



## **57 JFK STREET PROJECT**

### **SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION: VOLUME 1**

57 JFK STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MA

BUSINESS B ZONING DISTRICT AND  
THE HARVARD SQUARE OVERLAY DISTRICT

MARCH 29, 2022

#### **CLIENT:**

CRIMSON GALERIA LIMITED PARTNERSHIP  
166 HARVARD STREET, BROOKLINE, MA 02446

#### **PREPARED BY:**

NELSON WORLDWIDE  
198 TREMONT STREET, SUITE 439, BOSTON, MA 02116

#### **STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT:**

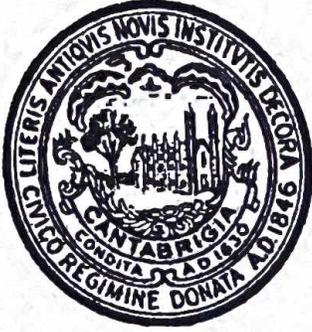
SILMAN  
111 DEVONSHIRE STREET, BOSTON, MA 02109

#### **MEP CONSULTANT**

ZADE ENGINEERING LLC  
1 BILLINGS RD, SUITE 306, QUINCY, MA 02171

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

## SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION • COVER SHEET

In accordance with the requirements of the City of Cambridge Zoning Ordinance, the undersigned hereby petitions the Planning Board for one or more Special Permits for the premises indicated below.

Location of Premises: 57 John F. Kennedy Street, Cambridge MA 02138

Zoning District: BB zoning district

Applicant Name: Crimson Galeria Limited Partnership

Applicant Address: 166 Harvard Street, Brookline MA 02446

Contact Information: 6172321776      rachna@masonmurphy.com      6172321700  
Telephone #      Email Address      Fax #

List all requested special permit(s) (with reference to zoning section numbers) below. *Note that the Applicant is responsible for seeking all necessary special permits for the project. A special permit cannot be granted if it is not specifically requested in the Application.*

1. Special Permit under Section 20.54.2(2) to increase the maximum building height from 60 to 65 feet.
2. Special Permit under Section 20.54.4(2) to exempt the addition from parking and loading requirements.
3. Special Permit under Section 20.54.5(2) to exempt the addition from front and side yard requirements.

List all submitted materials (include document titles and volume numbers where applicable) below.

Volume I: Project Narrative including overview, compliance with zoning and compliance with criteria specific to Special Permits being sought.  
Volume II: Project Plans and Illustrations  
Volume III: Appendix & LEED Checklist and Narrative

Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

*Rachna D. Balakrishna*

For the Planning Board, this application has been received by the Community Development Department (CDD) on the date specified below:

**DIMENSIONAL FORM**

**Project Address:** 57 JFK Street, Cambridge

**Application Date:** 03/28/2022

	Existing	Allowed or Required (max/min)	Proposed	Permitted
Lot Area (sq ft)	14,642	5,000 min	14,642	
Lot Width (ft)	111.96	50	111.96	
Total Gross Floor Area (sq ft)	36,570	n/a	66,904	
Residential Base	0	n/a	30,527	
Non-Residential Base	36,570	n/a	36,570	
Inclusionary Housing Bonus	0	n/a	8,843	
Total Floor Area Ratio	2.50	4.00 residential	4.61	
Residential Base	0	n/a	2.08	
Non-Residential Base	2.50	n/a	2.50	
Inclusionary Housing Bonus	0	n/a	0.60	
Total Dwelling Units	0	n/a	40	
Base Units	0	n/a	35	
Inclusionary Bonus Units	0	n/a	5	
Base Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	0	300	325	
Total Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	0	300	325	
Building Height(s) (ft)	29.5	60	65	
Front Yard Setback (ft)	front 5.9 @ Winthrop	39.6 front per C-3	5.9 front	
Side Yard Setback (ft)	front 0 @ JFK Street	34.2 front per C-3	0 front	
Side Yard Setback (ft)	side 7.8 @ 96 Winthrop	26.5 side per C-3	5 side	
Rear Yard Setback (ft)	side 0 @ Parking Garage	31.2 side per C-3	0 side	
Open Space (% of Lot Area)	0	4.69	4.88	
Private Open Space	0	668 sf	714 sf	
Permeable Open Space	0	n/a	n/a	
Other Open Space (Specify)	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Off-Street Parking Spaces	0	40	0	
Long-Term Bicycle Parking	0	41	44	
Short-Term Bicycle Parking	0	4	4	
Loading Bays	0	0 per 20.54.4.2*	0	

*Use space below and/or attached pages for additional notes:*

**\* 0 per C-3 district Loading Use Type for Multi Family**

**OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATE**

**Project Address:** 57 JFK Street Cambridge 02138      **Application Date:** 03/28/2022

This form is to be completed by the property owner, signed, and submitted with the Special Permit Application:

