



June 5, 2023

Ms. Swaathi Joseph
Community Development Department
City of Cambridge
344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: 1627 Massachusetts Avenue / 4 Mellen Street (*future address*)
Affordable Housing Overlay Planning Board Submission

Ms. Joseph,

Homeowners Rehab, Inc. (HRI) is pleased to submit this proposal (the "Proposal") for the creation of a 100% income-restricted housing development of 29 rental apartments to be located at 4 Mellen Street (an address recently assigned by DPW) / 1627 Massachusetts Avenue. Twenty-five (25) of the units will be in a new building constructed on the parking lot of the existing Saunders House, with the House being modified to accommodate four (4) apartments. This returns the House to the historic residential use after serving as office space in recent years for Lesley University. All of the apartments are currently expected to be income-restricted at or below 60% of Area Median Income (AMI), however that may change depending on resources available from the Commonwealth, although at all times, as required by the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO), the apartments will be reserved for tenants whose incomes are at or below 100% of AMI.

HRI's proposal has been prepared in compliance with the AHO to provide new family housing at a prime location along Mass Ave while also enabling the preservation of the Saunders House. HRI has worked with the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) to recommend this property, including the new addition, to the Cambridge City Council for Landmark Designation, and be given approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the new building. Additional approvals from the CHC will be sought as the project moves forward. HRI has once again paired with ICON Architecture, a women-owned design firm deeply experienced in sustainability, historic adaptive re-use, new construction, and affordable multi-family buildings to submit the proposal enclosed within.

Since September 2022, HRI has maintained a website at www.1627massave.com for the project and has posted updates including recordings of community meetings and copies of presentations. The website also allows visitors to submit comments and send questions which the HRI development team receives and responds to.

The HRI team looks forward to continuing to work with city staff, agencies, and neighbors in refining this proposal and appreciates the opportunity to present to the Planning Board for input this spring as the team works to advance the Proposal.

Regards,

Sara Barcan
Executive Director
Homeowner's Rehab Inc.



VOLUME I - FORMS & NARRATIVE

1627 MASS AVE
CAMBRIDGE, MA
06/05/23



VOLUME I - FORMS & NARRATIVE

AHO DESIGN REVIEW SUBMISSION FORMS _____ 3

- DESIGN REVIEW SUBMISSION CHECKLIST
- PARCEL DIMENSIONAL FORM
- BUILDING DIMENSIONAL FORM
- TENURE AND AFFORDABILITY SUMMARY
- INITIAL DEVELOPMENT BUDGET

WRITTEN SECTIONS _____ 12

- PROJECT NARRATIVE
- DESIGN STATEMENT
- DESCRIPTION OF TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT
- SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS
- PROPOSAL TIMELINE
- TEAM DESCRIPTION

AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVERLAY DESIGN REVIEW

These forms are intended to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO), Section 11.207 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (CZO). Refer to the CZO for detailed provisions.

Submission Checklist

Note: Review Section 11.207 of the CZO carefully before submitting a design review package for an AHO project. This checklist and accompanying forms are intended only to assist in assembling and organizing application materials.

Project Address: 4 Mellen Street / 1627 Massachusetts Ave.

Applicant: HRI 1627 Mass Ave LLC

Contact Name: Eleni Macrakis, Project Manager

Contact Phone: 617-868-4858 x209

Contact Email: emacrakis@homeownersrehab.org

FOR STAFF USE

Complete Submission Received on Date:

AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVERLAY DESIGN REVIEW

These forms are intended to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO), Section 11.207 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (CZO). Refer to the CZO for detailed provisions.

Project Phase: First AHO Design Review Meeting

Submit these items to CDD for the first AHO Design Review meeting with the Planning Board. Plans and drawings should be presented at a schematic design stage.

