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# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: August 3, 2022

Re: Special Permit **PB-390, 57 JFK Street**

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Community Development

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## Overview

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Submission Type:	Special Permit Application
Applicant:	Crimson Galeria Limited Partnership
Zoning District(s):	Business B; Harvard Square Overlay District
Proposal Summary:	Construct a residential addition of 38 units to the existing commercial building footprint. The final gross floor area for the proposed residential addition would be 30,150 square feet
Special Permits Requested:	Additional height in Harvard Square Overlay (20.54.2); Parking and Loading requirements in Harvard Square Overlay (20.54.4); Building Setbacks requirements in Harvard Square Overlay (20.54.5); and Building and Site Plan Requirements (Section 19.50)
Other City Permits Needed:	Historical Commission Review
Planning Board Action:	Grant or deny requested special permits
Memo Contents:	Zoning Report, CDD Urban Design Report
Other Staff Reports:	n/a

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<b>Zoning Section</b>	<b>Required Planning Board Findings</b> <i>(Summary - see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Harvard Square Overlay District: Building height up to 80 feet (Section 20.54.2)	<p>Those portions of the building in excess of 60 feet must be set back from the street line at least 10 feet and set back from one or more 45-degree sky exposure planes, unless otherwise permitted by the Planning Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowed Special Permit exceptions to upper floor setbacks must successfully reduce the overall negative effect of multiple floor setbacks and enhance both the proposed building silhouette and townscape of the block.</li> <li>• Such architectural elements as pergolas, and occupiable corner pavilions, occupiable pavilion directly above the main building entry, and special features that animate the public domain experience.</li> <li>• All such exceptions are to be limited in scope and work cohesively.</li> </ul> <p>All approved facade setbacks are to provide accessible, useable balconies for tenants.</p>
Harvard Square Overlay District: Waiver of parking and loading requirement (Section 20.54.4)	<p>The use is contained in a new structure or new addition to an historic structure provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The subject lot is sufficiently small in size as to contribute to a development pattern of diverse, small scale, new structures and the retention of existing structures (for lots exceeding 10,000 square feet a specific finding shall be made that this objective has been met).</li> <li>• The building design is more appropriate to its location and the fabric of its neighborhood and that it is in conformance with the objectives and criteria contained in Harvard Square Development Guidelines.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
Harvard Square Overlay District: Exemption of yard requirement (Section 20.54.5)	<p>For any new building in any Business, Office or Residence C-3 base-zoning district, for which a building permit is issued after December 15, 1985, the Planning Board issues a Special Permit exempting the building from yard requirements provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The design of the new structure shall be in conformance with the objectives and criteria contained in Harvard Square Development Guidelines.</li> </ol>

<b>Zoning Section</b>	<b>Required Planning Board Findings</b> <i>(Summary - see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. 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</li> <li>c. No National Register or contributing building previously existed on the site in the preceding five (5) years and which has been so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation or demolished prior to the application.</li> </ul>
<p>10.43 – General Special Permit Criteria</p>	<p>Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or</li> <li>(b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or</li> <li>(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</li> <li>(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</li> <li>(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</li> <li>(f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.</li> </ul>
<p>Harvard Square Overlay District: Criteria for Issuance of Special Permits (Section 20.53.2)</p>	<p>The special permit granting authority shall be guided by the objectives and criteria contained in the publication Harvard Square Development Guidelines [Document compiled from the Guidelines for Development and Historic Preservation as contained in the Final Report of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee, dated November 29, 2000 and the Harvard Square Development Guidelines, 1986].</p>



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# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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## Zoning & Development Staff Report

Date: August 3, 2022

Case: PB-390

Location: 57 JFK Street

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## Revised Proposal

### *Overview*

On May 24, 2022, the Planning Board (“the Board”) held a public hearing on an application by Crimson Galeria Limited Partnership (“the Applicant”) to redevelop the property at 57 JFK Street by constructing a residential addition to an existing commercial building. The addition would maintain the current building footprint, adding three stories to the two-story building. The addition would include 40 units and total 30,527 square feet. With the proposed addition, the building would total 66,904 square feet in gross floor area (GFA) and be 65 feet in height.