I hereby authorize the following Applicant: Crimson Galeria LP  
at the following address: 166 Harvard Street, Brookline MA 02440  
to apply for a special permit for: A residential addition  
on premises located at: 57 JFK Street, Cambridge MA 02138  
for which the record title stands in the name of: Crimson Galeria Limited Partnership  
whose address is: 1315 Beacon Street, Brookline MA 02440

by a deed duly recorded in the:

Registry of Deeds of County: Middlesex Book: 28824 Page: 484  
OR Registry District of the Land Court, Certificate No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Book: \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_

Rachna D. Balakrishna (Limited Partner)  
Signature of Land Owner (If authorized Trustee, Officer or Agent, so identify)

To be completed by Notary Public:

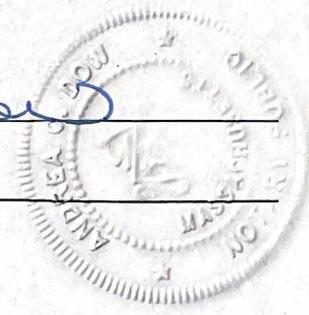
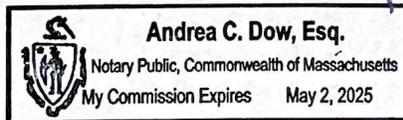
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, County of Norfolk

The above named Rachna Balakrishna personally appeared before me,

on the month, day and year Feb 7, 2022 and made oath that the above statement is true.

Notary: \_\_\_\_\_

My Commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_



**FEE SCHEDULE**

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**Project Address:** 57 JFK Street, Cambridge 02138      **Application Date:** 03/28/2022

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The Applicant must provide the full fee (by check or money order) with the Special Permit Application. Depending on the nature of the proposed project and the types of Special Permit being sought, the required fee is the larger of the following amounts:

- If the proposed project includes the creation of new or substantially rehabilitated floor area, or a change of use subject to Section 19.20, the fee is ten cents (\$0.10) per square foot of total proposed Gross Floor Area.
- If a Flood Plain Special Permit is being sought as part of the Application, the fee is one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00), unless the amount determined above is greater.
- In any case, the minimum fee is one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00).

**Fee Calculation**

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New or Substantially Rehabilitated Gross Floor Area (SF): 30,527      × \$0.10 = \$ 3,052.70

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Flood Plain Special Permit      Enter \$1,000.00 if applicable: \$ 0.00

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Other Special Permit      Enter \$150.00 if no other fee is applicable: \$ 150.00

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**TOTAL SPECIAL PERMIT FEE**      **Enter Larger of the Above Amounts: \$ 3,052.70**

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## PROJECT NARRATIVE

Crimson Galeria Limited Partnership proposes the vertical expansion of its building at 57 JFK Street to add 40 residential units. The proposed addition will add energy and life to Harvard Square and to the adjacent Winthrop Park. The project also will refresh the existing facades, resulting in an improved, integrated aesthetic for the entire expanded building. The proposed cladding materials are consistent with the warm tones of neighboring buildings. The scale and proportion of the addition are modern, reflecting the Crimson Galeria’s relatively recent construction, while fitting in with the overall context of the neighborhood.

Located at the corner of JFK and Winthrop Streets, the Crimson Galeria has approximately 36,570 square feet of commercial gross floor area. Currently, it houses primarily restaurant tenants in the basement, first floor, and second floor. The proposed expansion will add a small ground floor residents’ lobby and elevator core, a ~11,373 square foot third floor, a ~9,910 square foot fourth floor, and a ~8,551 square foot fifth floor, totally approximately 30,334 square feet of new gross floor area. The new third floor will extend almost to the existing facade lines facing JFK and Winthrop Streets. The fourth and fifth floor facades facing those streets will be stepped back from those of the levels immediately below.

This project requires three special permits from the Cambridge Planning Board. The first, under Section 20.54.2(2), to increase the maximum building height from 60 feet to approximately 65 feet. The second, under Section 20.54.4(2), to exempt the proposed addition from parking and loading requirements. The third, under Section 20.54.5(2) to exempt the addition from front and side yard requirements. Finally, as discussed below, a fourth special permit waiver from green area or permeable open space requirements may be required, depending on how the Planning Board interprets the language of Section 19.30.

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## BACKGROUND

The existing building is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of JFK and Winthrop Streets. The project site is in the Harvard Square Overlay District (HSOD); the base zoning is Business B. Except for Winthrop Park, where the base zoning is Open Space, all the site's neighbors also are in the Business B district and the HSOD. Per Section 20.54.6, the maximum floor area ratio for a Business B lot in the HSOD is 4.0.

The current uses of the site are Retail Business and Consumer Service Establishments, which are allowed by right in the Business B districts. These uses extend to the finished basement level. The current tenants include BonChon (Korean restaurant), Core Power Yoga, Maharaja Restaurant, Shake Shack, Menya Jiro (ramen restaurant), and Veggie Grill.

