



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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Community Development*

DESIGN REVIEW REPORT TO THE PLANNING BOARD

Date of Report: *July 1, 2013*

Project: *SP# 283* Address: *300 Mass Ave*

Proponent: *Forest City*

Application: *Project Review*

The building proposed by Forest City for Millennium at 300 Mass Ave has been reviewed several times by staff and the Board over the last two years as the design was modified to reflect the zoning proposal changes.

As shown in the Mass Ave perspectives, the design directly reflects the features of the zoning that modulate the massing, with the lower masonry element relating well to the existing residential neighbor, the higher elements set back, and the rooftop mechanicals carefully integrated into the architecture.

Throughout, there are very careful uses of materials, both glassy elements and more solid masonry elements, that make the building interesting, but not in an arbitrary way. The result is a remarkably strong and lively architectural solution that creates the significant amount of space needed for its biotech function while also being a good neighbor. This positive outcome is a huge improvement from the initial diagrammatic sketches that accompanied the original zoning proposal.

The Blanche Street view and the Green Street perspective illustrate the transformation of Blanche from an alley into a pleasant walking street leading to a well-landscaped corner, and also show that the character of the building changes on every side to reflect its context.

The substantial amount of ground floor retail relates well to Mass Ave with a sidewalk wide enough for outdoor seating, and turns the corner onto Blanche, helping bring a new focus on the supermarket, which has previously been a little hard to find. The building has a subtle curve at that corner, which creates space for additional outdoor seating where a café is expected.

This very positive review reflects the extensive work that has been put into the proposal over a long period of time--not every building gets this much scrutiny before coming to the Board for a special permit. Staff recommends approval of this project, with the usual proviso that the proponent continue to review design refinements with staff, and that anything significant will be brought back to the Board. For such a prominent project, a materials mock-up on the site will be important, as will the review of a more specific landscaping plan.