

**Cambridge Gas and Light Building
711-727 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge**

**Special Permit Application
PB#361**

City of Cambridge Planning Board

October 20, 2020

**SUPPLEMENT TO
PROJECT NARRATIVE**

Overview

Gas Light Building LLC, the owner, and Chevron Partners, the managing agent and developer of 711-727 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, are pleased to submit these updated and supplemental materials in support of this Special Permit Application. This project entails a substantial renovation and rehabilitation of the historic Cambridge Gas and Light Building and construction of a new hotel addition behind and above the existing building, located at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Temple Street, in the heart of Central Square, Cambridge. The essential elements of the Special Permit Application as it relates to the uses proposed, bulk and dimensional information, and special permits being requested remain the same. There are no amendments to the previously submitted Special Permit Application Narrative.

This Supplement to the Project Narrative will:

- describe revisions to the Special Permit Cover Sheet and provide additional detail about rooftop spaces, ground floor retail and other clarifying information requested by CDD staff
- summarize the comments and concerns raised by Planning Board members at the July 21st, 2020 Planning Board hearing
- identify the responses and changes made to the plans and proposal address each of these Planning Board member comments and concerns
- refer to specific page(s) of the graphic materials that reflect changes to the original plans and proposal
- describe ongoing public outreach to the project's neighbors

- summarize reasons to support this project, as revised

Revisions to Cover Sheet and Additional Information Requested By CDD:

The project team has reviewed CDD and other City department memoranda and communications, and has, in response, revised the Special Permit Application Cover Sheet and provided additional information and clarification to the project as follows:

(1) Revised Special Permit Application Cover Sheet. We have revised the Cover Sheet to identify all special permits being sought in a list format.

“Section 20.304.3.6 (exemption of rooftop spaces from GFA calculation)”, previously described in the Narrative as a Planning Board Finding, is now listed as a Planning Board Special Permit. Additional information and reasons to support a grant of this special permit is included in item (2) below.

(2) Additional Information re: Rooftop Spaces. This Special Permit Application seeks to exempt from Gross Floor Area calculations certain rooftop uses on the lower roof (“Level 4 Roof”) and the roof at the top floor of the building (“Upper Roof”), pursuant to Section 20.304.3.6. Additional graphic images provide more detail of the proposed uses on the Level 4 Roof and Upper Roof. *Refer to pages 20, 23.*

The Level 4 Roof will include six private terraces accessible to the individual hotel guests occupying each of the hotel rooms located on the Massachusetts Avenue side of the fourth floor of the building.

The breakdown of square footage for the Level 4 Roof Terraces is as follows:

- 368 SF
 - 252 SF
 - 383 SF
 - 383 SF
 - 254 SF
 - 732 SF
- Total Level 4 Terraces = 2,372 SF**

The Upper Roof Area of the new addition will contain the stairs and elevator headhouse, mechanical rooms, exterior mechanical equipment with screening, a walkway for access, green roof elements, and a common roof deck.

The breakdown of square footage for the Upper Roof is as follows:

- Stairs/Elev./Mech Rm’s-- 686 + 490 = 1,176 SF
 - Mechanical Equipment Exterior-- 1,593 + 1,067 = 2,660 SF
 - Common Roof Deck Space = 2,850 SF
- Total Upper Roof = 6,686 SF**

The design team went through a process of careful study to determine optimal locations and design for the rooftop spaces for this project. At Level 4, the proposed Terrace areas and

railings will be obscured behind the 42 inch high parapet of the existing building; thus, as shown in the cross-section elevation plan at *page 42*, will not be visible from the street. Terrace areas may be seen from the windows of neighboring office buildings located to the east and across Massachusetts Avenue. However, limited lighting and downlighting, as shown in nighttime renderings (*refer to pages 51, 57*) will minimize any light spill from these areas.