In 2015, the Planning Board, and prior to that the Historic Commission, approved a proposed vertical expansion which would have added three floors of Class A office space atop the existing building. That special permit exempted the proposed addition from parking and loading requirements under a former provision of the HSOD zoning that allowed the applicant to make a cash contribution to the Harvard Square Improvement Fund in an amount equal to fifty percent (50%) of the cost of construction of the minimum number of parking spaces required based on the gross floor area of the proposed office use. Work never began under that special permit.

In January 2016, the Cambridge City Council amended the zoning ordinance's definition of gross floor area to authorize the Planning Board to exempt from gross floor area calculations any basement or cellar space that it finds supports the character of the neighborhood or district in which the applicable lot is located. In 2019, the Planning Board, again after Historic Commission review, amended the 2015 special permit to exempt the building's basement from gross floor area calculations, and to exempt the proposed office addition from parking and loading requirements under a former provision of the HSOD zoning that allowed such an exemption if the expanded building did not exceed 80% of the maximum permitted gross floor area for the lot.

The worldwide Covid-19 pandemic arrived before construction of the office addition could begin, after which the demand for office space in Harvard Square and elsewhere plummeted. Work never began under the 2019 special permit amendment. The applicant now proposes a different vertical expansion of the building, to create forty residential units.

In March 2020, the City Council made several changes to the HSOD zoning regulations, including eliminating the former requirements of payment or limitation of gross floor area as preconditions to obtaining a special permit excluding a new structure or addition from parking and loading requirements.

## PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

Section 5.22 requires that every residential project (other than in the MXD District) must provide private open space. Because the underlying zoning district is Business B, the Residential C-3 district requirements apply. § 5.28.2(c). Section 5.22.2 provides that for a mixed-use building such as this project will create the required minimum private open space for residential use is calculated in relation to the portion of the lot which the residential floor area is to the total floor area in the building. This means that the private open space requirement is 4.53%.<sup>1</sup> of the lot area, or 668 square feet. This private open space area will be provided by the third-floor combination of the courtyard and Unit 301, at the lowest level used for residential purposes, as is allowed by Section 5.22.1.

## ROOFTOP MECHANICALS

The rooftop HVAC/mechanical systems serving the existing restaurant and retail tenants will be replaced with lower-profile units on a podium between the top of the current building and the bottom of the residential addition. They will be located opposite the Winthrop Street side of the building, facing the adjacent parking garage. As such they are not expected to bother any adjacent properties.

HVAC/mechanical systems for the residential addition will be placed on the roof of the addition, set back from all building facades, and screened. Given the surrounding topography and heights of adjacent and nearby buildings, these systems should not be visible or audible from nearby properties.

All HVAC/mechanical systems, whether for the existing building or the residential addition, will be designed to comply fully with the City's Noise Ordinance.

## SUPPORT FOR THE REQUESTED SPECIAL PERMITS

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<sup>1</sup> Calculated as 10% requirement multiplied by 30,334 sf of residential floor area divided by total building gross floor area of 66,904 sf.

## ***Special permit to increase maximum building height***

The first requested special permit is to increase the maximum allowed building height from 60 feet to 65 feet. Section 20.54.2(2) authorizes the Planning Board to increase the maximum building height for a building in Harvard Square up to 80 feet subject to the following conditions:

*If a Special Permit is issued portions of the building may extend to eighty (80) feet in height 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 (45) degree sky exposure planes, unless otherwise permitted by the Planning Board. A forty-five (45) degree sky exposure plane shall be an imaginary inclined plane beginning fifty-five (55) feet above any streetline in the districts and rising over one or more lots at a forty-five (45) degree angle.*

Only the upper portion of the new fifth floor will be more than 60 feet above the mean grade of the ground adjoining the building. The fifth floor will be setback more than ten feet from JFK and Winthrop Streets. It also will be set back from forty-five degree sky exposure planes starting fifty-five feet above the JFK and Winthrop Street sidelines. Rooftop mechanicals will be setback further from those streets.

## ***Special permit exemption from parking and loading requirements***

The second requested special permit is to exempt the proposed vertical expansion from parking and loading requirements. Section 20.54.4(2).a authorizes the Planning Board to grant such a special permit, provided that the following conditions are met:

- 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 (for lots exceeding 10,000 square feet a specific finding shall be made that this objective has been met).*

The project site has a lot area of 14,506 square feet, of which approximately 12,812 square feet is covered by the existing building, which will be retained. The proposed addition comprises three residential floors, with the upper two floors each stepped back from the level below. The design maintains the scale and character of the existing structure, while carefully adding development atop the roof, thereby contributing to the diversity of development patterns in Harvard Square.

