

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

2021 AUG 25 PM 4:27
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case Number:	373
Address:	698 Massachusetts Avenue (706 Massachusetts Avenue)
Zoning:	Business B (BB) / Central Square Overlay District
Applicant:	Central Property Limited. c/o Patrick Barrett 698 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA
Owner:	Century Limited Partnership P.O. Box #440317 West Somerville, MA
Application Date:	January 15, 2021
Date of Planning Board Public Hearing:	March 2, 2021; August 3, 2021
Date of Planning Board Decision:	August 3, 2021
Date of Filing Planning Board Decision:	August 25, 2021
Application:	Request for special permits pursuant to Section 20.304.5.4 of the Zoning Ordinance for a formula business use and Section 20.304.5.3.b to waive the limitations on bank frontages in the Central Square Overlay District.
Decision:	GRANTED, with Conditions.

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 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 Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board: Swaathi Joseph

For further information concerning this decision, please contact Swaathi Joseph at 617-349-4668, or sjoseph@cambridgema.gov.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Application Documents and Supporting Material

1. Special Permit Application submitted on 1/15/21, containing the Special Permit Cover Sheet, Dimensional Form, Ownership Certificate, Narrative, Community Outreach Summary, plan set titled Citizens, prepared by Philadelphia Sign, dated 7/22/2020 and revised through 8/11/2020.
2. Presentation slides shown to Planning Board on 3/3/2021.
3. Supplemental materials including responses, narrative, and plan set titled Citizens, prepared by Philadelphia Sign, dated 7/22/2020 and revised through 4/27/2021.
4. Presentation slides shown to Planning Board on 8/3/2021.

City of Cambridge Documents

5. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Community Development Department staff, dated 2/23/2021.
6. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Community Development Department staff, dated 7/27/2021.

Other Documents

7. Letter to the Planning Board from the Central Square Advisory Committee, dated 12/7/2020.
8. Letter to the Planning Board from Robert Walsh dated 2/5/2021.
9. Letter to the Planning Board from Stuart Weinberg dated 2/5/2021.
10. Letter to the Planning Board from Issac Torrin dated 2/8/2021.
11. Email communication to the Planning Board from Preston T. Richardson dated 2/8/2021.
12. Letter to the Planning Board from Robert Walsh dated 2/5/2021.
13. Letter to the Planning Board from Ayob Saer dated 2/10/2021.
14. Letter to the Planning Board from Lamir Satey dated 2/10/2021.
15. Letter to the Planning Board from Sonia Sater dated 2/10/2021.
16. Letter to the Planning Board from Nabil Sater dated 2/10/2021.
17. Letter to the Planning Board from Paul McNamara dated 2/10/2021.
18. Letter to the Planning Board from Kathy Lang dated 2/10/2021.
19. Letter to the Planning Board from Georges Sater dated 2/10/2021.
20. Letter to the Planning Board from John Buster dated 2/11/2021.
21. Email communication to the Planning Board from Carol O'Hare dated 2/25/2021.
22. Letter to the Planning Board from Dan Totten dated 2/26/2021.

23. Email communication to the Planning Board from Carol O'Hare dated 3/1/2021.
24. Email communication to the Planning Board from Lee Farris dated 3/2/2021.
25. Email communication to the Planning Board from Chris Marstall dated 3/2/2021.
26. Letter to the Planning Board from Bill Scott dated 7/12/2021.
27. Letter to the Planning Board from Sukhwinder Singh dated 7/23/2021.
28. Letter to the Planning Board from Bart Simonian dated 7/26/2021.
29. Letter to the Planning Board from Councillor Timothy Toomey dated 7/28/2021.
30. Letter to the Planning Board from Davidson Bettero, undated.

APPLICATION SUMMARY

The Applicant proposes to establish a bank use at 698 Massachusetts Avenue affiliated with the company Citizens Bank and proposes to install signage on the exterior of the building. Citizens Bank is an individual consumer service establishment with at least ten (10) or more locations in Massachusetts and possesses a standardized trademark logo and color scheme for its establishment exteriors, therefore meeting the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance definition of a “Formula Business” and requiring a special permit from the Planning Board for the establishment of the use. The particular bank branch will be relocated from its current location across the street at 689 Massachusetts Avenue. The base zoning district is Business B and the parcel is located in the Central Square overlay District. The business will occupy approximately 3,500 square feet on the first floor of the existing building. The length of the storefront is approximately 50 feet, which exceeds the limitation of 25 feet for a bank use in the Central Square Overlay District, requiring a waiver from the Planning Board.

