



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

2011 SEP 13 P 12:00  
CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

## NOTICE OF DECISION

Case Number:	260
Address:	5 Western Avenue
Zoning:	Business A (BA) District
Applicant:	City of Cambridge and Cambridge Housing Authority 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge MA 02139
Owner:	City of Cambridge and Cambridge Housing Authority 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge MA 02139
Application Date:	June 14, 2011
Date of Planning Board Public Hearing:	June 28, 2011
Date of Planning Board Decision:	June 28, 2011
Date of Filing Planning Board Decision:	September 13, 2011

**Application:** The Applicant seeks a Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20) for the renovation and restoration of the former Cambridge Police Department headquarters at 5 Western Avenue into offices for the Cambridge Housing Authority, two Cambridge Department of Human Services Programs, the Community Learning Center, and the Multi-Service Center.

**Decision:** GRANTED with Conditions

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board:

For further information concerning this decision, please contact Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, or [lpaden@cambridgema.gov](mailto:lpaden@cambridgema.gov).

## **DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED**

### Application Documents and Supporting Material

Cover Letter, Drawings and Site Plans, Dimensional Form, Photographs of the Existing Site and Proposed Renderings, Ownership Certificate, Evidence of Neighborhood Outreach, Traffic Impact Study, LEED Compliance Statement.

### Other Documents

Letter to the Planning Board dated June 15, 2011, from the Central Square Business Association.

Letter to the Planning Board dated June 28, 2011, from Sue Clippinger, Director of Cambridge Traffic, Parking and Transportation.

Letter to the Planning Board dated June 28, 2011, from the Central Square Advisory Committee.

Email to Liza Paden, dated May 17, 2011, from David Leftcourt, Arborist for the City of Cambridge.

Letter to the Cambridge Planning Board dated June 1, 2011, from the Cambridge Housing Authority.

Letter to David Black, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., dated May 6, 2011, from Sue Clippinger, Director, City of Cambridge Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department.

Email to Liza Paden, dated January 28, 2011, from John Woods.

Email to Liza Paden, dated January 28, 2011, from Rebecca Berry.

## **APPLICATION SUMMARY**

On June 13, 2011, the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) and the City of Cambridge submitted an application for a Project Review Special Permit for the rehabilitation of the former Cambridge Police Headquarters at 5 Western Avenue. The proposed project will re-use the currently vacant site as office and classroom space for the CHA, the Community Learning Center (CLC), the Multi-Service Center (MSC), and a records room for the Cambridge Election Commission (CEC). The plan does not expand the building footprint or include major changes to the building's exterior. A new interior mezzanine loft space above the 4<sup>th</sup> floor will increase the FAR from 4.22 to 4.36. The applicants will seek relief from the Board of Zoning Appeal for the maximum allowed Floor Area Ratio (FAR) at the site.

## **FINDINGS**

After review of the Application Documents and other documents submitted to the Planning Board, testimony given at the public hearing, and review and consideration of the applicable requirements and criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance with regard to the relief being sought, the Planning Board makes the following Findings:

**1. General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit (10.43)**

The Planning Board finds that the project meets the General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit, as set forth below.

*10.43 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 ...*

The proposed project exceeds the allowed FAR of 1.0 in the Business A (BA) district. Although there are no major additions to the exterior of the building, a new interior mezzanine creates additional FAR. The Board feels that the proposed interior floor plan, and new common spaces, are a significant improvement, and well designed to accommodate the several agencies that will be located inside. The Board supports the applicants' efforts to be granted FAR relief at the Board of Zoning Appeal.

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

The project involves the re-use of an existing building in a transit rich area. The agencies that will be located within the building are already in operation in the area. A Traffic Impact Study was included with the application and found that the uses will not have a detrimental impact on local vehicular traffic.

*(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 ...*

Adjacent uses will not be adversely affected. The project will coordinate with planned sidewalk improvements and pedestrian amenities on Western Avenue adjacent to the site.

*(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 ...*

No general nuisance or hazard will be created. The project will adhere to all applicable health and safety regulations.

*(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 ...*

The project will reactivate a key site in Central Square and create a more welcoming and visually appealing building. The project also represents appropriate infill development and the reuse of a significant building in a transit oriented location, consistent with City

goals for sustainable development and reinforcing the role of Central Square as a center of community activities.

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

The project is consistent with those objectives as set forth below:

## **2. Conformance with the Required Project Review Special Permit Criteria in Section 19.20**

### **a. Traffic Impact Findings, Section 19.25.1.**

Based on the findings of the Traffic Study the Planning Board finds that the project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area.

### **b. Urban Design Findings, Section 19.25.2.**

The Board finds that the proposed project is consistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30, as described below.

