applicants.

## Project Compliance Special Permit – Urban Design Findings

**19.25.2** Urban Design Findings. The Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the city as set forth in Section 19.30. In making that determination the Board may be guided by or make reference to urban design guidelines or planning reports that may have been developed for specific areas of the city and shall apply the standards herein contained in a reasonable manner to nonprofit religious and educational organizations in light of the special circumstances applicable to nonprofit religious and educational activities.

### **19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives**

The following urban design objectives are intended to provide guidance to property owners and the general public as to the city's policies with regard to the form and character desirable for new development in the city. It is understood that application of these principles can vary with the context of specific building proposals in ways that, nevertheless, fully respect the policies' intent. It is intended that proponents of projects, and city staff, the Planning Board and the general public, where public review or approval is required, should be open to creative variations from the detailed provisions presented in this Section as long as the core values expressed are being served. A project need not meet all the objectives of this Section 19.30 where this Section serves as the basis for issuance of a special permit. Rather the permit granting authority shall find that on balance the objectives of the city are being served. Nor shall a project subject to special permit review be required to conform to the Required Building and Site Plan Requirements set forth in Section 19.50.

Further indicators of conformance with these policy objectives shall be found in planning documents and plans developed for specific areas of the city or the city as a whole, to the extent that they are not inconsistent with the objectives set forth in this Section 19.30. These documents include the *Harvard Square Development Guidelines*, the *Central Square Action Plan*, the *Central Square Development Guidelines*, the *North Massachusetts Avenue Urban Design Guidelines Handbook*, the *University Park at MIT Urban Design Guidelines*, the *North Point Policy Plan and Design Guidelines*, the *Cambridge Institutional Growth Management Plan*, the *East Cambridge Riverfront Plan*, the *Eastern Cambridge Plan*, the *Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines*, the *Alewife Revitalization, Alewife Urban Design Study Phase II* and its Draft update of 1991, and *Toward a Sustainable Future: Cambridge Growth Policy Document*.

## General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit

### COMPLIANCE - GENERAL SPECIAL PERMIT CRITERIA (SEC. 10.43)

Granting of the Planning Board special permit for the project at 544-550 Massachusetts Avenue will not be to the detriment of the public interest for the reasons described here:

(a) The requirements of the Ordinance can and will be met. This project conforms with the Ordinance requirements in all respects except as to those elements that are eligible for special permit relief or are subject to a requirement for a BZA variance as Dwelling Unit per Lot Area, described above, the latter to be decided by the Cambridge BZA at the conclusion of the Special Permit process.

(b) Traffic generated or patterns of access or egress will not cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character. This project, located one block from the MBTA Central Square train station and bus stops, will in fact reduce traffic or changes to access or egress the site. Further, the renovation of the existing building will result the replacement of a dilapidated building in a prominent location in Central Square and bring it up to the standards of the surrounding buildings while retaining the local character of the building and the neighborhood.

(c) The project will not adversely effect the neighbors or neighborhood and will bring a small number of residents to this block to help sustain the retailers and foodservice in the immediate neighborhood without creating additional vehicular traffic.

(d) There will be no nuisance nor hazard created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City. For reasons already described, the project will not be cause for nuisance or hazard detrimental to the neighborhood or the community.

(e) The proposed use will not impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance. The project will create improved ground-floor retail opportunities within the existing building, improved, extremely desirable and rare small apartments, including 5 new inclusionary units within the district. Such uses will be a benefit to the Central Square business district and the residents and visitors to the City of Cambridge. The project achieves a number of the stated goals of the Central Square Overlay District, and given the complexity and cost of renovating a building around existing retailers and in a tight urban infill location with previous sub-surface petrochemical contamination, the compromises here are thoughtful, creative and are otherwise impossible without this relief.

(f) The new and renovation building construction is also consistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30, as well as consistent with the Central Square Development Guidelines published by the Development Department in 2013.

### COMPLIANCE - CENTRAL SQUARE OVERLAY (SEC. 20.305(1) – (5))

The Project meets the following standards for issuance of special permits being sought pursuant to the Central Square Overlay District set forth in Sec. 20.305(1) through (5):

The proposed development is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Central Square Action Plan:

**“Encourage responsible and orderly development”**: This Project will constitute a responsible development consistent with long-term goals of the Central Square community.

**“Strengthen the retail base to more completely serve the needs of the neighborhoods”**: The entire building will be ADA compliant and attractive and inviting. This will help the retailers to attract larger and more diverse clientele.

**“Preserve the Square's cultural diversity”**: Our building has always been culturally diverse and with the addition of a residential, and significantly more affordable housing component that continue.

**“Create active people-oriented spaces”**: In addition to the residential unit, this project creates a new community space with library for the CME and other community groups to host meetings and discussions. The building will continue, as it has been for 40 years, a place for dynamic and challenging ideas.

**“Improve the physical, and visual environment”**: The project will renovate a dilapidated and obsolete building to provide useful ADA compliant spaces. The addition of an elevator will remove the present barriers and 544-550 Mass Ave will be ready and beautified for its next century.

