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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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Community Development

**SANDRA CLARKE**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Administration

**KHALIL MOGASSABI**  
Deputy Director  
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**To:** City of Cambridge Planning Board  
**From:** Central Square Advisory Committee  
**Date:** April 30, 2019  
**Re:** Santander Bank – 599 Mass Ave

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The Central Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on Wednesday, April 17, 2019 to review and comment on the Santander Bank (the “Applicant”) proposal to operate as a Formula Business in the Central Square Overlay District (the “District”) at 599 Massachusetts Avenue. This meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions outlined in Section 20.300 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. The Committee is appointed by the City Manager to undertake all large project reviews of variances and special permits for activities within the Central Square Overlay District, and to monitor the progress of the Central Square Non-Zoning Recommendations of the 2013 K2C2 Study (the “Study”).

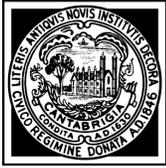
The establishment triggers two of the three characteristics contained within the definition of a Formula Business. The Applicant seeks a Special Permit to install its standardized signage on the exterior of the building and to use its corporate color and logo. The Cambridge Zoning Ordinance defines a Formula Business (Section 20.304.5) as an establishment that has a:

1. *trademark, service mark or logo, defined as a work, phrase, symbol or design or combination thereof that identifies and distinguishes the course of the goods or services from others*
2. *standardized building architecture including but not limited to façade design and signage*
3. *standardized color scheme used throughout the exterior of the establishment, including color associated with signs and logos*

\* \* \*

Consistent with the Study, the Committee’s questions and comments generally focused on enriching the District’s public realm, by prioritizing people, then spaces, then buildings. A key principle of formula business regulations is to regulate the design characteristics of a use, a building, or a site, and designs that might be considered “generic” in ways that impact the character of a district. The Committee’s concerns were how a given use, building, or site contributes to or takes away from the public realm and life on the streets.

The Committee viewed this proposal favorably as a positive lateral movement of an existing institution to an existing location, adding that the size of this new location at 599 Mass Ave is more appropriate for a bank. A comment was made regarding branch management and their involvement with the community. There could be some great opportunities to collaborate with other business and/or with clients, and even sponsor nonprofit organizations in and around the Square.



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Committee Members Present

- Joel Altstein
- Melissa Greene
- Esther Hanig
- Michael Monestime
- Robert Winters

Committee Members Absent

- Tahir Kapoor
- Christopher Sol Gully

***The following are comments made by member(s) of the public in attendance:***

- ***The criticism of banks and phone stores is always about activation. You seem to be addressing this through the nook and the artwork on display. I don't know how successful this has been in other locations. but I'm curious to hear your thoughts on how successful that's been in other locations and how that might be different now.***
  - It's all about the community, especially now that online banking is more of a thing. How do you involve and engage people in the area around the bank? We've had success in Brooklyn with this model. We also think about seminar and classes about mortgages, banking, etc. These wouldn't take place in the nook, per se, but in the common area of the bank.
- ***Is there any intention to use the setback that you've been given in a way that benefits the experience in the public realm? Sometimes, banks will have a physical element outside of their facility that brings a level of activity into the public space. For example, Citizens Bank has a large clock outside their building.***
  - Not at this time, but we will look into it further.

submitted on behalf of the Committee,

**Wendell Joseph, Neighborhood Planner**  
Community Development Department