

Harvard Square Advisory Committee

c/o Cambridge Community Development Department

344 Broadway

Cambridge, MA 02139

617/349-4647

Case No: 8 Brattle Street – BZA # 011944-2016

Applicant: IMA Pizza Store 21 LLC – c/o Drew Murphy

Proposal and Zoning Issues: The Board of Zoning Appeal Special Permit application is for a Fast Order Food Establishment (Section 4.35 o and 11.30) to operate an *&pizza* restaurant.

Harvard Square Advisory Committee: April 19, 2017

Summary: Drew Murphy, Development Manager for *&pizza* presented the program called “Little Giants”, the evolution of the design with the Historical Commission and the current design for the restaurant use. The existing Tory Row restaurant entrance as well as the Crimson Corner entrance will be used as a way to contribute to breaking up the size of the store front. The metal awning will be replaced with a canvas awning. The hours of operation will be from 11 am to 11 pm and there has been a request from the community for an earlier opening to accommodate breakfast as well as late night service. The operator is going to use the same recycling and waste disposal operator as the Sweetgreen Restaurant at 39 JFK Street and will access through the alley onto Palmer Street, the same as the previous restaurant tenant. There will be no deliveries or pick up from Brattle Street. The eat in/take out mix is expected to be 65%/35%, using plastic reusable trays for dining in, cardboard for takeout and while most patrons are expected to eat the pizza with their fingers, compostable utensils will be available. There will be 48 seats inside the restaurant including a table available for communal seating. There will be 16 seats outdoors in the patio area. The menu consists of a variety of toppings on a pizza base with gluten free options. Initially, there will not be any beer or wine, though they do expect to file a beer and wine license application to the City. Beer and wine consists of 1% of sales at existing locations where it is available and does not play a big part in the revenue.

Gary Doyle, the property owner/landlord attended the meeting.

The Committee discussed the proposal, including the hours of operation, beer and wine service, sidewalk alcohol service, counter service, litter control at the outside tables, lighting both during and after hours, and signage. No Sign Certification has been issued.

There was a great deal of discussion and concern expressed about the outside seating which is south facing, and subject to intense heat especially during the summer. The Committee members suggested that instead of an awning which would not provide adequate shade, there should be umbrellas that can

be adjusted, otherwise, the outdoor seating won't be useable. The windows will be "filmed" to reduce the UV and heat inside the restaurant.

Public Comment was taken and the following represents concerns and suggestions voiced during the meeting:

- Appreciate an active use at the location and support longer hours with more activity, like the façade with the amount of glass that would allow the interior activity to spill out.
- Encourage the restaurant operator to be part of the community and see the restaurant function as more than a transaction, keeping up with the changing character of retail.
- Appreciation of the restaurant use at this location and the liveliness it could bring.
- There was a great deal of concern that full and complete plans were not available to review the seating plan, elevation, awning(s) and the general operation plan.
- Support the idea of umbrellas but do not like the black color, there should be more color. There was a general dislike of the corporate color black being intensively used, and is seen as too austere and/or too dated.
- Support beer and wine on the menu.
- Concern that the 65/35 eat in/take out mix won't generate enough activity.
- Desire to see a return to the 1930s façade
- The location is critical in Harvard Square and should enhance the Square rather than provide another pizza location.
- This restaurant locating at the center of Square is a form of branding and not desirable.
- Support for more outdoor seating, no matter how many outdoor seats are installed, there is always public requests for more.

HSAC Comments and Concerns:

The submittal lacks information on the restaurant seating plan, operation plan, written details on the recycling and waste disposal and delivery plan, elevations of the façade, and awning details.

The counter service in the restaurant will not be able to accommodate both the eat in and take out service leading to excessive lines and confusion.

The location is challenging and a committee member encouraged flexibility to adjust the menu to meet demand.

The long store front should be broken up into smaller sections to preserve the character of the Square.

The Committee supports using colorful umbrellas for the outdoor seating rather than the fixed awning and using planters to soften the edges of the seating, adding more texture.

There is support for the food use at this location.

The façade design needs to be further developed to meet the guidelines to preserve the smaller store fronts, the black color is very difficult to work with, and just a black awning over the glass is not doing very much to activate the space.

The trash and recycling receptacles should be detailed in the application. Biodegradable utensils and dish should be a commitment.

The use of the black corporate color should not be maximized on the site.

There should be a strong commitment to remaining open more hours.

One member present and two who sent comments, see this use as "ordinary" and not in keeping with the needs of the Square.

A motion was made to recommend the application for a Fast Order Food Special Permit with the following comments and suggested conditions if the Board of Zoning Appeal grants the special permit:

- The hours of operation should include breakfast as early as possible, at least at 7:30 am as discussed and open as late as 2 am.
- There should be design revisions to include modification of the single storefront to meet the design guidelines for smaller and more historic narrow store openings. Umbrellas rather than one single awning would be one suggested option. Two operating entrances would be another. Minimize the use of the corporate black as much as possible to be more sensitive to the visual and physical characteristics of other buildings.
- There should be a trash and recycling pick up plan in place that meets the City of Cambridge regulations as well as a delivery plan that uses Palmer Street and does not allow the use of Brattle Street to prevent traffic problems and discourage the illegal parking on Brattle Street.