At the public hearing, the Board provided various comments and suggestions for refinement before continuing the hearing to a future date. Since that time, the Applicant’s team has met with staff from the Community Development Department (CDD) to further discuss the set of issues raised by staff and the Board at the May 24, 2022 hearing. The Applicant has since provided a revised application (“the Application”) that includes updated plans and a summary of the effort they have made to address the points raised by the Board and staff.

### *Key Revisions*

The Application does not significantly change the uses or dimensions of the initial proposal except by adding a long-term bicycle parking area in the basement, which is discussed below. Other changes are minor, and are explained in the Applicant’s memorandum “Updates to Proposed Residential Addition at 57 JFK Street” dated June 29, 2022 and in the various revised materials. Revisions to the building and site design are discussed further in the Urban Design Report from CDD staff.

### *Proposed Development*

The Application now proposes an addition of 38 dwelling units for a total of 30,150 square feet, which is a reduction of two units and 377 square feet. The below table shows key dimensional features of the Application compared to the relevant base and overlay zoning, and the initial development proposal:

Dimension	Dimensional Standards (BB/HSOD)	Proposed Development	Revised Development
<b>Gross Floor Area (GFA)</b>	76,138 ft <sup>2</sup> (58,568 ft <sup>2</sup> , plus 30% Inclusionary bonus)	66,904 ft <sup>2</sup>	66,720 ft <sup>2</sup>
<b>Floor Area Ratio (FAR)</b>	5.2 (4.0, plus 30% Inclusionary bonus)	4.61	4.57
<b>Height and Stories</b>	60', 80' by special permit	65' over five stories	65' over five stories
<b>Setbacks (Yards)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front (Winthrop Street): 39.6'</li> <li>• Front (JFK Street): 34.2'</li> <li>• Side (96 Winthrop Street): 26.5'</li> <li>• Side (parking garage): 31.2'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front (Winthrop Street): 5.9'</li> <li>• Front (JFK Street): 0'</li> <li>• Side (96 Winthrop Street): 5'</li> <li>• Side (parking garage): 0'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front (Winthrop Street): 5.9'</li> <li>• Front (JFK Street): 0'</li> <li>• Side (96 Winthrop Street): 5'</li> <li>• Side (parking garage): 0'</li> </ul>
<b>Open Space</b>	10% of lot area, reduced based on proportion of residential use	4.88% of lot area (714 ft <sup>2</sup> )	4.88% of lot area (714 ft <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Bicycle Parking (spaces per 1,000 SF)</b>	39 long-term spaces (2 tandem/trailer) 4 short-term spaces	0 long-term spaces 4 short-term spaces	39 long-term spaces (2 tandem/trailer) 4 short-term spaces

### Open Space

The Application states that the third-story courtyard alone satisfies the private open space requirement. The revised plans do not show dimensions for the courtyard, so it is unclear if it meets the minimum dimensional requirement of 15 feet by 15 feet. Similarly, the Application appears to count balconies towards the total amount of open space on the dimensional form, but it does not illustrate how the balconies meet the minimum dimensional standards. Compliance with the private open space requirement will be reviewed by the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) at the building permit review stage.

### Unit Size

The initial proposal included 14 studio units, 19 one-bedroom units, and seven “in-board” units for a total of 40 units. The Application shows that the number of one-bedroom units has been reduced to 17 to provide two two-bedroom units for a total of 38 units. The Application states that both two-bedroom units will be used to meet the Inclusionary Housing requirement. Before issuance of a building permit, CDD’s Housing staff will determine what units will be made permanently affordable to comply with the Inclusionary Housing requirements, which will be codified in a covenant recorded with the property deed. The Zoning Ordinance sets specific standards for the location of units that satisfy the Inclusionary Housing requirement as well as pricing, resident selection, and other details. For example, the revised plans show that the two two-bedroom units are located in the back corner of the building next to the

trash and the stairs. Under the Inclusionary Housing requirements, staff would have to determine if this condition is similar to the market-rate units.

### ***Outstanding Considerations***

#### ***Bicycle Parking***

The Application includes a revised approach to providing long-term bicycle parking. Instead of providing parking in-unit, a dedicated bicycle parking area has been carved out of the basement of the existing commercial building. The proposed basement plan in the Application does not align with the basement plan that was approved as part of PB-376, the special permit for a retail cannabis store in this building. Those plans showed four long-term bicycle parking spaces for employees located in the basement along with other employee amenity spaces. If the approved plans for PB-376 will change as a result of the Application, the Applicant will need to update their plans before issuance of a building permit.