The requested special permits are discussed in detail in the Findings below.

FINDINGS

After review of the Application Documents and other documents submitted to the Planning Board, testimony given at the public hearings, and review and consideration of the applicable requirements and criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance with regard to the relief being sought, the Planning Board makes the following Findings:

1. Special Permit for Formula Business in Central Square Overlay District (Section 20.304.5.4)

In the Central Square Overlay District, a Formula Business may be established on a lot by special permit from the Planning Board upon consideration of the following:

- a. *The extent to which the design of the proposal reflects, amplifies, and strengthens the established historical character of existing buildings and store fronts in Central Square.*
- b. *The extent to which the particulars of the building or storefront design is varied from the formula or standard design of the chain in order to reflect the unique character and conditions of Central Square generally or the specific location in particular.*
- c. *The extent to which the standard elements of the enterprise as they define it as a Formula Business are modified to respect and provide unique expressions of Central Square history and traditions as well as innovation in physical design and marketing that will distinguish the Central Square location from other locations of the Formula Business.*

Citizens Bank is reducing its overall footprint in Central Square by moving from a larger space at 689 Mass Ave to a smaller space across the street. The application proposes occupying the existing storefront previously tenanted by Rodney's Bookstore. Citizens Bank proposes utilizing the same sign band previously used by Rodney's, with no other dimensional changes. The existing façade will largely remain intact, with no new entrances, windows or other openings being created by this Application. The Applicant has committed to cleaning the historic brick pylons along the first floor in a non-damaging manner. A single, non-illuminated blade sign is proposed above the east entrance of the building. For the wall signage, the application involves utilizing a non-standardized "Silver Bells" color as the backing of the sign band, and limits overall wall signage for the bank to the left bay of the storefront only – which equates to approximately 25 linear feet of sign frontage along Mass Ave. On the right bay, the Applicant has committed to adding the address of the building (700 Mass Ave) along the existing sign band to indicate the entrance to upper-story commercial tenants. The proposed signage appears to conform to the standards of Article 7.000 of the Zoning Ordinance and will be reviewed for compliance prior to issuance of a building permit. For these reasons, the Board finds that the above criteria for granting a special permit for a Formula Business set forth in Section 20.304.5.4 have been met:

2. Special Permit to waive limitation on bank frontage in Central Square Overlay District (Section 20.304.5.3.b)

20.304.5 Use Limitations and Restrictions. In addition to the use regulations applicable in each base zoning district the following use restrictions and limitations shall apply in the Central Square Overlay District:

3. *Restricted Uses.*

- b. Unless specifically waived upon the granting of a special permit by the Planning Board, no individual bank or financial institution (Section 4.34e) shall occupy more than twenty-five (25) feet of building frontage facing Massachusetts Avenue or Main Street, and no more than thirty percent (30%) of a lot's aggregate building frontage facing one or more public streets may be occupied by such uses.*

The relocated bank use is proposed to occupy the entire frontage of the existing building, which spans approximately 50 feet. The size of the establishment will be an overall reduction in the bank's footprint from its current location at 689 Mass Ave. Further, the signage will be limited to an approximately 25-foot bay on the left side of the storefront, limiting the extent of frontage occupied by the bank use's signage and branding. Given the programmatic and space needs of the bank use, the Board finds it impractical to try to include a separate and distinct use along the storefront. With these facts, the Board finds that the increase from the permitted 25 feet to approximately 50 feet meets the goals of the Ordinance's provisions.