• **“Provide retail establishments that serve people of diverse economic and social groups who live in the surrounding neighborhoods”**: The building has always served small retailers and restaurateurs who serve the diverse local communities, and with this improvement it will also be ADA compliant to enhance the tradition, and renovated to provide more accommodating spaces.

**“Encourage the development of new mixed income housing”**: This project will create 27 new residential units, 5 inclusionary units, which rent at 25% of the applicant's income, the least expensive option. This project will make a significant contribution of smaller units, so rare, yet desperately needed in the Square now that abundant affordable housing has been absent for decades.

**“Promote compatible retail adjacent to residential uses”**: The Project will renovate the ground floor retail near residential uses in Central Square.

## COMPLIANCE WITH CRITERIA SPECIFIC TO SPECIAL PERMIT BEING SOUGHT

The Project complies in all respects with the specific criteria to the special permits being sought from the Planning Board, including as follows:

**1. Special Permit for Additional FAR for Residential Uses Pursuant to Sec. 20.304.3.4:** “Upon issuance of a special permit, the Planning Board may increase the allowed FAR on any lot or portion of a lot located within the Business B (BB) portion of the Central Square Overlay District to a total FAR of 4.00 for all nonresidential and residential uses combined, notwithstanding the Rules for Calculation of Permitted Gross Floor Area on a Lot as set forth in Section 5.30.12, provided that the maximum FAR permitted for nonresidential uses on a lot shall 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 shall not exceed the proposed FAR of all residential uses on the lot.” The project FAR calculations meet the above requirements. Please see attached worksheet from Carr, Lynch & Sandell and Dimensional Sheet.

**2. Special Permit for Additional Height of 80 feet Pursuant to Sec. 20.304.2.2.a:** “The maximum allowable height in the Central Square Overlay District may be increased up to eighty (80) feet upon issuance of a Special Permit by the Planning Board provided that those portions in excess of sixty (60) feet are set back from the street line at least ten (10) feet and that those portions are also set back from one or more forty-five degree (45°) bulk control planes beginning sixty (60) feet above any streetline in the district and rising over one or more lots at a forty-five degree (45°) angle.” The project plans show that the building meets the requirements and conditions, including 69’6” feet height, 10 feet setback (above 60 feet), and the bulk control planes described above.

**3. Special Permit for Waiver of Yard Setbacks and Open-Space Requirements Pursuant to Section 20.304.4:** “Although 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.” In granting this special permit, the Planning Board must determine that the Central Square Overlay District urban design objectives are met under Article 2.000 and Section 5.22 of the Zoning Ordinance. As the application states, this is characteristic of other buildings on the block and in Central Square generally and meets the goals of the ordinances.

## COMPLIANCE WITH CRITERIA SPECIFIC TO SPECIAL PERMIT BEING SOUGHT (Cont.)

**4. Special Permit for Waiver of Parking and Loading Requirements Pursuant to Sec. 20.304.6.3:** “Uses contained within the existing structure in existence before 1940 shall be exempt from parking and loading requirements of Section 6.36 of the Ordinance.” With respect to uses in the new addition to be constructed, special permit requirements and criteria, as follows, are or will be met by this project:

(a) “The 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”. The lot size of 4,391 is below half of the 10,000 threshold, and the existing, historic structure covers all of the buildable lot. The only land available is an easement 5’ wide whose soils may not be structural due to prior environmental remediation.

(b) “The Planning Board shall specifically find that an 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 and that it is in conformance with the objectives and criteria contained in Central Square Development Guidelines”; This project meets the requirement for an exemption as a requirement for onsite parking or loading facilities is inappropriate to this location and the fabric of this block of Mass Ave which has no curb cuts, nor onsite visible parking. It would also render this project unfeasible, due to the existing building and limited land on which to construct the foundation to the new addition.

(c) “No National Register or contributing building is demolished or so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation as a National Register or contributing building”; The existing building is not on the National Registry, is not eligible for membership, nor does it represent an important historical asset for the Square. The esthetic improvements contemplated by this Permit will improve the contribution of the building to the streetscapes and the utility of the building for the local area.

(d) “No National Register or contributing building has been demolished or altered so as to terminate or preclude its designation within the five (5) years preceding the application.” No building has been demolished on this site since 1906. In conclusion, the project fully meets the specific special permit criteria set forth in Sec.20.305