- 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 Harvard Square Development Guidelines.*

Using the alley between the building and 96 Winthrop Street for parking would create additional vehicle trips on Winthrop Street, contrary to recent efforts to emphasize pedestrian use of the street. At best, a few parking spaces might be provided, at the expense of the proposed residential lobby and elevator core, and the existing access for trash removal and recycling.

The only way to add significant parking within the building would be to convert the basement and/or first floor commercial space, with vehicle access from JFK or Winthrop Street. This would compromise the pedestrian street-level experience along one or both the building's street facades, and sacrificing space currently used by restaurants and small-scale retail serving the Harvard Square neighborhood. A vehicle entrance off of JFK Street would inject turning movements into an already congested arterial street. A vehicle entrance off of Winthrop Street would increase vehicular traffic on a street the city is working to make more pedestrian friendly.

The project is in conformance with the objectives and criteria of the Harvard Square Development Guidelines,<sup>2</sup> including:

1. *Preserve historically or architecturally significant buildings and structures as well as those that contribute to the distinctive visual character and historic significance of the District.*

The existing building, which does not have any historical significance nor significant architectural character, will remain largely unchanged. The addition will complement the existing building's architectural character. The project will not alter the historic granite wall to the rear of the building. The residential lobby will be set back from Winthrop Street, preserving the view from the street of the adjacent, historically significant building at 96 Winthrop Street (formerly the House of Blues). The elevator core, at the rear of the residential lobby, will have negligible impact on 96 Winthrop Street. The Cambridge Historical Commission issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project on September 2, 2021.

2. *Sustain the vitality of the commercial environment by preserving architecturally significant or original building fabric where it currently exists. When this is not possible, support creative, contemporary design for storefront alterations and additions.*

The existing building's façade is not architecturally significant. The project will refresh, while generally preserving, the building's fabric and the addition will be consistent with the existing architecture and fabric. The new residential lobby and elevator core and refreshed commercial entrances will feature contemporary design elements.

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted provisions of the Harvard Square Development Guidelines are from the February 22, 2002 draft guidelines, the most recent version available from the Community Development Department's Design Guidelines and Area Plans Referenced in the Zoning Ordinance webpage.

3. *Support creative, contemporary design for new construction that complements and contributes to its immediate neighbors and the character of the District. Recognize and respect creativity of design and mitigate the functional impacts of development on adjacent areas.*

The character of the surrounding context is highly varied, with a variety of historic, older, and modern buildings, as well as streets, squares, and alleys. The existing building has a modern appearance, and the new addition proposes a complimentary, contemporary design aesthetic. The addition's design is intended to complement the architecture of the existing building while receding into the background of historic Winthrop Park. The refreshing of the current facade will include redesigned entries to the commercial space that will improve visibility and break up the building's horizontal facades at the street level.

4. *Build on and sustain the diversity of existing building form, scale and material. Preserve and encourage flowers, green yards and courtyards and small, free-standing and wood-frame buildings where that character prevails. Encourage streetwall buildings where that character has been set. Encourage ground-ground level, small-scale storefronts to preserve the vitality and character of the streets.*

The proposed addition will build on the existing building's form, scale, and materials. The existing building is set to the sidewalk edge along JFK Street, which is generally consistent with streetwall building design in the vicinity. The proposed addition will reinforce the continuity of the JFK Street wall plane by aligning the third-floor facade with that of the adjacent parking garage. The addition will then step back at the fourth and fifth floor levels, to respect existing views of neighboring buildings and to minimize new shadows on Winthrop Park. The storefront facades along both streets will be preserved.

The current sidewalk width will be maintained on Winthrop Street to preserve the pedestrian experience. The alley between the building and 96 Winthrop Street will continue to provide a visual break between the two properties.

5. *Expand the high quality public environment now established in the heart of the District with a compatible palette of materials and street furniture.*

The proposed exterior materials will provide a contemporary aesthetic, while subtly contrasting with the historic (brick) context of Harvard Square. The existing facade will be reclad in gray high-density fiber cement, which has a stone-like visual quality. This will improve the condition and appearance of the existing structure. The entrances to the existing building, in the middles of the JFK and Winthrop Street facades, will be renovated with more contemporary designs.

A residential lobby and elevator will be added in the alley off Winthrop Street, which is currently used only for trash and recycling. The alley will be improved with the

installation of a gate acting as a visual scree, patterned concrete surface, and red brick pavers along the new Residential Entry.

6. *Expand the network of pedestrian walkways and paths wherever they can conveniently provide alternate routes through the District. Increase public access to alleys and interior spaces where appropriate, and upgrade paving and landscaping of such pathways and spaces. Enhance accessibility and safety for pedestrians throughout the District.*

The grade change between the alley and the adjacent property to the south is nearly 10 feet, making an accessible pedestrian connection impossible. Nor does the site provide a desirable or convenient location for a midblock connection. Planters will be installed along the property line at the Winthrop Street end of the alley to enhance the pedestrian experience, and as a deterrent to vehicles using the end of the alley for parking or loading.