The project team spent significant time and effort in designing and revising its plans for the Upper Roof in consultation with the management team at the Temple Place Apartments. The Upper Roof reflects plans that incorporate the requested modifications to siting of the mechanical systems and equipment at the Upper Roof level as far from the Temple Place Apartments as feasible (without violating bulk plane setbacks measured from Massachusetts Avenue). Additional screening systems will provide acoustical protection (diminishing sound effects) and visually attractive screening of the rooftop systems as viewed from the street or neighboring properties. The common roof deck will be situated more than 21 feet back from the Massachusetts Avenue front lot line, so as not to be visible from street level along Massachusetts Avenue. The roof deck will also be obscured from view from the Temple Place Apartments, as it is located on the opposite side of a headhouse and mechanical equipment area, thereby mitigating impacts on the residential neighbors. Although the Upper Roof deck will be visible to the office building next door, lighting will be limited to only that required for safety, and compliant with City of Cambridge lighting standards.

Accordingly and for reasons described above, the proposed rooftop spaces have been “located and designed to minimize impacts on neighboring uses, including but not limited to light trespass, noise or other nuisance,” and therefore meet the standard for a special permit under Section 20.304.3.6.

(3) Additional Information re Ground Floor Retail:

Accessibility. The proposed renovations to the existing building include modifications to provide three, accessible (inside and out) ground floor retail spaces along Massachusetts Avenue. Exterior accessibility will be achieved by removing the granite curbs and lowering the entrances to the ground floor retail spaces. Interior accessibility will be provided inside the ground floor retail spaces by the owner, with retail tenants required to additionally comply with accessibility requirements in connection with any tenant fit outs.

Retail Spaces. The plans include the provision of the ground floor retail shells, to be built out by tenants, with details of such spaces depending upon each retail tenants’ particular needs and operating and licensing requirements. Tenants requiring bathroom facilities for patrons will provide their own accessible bathroom facilities as required under applicable building code and licensing requirements for their specific retail use. The plans do not presently include venting for a full-scale restaurant, but do provide adequate venting for a café use.

Preservation of Existing Historic Façade. The project is designed so as to preserve and revitalize the historic façade and architectural elements of the existing building. In keeping with this goal, and at the recommendation of Charles Sullivan, of the Cambridge Historic Commission, the owner has agreed to remove, refurbish and restore the elaborate grillwork on corner bays of the Massachusetts Avenue façade.

Additionally, the plans are to preserve the existing façade of this historic building with only minor modifications as necessary, but maintaining the existing ratio of glass to solid materials. Currently, the ground floor non-residential façade along Massachusetts Avenue is approximately 47.6% clear glass. The proposed plans maintain the same percentage of clear glass at the ground floor.

Ground Floor Non-Residential Façade -- Percentage of Clear Glass:

| FAÇADE | EXISTING | PROPOSED |
|----------|----------|----------|
| Mass Ave | 47.6% | 47.6% |

Sec. 20.304.5.1.c requires ground floor non-residential façades on Massachusetts Avenue to provide for no less than 50% clear glass. However, the project team has determined that it would not be feasible (or desirable) to attempt to achieve a 50% clear glass façade, as this would require demolishing portions of the existing historic façade to provide for additional glazing, which would not be in keeping with the goal of maintaining and preserving the unique and historic architectural features at the ground floor.

Protection for Street Trees. The owner will ensure the protection of the existing street trees along Massachusetts Avenue and Temple Street (if applicable) that border the property throughout construction of the new development. The owner will also cooperate with and support a City request to plant a new street tree in empty planter/dirt location abutting the property on Temple Street.

Allow for Formula Business. The Central Square branch of Bank of America has existed at this location for several decades, and is a tenant under a long-term lease. A recent signage change has improved the look substantially. The Bank of America branch, as existing and with modified signage meets the standards for a special permit under Section 20.304.5.4. The branch design fits within the unique, historic façade of the existing building, reflecting the established historical character of this building and the neighboring historic bank building next door. The storefront design is varied and unique from the typical or standard Bank of America design. The new, smaller scale signage is more consistent with Central Square’s unique character.

(4) Additional Information re Bicycle Parking:

The project team has provided a bicycle parking plan showing the design for 8 long-term bicycle parking spaces (including rack types) being provided inside the building. *Refer to page 46.* The team’s traffic and parking consultant, VHB, determined that there was not sufficient area outside the building to allow for the six (6) short-term bicycle parking spaces that would be required under Section 6.107.3. Accordingly, the owner has agreed to provide a payment to the City’s Public Bicycle Fund for the six (6) short-term bicycle parking spaces (on three (3) racks) that cannot feasibly be provided on the site, as provided for under Section 6.104.2b of the Ordinance.