## Revisions to Plan after Community Meetings

During both community meetings and the Central Square Advisory Committee Meetings where this plan was discussed in 2019 and early 2020, there was robust opposition to the change in use to residential by one existing tenant. There were a number of supporters who came to the meetings mostly from the local dance and arts community to add voice to the opposition. For the 4-years prior to the application there was a dance studio which was available for hourly rental on the top floor of the building called Studio-550. The studio hosted 300 people per week for dance instructions and presentations and it was a dynamic and exciting use. The Central Square Dance Community is strong and has deep roots. The adjacent Dance Center and the Green Street Studios, along with Teddy's Shoes, in our building, which has historically served the local dancers with Capezios and tap shoes, made Central Square the "Center for Dance". Although the studio was a temporary use on a tenant-at-will basis in the building, the tenant was aware from the outset that the use was going to change in the future, and the space was distinctly unsuitable for a long-term, sustainable dance operation, it was what was needed by the art's community at the time, very cheap space. The message was received loud and clear and over the next 9 months, we worked with Studio-550 to relocate to a new facility. Although Covid has delayed the Studio's reopening, we are pleased we were able to offer a long period of free rent while they relocated and we look forward to their reopening in a new ADA compliant location. As a result of this concession and assistance, all parties are very pleased with the outcome.

Another issue that was raised is the future of The Center for Marxist Education, which has also been an occupant in the building for decades. The former owner of the building supported the Center for political reasons by giving them space for a near zero rent. Although the present rent is now \$400.00 per month which is completely unsustainable for the building, the proposed plan includes a further concession and compromise with the Center. The developer has agreed to create a community room and library space that may be used by the CME providing that the programming includes meetings and discussions of topics that are important to both the CME and the applicant, these include: Affordable Housing, First-time Home Ownership, Health Care and Democratic Action to Effect Positive Change.

From a number of local housing advocates, there was positive feedback on the provision of more, smaller residential rentals in the context of the center of the Square in close proximity to the T, and to actively discourage automobile ownership by residents to the maximum legal extent:

### Summary of Changes:

Assist Studio 550 with Relocation and hold application until resolved - Complete January 1, 2021

Create new Community Space and Library for CME, new public space and restroom - Adopted 2021

## Sustainability, Green Building Requirements, Sustainability Narrative and Implementation

**Green Building Project:** Although this project does not meet the requirements to be determined a “Green Building Project” in that, “Any new construction, or any substantial rehabilitation of an existing building for an existing or new use, that totals 25,000 square feet of Gross Floor Area or more and that (1) requires the issuance of a special permit by the Planning Board under any provision of this Zoning Ordinance (including but not limited to special permits required in Article 13.000 – Planned Unit Development Districts, Section 19.20 – Project Review Special Permit, and Section 5.28.2 – Conversion of Non-Residential Structures to Residential Use) or (2) is subject to the provisions of Section 19.50 – Building and Site Plan Requirements, shall be considered a Green Building Project subject to the requirements of Sections 22.20 through 22.25.”, the applicant is committed to best practices in this area. The dilapidated and obsolete existing building at the site is the very opposite of a **Green Building**. With an ancient Oil burner, no insulation, single pane and leaky glazing, lack of door closers and airlocks, no under roof insulation, and a wide open vault to the under-sidewalk areas, the energy efficiency and program ratings of the building will be dramatically improved by this application.

At a minimum the applicant is committed to the EnergyStar MultiFamily New Construction Standards for all the areas that will be “new build” and will up-fit and retrofit all existing areas to the highest energy standards that can be achieved through the renovations. In addition the new build areas will work with an engineer to achieve the LEED Gold certification, Mass Stretch Energy Code, and IECC 2015. Improvements to be made include:

- ◆ Water Efficiency: Ultra efficiency faucets, toilets, showers and appliances that meet or exceed EnergyStar Certification.
- ◆ No outdoor water usage.
- ◆ Energy and Atmosphere: Higher density, reduced consumption per capita and 25% better than ASHRAE 90.1.2010 through small ultra efficient condensing boilers, and heat pumps.
- ◆ Efficient Hot Water systems. On-demand or combi boilers at 97% efficiency or greater
- ◆ Reduced Construction waste and Green Materials
- ◆ Efficient Zoning and computer controls of HVAC to reduce consumption
- ◆ High U and R Values for all windows and insulation
- ◆ 100% LED lighting interior and exterior

Tracking and rating information will be reviewed for rating and submitted with Building Permit application.

## Transportation Impact Study

### Executive Summary:

**Although the project does not meet the threshold for a Traffic Study, and one is NOT required as set forth in Section 19.24(3),** the applicant has undertaken a review of pre-Covid traffic studies in the immediate area and presents that data here in the attached Transportation Impact Review.

**Summary of Findings of Transportation Impact Review:** The proposed changes of use will, in fact, significantly reduce vehicular traffic to and from the site within the study area. This is due primarily to the relocation of a Dance Studio which attracted approximately 300 visitors per week from a broad geographic area for 1-2 hour classes at all times of day, 7-days per week, the relocation of a tailor and cleaning shop which attracted 6-10 customers with vehicles and delivery trucks per day with vehicular pickups and deliveries, the organization of community meetings in off-peak hours, and the change of use from upper floor commercial (with up to 6 workers per floor) to residential (5 or 6 residents per floor). The proposed changes of use will also change the pattern of traffic and reduce the peak hour, short-term vehicular traffic.