Requirements

Narrative Volume (8.5"x11" portrait orientation)

Provided Forms: *Approximate figures may be provided where necessary*

- Design Review Submission Checklist (this form)
- Parcel Dimensional Form [Section 11.207.8(d)(xiii.)]
- Building Dimensional Form for each existing or proposed building on the site [Section 11.207.8(d)(xiii.)]
- Tenure and Affordability Summary [Section 11.207.3]
- Initial Development Budget [Section 11.207.8(d)(v.)]

Written Sections:

- Project Narrative [Section 11.207.8(d)(xiv.)]
- Design Statement [Section 11.207.8(d)(v.)]
- Description of Transportation Demand Management programs offered, if applicable [Section 11.207.6.5]
- Summary of Community Engagement Process [Section 11.207.8]

Graphics Volume (11"x17" landscape orientation)

- Context map [Section 11.207.8(d)(i.)]
- Context analysis [Section 11.207.8(d)(ii.)]
- Existing conditions site plan including tree survey [Section 11.207.8(d)(iii.)]
- Proposed conditions site plan including tree survey [Section 11.207.8(d)(iv.)]
- Schematic first floor plan and typical floor plan of all new buildings and existing buildings to remain [Section 11.207.8(d)(vi.)]
- Schematic elevations and cross-section drawings of all new buildings and existing buildings to remain [Section 11.207.8(d)(vii.)]
- Schematic landscape plan [Section 11.207.8(d)(viii.)]
- Plans of parking and bicycle parking facilities [Section 11.207.8(d)(ix.)]
- List of anticipated materials of proposed façade and landscape materials [Section 11.207.8(d)(x.)]
- Photographs of existing conditions [Section 11.207.8(d)(xi.)]
- Massing plan, schematic views, and sketch renderings of proposed conditions [Section 11.207.8(d)(xii.)]
- Viewshed analysis and shadow studies [Section 11.207.8(d)(xv.)]

Note: Use attached "Graphics Checklist" to ensure that all necessary information is provided.

Other Submissions (as applicable)

- Green Building Requirements – if Section 22.20 of the CZO applies, submit a statement of intent that says what Green Building Rating System will be used and other sustainable design objectives for the project
- Flood Resilience and Green Factor Standards – note if Sections 22.80 and/or 22.90 of the CZO apply and provide preliminary materials indicating how the standards will be met.
- Flood Plain Requirements – note if Section 20.70 of the CZO applies based on the project being within the Flood Plain

Last Updated: March, 2023

AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVERLAY DESIGN REVIEW SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

These forms are intended to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO), Section 11.207 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (CZO). Refer to the CZO for detailed provisions.

Project Phase: Second AHO Design Review Meeting

Submit these items to CDD for the second AHO Design Review meeting with the Planning Board. Plans and drawings should be at an advanced design development stage.

Requirements

Narrative Volume (8.5"x11" portrait orientation)

Provided Forms: *Updated and detailed from prior submission*

- Design Review Submission Checklist (this form)
- Parcel Dimensional Form [Section 11.207.8(d)(xiii.)]
- Building Dimensional Form for each existing or proposed building on the site [Section 11.207.8(d)(xiii.)]
- Tenure and Affordability Summary [Section 11.207.3]
- Initial Development Budget [Section 11.207.8(d)(v.)]

Written Sections: *Updated and detailed from prior submission*

- Project Narrative [Section 11.207.8(d)(xiv.)]
- Design Statement [Section 11.207.8(d)(v.)]
- Description of Transportation Demand Management programs offered, if applicable [Section 11.207.6.5]
- Summary of Community Engagement Process [Section 11.207.8]

Graphics Volume (11"x17" landscape orientation)

- Context map [Section 11.207.8(d)(i.)]
- Context analysis [Section 11.207.8(d)(ii.)]
- Existing conditions site plan including tree survey [Section 11.207.8(d)(iii.)]
- Proposed conditions site plan including tree survey [Section 11.207.8(d)(iv.)]
- Floor plans of all new buildings and existing buildings to remain [Section 11.207.8(d)(vi.)]
- Elevations and cross-section drawings of all new buildings and existing buildings to remain [Section 11.207.8(d)(vii.)]
- Landscape plan [Section 11.207.8(d)(viii.)]
- Plans of parking and bicycle parking facilities [Section 11.207.8(d)(ix.)]
- Materials palette of proposed façade and landscape materials [Section 11.207.8(d)(x.)]
- Photographs of existing conditions [Section 11.207.8(d)(xi.)]
- Perspective views and renderings of proposed conditions [Section 11.207.8(d)(xii.)]
- Viewshed analysis and shadow studies [Section 11.207.8(d)(xv.)]