7. *Encourage new residential projects in the District, especially in mixed-use buildings, and support existing residential uses.*

The project will transform the existing commercial (primarily restaurant) building into a mixed-use building with forty residential units.

8. *Encourage projects that will maintain a wide diversity of uses serving the needs of surrounding neighborhoods, students, and visitors from around the world.*

The project will preserve and enhance the existing building which has for several decades provided space for a variety of restaurant and retail uses. The occupants of the forty new residential units will provide additional customers for these and other Harvard Square businesses.

9. *Encourage creative solutions to the District's parking and transportation issues, including the problem of on-street deliveries. Discourage loading docks, which do not generally contribute to the historic character of the street.*

The addition will share the existing building's trash and recycling facilities in the building's basement; the project will not include any loading docks.

- 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; and*

The existing building is not a National Register or contributing building.

- 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 National Register or contributing building has existed on the lot within the five years preceding the application.

***Special permit exempting the addition from front and side yard requirements.***

The third requested special permit is an exemption from front and side yard requirements.<sup>3</sup> The existing building has minimal front yards facing JFK and Winthrop Streets, virtually no side yard facing the adjacent parking garage. The alley separating the building from 96 Winthrop Street is approximately 15' 8" wide, except at the rear where an underground vault protrudes more than 3 feet above grade across the width of the alley. Because front and side yard requirements are calculated by formulae using the height and length of the facade facing a particular yard, the vertical expansion will increase the required yard depths, yet the existing building will remain in place.

Section 20.54.5 of the HSOD zoning provides for the waiver of yard requirements:

*Maintenance of the Harvard Square Overlay District's positive diversity of building form and scale and its variety of open spaces, yards and courtyards is encouraged throughout the District. It is therefore desirable to permit design flexibility to allow any physical change in the District to reflect the character of the area within which it is located. To this end any building in the Harvard Square Overlay District shall be exempt from the yard requirements as specified in Section 5.30, (except where such yard abuts a lot, but not a public way, outside the Overlay District) if the following conditions are met:*

1. *The building existed as of December 15, 1985 or a building permit had been issued by that date, or*
2. *For any new building in any Business, Office or Residence C-3 base-zoning district, for which a building permit is issued after December 15, 1985, the Planning Board issues a Special Permit exempting the building from yard requirements provided:*
  - a. *The design of the new structure shall be in conformance with the objectives and criteria contained in Harvard Square Development Guidelines.*
  - b. *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*

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<sup>3</sup> Because the building and site have frontage on two streets, front yard requirements apply along JFK and Winthrop Streets and side yard requirements apply along the other two lot lines. The building and property do not have a rear yard or rear lot line. CZO, § 5.24.3.

*c. No National Register or contributing building previously existed on the site in the preceding five (5) years and which has been so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation or demolished prior to the application.*

The existing building was constructed in 1975. Thus, the proposed vertical expansion may already be exempt from front and side yard requirements under the first provision quoted above.

To the extent the Planning Board does not find the expansion so exempt, the applicant requests a special permit under the second provision quoted above. As detailed above, the proposed addition is in conformance with the objectives and criteria of the Harvard Square Development Guidelines, the existing building is not a National Register or contributing building, and no National Register or contributing building existed on the site in the preceding five years.

The Harvard Square Development Guidelines also include provisions specific to the renovation of/addition to existing buildings:

*Creative design solutions to development and renovation efforts are encouraged to ensure that the unique resources and character of Harvard Square are protected.*

1. *New Construction/Additions to Existing Buildings*

*Harvard Square is a kaleidoscopic urban environment that has always changed with time. That continuous evolution of architectural design and site development has been positive and necessary to keep the Square fresh, vibrant, and economically viable. Contemporary design expression is encouraged, as is new construction that accommodates older structures on or adjacent to the site. Construction that only incorporates portions of older structures may be acceptable if those portions are substantial and significant; however, use of isolated and token historic elements is discouraged. Demolition involving only the retention of facades to allow replacement of historic structures with new construction behind is discouraged unless the supporting historic fabric is found not to be salvageable.*

*In the Square's historic context, new building design should be guided by the particular considerations of its place, such as the appropriateness of the structure's height, scale, mass, proportions, orientation, and lot coverage; the vertical and horizontal emphasis, rhythm of openings, transparency, texture, and materials of the publicly-visible facades; sunlight and shadow effects; relationship to public open space; and landscaping.*

*Any design should be further guided by consideration of the relationship of a proposed building to the site and to other buildings and structures in the vicinity. In that regard, Harvard Square has been divided into the six smaller areas, or subdistricts described above, which are distinctive in their built character.*

*Designers should refer to the discussion of the existing conditions and preservation and development goals for the particular subdistrict in which they are working.*

The addition will use contemporary cladding and finishes, which also will be used to refresh the existing building's facades. The new residential lobby and the refreshed commercial entrances will have a more contemporary design. The new upper floors include setbacks and articulation with high levels of transparency. The new floors will step back from JFK and Winthrop Streets to respect existing views and minimize shadow impacts on Winthrop Park.