The basement parking area is not internally connected to the residential addition, so resident cyclists would have to exit one part of the building and re-enter through another. If it is not possible to provide direct access within the building that meets the zoning standards, the Applicant could provide secondary access from the residential elevator/stairwell to the basement bike parking.

The Application is still missing dimensions related to the zoning standards for bicycle parking, including the width of the primary access route, the grade of the primary access route from the public right-of-way to the Bicycle Parking Spaces, the interior dimensions of the elevator, and the horizontal distance from the center point of the Bicycle Rack in each direction parallel to the length of the bicycle. All of these dimensions will need to be verified on a 1"=10' scale drawing in order to determine compliance with zoning requirements.

The Application also shows that the four short-term bicycle parking spaces have been moved onto the Applicant's property. However, the spaces appear to be further than 50 feet from the entrance to the residential part of the building. The Zoning Ordinance requires that short-term bicycle parking be located within 50 feet of a pedestrian entrance to the building containing the use it serves. If the Applicant would like to locate the short-term bicycle parking outside of this distance, they could seek a special permit from the Planning Board to modify the bicycle parking requirements. Alternatively, if it is not possible to fit the required short-term spaces within 50 feet of the entrance, then a payment to the City's Bicycle Parking Fund can be made in lieu of installing spaces.

#### ***Parking***

The Applicant is not proposing any mitigation for not providing off-street parking. While mitigation is not required as a condition of the special permit to waive or reduce the required amount of off-street parking, the general special permit criteria in Section 10.43 notes that special permits should not be granted if the project would be a detriment to the public interest because "traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character." In other cases where parking is reduced or waived, the Planning Board might ask if the applicant agrees to implement transportation demand management (TDM) programs that incentivize residents and employees to use non-auto modes of transportation. If the Board and the applicant agree

to implement such a program, the following is a typical residential TDM package that staff would recommend incorporating into the conditions of the special permit:

- To establish the habit of using mass transit, offer each adult member of each household (up to two) upon move-in will be offered a Charlie Card loaded with a bus/subway pass paid at 100% of the cost of the pass for two consecutive months. For condominiums, this benefit will apply to original condominium owners only. For apartments, this benefit will end after two months for the household after using the program and begins anew upon unit turnover.
- Offer each adult member of each household (up to two) upon move in a one-year Gold-Level Bluebikes membership. This benefit will end after one year for the household and begins anew upon turnover.
- Provide bicycle parking without a charge to users, along with air pumps and other bike repair tools near bicycle parking areas.
- Designate a Transportation Coordinator to manage TDM programs for the site, and to coordinate with the city and local Transportation Management Associations and oversee the marketing and promotion of transportation options to all residents at the site in a variety of ways:
  - Posting information in a prominent location in the building and on the Project’s website, social media, and property newsletters.
  - Responding to individual requests for information in person and via phone and email.
  - Provide one new resident packet of transportation information to all units upon move-in. Transportation information packets may be purchased from the Community Development Department.
- Either install a real-time multi-modal display screen in a permanent and central location for residents to show arrival times and availability for nearby buses, trains, shuttles, Bluebikes, and carshare vehicles, etc. or establish a transportation information center located in an area that is central, visible, and convenient and equally accessible to all residents. An information center shall feature information on:
  - Available pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the vicinity of the Project site.
  - MBTA maps, schedules, and fares.
  - Bluebikes regional bikeshare system.
  - Carsharing.
  - Ride-matching; and,
  - Other pertinent transportation information.

### Planters

To address concerns about unauthorized parking and loading activity in the paved area adjacent to the building on the Winthrop Street side, the Applicant has agreed to install non-movable planters on the lot to physically prevent motor vehicle parking adjacent to the building. This is discussed further in the Urban Design Report from CDD staff.

### Sustainability

The Application clarifies that the addition will include “a high albedo roofing membrane roof.” However, some figures in Volume 2 depict a green roof on the fourth and fifth stories, while others depict a white roof. Wherever feasible, staff recommends the use of green roofs over high albedo roofs. This is discussed further in the Urban Design Report from CDD staff.