**Applicant will also strive to further reduce vehicular traffic to and from the building, and the environmental impact of the use of private vehicles, through the offering of a discounted MBTA Perq Pass to all residents, video monitored bicycle storage and security, MetroBike memberships, and pro-active discouragement of vehicular ownership by tenants without demonstrated ownership or rental of off-street parking offsite as part of the leasing process.**

**Please see attached: Traffic Impact Review and Summary, January, 2020 (based on pre-Covid traffic data)**

## Appendices and Bibliography

### **Additional Materials:**

Carr Lynch and Sandell, Three Dimensional Computer, as-built survey of 544-550 Mass Ave  
Community Meeting Presentation Slide PDF's  
FAR Worksheets and detailed analysis per floor  
Overall Dimensional Worksheet  
Review Transportation Impact Study  
Architectural Drawing Set - Carr Lynch & Sandell  
Material Presentation Board  
Photographic Survey of Material Presentation Board



# Traffic Impact Review

Prepared for: Central Square Redevelopment LLC

February 3, 2021

Review of Data sets for changes in proposed use at 544-550 Mass Ave Cambridge, MA

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# Transportation Impact Review — 544-550 Massachusetts Avenue

## Project Overview

On behalf of Central Square Redevelopment LLC (Ownership) a review of publicly available data conducted in the relevant intersections, pre-Covid's economic impact in 2019 and 2020, I have conducted this Transportation Impact Review for the proposed 544-550 Massachusetts Avenue Project (the Project Site). This project consists of a mixed use redevelopment of an existing retail and office building into a mixed-use residential and retail building on the site. The development will include 29 small single occupant units, and the retail spaces will remain unchanged at approximately 3,721 square feet. The total development will be housed within the existing building (the Proposed Project). As the development does not require a full TIS, this review is to provide detail as to uses and occupancy and the potential increase or decrease in traffic impact created by the proposed development. The data set has been collected between April and August of 2019, and existing conditions are modeled on the occupancy at 544-550 Mass Ave at that time, and covers the intersections and neighborhood potentially impacted by this development.

The review has addresses the City of Cambridge Guidelines for Transportation Impact Studies in order to provide a general summary of findings and is in no way a comprehensive study, as that is not required, under the Article 19 Special Permit Project Review, in this case.

Pre-existing site conditions: (all data is from Fall 2019 - Spring 2020):

7,879 Square Feet: The present use consists of a restaurant licensed for 67 seats. The hours of operation are 11:30AM - 11:00PM weekdays and 11:30AM - 1:00AM weekends. This restaurant replaces Shalimar with approximately the same number of seats. In addition there is a shoe retailer, Teddy's Shoes, that employs two people and estimates 10-15 customers per day and 2 deliveries by truck per day. The hours of operation are 11:00AM - 6:00PM 6 days per week. On the second floor is The CME, a community group office with 3 permanent staff and weekly meetings with up to 30 attendees. They operate a bookstore and have 3-5 customers per day, and one delivery by truck per week. In addition there is a retail tailor with a workshop which employs between 3 and 6 full time persons, and they report 6 customer visits and truck deliveries and pickups per day between the hours of 10AM and 6PM. On the third floor of the building is a Dance and performance studio. The studio employs 3 full time employees and conducts rental classes between 7 and 12 hours per day. The classes host 1 or 2 educators and 6-25 students. The studio has calculated the weekly total attendance at 300 people per week, with highly variable hours, but generally 11:00AM - 9:00PM. There is no onsite vehicle or bicycle parking.

Proposed Uses:

19,758 Square Feet: The proposed project will include 29 small studio residential units, suitable for single tenant occupancy, and approximately 3,721 SF of restaurant/retail. No vehicle parking will be provided in association with the project. There are 29 long-term bicycle storage spaces in the basement accessible by elevator.

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## SUMMARY OF REVIEW

Reviewing the ATR data gathered in June of 2019 for the intersections of Pearl Street, South of Mass Ave and Green Street between Pearl and Magazine, and the bicycle and pedestrian counts performed on June 19, 2019 and July 9, 2019, by VHB, conducted as part of the study for 600 Mass Ave, which provides the most relevant pre-Covid dataset for this precise location, as well as the datasets created for 10 Essex, Mass & Main, MIT Kendall Square Redevelopment, and 907 Main Street, and including projected growth of .5% per year for five years (ignoring the 15% reduction due to the pandemic for the purposes of future projections) for this review, the proposed project will not increase vehicular traffic counts, and will in fact result in a difference in delay from present to future of -.01, -.03 and -.07, respectively, for slight improvements in the three intersections analyzed. The project will increase bicycle and pedestrian traffic at the immediate two adjacent intersections on Mass Avenue, but will not change the rating of these crossings, and the increases in ridership on the MBTA will be significant in percentage terms for these 29 units, but nominal overall with no measurable impact on the system, nor waiting times. The improvements on the vehicular numbers are due to the relocation of the Studio-550, and the Community Center which generated a very high trip rate and local parking demand for transient visitors, compared to the single-occupant residential units. Although the total residential square footage will double the previous commercial footage, overall trip generation due to the new 29 SRO units will decline significantly from the prior uses.