The project site is in Subdistrict D: Winthrop Square/JFK Street. As the Development Guidelines note:

This subdistrict includes an eclectic mix of architecture that spans 200 years of Cambridge history. ... The buildings located around Winthrop Square and on the northern section of JFK Street represent a mixture of frame and masonry construction. Most of the older buildings, including residences and light-industrial buildings have been converted to commercial uses.

The proposed addition is consistent with that history, although in this instance it will be adding residences not converting existing residences to commercial uses. The project will continue to protect the portion of 18<sup>th</sup> century wall that runs behind the property, described in the subdistrict guidelines as "a critically-important artifact of early development in Harvard Square."

## 2. *Alterations to Existing Buildings*

*Where exterior architectural features of a building are proposed to be altered, a property owner or developer is encouraged to retain and repair, rather than replace, original or significant exterior building elements.*

The existing building's exterior architectural features consist primarily of concrete elements with large punched "ribbon" commercial windows. This architecture will be retained and refreshed to match the vertical addition, with the existing commercial entrances upgraded to a more contemporary design.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH THE GENERAL SPECIAL PERMIT CRITERIA**

The requested special permits satisfy the general special permit criteria of CZO Section 10.43, which provides that:

*Criteria. Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:*

- (a) *it appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or ...*

With the requested special permits, the requirements of the Ordinance will be met.

- (b) *traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or ...*

The City maintains Winthrop Street as a shared street for pedestrian, bicycle, and motor vehicle traffic, which is closed to motorized vehicles between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 a.m. daily. Although the sidewalk area along the building's Winthrop Street facade is a fire lane, unauthorized parking and loading activity occurs in that area. The applicant has agreed to install large planters or other physical elements on its property along the Winthrop Street line to prevent this unauthorized activity. Because it does not include the creation of any additional parking spaces, the proposed residential addition will not generate new vehicle trips to/from the project site.

The proposed special permit will not change the existing patterns of activity along Winthrop Street or elsewhere in the vicinity.

- (c) *the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or ...*

The continued use of the existing basement, first floor, and second floor for retail, restaurant, and other small-scale commercial uses is not expected to adversely impact the operation of adjacent uses that exist or allowed under current zoning. Nor is the proposed residential addition expected to have adverse impacts. Rather, the new residents are expected to frequent retail, restaurant, and other uses in the vicinity, contributing to the vitality of this area of Harvard Square.

- (d) *nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or ...*

The proposed residential addition is not expected to cause any nuisance or hazard. The mechanical equipment for the addition will be set back from the edges of the fifth floor; there are no adjacent occupied buildings at that level. The rooftop HVAC/mechanical systems serving the existing restaurant and retail tenants will be replaced with lower-profile units on a podium between the top of the current building and the bottom of the residential addition. They will be located opposite the Winthrop Street side of the building, facing the adjacent parking garage. As such they are not expected to bother any adjacent properties. All mechanical equipment will comply fully with the City's Noise Ordinance.

- (e) *for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and ...*

Granting the requested special permits would not impair the integrity of the Harvard Square Overlay District, the underlying Business B district, or any adjoining district. The proposed

residential use of the addition is consistent with the intent of the zoning requirements for the Harvard Square Overlay District, the underlying Business B district, and other applicable citywide requirements.

- (f) *the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.*

As discussed below, the proposed residential addition is consistent with the Urban Design Objectives as set forth in Section 19.30:

## **COMPLIANCE WITH URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES OF SECTION 19.30**

As stated in Section 19.21.21, the purpose of urban design review by the Planning Board is to:

review the specific design details of buildings and their site layout to ensure that the design of the building and its location on the lot minimize any potential negative impact on abutting properties and on the environment along public streets and sidewalks. Particular attention will be paid to the design of the ground floor; the layout of service facilities including driveways, and parking and loading facilities; the location and screening of mechanical service equipment and waste disposal facilities; landscape amenities; and similar building and site layout details.

The only ground floor element of the proposed vertical expansion of the existing building will be a small residential lobby. The new residential space will not require a driveway or loading facility, and the applicant is requesting a waiver of the parking requirement. Rooftop mechanical equipment will be screened and designed to comply with the City's Noise Ordinance. Waste, including recyclable materials, will be stored inside the building until pickup. As the existing building occupies almost the entire site, and the perimeter areas outside the building footprint already are used for sidewalks and a service alley, opportunities to add landscape amenities are few (and further limited by the need to provide short-term bicycle parking).

The project's compliance with the specific requirements of Section 19.30 is discussed below.