Note: Use attached "Graphics Checklist" to ensure that all necessary information is provided.

Other Submissions (as applicable)

- Green Building Requirements provide all materials required in Section 22.20 of the CZO (if applicable). CDD will review and certify materials before the second meeting is scheduled.
- Flood Resilience and Green Factor Standards – provide all materials required in Sections 22.80 and/or 22.90 of the CZO (if applicable) for the initial stage of review. DPW and/or CDD will review and certify materials before the second meeting is scheduled.
- Flood Plain Requirements – provide all materials required in Section 20.70 of the CZO (if applicable). The City Engineer will review and certify materials before the second meeting is scheduled.

Last Updated: March, 2023

AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVERLAY DESIGN REVIEW SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

These forms are intended to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO), Section 11.207 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (CZO). Refer to the CZO for detailed provisions.

Project Address: 4 Mellen Street / 1627 Massachusetts Ave

Applicant: HRI 1627 Mass Ave LLC

Parcel Information – Provide one form for the entire parcel

	Existing	District Zoning Standards	AHO Zoning Standards	Proposed
Base Zoning District(s)	C-2A			
Overlay Zoning District(s)	Mass Ave Overlay, Affordable Housing Overlay			
Uses on Adjacent Lots	C-1 zoning, residential. Easement to Eversource building			
Lot Area, in sq. ft.	14,465	14,465	No Min	14,465
Lot Width, in feet	90.37 – 90.47	90.37 – 90.47	No Max	90.37 – 90.47
Number of Buildings	1	1	N/A	2
Existing to be demolished				0
Existing retained/moved/enlarged				1 retained
New construction				1
Gross Floor Area (GFA), in sq. ft.	5420	5420	No Max	35,263
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	.37	.37	No Max	2.1
Dwelling Units	0	0	No Max	29
Affordable Dwelling Units	0	0		29
Total Open Space, in sq. ft. ¹	3,950	3,950	15% min = 2,170	5,300
Private Open Space	3,950	3,950	15% min = 2,170	2,950
Permeable Open Space	3,950	3,950	All private open space	5,300
Open Space above Ground Story	0	0	<25%	0
Total Off-Street Parking Spaces	21	0	0	0
Provided on-site	21	0	0	0
Provided off-site ²	0	0	/	0
Long-Term Bicycle Parking Spaces	0	0	30	30
Short-Term Bicycle Parking Spaces	0	0	0	4
Provided on-site	0	0	/	4
Fund contribution ³			/	
Public Bicycle Sharing Stations ⁴	0	0		0
Provided on-site	0	0		0
Provided off-site	0	0		0
Loading Bays	0	0	N/A	0

¹ Refer to Open Space provisions in Section 11.207.5.2.4 of the CZO.

² Refer to off-site parking provisions in 11.207.6.2 of the CZO.

³ Refer to Public Bicycle Parking Fund provisions in Section 6.104.2(b.) of the CZO.

⁴ Refer to Public Bicycle Sharing Station provisions in Section 11.207.6.4(d) of the CZO.

Attach additional calculations as necessary to explain any figures above.

Last Updated: March, 2023

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These forms are intended to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO), Section 11.207 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (CZO). Refer to the CZO for detailed provisions.