**Short-term Bicycle Parking:** Although the Long-term bicycle parking needs will be met by enclosed, secured storage, based on Cambridge Zoning Ordinance Section 6.100, short-term needs, estimated at 7 spaces, using city guide (Section 6.100) can not be met on the applicant's property. The proponent would like to seek approval from the City to either install a rack in an appropriate space in the front of the building, or to make a payment in-lieu toward nearby short-term bicycle parking provided by the City. The City of Cambridge Bicycle Parking Guidelines indicate that 7 spaces is sufficient for the project demand.

**Mass Transit:** The MBTA reports a departing capacity on trains and busses from Central Square within a 3 minute walk from the site of 28,000 departures per hour, so the project will have no measurable impact on capacity nor create any burden on the system. According the MBTA capacity on the Red Line will increase by 7,000 riders per hour as signal works and new equipment deployment is completed. Central Square represents a central hub in this network which allows access in numerous directions, creating an ideal starting point of departure. This entry point saves riders multiple transfers and increases system capacity overall.

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**Copy of BZA  
Application  
191126 -**

**544-550 Mass Ave**





**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
 MASSACHUSETTS  
 BOARD OF ZONING APPEAL  
 831 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE  
 CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139  
 617 349-6100**

**BZA APPLICATION FORM**

Plan No: BZA-017219-2019

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

The undersigned hereby petitions the Board of Zoning Appeal for the following:

Special Permit : \_\_\_\_\_ Variance :   v   Appeal : \_\_\_\_\_

PETITIONER : Central Square Redevelopment LLC - C/O Clifford Schorer

PETITIONER'S ADDRESS : 10 Turnpike Road Southborough, MA 01772

LOCATION OF PROPERTY : 544 Massachusetts Ave Cambridge, MA

TYPE OF OCCUPANCY : Assembly, Merchantile, Residential ZONING DISTRICT : Business B Zone/CSQ Overlay


REASON FOR PETITION :  
 Other: Lot area per dwelling unit variance

**DESCRIPTION OF PETITIONER'S PROPOSAL :**

Applicant seeks to build 29 micro-Studio apartments where 20 units of any size are permitted by right. Infill location with small building footprint and existing retailers create a hardship for renovating building into larger spaces.

**SECTIONS OF ZONING ORDINANCE CITED :**

Article 5.000 Section 5.33 (Table of Dimensional Requirements).  
 Article 11.000 Section 11.203.5.A,B (Affordable Housing).  
 Article 10.000 Section 10.30 (Variance).

Original Signature(s) :   
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Petitioner(s) / Owner)  
 Clifford Schorer  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Print Name)

Address : 10 Turnpike Road, Southborough, MA 01772

Tel. No. : (508)726-5445

E-Mail Address : cschorer@gmail.com

Date : November 26, 2019

**BZA APPLICATION FORM - OWNERSHIP INFORMATION**

To be completed by OWNER, signed before a notary and returned to The Secretary of the Board of Zoning Appeals.


I/We Central Square Redevelopment  
(OWNER)

Address: 10 TURNPIKE RD. SOUTHBRIDGE, MA

State that I/We own the property located at 544-550 MASS AVE., which is the subject of this zoning application.

The record title of this property is in the name of CENTRAL Square Redevelopment

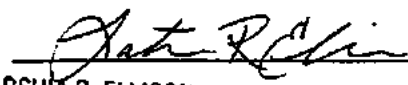
\*Pursuant to a deed of duly recorded in the date \_\_\_\_\_, Middlesex South County Registry of Deeds at Book \_\_\_\_\_, Page \_\_\_\_\_; or Middlesex Registry District of Land Court, Certificate No. \_\_\_\_\_ Book \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_.

  
SIGNATURE BY LAND OWNER OR AUTHORIZED TRUSTEE, OFFICER OR AGENT\*

\*Written evidence of Agent's standing to represent petitioner may be requested.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, County of Middlesex

The above-name Clifford J. Schorer III personally appeared before me, this 14<sup>th</sup> of November, 2019, and made oath that the above statement is true.

 Notary

My commission expires \_\_\_\_\_  
LATARSHIA R. ELLISON  
Notary Public (Notary Seal).  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
My Commission Expires Mar 20, 2026



- If ownership is not shown in recorded deed, e.g. if by court order, recent deed, or inheritance, please include documentation.