*(19.31) New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.*

The project fits within the context of nearby building heights and existing street walls. The addition's JFK Street facade will align with the existing building's street wall at the third floor level, and connect visually to the taller parking garage immediately to the south. The addition's Winthrop Street facade will step back further at the fourth and fifth floor levels, preserving views from and limiting new shadows on Winthrop Park. The massing of the addition also is sensitive to the transition in height from the adjacent, smaller Hyde-Taylor House at 96 Winthrop Street.

*(19.32) Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.*

The project is principally an addition atop an existing two-story building. Repurposing the alley from trash and recycling storage to include a new residential lobby will improve the building's interface with Winthrop Street, as will the installation of physical barriers to prevent vehicles from parking or loading on the property adjacent to Winthrop Street. Long-term bicycle parking for residents will be provided inside the building. Short-term bicycle parking will be provided along Winthrop Street.

*(19.33) The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.*

All rooftop mechanical equipment will be selected, located, and screened so as to not adversely impact the abutting properties or members of the public using Winthrop Street or Winthrop Park, and will comply fully with the City's Noise Ordinance.

Shadow impacts on Winthrop Park have been minimized. Shadow increases at the spring and fall equinoxes will be marginal and are not expected to have a significant adverse impact on the use or enjoyment of the park.

*(19.34) Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.*

The project will not cause a burden on City infrastructure.

*(19.35) New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.*

The project complies with the general development guidelines for the Harvard Square Overlay District. It will reinforce and enhance the diverse development patterns of this area of Cambridge. It does not involve the demolition or alteration of any historical or architecturally significant structures.

*(19.36) Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.*

The project will add forty residential units.

*(19.37) Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.*

The project is the vertical expansion of an existing, two-story building, and will neither create nor remove open space. The project will preserve the open area between building and Winthrop Street, and will add physical barriers to prevent vehicles from using that space. This space contributes to the shared street nature of Winthrop Street and serves as a publicly accessible area for outdoor seating.

The stepped massing of the proposed addition will create an uncluttered backdrop to the adjacent Winthrop Park, without visually intruding on this important passive recreation and historic open space.

## GREEN AREA OR PERMEABLE OPEN SPACE CONSIDERATIONS

In their pre-filing review of this application, CDD staff asked for an explanation of how the project would comply with Section 19.59.<sup>4</sup> It would not be possible for 15% of the project site to be Green Area or Permeable Open Space. Green Area Open Space, as defined in Article 2, must be “land at grade, and shall consist of friable, permeable materials (including but not limited to loam, gravel, sand, crushed stone, and including naturally occurring soil, bedrock, and incidental pipes and other underground utilities) having a minimum depth of three (3) feet.” The existing building footprint covers most of the project site. That footprint will be enlarged somewhat by the residential lobby. The remainder of the project site is covered by portions of the public sidewalks along JFK Street and Winthrop Street and the alley between the existing building and the Hyde-Taylor House building.

Replacing portions of the sidewalks with strips of landscaping destined to be walked over daily would serve no practical use and would inhibit access to the building by the mobility impaired or bicyclists. The remainder of the alley will be needed for access between the building’s trash and recycling storage areas and Winthrop Street.

Replacing portions of the sidewalks (or alley surface) with permeable pavers might qualify those areas as Permeable Open Space. Doing so would create an uneven surface for pedestrians and bicyclists while providing negligible public benefit. It also would have the potential of increasing stormwater infiltration immediately adjacent to the foundation of a building that was not designed or constructed with that in mind.

Because the project already will be subject to special permit review, the building and site plan requirements of Section 19.50—including Section 19.59—do not appear to apply. See Section 19.30 (“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.”). If the Planning Board determines that Section 19.59 nonetheless applies, the applicant requests a waiver from Section 19.59, as provided for by Section 19.51.2.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 19.59 provides that:

At least 15% of the lot shall consist of any combination of Green Area or Permeable Open Space as defined in Article 2.000. This requirement may be met on a lot held in the same ownership, provided the Open Space is located within 300 feet of the development lot and does not serve to meet the requirement of this Section 19.59 for any other development.

## Green Building Requirements

### 57 JFK Street Green Building Report – Certification for Special Permit Stage

**Status:** The Community Development Department (CDD) received the Green Building Report (GBR) for the Special Permit stage for 57 JFK Street. Pursuant to Section 22.25.1 of the Zoning Ordinance, CDD staff have reviewed the project’s GBR and provide the following Determination, Summary of Compliance and Comments.

**CDD Determination:** The documentation provided by the Applicant is adequate and demonstrates compliance with the Green Building Requirements applicable to the Special Permit stage. A revised submission, with additional documentation will be required at the Building Permit and Certificate of Occupancy stages.