Project Address: 4 Mellen Street / 1627 Massachusetts Ave

Applicant: HRI 1627 Mass Ave LLC

Building Information – EXISTING BUILDING

	Existing	District Zoning Standards	AHO Zoning Standards	Proposed
Building Designation (per plans)	1627 Mass Ave: Existing building			
Type of Alteration Proposed	Use change			
Building Use(s)	Office	C-2A	Aff. Housing	Multi-family
Ground Story Use(s)	Office	C-2A	Aff. Housing	Multi-family
Gross Floor Area (GFA), in sq. ft.	5,420	(calculated for lot)	(calculated for lot)	5,420
Dwelling Units	0	(calculated for lot)	(calculated for lot)	4
Affordable Dwelling Units	0	(calculated for lot)	(calculated for lot)	4
Stories Above Grade ¹	3	60' max	7 max, 5 within 35' of C-1	3
Building Height, in ft.	41' +/-	60' max	80' max, 60' within 35' of C-1	41' +/-
Ground Story – floor-to-floor, in ft.	11'-10"	N/A historic structure	N/A historic structure	11'-10"
Building Setbacks, in ft. ²				
Front Yard	26.9'	(H+L)/4 = 20' +/-	10'	26.9'
Side Yard	16.4'	(H+L)/6 = 13' +/-	10' side street	16.4'
Side Yard	27.5'	(H+L)/6 = 13' +/-	7.5'	27.5'
Rear Yard	73.1	(H+L)/5 = 16' +/-	N/A corner lot	11' to New Construction
Distance to nearest building, in ft.	40' +/-	/	/	11' to New Construction
Building length along street, in ft.	76' +/- (total)	/	/	76' +/- (total)
Fenestration, as % of façade area facing public street or open space	16% average	N/A historic structure	N/A historic structure	16% average
Ground Story only	22% (average)	N/A historic structure	N/A historic structure	22% (average)
Where Ground-Story non-residential uses are proposed in a Business district:³				
Frontage, as % of total façade length	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Depth from facade, in feet	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

¹ Refer to Definitions in Article 2.000 of the CZO.

² Where the proposal is applying front yard setback standards per Section 11.207.5.2.3(b) of the CZO, attach an area plan identifying the four nearest pre-existing principal buildings that contain at least two Stories Above Grade and directly front the same side of the street as the AHO Project, and a table providing the front yard setbacks for each building and calculating the average of the four.

³ See Section 11.207.7.4(e) of the CZO.

Attach additional calculations as necessary to explain any figures above.

Last Updated: March, 2023

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These forms are intended to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO), Section 11.207 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (CZO). Refer to the CZO for detailed provisions.

Project Address: 4 Mellen Street / 1627 Massachusetts Ave

Applicant: HRI 1627 Mass Ave LLC

Building Information – NEW CONSTRUCTION BUILDING

	Existing	District Zoning Standards	AHO Zoning Standards	Proposed
Building Designation (per plans)	1627 Mass Ave: Existing building			
Type of Alteration Proposed	Use change			
Building Use(s)	None	C-2A	Aff. Housing	Multi-family
Ground Story Use(s)	None	C-2A	Aff. Housing	Multi-family
Gross Floor Area (GFA), in sq. ft.	0	(calculated for lot)	(calculated for lot)	29,843
Dwelling Units	0	(calculated for lot)	(calculated for lot)	25
Affordable Dwelling Units	0	(calculated for lot)	(calculated for lot)	25
Stories Above Grade ¹	0	60' max	7 max, 5 within 35' of C-1	5/6
Building Height, in ft.	0	60' max	80' max, 60' within 35' of C-1	69'-8" / 59'-4"
Ground Story – floor-to-floor, in ft.	0	N/A	15' if non-residential use – N/A	17'-9"
Building Setbacks, in ft. ²				
Front Yard	/	(H+L)/4 = 20' +/-	10'	10' Mellen St
Front Yard	/	(H+L)/4 = 20' +/-	10'	26.9' Mass Ave
Side Yard	/	(H+L)/6 = 13' +/-	7.5'	7.6'
Side Yard	/	(H+L)/6 = 13' +/-	7.5'	7.6'
Distance to nearest building, in ft.	/	/	/	7.6' to abutting brick facade (no windows)
Building length along street, in ft.	0	/	/	73'
Fenestration, as % of façade area facing public street or open space	0	/	20% at public street	20%
Ground Story only	0	/	30% if non-residential use – N/A	35%
Where Ground-Story non-residential uses are proposed in a Business district:³				
Frontage, as % of total façade length	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Depth from facade, in feet	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

¹ Refer to Definitions in Article 2.000 of the CZO.