### Building and Site Plan Requirements

The Applicant is now seeking a special permit to waive the requirements of Section 19.50 Building and Site Plan Requirements, though the revised cover sheet notes that is only “if the Planning Board determines that Section 19.59 applies to the project.” The Planning Board determines whether the criteria for the requested special permits are met, and generally does not determine what zoning requirements apply or when a special permit is needed. In this case, ISD would determine if Section 19.50 applies at the building permit stage unless a special permit that waives Section 19.50 has been granted by the Planning Board.

The project appears to meet most of the requirements of Section 19.50 with the exception of Section 19.59, which requires that at least 15% of the lot be devoted to Green Area or Permeable Open Space located at grade. As noted above, the Application proposes 714 square feet of private open space in the form of a third-story courtyard and residential balconies. The Application does not show any open space being provided at grade. Per Section 19.51.2 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Board can grant a special permit waiving the requirements of Section 19.50 if it finds that the proposal is in general conformance with the Citywide Urban Design Objectives in Section 19.30.

### **Special Permit Conditions**

If the Board decides to grant the special permit, the following list summarizes the general categories of conditions recommended for this development based on the requested special permits:

1. Approved Development: Authorized development would need to conform with the submitted application materials. An Approved Dimensional Form would be attached as an Appendix.
2. Permitted Uses: The special permit would authorize multifamily residential use for the addition to the existing building. In the future, uses that are allowed by zoning but not authorized by the special permit would require Planning Board approval, and uses that are limited by the Zoning Ordinance (e.g., requiring a separate special permit from the Planning Board or BZA) would need to seek the necessary relief.
3. Design Review: CDD staff would review and approve design details at the construction documents phase, prior to issuance of a building permit, to certify that the plans conform to the Planning Board’s approval. Board members may cite specific areas of focus for detailed review, based on the Urban Design Report and Board discussion.
4. Transportation and Infrastructure: Work being done on City property would be subject to review and approval by appropriate City departments, including DPW, TP+T and CDD. If agreed to by the Board and Applicant, staff would recommend additional conditions to implement



residential TDM programs and install non-movable planters or other physical elements on the lot to designate the property line along Winthrop Street to physically prevent motor vehicle parking adjacent to this building (as described on pages 3-4).

5. Sustainability: Development will be subject to the Green Building Requirements in Section 22.20, which will be reviewed again by CDD staff at the building permit and certificate of occupancy stages. If applicable, ISD would also review for compliance with Green Roof Requirements in Section 22.35.
6. Housing: Development will be subject to Inclusionary Housing requirements, which will be certified by the CDD Housing staff at the building permit and certificate of occupancy stages.
7. Construction Management Program: Per Section 18.20, staff would recommend a Construction Management Program be provided and approved by TP+T, DPW, and other applicable City departments before issuance of a building permit. This program would also include a community outreach program designating a point of contact to provide information to the public during the construction process and notification panels posted on the site with project information.



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# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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## Urban Design Staff Report

Date: August 3, 2022

Case: PB-390

Location: 57 JFK Street

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## Revised Proposal

### Planning Board Comments

Generally, the Planning Board was supportive of the project at its May 24, 2022 meeting, but Board members requested that many details be refined and that further information be provided. These included:

- A request for the balcony areas to be made occupiable.
- Concerns about the construction type and impacts on floor height.
- A need to clarify the details of the projections around the commercial entrance on Winthrop Street, which are important visually and architecturally.
- Clarify whether green roofs are proposed with Board members expressing a preference for such.
- What will the units facing the courtyard look like?
- The possibility of larger, two- or three-bedroom units.
- Concerns about short-term leases.
- Concerns about the design and layout of short- and long-term bicycle parking.
- Greater detail and understanding of the shadow study and the effects of the step-backed massing on Winthrop Square.
- Operational and maintenance issues as mentioned by abutters.
- That issues in staff memos need to be addressed.
- A request that each of the Board's questions and issues raised be thoroughly addressed and alternatives explored.

### Urban Design Comments

In response to the Planning Board and Staff comments, several design changes have been made and additional materials provided.

- Access to all the balconies has been provided, so that they are now occupiable. Most balconies appear to have a useable width of about 2'6" when the planters are taken into consideration, which is quite narrow. Given the extensive roof area available, the potential to expand those balconies above the Third Floor should be considered.