The motion was seconded.

Members present voting in favor: J. DiGiovanni, A. Offiong, A. Crosbie, and M. Simitis. Voting against the motion: P. Gifford. K. Kuelzer abstained from the vote, her comments are attached. Also attached are the emails from absent Committee members F. Kramer and L. Curry.

Respectfully Submitted for the Committee,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Liza Paden".

Liza Paden
Community Development Department staff

Hi Liza,

Since I can't be present for the April 19 discussion of the proposal by and pizza for the corner of Brattle Street and Massachusetts Avenue I want to express my strong objection to their plan.

When I review the &pizza proposal against the Harvard Square Development Guidelines, I see clear violations. Quoting from the HSAC guidelines:; ".....retention of the small scale environment, with narrow storefronts and interesting signs should be encouraged in this subdistrict." Ignoring this guideline, the applicant and, I assume, the building owner, propose to take two distinct 30' storefronts and combine them creating one 60' storefront with a common boring façade. The awning signing, simple type in the typeface of the brand, is bland as opposed to interesting or engaging.

Also, the fast food ordinance requires that the applicant show a hardship. If the hardship is on the basis of lack of pizza offerings, I see no need for another pizza shop in this subdistrict, especially in this extremely high profile location that visually impacts the character of Harvard Square for the person on the street. There are 5 other pizza specialty locations within a few blocks.

Oggi Gourmet, 30 Dunster Street, Holoyoke Center

Pinocchios Pizza, 74 Winthrop Street -

Otto's Pizza, 1432 Massachusetts Avenue -

Just Crust, 49B Brattle Street -

Cambridge One, 27 Church Street -

Additionally, there are another group of restaurants that offer pizza.

Flour Bakery, - 114 Mount Auburn Street -

Toscano, 52 Brattle Street

Alden & Harlow, 40 Brattle Street

Russell Tavern, 14 JFK Street -

Grafton Street, 1280 Massachusetts Avenue -

Benedetto Restaurant, 1 Bennett Street -

Thank you,

Frank Kramer

Liza:

I share in the concerns Frank voiced about this project, and am especially convinced by the facade and streetscape drawing at Sheets LM06 and LM08 of the package you just provided that the planned design and operation will not contribute to the Square's having a unique character that integrates old and new elements, will not add to good flow of pedestrians at this active [congested] pedestrian crossing point, and will not serve any need of nearby residents or visitors that is not currently being met.

Thanks.

Lauren

April 19, 2017

Dear Liza and Fellow HSAC members,

I have reviewed the design and the BZA application from &pizza, and took a very careful look at the Harvard Square Development guidelines in preparation for the meeting tonight.

I am not convinced at this time that the plans meet the criteria for special permit. Merging two retail store fronts DOES negatively impact the established neighborhood character and adjacent uses.

There are primary goals and secondary goals for the district. The challenge with the secondary goals is that they are “not prescriptive measures that must be applied equally”. To evaluate which policy is applicable to each case comes down to whether or not it is critical relative to the primary goals. Using this as the parameter, the committee must preserve and protect the “unique character”, “vitality” and “livability” for a specific set of stakeholders, namely: Cambridge residents, students, visitors and business people.

Looking to the secondary goals, this application doesn't seem to meet the criteria for several of them:

2. Preserving original building fabric
4. Encourage ground level, small-scale storefronts
8. Encourage a wide diversity of uses

The merging of two retail spaces and store-fronts into one 72 foot space with limited offerings and very low potential for street activation at a variety of times of day negatively impacts the character of the neighborhood and the adjacent uses. I understand that the business owner has agreed to expand their hours, but in the absence of an applicant who is an operator with a track record that demonstrates that they are likely deliver on such promises, or even one with a business model that has demonstrated any success with public engagement at these expanded hours (find me a breakfast pizza joint doing brisk business), I don't think it's good enough to warrant special relief.

The stakes here are really high when it comes to the goal of our committee. If we fail to hold up the policy, we are allowing a property owner to get a high rent paying tenant who will physically conform Harvard Square to fit at national model. Businesses come and go, and the Square has stayed a recognizable, distinct place, only because the policy has made the retailer conform to the Square, and not the other way around. If &pizza comes and goes, it will leave in behind a new footprint that only a certain type of operation can fit. Small scale and diverse stores may not be able to come back. We also need to remember that our duty is not to make it possible for a landlord to get top dollar out of a marquee location.

I look forward to hearing the applicant and the thoughts of the committee this evening. I expect there to be some very important discussions.

Best regards,

Kari Kuelzer
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