² Where the proposal is applying front yard setback standards per Section 11.207.5.2.3(b) of the CZO, attach an area plan identifying the four nearest pre-existing principal buildings that contain at least two Stories Above Grade and directly front the same side of the street as the AHO Project, and a table providing the front yard setbacks for each building and calculating the average of the four.

³ See Section 11.207.7.4(e) of the CZO.

Attach additional calculations as necessary to explain any figures above.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVERLAY DESIGN REVIEW SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

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Project Address: 4 Mellen Street / 1627 Massachusetts Ave

Applicant: HRI 1627 Mass Ave LLC

Tenure:

Rental housing

Homeownership housing

Unit Affordability Summary ¹

	Units at or Below 80% AMI	Units 80% to 100 %AMI	Total
# of Units:	29	0	29
% of Units:	100%	0	100%

¹ Refer to Section 11.207.3 in Article 2.000 of the CZO

Unit Size Summary:

	0-bedrooms	1-bedrooms	2-bedrooms	3-bedrooms	4+bedrooms	Total
# of Units:	N/A	10	12	7	N/A	29
Average size range (sf):		624	839	1074		
Smallest unit size (sf):		547 (Existing building)	824	957		
Largest unit size (sf):		755	853	1100		

Please describe other anticipated affordability limitations, if applicable (voluntary):

HRI has committed to a 100% affordable development that focuses on larger unit sizes, with 19 of the 29 units proposed as 2BR and 3BR apartments (65.5% of all units) and the remaining as 1BR apartments. The current income restriction projections range from 30% AMI to 60% AMI, however those restrictions may be further refined, as permitted under the AHO and as allowed by the CAHT acquisition and pre-development loans, depending on expected project costs and available non-City of Cambridge financing sources. The specific allocation of units to the proposed income tiers will continue to take shape as the project proceeds through permitting and financing and will comply with all Department and Housing and Community Development (DHCD) requirements for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) that is published and updated annually.

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Project Address: 4 Mellen Street/1627 Massachusetts Avenue

Applicant: HRI 1627 Mass Ave LLC

Initial Development Budget (see Section 11.207.8 of CZO):

Anticipated Uses/Costs*:	
Acquisition:	\$ 7,200,000
Construction/Hard Costs:	\$ 15,156,690
Other Costs/Soft Costs:	\$ 3,961,888
Capitalized Reserves:	\$ 429,279
Developer Overhead/Fee:	\$ 2,162,946
Total Uses/Costs:	\$ 28,910,803

Anticipated Sources*:	
Federal LIHTC Equity:	\$ 10,556,419
Seller Note:	\$ 1,900,000
City of Cambridge <small>(Acquisition Loan Awarded, Balance not yet Applied For)</small> :	\$ 7,859,942
DHCD <small>(Not yet Applied For)</small> :	\$ 2,900,000
Deferred Fee/Sponsor Loan:	\$ 324,442
Permanent Mortgage:	\$ 5,370,000
Total Sources:	\$ 28,910,803

**Anticipated Sources & Uses: Final Sources & Uses will fluctuate until construction loan closing especially due to currently volatile interest rate and construction pricing environments, therefore these are current well-informed estimates. The only funds applied for/ awarded so far is the portion attributable to acquisition loan from the City of Cambridge. All other sources currently listed here have not yet been applied for, as that will happen after successful Planning Board review.*

Last Updated: March, 2023

Project Narrative Section 11.207.8(d.)(xiv.)