**BZA APPLICATION FORM**

**DIMENSIONAL INFORMATION**

**APPLICANT:** Cliff Schorer **PRESENT USE/OCCUPANCY:** Retail, Office  
**LOCATION:** 544 Massachusetts Ave Cambridge, MA **ZONE:** Business B Zone/CSQ Overlay  
**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **REQUESTED USE/OCCUPANCY:** Retail, Residential

	<u>EXISTING</u> <u>CONDITIONS</u>	<u>REQUESTED</u> <u>CONDITIONS</u>	<u>ORDINANCE</u> <u>REQUIREMENTS</u> <sup>1</sup>	
<u>TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA:</u>	7,879	17,436	20,550	(max.)
<u>LOT AREA:</u>	4,391	4,391	None	(min.)
<u>RATIO OF GROSS FLOOR AREA TO LOT AREA:</u> <sup>2</sup>	1.79	3.97	4.0 (SP)	(max.)
<u>LOT AREA FOR EACH DWELLING UNIT:</u>	N/A	151sf	300sf	(min.)
<u>SIZE OF LOT:</u>	<u>WIDTH</u>	49.98'	N/C	(min.)
	<u>DEPTH</u>	89'	N/C	None
<u>SETBACKS IN FEET:</u>	<u>FRONT</u>	0'	N/C	(min.)
	<u>REAR</u>	0'	N/C	(min.)
	<u>LEFT SIDE</u>	5' & 6'	N/C	(min.)
	<u>RIGHT SIDE</u>	0'	N/C	(min.)
	<u>HEIGHT</u>	42'	69'6"	80' (SP)
<u>SIZE OF BLDG.:</u>	<u>LENGTH</u>	92'	None	
	<u>WIDTH</u>	44'	None	
	<u>RATIO OF USABLE OPEN SPACE TO LOT AREA:</u>	0	1,400	0
<u>NO. OF DWELLING UNITS:</u>	0	29	20	(max.)
<u>NO. OF PARKING SPACES:</u>	0	0	.5/du	(min./max)
<u>NO. OF LOADING AREAS:</u>	0	0	None	(min.)
<u>DISTANCE TO NEAREST BLDG. ON SAME LOT:</u>	N/A	N/C	N/A	(min.)

Describe where applicable, other occupancies on same lot, the size of adjacent buildings on same lot, and type of construction proposed, e.g.: wood frame, concrete, brick, steel, etc.

N/A

1. SEE CAMBRIDGE ZONING ORDINANCE ARTICLE 5.000, SECTION 5.30 (DISTRICT OF DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS).
2. TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA (INCLUDING BASEMENT 7'-0" IN HEIGHT AND ATTIC AREAS GREATER THAN 5') DIVIDED BY LOT AREA.
3. OPEN SPACE SHALL NOT INCLUDE PARKING AREAS, WALKWAYS OR DRIVEWAYS AND SHALL HAVE A MINIMUM DIMENSION OF 15'.

**BZA APPLICATION FORM**

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR A VARIANCE**

**EACH OF THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS FOR A VARIANCE MUST BE ESTABLISHED AND SET FORTH IN COMPLETE DETAIL BY THE APPLICANT IN ACCORDANCE WITH MGL 40A, SECTION 10:**

**A)** A Literal enforcement of the provisions of this Ordinance would involve a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the petitioner or appellant for the following reasons:

A literal enforcement of the Ordinance would require the loss of local retailers and enlargement of the floorplate of each floor to allow for larger residential units, given the extreme high-cost of infill construction and engineering reinforcements required. There is substantial demand for inclusionary and market units at a smaller scale and price point. It is this demand that alleviates the substantial financial hardship of preserving and renovating existing building.

**B)** The hardship is owing to the following circumstances relating to the soil conditions, shape or topography of such land or structures and especially affecting such land or structures but not affecting generally the zoning district in which it is located for the following reasons:

The building is a very unusual shape having been developed over 100 years with additions. There is an easement for public emergency access that runs through the property alley which must be preserved, and the rear of the building may not be increased in height due to existing support structure of a different height to the floors. The area per floor is broken up by the requirement to add an elevator and emergency stair egress. This provides only very small spaces for units. The hardship in this particular location would be great for larger unit sizes.

**C) DESIRABLE RELIEF MAY BE GRANTED WITHOUT EITHER:**

1) Substantial detriment to the public good for the following reasons:

There is substantial demand for this smaller scale and less expensive housing in Central Square. It will relieve pressure on larger family units in the surrounding neighborhood. With the loss of many SRO and lodging accommodations in the Central Square Area, this is a much needed housing stock category. There is no esthetic, traffic, or quality of life impact and the overall FAR is within the new CSQ guidelines. Permitting this Variance will create 4 additional Inclusionary units which are available at 25% of the applicant's income rather than the usual 30%. The new ordinance is creating far fewer smaller units (16% under old ordinance/12% under new ordinance) and this is a serious need that will only increase. Nearly 50% of the entire need in the City of Cambridge, based on existing inclusionary, is single person occupancy.

2) Relief may be granted without nullifying or substantially derogating from the intent or purpose of this Ordinance for the following reasons:

There will be no change to the proposed exterior of the building and this will allow the improvement of an obsolete structure in the middle of Central Square without displacing the local retailers. As the overall project is very low scale and a small urban infill, rather than the large scale residential development the ordinance is designed to address, this is an exception that is very specific to the challenges of this site that creates enough value to justify the enormous cost per foot, which has permitted most of this side of Mass Ave to fall into long term neglect.

