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## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: October 9, 2019

Re: Special Permit **PB #315, MXD 145 Broadway – Use Determination**

This memo contains an overview of the of the proposed use at 145 Broadway, the determination being requested, and related comments.

### Summary of Request

The Special Permit for the Mixed-Use Development: Kendall Center (MXD) Infill Development Concept Plan (IDCP) was originally granted by the Planning Board in 2017. This special permit authorized the development of a commercial office building at 145 Broadway with ground-floor retail space and a below-grade parking facility. The permit has a condition that the permittee shall coordinate continuing design of ground floor active use spaces (12.b). The building is currently nearing construction completion.

The applicant is proposing to site a yoga studio on the first floor, in the area designated for retail and active use, with an entrance on Galileo Way. The total area of the proposed yoga studio use is 3,504 square feet. The issue arises because a yoga studio is not formally designated as “retail” under our current zoning ordinance, and is often classified as a “classroom” space.

CDD staff have conferred with staff of the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA), who have determined that a yoga studio is consistent with the “Entertainment and Recreation” uses authorized in the Kendall Square Urban Renewal Plan. The CRA will hold a Design Review meeting to review the signage for the location.

### Requested Determination

Article 14.000 of the Zoning Ordinance regulates development in the MXD District, and allows a range of uses including “Recreation facilities including bowling alley, indoor or outdoor tennis courts, public recreation building, health club, or skating rink [if they are located in or attached to structures containing other principal uses]” under the category of “Entertainment and Recreation” (Section 14.21.5). Uses that are not specifically listed can also be allowed in the Planning Board’s approval of an IDCP Special Permit or Amendment (Section 14.21.8).

Section 14.38 also requires “active ground floor uses,” as specified below, for newly constructed buildings along Main Street, Broadway and Ames Street but not along Galileo Galilei Way where the yoga studio is proposed:

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344 Broadway  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
Voice: 617 349-4600  
Fax: 617 349-4669  
TTY: 617 349-4621  
[www.cambridgema.gov](http://www.cambridgema.gov)

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*Active Ground Floors: The ground floor of newly constructed buildings utilizing fifty thousand (50,000) square feet or more of Infill GFA, with frontage along Main Street, Broadway and Ames Street must be occupied by (i) Retail and Consumer Service uses, as listed in Section 14.21.3, or (ii) active public gathering space (whether enclosed or open), for a minimum street frontage length of seventy-five percent (75%) of the building façade along this frontage.*

The approved IDCP (Special Permit PB-315), as most recently amended, authorizes approximately 53,637 square feet of retail use, of which approximately 42,300 square feet is replacement retail at 325 Main Street and the remainder is in the 145 Broadway building. The IDCP and subsequent design approval for 145 Broadway show retail and active use at the corner of Broadway/Galileo Galilei Way and extending along the Galileo Galilei Way street frontage.

The Permittee is seeking a determination from the Planning Board that a yoga studio is permissible in the space on Galileo Galilei Way that is designated as “retail” within the IDCP. The Permittee characterizes this use as a recreational facility similar to a health club, which is a permitted use in the MXD District, and it is not within a location where retail or active public gathering space is required by zoning. Therefore, while it is somewhat different in character than the uses shown in the IDCP and the 145 Broadway design review materials, the use is allowed by zoning and is in a location where retail and active uses are not necessarily prioritized.

### **Urban Design Comments**

From an urban design standpoint, the main distinction between a typical retail use and a yoga studio (or similar recreation/fitness space) is that the former tends to have more transparent storefront windows to create visual interest along the streetscape, while the latter tends to be visually screened from the outside for the privacy of members or patrons. Therefore, while a yoga studio would help activate the street by generating foot traffic, it might appear less visually active than the renderings shown in the approved design review materials for 145 Broadway.

Based on the submitted materials, it does not appear that the exterior storefront glass would be changed in the proposal. It would be helpful to confirm if that is the case, and to have some indication of whether and how the studio space might be visually screened. Where screening is necessary, staff would prefer “café blinds,” so that the glass above eye level is transparent, as opposed to “blackout” shades that would fully envelop the space.

It would also be helpful to clarify whether this use would affect the placement of outdoor tables, chairs, and umbrellas that were shown in the approved design review materials.