- High albedo roofing membrane has been confirmed for the roof; however, the birdseye view on Figure 31 still depicts a green roof. Staff would prefer to see the adoption of green roofs where feasible given their benefits associated with reducing urban heat island effects, improving occupant comfort and enjoyment of the building, and if roof plantings are visible, providing a more aesthetically pleasing view from the public realm.
- Additional perspectives (Figures 32-35) have been submitted, which show the balcony terraces from above, and ground level views of the residential entry and the re-clad Winthrop Street façade. These views help to clarify some of the project’s architectural details, including the projecting framing element around the commercial entry on Winthrop Street. However, the projections still appear inconsistent with the canopy details shown in plan and section (Figures 8 and 27).
- Staff had also hoped to see some supplemental views of the project from further west on Winthrop Street and from Winthrop Square to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the visual impacts of the building’s mass, but these have not been provided.
- Figure 37 has been updated to provide further information on specific materials and details. The proposed metal panel cladding will be Alucobond, which is a high quality and durable Aluminum Composite Metal (ACM) panel system. Staff note that the wood-lined soffits above the balconies and at the residential entrance have not been included in the materials palette. Similarly, the proposed addition’s vision glass and mullion details have not been provided.
- No other construction or framing details have been provided other than the Applicant’s statement that “the project team is confident the frame profile, as represented in the drawings, and the quality expected by the local market is achievable using wood and wood sub-framing”.
- The planters have been reinstated along Winthrop Street, which is consistent with the previous approval. There is no additional information about the size of the planters or the proposed plantings. Staff recommends that the planters be sized and located to create a physical and visual buffer between the street and the sidewalk. There is also some concern that low planters may become a magnet for trash and hazardous materials. This could be addressed through the design of the planters as well as through adequate building maintenance operations. Staff also recommends that the planters be placed in alignment with the light poles on City property, as shown in the updated materials. The Department of Public Works recommends leaving the existing bollards in place and suggests that the Applicant coordinate with them on any additional approvals needed for locating the planters in the City right-of-way.
- The Applicant has advised that floor-mounted bumper rails are not considered necessary as vehicular access to the alley is prevented. Staff note that the previous recommendation for bumper rails was associated with dumpsters being accessed from the narrow alley.
- The Zoning and Development Report provides comments on the changes to housing unit sizes, and long and short-term bicycle parking.

Previous staff comments about further enhancing the design have not been responded to. These were suggested as areas for further consideration or study, and included:

- Introducing additional vertical columns/fins to reduce the horizontal emphasis of the existing building’s glazed facades.

- Architectural treatments to help mitigate solar gain, including shading devices, or use of more solid/opaque infill panels within the structural grid.
- Reviewing the metal panel cladding profiles to consider adding visual interest, richness and texture through joint patterns and edge definition.
- Updating the elevations to clearly show existing conditions/materials to be maintained, and proposed new façade materials and details.
- Opportunities to further celebrate and define the main building entrances with color or contrasting materials.
- Potential for an additional tree close to the crosswalk on JFK Street.

Additionally, staff would like to make note of the collapsed dry laid, stone wall at the rear of the project. According to *the Harvard Square Development Guidelines*, this 18th century wall is a critically important artifact of early development in Harvard Square and should be protected and exposed to public view in any future development. Since physical and visual access appears impossible due to the existing mechanical platforms installed at the rear of the alley, efforts to reconstruct the wall could be considered as a possible alternative to meeting this guideline.

**Continuing Review:**

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends as conditions for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

1. Updated basement and first floor plans clearly showing (for all existing and future building uses) - trash, recycling, access routes, mechanicals, etc. An enlarged plan of the alley would also assist with understanding some of the building logistics and impacts of existing mechanicals located on the platforms.
2. Updated elevations that clearly show more details about existing conditions/materials to be maintained, and proposed façade materials, joint patterns, profiles, through-wall vents, etc.
3. Review of all exterior materials, colors, and details, including a mock-up of all materials. The mock-up should be installed on the site, and be reviewed by staff and the Planning Board, prior to any exterior materials being ordered. Color and finish selection should ensure that the bronze panel has a matte/low sheen finish.
4. Review of all building mechanicals and appurtenances, including confirmation that all selected rooftop equipment is sized to be concealed by the roof screen.
5. Landscape design details for the courtyard, including species and planting standards for trees and other vegetation, consideration of an additional street tree on JFK Street, and details of bicycle racks, and planters (and proposed plantings) on Winthrop Street.
6. Review of all exterior lighting with reference to the City's Draft Outdoor Lighting Ordinance recommendations.