Feedback from July 21st, 2020 PB Hearing and Responses to Feedback:

Here is a brief summary of feedback from the initial Planning Board Hearing and the project team’s responses to each, organized thematically:

- (1) New Hotel façade on Massachusetts Avenue “overwhelms,” appears too dominant vis-à-vis, the historic Gas and Light Co. Building.

- a. Response #1: Explore reducing the depth of the frames:

Chevron Partners has a proven dedication to preservation and transformation of historic properties by restoring their inherent beauty in combination with appropriate modernization. Chevron’s vision and intention has always been to highlight the elegance of the existing historic building while honoring it with an equally elegant, modern addition above. In response to these concerns about heaviness of the deep frames of the Massachusetts façade, the team undertook several studies to evaluate various changes that might be made to shallow the depth of the hotel upper-story frame elements. After study, it was determined that the design could support a reduction of one-third of the frame depth, reducing these frames from 24 inches to 16 inches. *Refer to page 41 of the graphic materials.*

- b. Response #2: Choose a matte material finish and complementary colors for new addition components.

The team continues to explore material finishes, seeking a less shiny, more matte finish, and colors that complement the existing stone façade. Collaborating with CDD’s urban design professionals in consultation with Mr. Charles Sullivan, Cambridge Historic Commission, the team will continue this exploration, with actual mock-ups of materials to be viewed on site later on during the construction phase of the project.

- c. Response #3: Evaluate perspective renderings in order to gain a more realistic sense of how the new addition will be seen in its context.

Upon careful review, the team determined that original renderings required improvements so as to show a more realistic view of the proposed project in its surrounding context, as one would actually experience/view if from various vantage points. *Refer to revised renderings included in pages 48 through 57..*

- (2) Board members requested that the applicant provide more perspective views of the project from more vantage points.

- a. Response #1: In evaluating the perspective renderings, the team realized that certain renderings had relied upon photographs taken with a distorted, wide-angle from unrealistic vantage points (eg., shot from the ground, as opposed to eye level), such as what one might use for marketing purposes.

The team determined that renderings would need to start from scratch, originating with true perspective photographs in order to provide the most realistic views possible. Updated and more true perspective photographs were taken, and renderings created in order to provide a realistic views from the following perspectives:

- i. Taken from directly across Massachusetts Avenue, looking head on. *Refer to page 49.*
- ii. Removing distorted wide-angle view, to create more accurate perspective. *Refer to page 48.*
- iii. Additional views from various vantage points provide better sense of how the project fits complimentarily into its context. *Refer to pages 49 through 57.*

- (3) Comments related to the Temple Street East façade included questions about the height of the new hotel/office lobby entrance (which appeared too large), a desire for more articulation of the new addition, and more attention to how this façade fits into the context of the Temple Street corridor.
 - a. Response #1: In evaluating the new hotel/office lobby entrance, the team studied this issue and decided to reduce its scale to be less prominent relative to the existing building. *Refer to pages 35-36.*
 - b. Response #2: In evaluating the articulation of this façade, various possible approaches were explored and evaluated with CDD staff, resulting in a revised reveal element. *Refer to pages 35-36.*
 - c. Response #3: Updated and additional renderings of the project as seen along Temple Street provide a better sense of how the project fits into the context of the diverse, varied architecture seen along this corridor. *Refer to pages 48 through 57.*
- (4) Comments about the West façade (as seen from the Post Office building on Mass. Ave.) included a desire to see more care given to the articulation and materiality of this façade.
 - a. Response #1: The team explored various alternatives, including adding windows (not allowed on zero lot line), mural (deemed not advisable by CDD staff and owner), and alternative brick cladding, each of which were ruled out as not contributing to the overall project design. The team agreed upon a refinement to original metal cladding as the preferred option. *Refer to pages 50-51.*
- (5) Concerns were expressed relative to the Rear façade, and specifically the impact of the new addition on its neighbors at Temple Place, in terms of privacy and minimizing so-called “light pollution”.
 - a. Response #1: The team has studied various options for mitigating “light pollution” and privacy concerns, and is continuing this investigation, envisioning that the project will likely employ a combination of approaches, including

shielded downlights, specialty glazing on the windows with films, and/or automatic window shades. *Refer to page 44.*

This work will be ongoing in consultation with CDD staff and subject to CDD further review later on in the construction phase of the project.