20.305 Standards for Issuance of Special Permits. In addition to the general standards for the issuance of a special permit found in Section 10.40 of the Zoning Ordinance, the special permit granting authority shall in addition make the following findings:

(1) The proposed development is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Central Square Action Plan:

- encourage responsible and orderly development;*
- strengthen the retail base to more completely serve the needs of the neighborhoods;*
- preserve the Square's cultural diversity;*
- create active people oriented spaces;*
- improve the physical, and visual environment;*
- provide retail establishments that serve people of diverse economic and social groups who live in the surrounding neighborhoods;*
- encourage the development of new mixed income housing; and*
- promote compatible retail adjacent to residential uses*

The Board finds the proposed bank use to be consistent with these goals and objectives on the whole, based on the Findings made previously in this Special Permit Decision. The proposal will result in minimal change since it proposes to move an existing business that is otherwise allowed in the district into a smaller existing ground-floor space, with minimal physical changes to the storefront façade and signage.

(2) The building and site designs are consistent with "Urban Design Plan for Central Square" as outlined in the "Central Square Action Plan" and the "Central Square Development Guidelines";

No changes are proposed for the exterior of the building other than new signage. The Board recommends that as part of continuing design review, the Applicant work with CDD Staff on the specific details of exterior materials and colors, exterior lighting, and proposed signage. The Central Square Overlay District requires that the ground (first) floor facade shall consist of a minimum of 50% clear glass, which is met in this proposal. In addition, the Board recommends that any cleaning of the existing brickwork along the first-floor façade be completed in such a way as to do no harm to the building's historic materials.

(3) The building and site designs adequately screen the parking provided and are sensitive to the contributing buildings in the vicinity;

No parking is proposed.

- (4) No National Register or contributing building is demolished or so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation as a National Register or contributing building; and*
- (5) No National Register or contributing building has been demolished or altered so as to terminate or preclude its designation within the five (5) years preceding the application.*

The existing building is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but it is a contributing building within the Central Square National Register Historic District. However, the proposed use change and signage modifications will not alter the building so as to preclude its designation as a contributing building.

3. General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit (Section 10.43)

The Planning Board finds that the project meets the General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit, as set forth below.

10.43 Criteria. Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:

- (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or ...*

Upon granting of the requested special permits, it appears that the requirements of the Ordinance will be met.

- (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or ...*

The proposed use is not anticipated to cause particular congestion or hazard or substantial change in the neighborhood character since it is allowed in the district and is already in existence in the immediate vicinity.

- (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or ...*

The use is allowed in the district and will not adversely impact surrounding uses.

- (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or ...*

The proposed use will not create nuisance or hazard, and all business activity will continue to adhere to applicable health and safety regulations.

(e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and ...

As set forth above in these Findings, the proposal is found to be consistent with the intent of the Central Square Overlay District and the criteria for granting a special permit.

(f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

The proposal is not inconsistent with the citywide urban design objectives and is consistent with the urban design objectives for Central Square as set forth above in these Findings.

DECISION

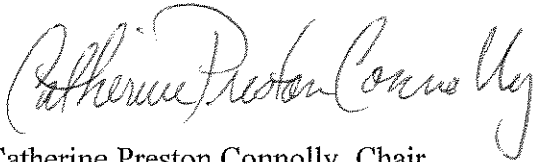
Based on a review of the Application Documents, testimony given at the public hearing, and the above Findings, the Planning Board hereby GRANTS the requested Special Permits subject to the following conditions and limitations. Hereinafter, for purposes of this Decision, the Permittee shall mean the Applicant for the requested Special Permits.

1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the Application Documents submitted on 1/15/2021 and plan set titled Citizens, prepared by Philadelphia Sign, dated 7/22/2020 and revised through 4/27/2021, except as set forth in the additional Conditions of this Special Permit Decision. Appendix I summarizes the dimensional features of the project as approved.
2. The Special Permits to permit a Formula Business use and to waive the limitations on frontage for a bank use shall be granted only for the Citizens Bank use approved to be established at 698 Massachusetts Avenue. Any future Formula Business, bank use, or other limited use established at this location shall be required to seek new Special Permits to the extent applicable to that future use.
3. The project shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department (CDD). Before issuance of each Building Permit for the project, CDD shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the final plans submitted to secure the Building Permit are consistent with and meet all conditions of this Decision. As part of CDD's administrative review of the project, and prior to any certification to the Superintendent of Buildings, CDD may present any design changes made subsequent to this Decision to the Planning Board for its review and comment.
4. The Permittee shall address the following comments through the continuing design review process set forth above. Each of the below items shall be subject to CDD review and approval of the final design details prior to issuance of a Building Permit:
 - a. Review of exterior materials and colors.
 - b. Review of exterior lighting.
 - c. Review of all exterior signage and attachments.
 - d. Review of proposed design drawings for changes to the building's exterior.
 - e. Review of proposed site plan and floor plans.
 - f. A plan for anticipated loading and delivery operations of the bank.
 - g. A plan for bicycle parking for employees and patrons of the bank.