Homeowner's Rehab Inc. is proposing an income-restricted development of 29 new affordable rental apartments (the "Proposal"). The Proposal for 1627 Massachusetts Ave includes the renovation of the existing 3-story mansion and a new construction building to its rear in the existing parking lot, which will consist of family-sized affordable housing units that fall under the Affordable Housing Overlay. The overall unit count is 29 units, broken into (10) 1-bedroom, (12) 2-bedroom and (7) 3-bedroom units. (4) of the units will be in the mansion, with (2) 1-bedroom units at the ground floor and (2) 3-bedroom duplexes above. This unit count assumes an amenity space on the ground floor, as community members have noted they would like to see more community space in the neighborhood. This Proposal is possible due to Lesley University's decision to market the property for sale in 2021 and closing of the sale to HRI in August 2022 to facilitate the creation of new affordable housing for the Cambridge community.

All of the apartments are planned to be affordable to families earning up to 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI), with adjustments to this AMI possible based on available resources from the Commonwealth. The income-restrictions will always comply with those required under the Affordable Housing Overlay, under which this Proposal is being permitted. Since 65% of the apartments are 2-bedroom or larger, the Proposal helps provide new housing stock for families in a housing market which has a well-documented crisis of affordable options. The Proposal also includes an approximately 700sf amenity space / community room on the first (ground) floor that will be able to be programmed for a variety of uses.

HRI expects to finance the Proposal via Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), tax-exempt bonds, state housing tax credits, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) housing resources, Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust (CAHT) funding, Cambridge Historic Commission funding, and a permanent mortgage in addition to seeking possible operating rental subsidies. Depending on timing of permitting and the availability of funding rounds from DHCD, it may be possible to start construction in spring 2025 for a completion in late 2026. HRI is excited to deliver this housing as soon as possible given the great need.

The design team has used the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) design guidelines as well as meetings with the Cambridge Historical Commission, City of Cambridge staff, and the community to inform the program, building and site design and has received feedback from community members and City departments. On March 30, 2023 the Cambridge Historical Commission took two steps at its monthly meeting regarding this Proposal, by (1) approving the tentative designation of the property as a Landmark, thereby forwarding the Landmark Designation to City Council for review and approval and (2) issuing an initial Certificate of Appropriateness approving, in principle, the current design scheme. These steps allow the Proposal to continue into Planning Board review.

Design Statement Section 11.207.8(d.)(v.)

The development at 1627 Massachusetts Ave includes the renovation of the existing 3-story mansion and a new construction building to its rear in the existing parking lot, which will consist of family-sized affordable housing units that fall under the Affordable Housing Overlay. The overall unit count is 29 units, broken into (10) 1-bedroom, (12) 2-bedroom and (7) 3-bedroom units. (4) of the units will be in the mansion, with (2) 1-bedroom units at the ground floor and (2) 3-bedroom duplexes above. This unit count assumes an amenity space on the ground floor, as community members have noted they would like to see more community space in the neighborhood.

The preservation of the existing Second Empire Style Mansion is an important part of this development. The front and side yard adjacent to the mansion on the Mellen St and Mass Ave side will be maintained, keeping the mansion's position as a landmark and helping to highlight its cultural significance and compatibility with the larger neighborhood fabric. The exterior siding, trim, and moldings will be restored to their original appearance, highlighting their material quality and craftsmanship. The existing building will connect to the new construction building at its rear on the basement, first, and second floors. Two changes to the mansion are proposed and have been discussed with Cambridge Historic Commission. The modern ramp at the front of the building will be removed as it is no longer needed due to the mansion's accessible connection to the new construction portion of the site. That connection is made possible through the removal of the existing 'EII' structure. Cambridge Historic Commission has approved the project in Principle, understanding that details will need to be reviewed in the future to provide a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The preservation of the mansion and its front and side yard provide the site with ample open space. Given the limited remaining area of the site, the team has employed the minimal allowable side and front yard dimensions to allow for the largest floor plate size possible for the new construction portion. To provide an accessible entrance to the existing building and new construction portion of the site, the main entrance has been established on Mellen Street. This entry is emphasized through an inset on the ground floor as well as numerous design elements including signage, accent lighting, landscaping, a trellis and seating which provide a gathering space and warm welcome. Pedestrian and bicycle parking follow the same path separate from vehicles to the main entry. Bikes have an accessible route through the building to permanent parking in the basement, and visitor parking is right outside main building entry.