(6) Board members requested that the applicant provide more detailed graphic depictions of the project shown at both a larger scale as well as a more detail with respect to the roof areas and mechanical screening.

- a. Response #1: The roof railings and parapets (at both the existing roof and upper roof) have been drawn at a larger scale with graphic image demonstrating that roof railing at the hotel level and at the roof are largely not visible from the street. *Refer to page 42.*
- b. Response #2: Additional graphic material shows the plans for mechanical equipment screening and noise mitigation, employing a combination of acoustic treatment panels on the inside-facing side and attractive, Ipe wood on the exterior cladding side of the mechanical equipment screening. *Refer to page 43.*

The team has spent extensive time and effort in relocating the roof mechanical systems (in response to neighbor's request) and developing desirable screening elements for these systems so as to minimize impacts upon the residents of Temple Place Apartments.

(7) Board members asked for sharing of shadow studies to better illustrate impacts of the project on neighboring buildings.

- a. Response #1: Shadow studies (previously filed) have been improved by refining coloration to better illustrate impacts. *Refer to pages 62-63.*

(8) Comments about signage for the formula business tenant, Bank of America, suggested a desire to see improvements to the existing large, bright Bank of America signs.

- a. Response #1: Bank of America has agreed to change its signage, with approval from the City of Cambridge Planning staff. The improved signage has recently been installed on site. *Refer to recent photographs, page 45.*

(9) Board members expressed concern that the applicant "refresh" its outreach to community members, since there has been a delay between filing and the first public hearing, due to Covid-19 shutdowns.

- a. Response #1: The applicant has continued to be in regular communication with its neighbors, and in particular, the management team for the Temple Place Apartments, having spoken with them most recently in late August and early September. Discussions involved how best to provide an opportunity for residents to learn more about the development in view of safety concerns and restrictions (due to Covid-19) on large gatherings and residents' general lack of

internet/computer access. It was determined that an open house on site was the desirable approach.

The owner prepared an informational pamphlet, attached to this submission. Open house dates and times have allowed many opportunities for residents to walk next door to the former convenience store on Massachusetts Avenue to view the physical model, and pose questions or concerns to the owner who will be available on site. Additional feedback from these open house events will be shared with the Board as soon as they conclude.

- (10) Additional comments received by the project team since the July 21st hearing included concerns that the project insure the preservation of certain architectural details and discussion of lighting of the existing building and addition.
- a. Response #1: With regard to decorative grillwork, at the request of Charles Sullivan of Cambridge Historic Commission, the team will remove and restore the decorative grill work at the arch locations at the ends along Massachusetts Avenue, while creating new retail frontage. *Refer to pages 45, 49.*
 - b. Response #2: Lighting of the existing building on the Massachusetts Avenue was implemented previously and will be maintained as is. The proposal for additional lighting on the new addition will be refined and plans filed for approval as required in accordance with City regulations. Views of existing night lighting are provided. *Refer to pages 37-39, 51, 56-57*

Revised Façade and Additional Information Demonstrates Project Meets Goals and Priorities for Urban Design under the Central Square Overlay District:

The project envisions a transformation of the Cambridge Gas and Light building at 727 Massachusetts Avenue, adding a small boutique hotel that marries the best of the historical context and the new program, with respectful massing and setbacks to preserve the dominance of the historic structure. The project team believes that through incorporation of feedback, and resulting modifications to façade treatments and other distinguishing features of this property, we have been able to improve this project immensely.

The owner remains committed to the creation of a vibrant, mixed-use development, with its new, accessible, ground floor retail opportunities, improved offices, and new boutique hotel, as a vital contribution to the Central Square business district. The modifications to the proposal serve to better honor the distinctive, elegant, historic Gas and Light Co. Building, while creating an elegant, modern extension to that building, with design and façade elements meant to fit within its rich and varied context.