- h. A maintenance plan for the sidewalk in the area surrounding the proposed ATM vestibule.
- 5. Any proposed façade alterations shall be coordinated with review and approval by Cambridge Historical Commission staff.
- 6. The historic bricks along the façade shall be cleaned using non-harmful materials and methods to be determined in consultation with Cambridge Historical Commission staff; sandblasting is strictly prohibited.
- 7. The Permittee shall add address signage for 700 Massachusetts Avenue to the sign band on the western bay of the storefront, subject to review and approval of the signage design by CDD staff.
- 8. All authorized development shall abide by all applicable City of Cambridge Ordinances, including the Noise Ordinance (Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code) and Sign Ordinance (Section 7.10 of the Zoning Ordinance).

Voting in the affirmative to approve the Development Proposal were Planning Board Members Louis Bacci, Jr., H Theodore Cohen, Steven Cohen, Catherine Preston Connolly, Mary Flynn, and Hugh Russell, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board, necessary to grant a special permit.

For the Planning Board,



Catherine Preston Connolly, Chair.

A copy of this decision PB #373 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 has been filed on August 25, 2021 with the Office of the City Clerk, by Swaathi Joseph, duly authorized representative of the Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty days have elapsed since the above decision was filed in the office of the City Clerk and:

_____ no appeal has been filed; or

_____ an appeal has been filed within such twenty days.

The person exercising rights under a duly appealed special permit does so at risk that a court will reverse the permit and that any construction performed under the permit may be ordered undone. This certification shall in no event terminate or shorten the tolling, during the pendency of any appeals, of the periods provided under the second paragraph of G.L. c. 40A, §6.

Date: _____, City Clerk

Appeal has been dismissed or denied.

Date: _____, City Clerk

Appendix I: Approved Dimensional Chart

	Existing	Allowed or Required	Proposed	Permitted
Lot Area (sq ft)	5,562	None	No Change	No Change
Lot Width (ft)	27.83	None	No Change	No Change
Total GFA (sq ft)	15,904	As Exists	No Change	No change
Residential Base	n/a	n/a	No Change	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Non-Residential Base	15,904	n/a	No Change	
Inclusionary Bonus	n/a	n/a	No Change	
Total FAR	2.86	As Exists	No Change	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Residential Base	n/a	n/a	No Change	
Non-Residential Base	2.86	n/a	No Change	
Inclusionary Bonus	n/a	n/a	No Change	
Total Dwelling Units	0	As Exists	No Change	No change
Base Units	n/a	n/a	No Change	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Inclusionary Bonus Units	n/a	n/a	No Change	
Base Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	n/a	n/a	No Change	
Total Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	n/a	n/a	No Change	
Height (ft)	55.8	As Exists	No Change	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Front Setbacks (ft)	0	As Exists	No Change	
Side Setback (ft)	0	As Exists	No Change	
Open Space (% of Lot Area)	0	As Exists	No Change	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Private Open Space	n/a	As Exists	No Change	
Permeable Open Space	n/a	As Exists	No Change	
Off-Street Parking Spaces	0	As Exists	No Change	No change
Long-Term Bicycle Parking	0	As Exists	No Change	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Short-Term Bicycle Parking	n/a	As Exists	No Change	
Loading Bays	0	As Exists	No Change	

There are no changes to the existing building with regard to the dimensional requirements. The approved formula business shall occupy an existing space of approximately 2,718 square feet in the first floor of the existing building in conformance with the Application Documents.