\* If You have any questions as to whether you can establish all of the applicable legal requirements, you should consult with your own attorney.

**BZA APPLICATION FORM**

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR A SPECIAL PERMIT**

Please describe in complete detail how you meet each of the following criteria referring to the property and proposed changes or uses which are requested in your application. Attach sheets with additional information for special permits which have additional criteria, e.g.; fast food permits, comprehensive permits, etc., which must be met.

Granting the Special Permit requested for 544 Massachusetts Ave Cambridge, MA (location) would not be a detriment to the public interest because:

- A)** Requirements of the Ordinance can or will be met for the following reasons:  
All other requirements of the Ordinance are met. The variance addresses only the need for additional DU per lot area, due to the inclusion of small units.
- B)** Traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would not cause congestion hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character for the following reasons:  
There is no change to the access and egress and no additional parking or traffic impact anticipated. This is perfectly located above public transportation and has been a failure as office and assembly space on the upper floors leading to deterioration. There is substantial demand in this area for smaller housing units and this number will have no detrimental effect on the overall traffic burden of the area.
- C)** The continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would not be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use for the following reasons:  
There are numerous local retailers and especially restaurateurs who would only benefit by the addition of residential on this portion of Mass Ave.
- D)** Nuisance or hazard would not 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 for the following reasons:  
There is no impact on public safety, health or welfare. Units are served by public water and waste.
- E)** For other reasons, the proposed use would not impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district or otherwise derogate from the intent or purpose of this ordinance for the following reasons:  
This is entirely in the spirit of the recent Zoning changes to the CSQ Overlay in encouraging reuse of obsolete and dilapidated structures and renovation of infill properties which would be too costly without the availability of variances and special permits.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
 MASSACHUSETTS  
 BOARD OF ZONING APPEAL  
 831 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE  
 CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139  
 617 349-6100

2019 NOV 27 AM 11:13

BZA APPLICATION FORM  
GENERAL INFORMATION

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
 CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

The undersigned hereby petitions the Board of Zoning Appeal for the following:

Special Permit : \_\_\_\_\_ Variance :   v   Appeal : \_\_\_\_\_

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PETITIONER'S ADDRESS : 10 Turnpike Road Southborough, MA 01772

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 Article 11.000 Section 11.203.5.A,B (Affordable Housing).  
 Article 10.000 Section 10.30 (Variance).

Original Signature(s) :   
 (Petitioner(s) / Owner)  
 Clifford Schorer  
 (Print Name)

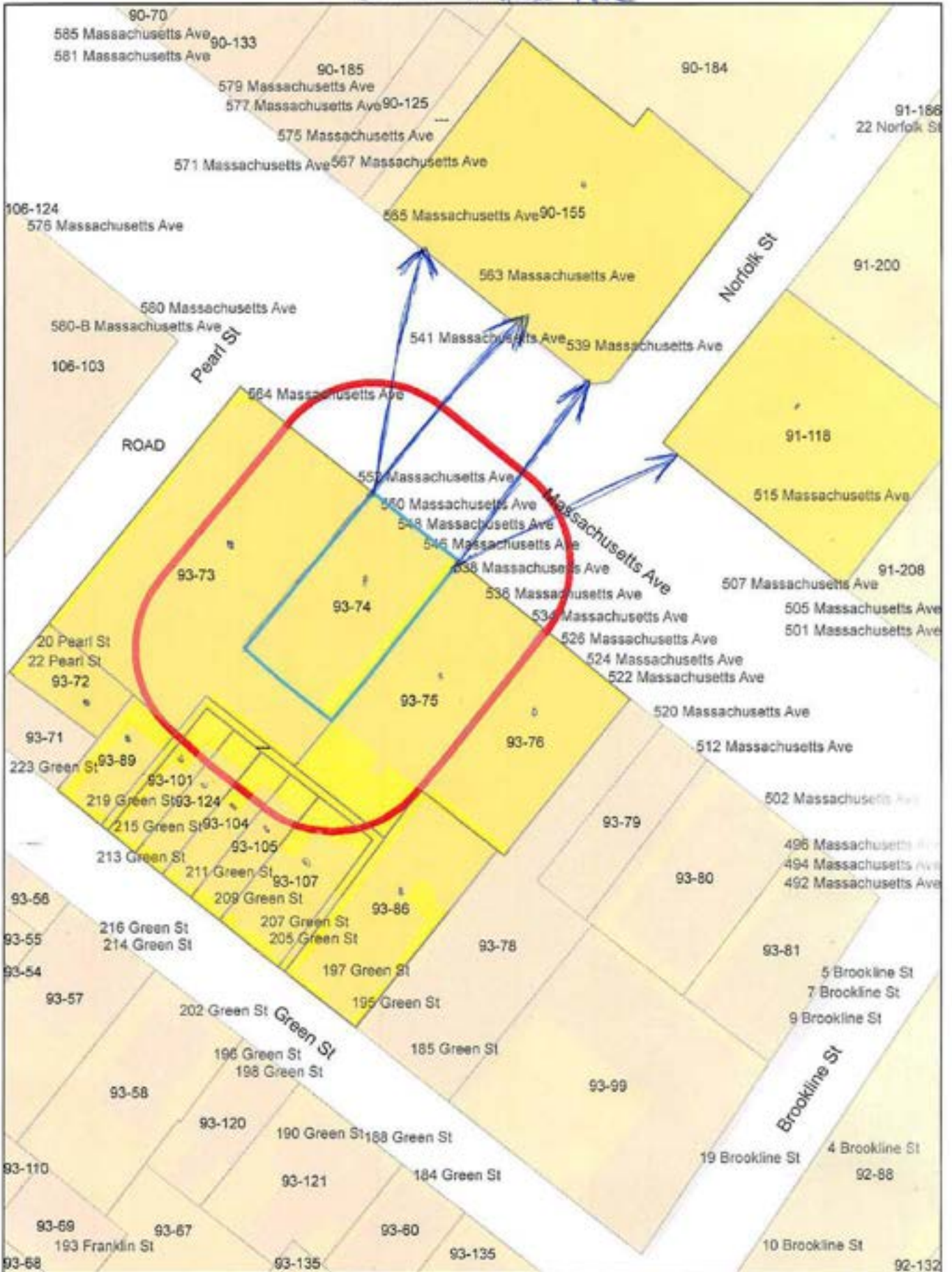
Address : 10 Turnpike Road, Southborough, MA 01772

