



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: October 28, 2025

Subject: Initial Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Advisory Design Consultation

Project Location: 2072 Massachusetts Avenue

Date of Planning Board Meeting: October 7, 2025

Overview

The Planning Board (the “Board”) met on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, to review and comment on the design for 2072 Massachusetts Avenue, a multifamily development by CC HRE 2072 Mass Ave LLC and CC HRE 2072 Mass Ave Tenant LLC (the “Developer”) under the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) in Section 11.207 of the Zoning Ordinance. The Board reviewed a plan set submitted by the Developer dated September 4, 2025, as well as staff memos from the Community Development Department (CDD) and Department of Public Works (DPW), which are attached.

Proposal Description

The Developer is proposing to demolish the existing structure to construct a new 12-story, 126-foot-tall residential building consisting of 73 affordable rental units with approximately 91,700 square feet of Gross Floor Area. The unit mix will include studios, one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments ranging in size from 500 to 1,159 square feet at 30% and 60% AMI. The project also includes resident amenities such as a ground-floor community space and a rooftop outdoor terrace. Bicycle parking will be provided with 44 long-term and 1 short-term spaces, supplemented by a financial contribution to offset the remaining required spaces.

Board Comments

Board members were very supportive of the proposal and commended the Developer for adding a significant number of family-sized units and amenity spaces. The Board thought the proposed height was appropriate for the site, in one of the major corridors in the city, well served by public transit and bicycle amenities. The Board generally supported the modern double stacked design and the choice of colors and materials, particularly the use of brick in context with the surrounding buildings and the use of mass timber as a structural and aesthetic option.

As the proposal continues to develop, Board members urged the developer to focus on the following program and design elements:

Site Design

- Board members encouraged the Developer to continue working with the City to provide loading/unloading and pick-up/drop-off areas for the project and present a streetscape design, ensuring consistency with the City's broader vision for the public realm. It was noted that Massachusetts Avenue may present additional challenges for these functions due to the presence of a bike lane and a bus stop and encouraged the applicant to account for these conditions as the design continues to develop.
- Continue coordination with City staff to ensure that proposed improvements along Walden Street are accurately represented and aligned with City's ongoing planning efforts. The Board also encourages continued discussion with staff to clarify timing and scope for these potential streetscape improvements and would like more detail on its phasing at the second hearing.
- Clarify the current arrangements for the use of the City owned parking lot on Walden Street adjacent to the site and provide an update on any options for using this site to alleviate concerns with project loading and drop-off /pick-up.
- Identify a contingency plan for the large tree on the abutting Russell Apartments lot in the event it dies or is severely damaged during construction.

Building Design

- Continue to refine the Massachusetts Avenue and Walden Street facades and present more details on materials, fenestration, and increased ground-floor transparency, showing how the building is more inviting and aligned with the Massachusetts Avenue Planning Study goals.
- Consider increasing the ground-floor height to enhance the sense of openness and visibility along the street frontage.
- Consider introducing additional façade recesses, potentially including balconies, particularly on the east elevation, to provide private open spaces, natural light and air for the apartments.
- Further develop the elevations facing the neighborhood to make the building more inviting from that perspective.
- Present a detailed layout plan for the terrace, demonstrating how residents will use this space. Include cross-sections illustrating rooftop plantings to clarify the feasibility of the proposed roof trees to provide shading.

- Provide examples or precedents that illustrate how roof gardens can function effectively for residents on upper floors of taller buildings.
- Evaluate the possibility of incorporating a basement or partial basement to accommodate bicycle parking and laundry facilities, allowing more active residential use on the ground floor and potentially additional dwelling units on the ground and rooftop.
- Consider eliminating the rooftop emergency generator to achieve a 100% fossil-fuel-free building and reclaim space for residential or amenity use.
- Maintain the proposed terrace location, with its orientation and views toward the street and city skyline.
- Present more detailed floor plans that align interior layouts with façade articulation and structural grids, clearly identifying accessible dwelling units.
- Improve access to the bicycle rooms, including the addition of a direct external entry at the rear of the building.
- Confirm that the number of laundry machines proposed is adequate to serve the total number of residential units and consider increasing the number of machines.

In addition to these topic areas, the Board supported comments made in the staff memos for the proposal and asked that they be considered to refine the project's design.

Submitted for the Planning Board,

Swaathi Joseph

Representative to the Planning Board, authorized by Mary Flynn, Chair.