On behalf of the project team, we wish to thank this Board for its consideration and urge you to approve the Special Permit Application as amended.

List of Revised and New Graphic Materials:

Revised Graphic Images:

Pages 24, 33, 37, 38, 62 and 63 are revised/updated versions of graphic slides included in the original Special Permit graphic materials.

New Graphic Images:

Pages 11, 35, 36, 41-46, and 48-57 are all new graphic slides.

SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION

(revised final October 20, 2020)

711-727 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE, MA

REVISED
COVER SHEET

LOCATION: 711-727 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

DISTRICT: BB-CSQ

OWNER: Gas Light Building LLC
Attn: Marcel Safar, Its Manager

ADDRESS: 100 Summer Street, Suite 1600, Boston, MA, 02110

List all special permit(s) requested:

Petitioner respectfully requests Planning Board special permit relief pursuant to Cambridge Zoning Ordinance Sections as follows:

- Building height up to 80 feet (Section 20.304.2)
- Combined residential & non-residential FAR up to 4.0 (Section 20.304.3)
- Formula Business Use (Section 20.304.5)
- Modify limitations on bank frontage (Section 20.304.5.3.b)
- Reduction of parking and loading requirements (Section 20.304.6)
- Exemption of rooftop spaces from calculation of GFA (Section 20.304.3.6)
- Exemption of basement area in the calculation from GFA (Art 2.000)

List all submitted materials:

Part 1 of 2 list:

- Cover Sheet – Revised 10.20.20
- Fee Schedule
- Ownership Certificate
- Certifications of Receipt of Plans
- Dimensional Form (with Footnotes)
- Area Calculations

- Project Narrative – original, dated January 27, 2020
 - Overview
 - Owner/Developer
 - Design Objectives and Solutions
 - The Hotel
 - Architect
 - Zoning Counsel
 - Compliance with Zoning
 - Compliance with General Special Permit Criteria
 - Compliance with Criteria Specific to Special Permit Being Sought Under the Central Square Overlay District
 - Public and Private Utilities Narrative
 - Community Outreach
 - Exhibit re: Project Compliance with Ordinance 19.30 – Citywide Urban Design Objectives
- Transportation Report by VHB, dated January 23, 2020
- Transportation Report by VHB, updated March __, 2020
- Article 22 Sustainability Narrative and Preliminary LEED Scorecard prepared by WSP, dated September 10, 2019
- Article 22 Sustainability Narrative and Preliminary LEED Scorecard prepared by WSP, updated June 30, 2020
- Meeting minutes re project meeting with Cambridge DPW, by Finegold Alexander Architects, dated December 31, 2018
- Plans and renderings detailing transformer vault and easement to be granted to Eversource for access/egress and repairs/replacements, dated 5/8/19
- Zero Carbon Building Assessment prepared by WSP, dated May 5, 2020
- Supplemental Project Narrative – revised, issued October 20, 2020
- FAQ Pamphlet, distributed to Temple Place Apartments residents, September, 2020

Part 2 of 2 list:

- HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS
- EXISTING CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS
- EXISTING FLOOR PLANS
- PROPOSED DEMOLITION
- SITE CONTEXT MAP
- PROPOSED PLANS & BUILDING SECTION
- PROPOSED LANDSCAPING PLANS
- ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING BUILDING BY ELEVATION
- PROPOSED BUILDING ELEVATIONS
- PROPOSED EXTERIOR FAÇADE MATERIALS
- PROPOSED FRAME DEPTH REDUCTION

- PROPOSED DECK RAILING & MECHANICAL SCREEN DETAILS
- PROPOSED LIGHT POLLUTION DESIGN OPTIONS
- ALTERATIONS TO BANK OF AMERICA SIGNAGE
- PROPOSED BICYCLE PARKING
- PROPOSED RENDERINGS
- ROOF ELEMENTS REQUIRING ZBA APPROVAL
- SHADOW STUDY