**Project Summary:** This project is subject to the City’s Green Building requirements, which mandate that projects containing less than 50,000 square feet of GFA meet the LEED Silver requirements. Based on the documents submitted, the project is expected to achieve LEED Gold certification with 74.5 points. The project is seeking LEED certification with USGBC.

#### Summary of Compliance:

##### Green Building Professional Affidavit Certification

Stefan David Vogelmann, LEED AP of Nelson Architecture & Interiors, has been identified as the Green Building Professional for the project. The affidavit states that this professional has reviewed all relevant documents for this project and confirm to the best of their knowledge that those documents indicate that the project has been planned and designed to achieve the LEED requirements of Section 22.24 under Article 22.20 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance.

##### LEED Rating System Checklist, LEED and Net Zero Narrative

- Rating System: LEED v4 BD+C: Multifamily Midrise.
- Energy cost saving = 26.6% over the LEED baseline standard (ASHRAE 90.1-2010).
- Energy use savings = 26.6% reduction in energy use relative to ASHRAE 90.1-2010 baseline.
- Site EUI (Stretch Code standards) = 18.4 kBTU/SF-yr.
- Source EUI (Stretch Code standards) = 51.6 kBTU/SF-yr.
- GHG emissions reduction = 26.6% reduction.
- LEED categories and their credit points:
  - Integrative Process – 1 point
  - Location and Transportation – 15 points
  - Sustainable Sites – 3 points
  - Water Efficiency – 8 points
  - Energy and Atmosphere – 27 points
  - Materials and Resources – 3.5 points
  - Indoor Environmental Quality – 10 points
  - Innovation – 4 points
  - Regional Priority – 3 points
  - **Total credit points = 74.5 point**

**Advisory Comments:**

While the project meets the Green Building Requirements, CDD staff do provide comments and recommendations for consideration to the Planning Board on how projects might further improve their energy performance or reduce their embodied carbons. The Planning Board looks carefully at the sustainability aspects and qualities of all building types/use, and their operational and embodied carbons. For that reason, staff believe the following recommendations are relevant to this project and should be considered:

1. Staff recommend the use of centralized heat pump technology for heating, cooling and DHW.
2. For low emitting materials, staff recommend reaching the 90% threshold in at least three product categories.
3. Since the project is primarily residential, staff recommends the use of WELL standards or Fitwel guidelines, in addition to LEED.
4. Staff recommend conducting a whole-building life-cycle analysis for the Project to demonstrate commitment to reducing environmental impacts including those of global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, and other concerns.
5. Future updates from the applicant should include the following:
  - a. a sustainable design specification section for the emission levels of composite wood products, paints, sealants, and finishes, as well as for carpet, carpet pads, and adhesives.
  - b. an updated roof plan showing mechanical equipment and identifying areas that could potentially be dedicated to green roof or solar array systems.
  - c. For building permit phase, the applicant submission should be a single pdf file with updates, as well as the project name and page number listed on all pages.
6. Staff recommend pursuing enhanced indoor air quality strategies, especially using higher filtration levels above 8 MERV preferably 10-13 MERV to do better in capturing 1-3 microns particle size.

## Community Outreach Narrative

We began our efforts at Neighborhood and Community Outreach for our proposed residential addition at 57 JFK Street by sending written notice on June 22, 2021 and again on June 28, 2021 to all of the abutters on the list provided by CDD and also reached out to other business owners, residents and community members, including representatives at University Lutheran Church (Kathleen Reed) and First Parish Church (Adam Dyer). In addition to providing written notice to the abutters, we have done the following on community outreach: 1) Presented our plans at the July 2, 2021 meeting of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Association (HSNA) on Zoom; 2) Presented our plans at an open, in-person community meeting on July 12th at 57 JFK Street; 3) Presented our plans at the September 10, 2021 in-person Harvard Square Business Association (HSBA) meeting. Cambridge Historical Commission reviewed our plans at their 8/5/2021 and 9/2/2021 meetings and signed off on the plans during the September 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

## Trash Narrative

The Crimson Galeria building at 57 JFK Street in Cambridge is currently a 2-story commercial building with restaurant and retail/service tenants. Trash and Recycling is picked up daily for 57 JFK Street by Casella Waste Systems. This daily pickup will continue with the proposed residential addition on top of the existing building.

For the 3 residential floors there will be a designated trash room on each floor where residents can deposit their trash and recycling at any time. Building management will move the trash and recycling from the trash rooms on the third, fourth and fifth floors to larger trash and recycling bins in the basement everyday so that they can be included in the daily pickup by Casella. There will also be a cardboard baler in the basement. As noted above, trash and recycling pickup will continue to occur on Winthrop Street every morning.

## Loading Narrative

Loading, deliveries and moving for the residential addition will only occur between 7:00am and 11:00am on Winthrop Street; the City allows vehicles to enter the street before 11:00am. Moving vehicles will be scheduled to come only between 7:00-11:00am and will be managed by a building maintenance person.