

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS  
**PLANNING BOARD**

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No: PB#137

Address: 580 Massachusetts Avenue

Zoning: Business B/Central Square Overlay District

Owner: Stu-Lin Realty Trust, 923 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA  
02139

Application Date: February 26, 1998

Public Hearing: March 17, 1998

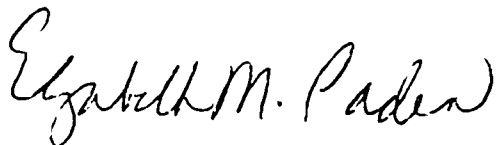
Planning Board Decision: April 21, 1998

Date of Filing Decision: May 8, 1998

Application: Special Permit to waive the front yard setback for  
residential use in the Central Square Overlay District.

Decision: DENIED

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 the  
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 Office of the  
Community Development Department and the City Clerk.



Authorized Representative to the Planning Board

For further information concerning this decision, please call Liza Paden at 349-  
4647. TTY: 349-4621, email lpaden@ci.cambridge.ma.us.

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#### Application

The applicant submitted a Special Permit Application on February 26, 1998, with a dimensional form, assessor's plat, plot plan, and building plans updated. scale 1/8" = 1'.

#### Other Documents Submitted

Letter to Paul Dietrich, Chair of the Planning Board, from George Metzger, Chair, Central Square Advisory Committee. dated 2/26/98.

Building plans dated 3/6/98. scale 1/8"=1".

Letter to the Planning Board from Joseph D. Power, Business Representative, et al, dated 3/17/98.

Letter to the Planning Board from Stuart Jay Rothman, dated April 21, 1998, re: the petition.

#### Public Hearing

At an advertised public hearing held on March 17, 1998, Tim Russell, the architect representing the applicant, presented the application which consisted of plans to renovate the existing building at the corner of Pearl Street and Massachusetts Avenue. This renovation would include the renovation of the ground floor retail space as the temporary location of the CVS store now at the Holmes block and the renovation of the existing 32 units of housing on the second and third floors, including the relocation of residential access to Pearl Street from Massachusetts Avenue. The application requests a waiver the front yard setback requirement for residential uses in the Central Square Overlay District, on the Pearl Street facade, in order to construct an elevator element serving the second and third floors. The architect discussed the plans to

renovate the exterior of the building, to improve the stucco wall treatment, to add color to the stucco, to integrate the vertical aspects of the design, and to return the windows to their original size.

The CVS loading area would be as it is now, off of Green Street at the rear of the retail space.

There were members of the public opposing the proposal for its lack of permanent affordable housing at this site and for the owner's refusal to provide permanent, affordable units from the stock of formerly rent controlled housing controlled by the applicant elsewhere in the City, as was done by Harvard University.

Mr. Russell suggested that the proposal is minimal in nature. The setback relief would allow more efficient construction of the elevator and gain additional floor space for the retail tenant on the first floor. Conforming construction might result in reduction in the number of dwellings units. The rent levels are not known at this time but will be offered at market rate; the location assures that they will not be top of the market rent levels. The unit mix is one bedrooms and studios.

The Board also discussed the first variances and special permits previously issued for this location by the Board of Zoning Appeal and Planning Board.

Generally the Board was of the opinion that some affordable units are an appropriate requirement for issuance of any special permit for this building because of its major presence in the Central Square neighborhood. It was the Board's initial view that if the applicant was not going to provide some affordable units, then the building should conform with the front yard setback requirement.

On April 21, 1998, the Planning Board resumed deliberation. Mr. Russell reviewed the ongoing redevelopment of Central Square, suggested that this renovation would be an improvement for the Square, and indicated that the requested relief was minor. He presented a memo from the applicant outlining a proposal to contribute 2 units of housing which would be affordable for 5 years at Section 8 rent levels; one unit would be a one bedroom and one would be a studio. There was discussion of what the rent level would be and how that would be determined if the units were not occupied by a Section 8 tenant. In that case the proposed rent level would be set at the recently adopted inclusionary zoning requirement. A number of Board members indicated that the proposal was barely adequate, but only because the relief sought and construction done was quite limited.

### Findings

The Planning Board considered the application and the letter of April 21, 1998 regarding the offer for affordable housing units. While the Board recognized that the relief sought was modest the criteria for issuance of special permits in

the Central Square Overlay District makes reference to the provision of affordable housing. As the project is principally rehabilitation of a significant cluster of housing all Board members found that some provision for continued affordable of the site was a necessary requirement for issuance of the special permit. Members varied with regard to the adequacy of the proposal; no member thought it was more than marginally adequate to meet the standards of the Overlay District.

Decision

After review of the application documents and testimony at the public hearing, and at after deliberation at a subsequent Board meeting, the Planning Board **DENIED** the Special Permit #137, by virtue of lacking the necessary two thirds of the Board voting in the affirmative.

Voting in the affirmative to grant the Special Permit were P. Dietrich, S. Lewis, H. Russell, and F. Darwin, Associate Member appointed by the chair to act in the stead of a full member, constituting less than the two thirds of the members of the Board necessary to grant a special permit. Voting in opposition to granting the Special Permit was H. Salemme.

Respectfully Submitted,



Paul Dietrich, Chair

A copy of this decision 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 **May 8, 1998**, by Elizabeth M. Paden, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have likewise been filed with the City Clerk on such date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of this decision.

No appeal has been filed.

DATE:

City Clerk  
City of Cambridge