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

The project makes use of an existing building that has been a part of the existing pattern of development in Central Square since it was constructed in 1933. The exterior of the building will be preserved, cleaned, re-pointed where appropriate. The CHA and the City of Cambridge will work with the Cambridge Historical Commission regarding exterior improvements and appropriate lighting.

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

The project will create new bicycle parking on the sidewalks consistent with the City's plan to improve sidewalks along Western Avenue. There will lockers and showers within the building for employees to encourage bicycle use. The parking garage will be located in the basement and feature 13 parking spaces (including 1 accessible parking space). The building will maintain the two existing main entries: on Western Avenue for the Cambridge Learning Center and on Green Street for the Cambridge Housing Authority and the Multi-Service Center.

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

The project will reuse an existing and formerly active building, therefore the trash collection, lighting, and mechanical equipment associated with it will not add new

impacts to the neighborhood. Trash storage and collection, and lighting will not create a negative impact nor will there be additional stormwater runoff created. Mechanical equipment will generally be located in the attic and appropriately screened when located on the roof.

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

The project is being designed to achieve a LEED Gold rating. The building was formerly active, so the proposed project will not create additional impacts on the City's infrastructure.

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

The proposed project will preserve a prominent, historical, public building in Central Square, and will feature community-based uses and agencies with a long history in the area.

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

The project does not include the creation of housing units; however the proposed uses directly support the goal of providing affordable housing to low and moderate income residents.

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

Sidewalk improvements and pedestrian amenities adjacent to the site will happen as part of the City's Western Avenue improvements and will be coordinated with the proposed project.

## **DECISION**

Based on a review of the Application Documents, testimony given at the public hearings, and the above Findings, the Planning Board hereby GRANTS the requested Special Permit, Section 19.20, and fee waiver, subject to the following conditions and limitations. Hereinafter, for purposes of this Decision, the Permittee shall mean the Applicant for the requested Special Permits and any successor or successors in interest.

1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the Application Documents dated June 13, 2011, and all supplemental documents and information submitted by the Applicant to the Planning Board as referenced above. Appendix I summarizes the dimensional features of the project as approved.

2. The project shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department (CDD). Before issuance of each Building Permit for the project, CDD shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the final plans submitted to secure the Building Permit are consistent with and meet all conditions of this Decision. As part of CDD's administrative review of the project, and prior to any certification to the Superintendent of Buildings, CDD may present any design changes made subsequent to this Decision to the Planning Board for its review and comment.
3. All authorized development shall abide by all applicable City of Cambridge Ordinances, including the Noise Ordinance (Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code).
4. Throughout design development and construction, the project shall conform to the Green Building Requirements set forth in Section 22.20 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance.

Voting in the affirmative to GRANT the Special Permits were Planning Board Members H. Russell, T. Anninger, W. Tibbs, P. Winters, S. Winter, T. Cohen, and Associate Members C. Studen, A. Nur, appointed by the Chair to act on the case, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board, necessary to grant a special permit.

For the Planning Board,



Hugh Russell, Chair

A copy of this decision #260 shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on September 13, 2011, by Taha Jennings, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of the decision. No appeal has been filed.

DATE:

City Clerk of Cambridge

**Appendix I – Dimensional Form**

**Special Permit # 260**

**Address: 5 Western Avenue**

	<b>Allowed/Required</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Granted</b>
<b>Total FAR</b>	1.0	4.22	4.36	4.22*
<b>Residential</b>	1.75			
<b>Non-Residential</b>	1.0	4.22		4.22*
<b>Inclusionary Bonus</b>				
<b>Total GFA in Sq. Ft.</b>	12,980	59,676	61,498	59,676*
<b>Residential</b>	22,715			
<b>Non-Residential</b>	12,980	59,676	61,498	59,676*
<b>Inclusionary Bonus</b>				
<b>Max. Height</b>	65	64'5"	64'5"	64'5"
<b>Range of heights</b>				
<b>Lot Size</b>	none	12,980 SF	12,980 SF	12,980 SF
<b>Lot area/du</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Min. Lot Width</b>	none	100'	100'	100'
<b>Min. Yard Setbacks</b>				
<b>Front</b>	None	0	0	0
<b>Side, Left</b>	None	0	0	0
<b>Side, Right</b>	None	0	0	0
<b>Rear</b>	20 feet	0	0	0
<b>Total % Open Space</b>				
<b>Usable</b>				
<b>Other</b>				
<b>Off Street Parking</b>	See sec. 20.304.6		13	*
<b>Min #</b>				
<b>Max #</b>				
<b>Handicapped</b>				
<b>Bicycle Spaces</b>	7	2	8	8
<b>Loading Bays</b>	See sec. 20.304.6			*

\* Board of Zoning Appeal Variance and Special Permit