

To: Board of Zoning Appeal
From: Harvard Square Advisory Committee
Date: November 19, 2025
Re: **95 Mount Auburn Street (Pura Vida) – Positive Recommendation**

Overview

The Harvard Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, to discuss a special permit application for a Vida Pura Miami food establishment proposed for 95 Mount Auburn Street. The meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions of Section 20.50 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in advance of the applicant’s hearing for a special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA). Committee members present were Charles Bonney, John DiGiovanni, Henry Grabar, Kari Kuelzer, Ivy Moylan, Alexandra Offiong (Chair), Matt Simitis, and Nicola Williams. Absent were Allison Crosbie, Gareth Doherty, and Ryan Clinesmith Montalvo. After discussion, John DiGiovanni moved and Kari Kuelzer seconded the motion to forward a report to the BZA with a positive recommendation for the Special Permit, as well as the below comments. Eight (8) members present voting in favor and none (0) against.

Proposal Description

The Applicant is proposing a formula business quick-service food establishment in an approximately 4,151 square foot retail space on the ground floor of 95 Mount Auburn Street in Harvard Square. Pura Vida Miami is health and wellness focused café chain operating with approximately 49 locations nationwide. Menu items include bowls, wraps, smoothies, and coffee. Fast Order/Quick-Service Food Establishments in the Harvard Square Overlay District require a special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA) if they are considered a Formula Business. Pura Vida is a franchise chain that qualifies as a Formula Business. HSAC reviewed the application and prepared this recommendation to be submitted to the BZA. The applicant noted that 85 to 75% of sales are typically on-site and deliveries were to be scheduled pre-opening. Trash will be scheduled for pick-up 7 days a week and recycling 6 days a week. There is an 88-seat capacity and delivery pick-up is planned for the JFK St loading zone with intentions to provide specific in app pick-up directions for drivers.

Public Comments

None.

Recommendation

The Harvard Square Advisory Committee recommends approval of the proposed Pura Vida Miami café at 95 Mount Auburn Street and offers the following comments and guidance:

1. General Support

- The Committee is supportive of the application and finds the proposed café use, with substantial on-premise seating, to be an appropriate and positive addition to Harvard Square.
- The Committee is enthusiastic about the extensive seating capacity and the emphasis on a welcoming, dine-in environment.

2. Hours of Operation

- The Committee supports the proposed hours.
- The Committee encourages the applicant to consider later hours, where possible, to continue the activation of the square, recognizing that any approved hours would represent a maximum and the operator could choose to close earlier as needed.

3. Deliveries and Operations

- Although the Committee raised general concerns with this intersection and issues with the availability of drop off and loading facilities, they are pleased with the applicant's intentions to manage traffic impacts from food pick-up and deliveries. Deliveries are encouraged to be made after hours to minimize conflicts with daytime traffic and loading conditions in Harvard Square.
- The Committee appreciates the applicant's stated commitment to actively managing third-party pickup and delivery operations (e.g., DoorDash, Uber Eats and similar services), including the use of clear instructions on delivery platforms and on-site staff supervision, to reduce double-parking and congestion near the corner of Mount Auburn Street and JFK Street.

4. Storefront Lighting

- The Committee encourages the applicant to maintain appropriate storefront lighting after closing hours so that the space contributes to a safer, more active streetscape in the evening and at night.

The motion to adopt this recommendation passed unanimously among Committee members present.

Respectfully submitted for the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mason Wells", written in a cursive style.

Mason Wells
Community Development Department