The new construction building is perfectly sited to avoid solar heat gains with its south, east and west sides shaded, and to take advantage of northern daylight on its primary façade on Mellen Street. The building's average glazing percentage is kept to 20% to align with exterior envelope efficiency goals and fit in with the context of the mansion and adjacent smaller scale buildings. The ground floor facing Mellen Street has a higher percentage of glazing, with the ground floor community room creating a distinct element on the façade with tall expanses of glass.

There is minimal space on site for trash and equipment given the location of the mansion, new construction, and existing front and side yards. The area to the south of the mansion is the only opportunity for these to be located. Trash is set beyond the face of the mansion and within a solid wood enclosure, with the trash and recycling separated to help with pest control. The transformer is the only site equipment.

It is currently pad mounted next to the trash, which will be screened in compliance with Eversource requirements, and the team will also explore the option to move the equipment into an underground vault. Some mechanical, electrical and plumbing equipment will be in the basement of the mansion, and with fully central systems there is little equipment located on the roof of the new construction building. Roof top equipment will be set back a minimum of 10' from the edge of the building.

As a response to the neighborhood height considerations, the maximum height of 7 stories and 80' as of right through the Affordable Housing Overlay is not being pursued, instead the new construction building has a half level at 6 stories and the main massing at 5 stories. This strategy helps the building to relate to the larger context of the neighborhood, which consists of six and seven story buildings nearby along Mass Ave, in C-2A zoning district that this parcel resides within, and shorter three and four story buildings in C-1 zoning district which the parcel abuts.

Based on input from the city, some changes to the overall massing and articulation of the building have been examined to address window proportions, add emphasis to the Mellen Street façade, and re-examine the ground floor inset. The city encouraged the team to embrace the verticality of new construction in contrast to the mansion, and the main bay 'tower' at the corner of Mellen St and Mass Ave emphasizes that, along with the secondary bays on Mass Ave and the side elevation. In response to city comments, the ground floor inset was reduced in height and is now a similar scale as the existing Mansion porch, aligned with the side yard of the mansion. Other responses to Specific AHO Building Massing and Design Guidelines include the use of bays to break down the massing and provide asymmetry, small-scale materials including clapboard-look siding to relate to neighborhood context, a unique material at the base of the building and window scale and percentage relating to the neighborhood.

Transportation Demand Management [Section 11.207.6.5]

The proposed development of 29 units requires compliance under Section 11.207.6.5 as there is no off-street parking proposed. HRI is committing to providing subsidized MBTA passes per Section 11.207.6.5(a) and per CDD guidance of providing a 100% discounted MBTA combined subway and bus pass for three months or pass of equivalent value, to up to two individuals in each household upon initial occupancy of a unit. HRI commits to this as a baseline and will continue to evaluate the opportunity to provide additional TDM measures as this proposal progresses. HRI and its management agent for the property are also committing to Section 1.207.6.5(b) to provide transit information to the residents.

HRI shared the Transportation Demand Management Plan along with the site plan with members of the Traffic, Parking, Transportation Department (TPTD) team during initial reviews in fall 2022 and February 2023. During this time, TPD assisted in reviewing site access and layout and has indicated that the plan conforms to Section 11.207.6.1(a) and (b) and that there is no need for off-street facilities for a 29 unit building in a transit rich location. HRI has requested a temporary loading zone on Mellen Street, in proximity to the curb cut that HRI will close for the building. TPTD staff indicated that the use of public curb space will be reviewed closer to Certificate of Occupancy, as TPTD actively reviews curb regulations at all times, and has indicated that the Project as proposed compiles with Section 11.207.6.1 of the AHO.