Tel. No. : (508)726-5445

E-Mail Address : cschorer@gmail.com

Date : November 26, 2019

544 Mass Ave



544 Mass Ave

93-73  
CARU RETAIL LLC.  
614 MASSACHUSETTS AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

93-105-104  
RAYCE REALTY LLC  
228 WESTERN AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

91-118  
PARTEEN, LLC  
C/O MINTZ LEVIN, COHN, FERRIS, GLOVSKY  
ONE FINANCIAL CTR  
ATTN: ALLAN CAGGIANO, ESQ.  
BOSTON, MA 02111

93-107  
CASCAP REALTY, INC  
231 SOMERVILLE AVENUE  
SOMERVILLE, MA 02143

93-101  
GAJOS, KRZYSZTOF Z.  
215 GREEN ST. UNIT B  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

93-86  
PARSON-GREEN LLC  
1247A COMMONWEALTH AVE  
BOSTON, MA 02134

93-86  
CABRAL, KYLE PROPERTY MANAGER/REALTOR  
ALL BRIGHT REAL ESTATE  
1247A COMMONWEALTH AVE  
ALLSTON, MA 02134

93-89  
CHESHATSANG, DHIKI P., &  
CHESHATSANG, LOBSANG N.  
48 PIERSON ST  
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

93-74  
CENTRAL SQUARE REDEVELOPMENT, LLC  
10 TURNPIKE RD  
SOUTHBOROUGH, MA 01772

90-155  
NAGGAR REALTY LLC.  
C/O 545-565 MASS AVE LLC  
585 MASSACHUSETTS AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

93-101  
YOZWIAK, NATHAN L. & JASMINE M. HANIFI  
215 GREEN ST., #A  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

93-124  
GREENWALD, DANIEL & MARISA S. GOLD  
213 GREEN ST #2  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

93-86  
CABRAL, KYLE PROPERTY MANAGER/REALTOR  
ALL BRIGHT REAL ESTATE  
1247A COMMONWEALTH AVE  
ALLSTON, MA 02134

93-86  
FEUERMAN, JEFFREY M. & JEFFREY A. KESNER  
TRUSTEE 195-197 GREEN STREET TRUST  
1247A COMMONWEALTH AVE  
ALLSTON, MA 02134

*Petitioner*  
CENTRAL SQ. REDEVELOPMENT LLC  
C/O CLIFFORD SCHORER  
10 TURNPIKE ROAD  
SOUTHBOROUGH, MA 01772

93-76  
522-526 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, LLC  
C/O MOULTON ORIENTAL FURNITURE  
68 MOULTON ST., 3RD FL  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

93-72  
RAMEY, JEAN ANN,  
TRUSTEE OF CRESCENT REALTY TRUST  
SYNAPSE ENERGY ECONOMICS, INC.  
ATTN: JEANANN RAMEY  
485 MASS AVE STE #2  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139-4041

93-75  
THE NEW DANCE COMPLEX, INC.  
C/O RICHARD GETZ ASSOC. AGENT  
22 HILLIARD ST. STE106  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

93-75  
THE NEW DANCE COMPLEX, INC.  
C/O LIZ SMITH  
536 MASSACHUSETTS AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

93-86  
OLIVIA LLC,  
93 FISHER AVE  
BROOKLINE, MA 02445

93-124  
GOULET, DARIN P. TARA B. REDEPENNING  
213 GREEN ST #1  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139