OWNER: GAS LIGHT BUILDING LLC
ADDRESS: 100 SUMMER ST.
SUITE 1600 BOSTON, MA 02110

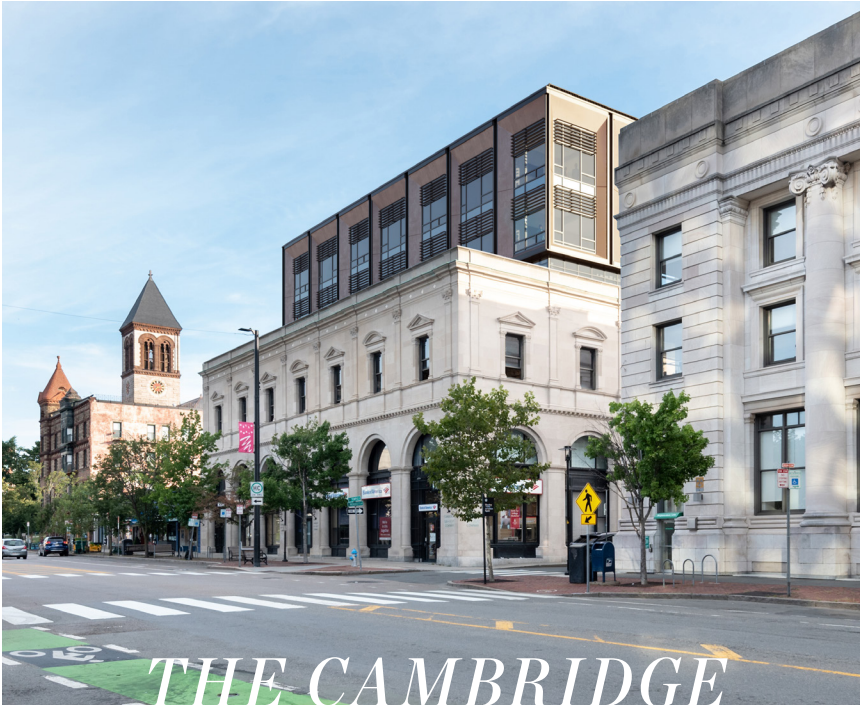
727 MASS AVE

CAMBRIDGE GAS LIGHT CO. BUILDING

727 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE, MA
02139727MASSAVE.COM



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Boutique Hotel Concept



THE CAMBRIDGE GAS LIGHT CO. BUILDING



Located in the heart of Central Square, the Cambridge Gas Light Co. Building (727 Mass Ave) will undergo extensive renovation and improvements, in addition to a new boutique hotel above the historic building.

With improved, fully-accessible retail space along Mass. Ave., renovated office space, and a quiet, elegant lobby entrance off Temple Street, this project will bring vitality and opportunity to this corner of Central Square.

The week of Monday, October 5th, 2020 there will be a building model setup in the Convenience Plus store. Neighbors are welcome to stop by to view the model. To adhere to social distancing, the model will be available to view during the following times:

Monday, October 5th from 10AM–12PM

Tuesday, October 6th from 1PM–3PM

Wednesday, October 7th from 11AM–1PM

Thursday, October 8th from 4PM–6PM

Friday, October 9th from 8AM–10AM

Saturday, October 10th from 9AM–11AM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW OFTEN IS TRASH COLLECTED?

The property will have a private service which will collect trash on a daily basis. This will in turn reduce the amount of trash stored on site.

IS THERE A DUMPSTER ON SITE?

No, there is no room for a dumpster on site.

WHERE DOES THE LAUNDRY ROOM EXHAUST VENT TO?

The laundry room's exhaust vents through the top of the building on the roof along with the other HVAC system, which has been strategically placed, located away from our neighbors.

WILL THERE BE A SMOKING AREA ON THE PREMISE OR IN THE VICINITY?

No. As a LEED accredited building, it does not allow smoking within a 25 feet radius of the property.

WHERE WILL DELIVERIES FOR THE HOTEL BE RECEIVED?

Deliveries for the hotel or its guests will be received through the entrance on Temple Street.

WHERE WILL THE RETAIL RECEIVE DELIVERIES?

Retail spaces are located on Massachusetts Avenue and will receive deliveries through each retail space's front entrance. Bank of America (which will remain in its current location) will continue to receive its deliveries through its designated loading zone in front of Bank of America.

WILL THERE BE OFF-STREET PARKING? WILL THE CURRENT ON-STREET PARKING BE ALTERED ON TEMPLE STREET?