Describe Community Process [Section 11.207.8]

In accordance with Section 11.207.8 “Advisory Design Consultation Procedure,” two community meetings have been hosted virtually by HRI. Approximately 30 people attended the first virtual meeting, and 50 people attended the second virtual meeting. The first meeting, on September 15, 2022, was used to share information about HRI’s previous projects and partnership with ICON Architecture, its goals for the project, sustainable building practices HRI uses, and plans to learn more about the neighborhood context. At the first community meeting, HRI heard from neighbors who were interested in learning about its plans for activating the green space around the mansion, what type of applicant would be eligible to apply for housing, how HRI would account for transportation access, plans for assessing and protecting trees, and how shadows would impact neighboring buildings.

To follow up on these questions prior to the second community meeting, HRI commissioned a number of studies. HRI hired Vanasse & Associates to conduct a transportation study, which found that there is adequate street parking nearby, even accounting for upcoming changes to Massachusetts Ave with the MassAve4 Cycling Safety Ordinance. Notably, nearby public transit hubs, bike lanes, and bus stops will serve residents, all within a 10-minute walk of the building; HRI will also have 1:1 indoor bicycle parking. Additionally, an arborist prepared a report on healthy and decaying trees on site, finding the oaks to be in relatively stable health, and identifying trees needing to be removed due to poor health. ICON Architecture conducted a shadow study as well. At the second community meeting, the results of these pre-development studies were shared, addressing questions from neighbors with concerns about parking, traffic, trees, and overall site design.

The second community meeting, on March 15th, 2023, included ample time for neighbors to inquire about the building’s design. Elevation from all four sides of the project were shown, with explanations of how the building meets zoning requirements under the AHO. Abutters provided feedback on HRI’s plans for the development, with positive support offered for landscaping plans and increasing the overall amount of affordable housing in Cambridge. Abutters raised concerns about traffic and placement of the trash enclosure, which HRI addressed during the meeting.

HRI has also communicated and/or met with various neighborhood organizations and abutters to discuss the project and plans to continue these conversations throughout the pre-development process.

Additionally, HRI maintains a website for the project, www.1627MassAve.com, which has an overview of the project, a feedback page, updates for website subscribers, and a timeline of project milestones. The website has over 50 comments from the public responding to questions about the need for affordable housing in Cambridge, how HRI can highlight the community’s history, and giving general feedback on the project.

Proposal Timeline

August 2022: HRI acquires property from Lesley University

September 2022: 1st AHO community meeting; launch of www.1627massave.com

Fall/Winter 2022-2023: Housing program discussions with City of Cambridge, staff design review

March 2023: 2nd AHO community meeting

Spring/Summer/Fall 2023: Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) and Planning Board review

Winter 2024: Ongoing pre-development; seek additional resources from Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development

Spring 2025 – Fall 2026: Potential construction start & finish allowing resident occupancy in 2026.

This timeline may change and HRI will post updates at www.1627massave.com and will also provide updates to CDD staff.

Team Description

HRI is working with ICON Architecture as the lead architect team on this project. ICON and HRI have collaborated on several projects before, including Finch Cambridge, Putnam Green, and Auburn Court, all developed in Cambridge. RBLA Design is a landscape architecture firm owned by Rebecca Bachand focused on multifamily and affordable housing properties. Kevin Quetti is the civil engineer through his firm Quetti Design Group. HRI has also contracted with a number of consultants to support elements of the project requiring a special focus such as sustainability and green certification. CLEAResult is the green consultant, supporting EGC certification, durable and energy efficient building design, PHIUS verification, and HERS rating. Linnean is supporting PHIUS certification and WUFI energy modeling, as well as Mass-Save incentive coordination. A transportation study was conducted by Vanasse & Associates in the fall of 2022, and David Ropes of Tree Specialists, Inc. conducted a tree study in the fall as well. Wingate is the property management team maintaining the property currently and throughout construction. NEI General Contracting, an experienced local builder is providing pre-construction estimating services to HRI. The formal selection of a general contractor will occur subsequent to receiving financing from DHCD.