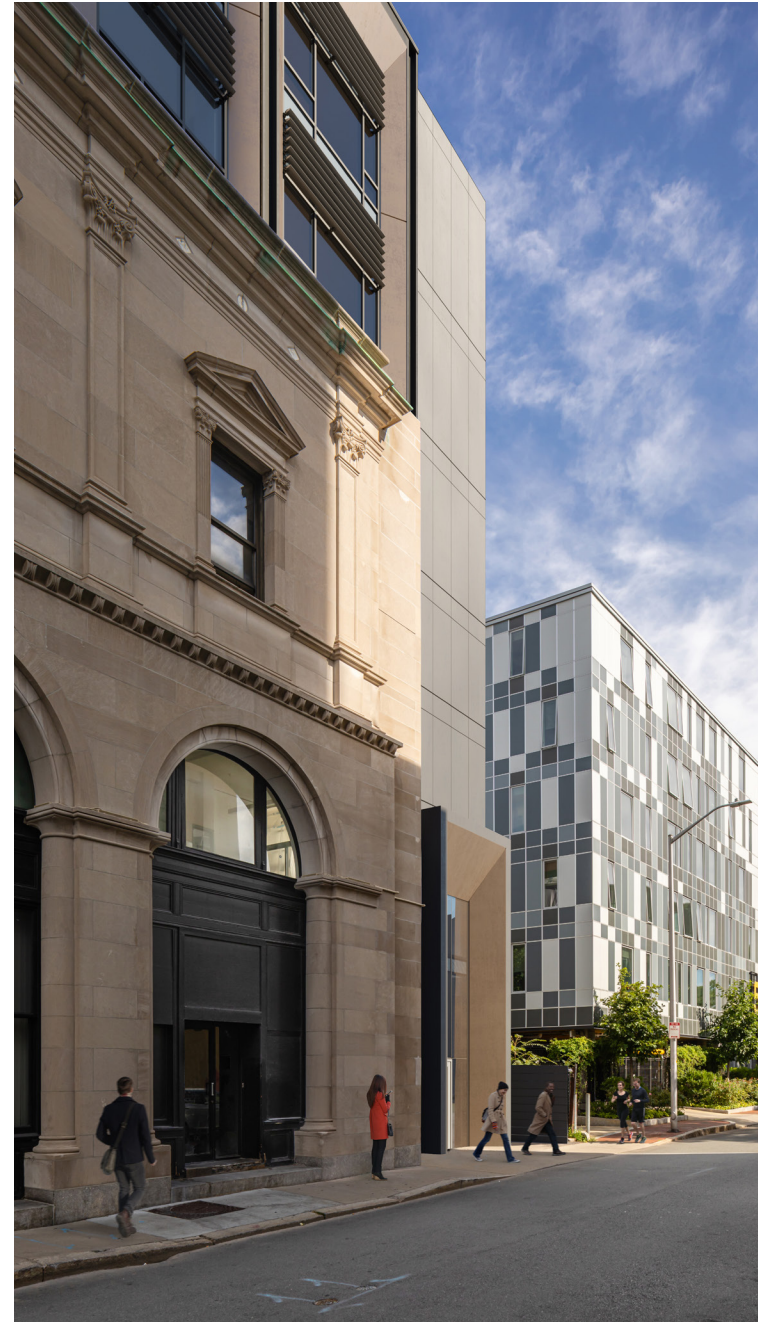
There will continue to be no parking spaces on the property. After conducting an analysis of traffic and parking conditions along Temple Street, the proposal does not include any changes to current on-street parking along Temple Street. The City's Traffic and Parking Department is responsible for all decisions about on-street parking in Cambridge.

WHAT PURPOSE DOES THE SERVICE CORRIDOR (THAT ABUTS THE TEMPLE PLACE APARTMENTS) SERVE?

There is a service corridor which runs along the back of the new addition to the building, that abuts the Temple Place Apartments. This area does not support vehicular traffic and is intended for infrequent foot traffic for maintenance access, as well as for trash removal for the building.

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?

There will be Comment Box located in the Convenience Plus store where you can leave feedback on the project.





CHEVRON
PARTNERS

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