

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date:	March 24, 2026
Subject:	Final Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Advisory Design Consultation Procedure Compliance Certification
Project Location:	2072 Massachusetts Avenue
Date of Planning Board Meeting:	March 3, 2026

Project Overview

The Planning Board (the “Board”) met on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, to review and comment on the revised 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 February 5, 2026, as well as staff memos from the Community Development Department (CDD) and Department of Transportation (DOT), which are attached. The Board held its first advisory consultation on October 7, 2025, and issued an initial report dated [October 28, 2025](#).

Board Comments

The Board was pleased with the improvements made to the project in response to both staff and Planning Board comments and commended the development team for a thoughtful design process focused on enhancing the neighborhood and the quality of life for future residents. Board members appreciated the increased setbacks for rooftop mechanical equipment, which significantly reduce its visibility from the ground. Other notable improvements include the quality of interior spaces with wood finishes, added articulation on the south facade, improved fenestration on the west facade, the inclusion of a mural facing Massachusetts Avenue, improved bicycle parking access, and the rooftop design approach shaped by community engagement. The Board was also pleased that rethinking the long-term bicycle parking layout allowed for the addition of an extra two-bedroom unit.

As the project progresses, the Board offers the following suggestions:

- Further refine the south facade, as it still reads as a single massing and overly flat.

- Explore additional strategies to maximize natural light and views for the lower-level units facing the Russel Apartments' blank brick wall, such as adjusting their layout and fenestration.
- While some members liked the use of warm colors on the facades, others encouraged exploring more expressive options such as red brick tones and/or painted mullions. The Board strongly recommended seeking an alternative to the grey color.
- Continue coordinating with City staff to ensure the ground floor design and pedestrian experience align with the ongoing Massachusetts Avenue redesign plan.
- Continue working with the City on the widening of Walden Street to align with City goals for pedestrian safety and overall streetscape design.
- Consider selecting large growth trees to be planted along the south edge of the site to improve the transition to the City's parking lot and align with the City's urban forestry priorities.
- Explore ways to improve safety along the alley between the building and the Russell Apartments, including the use of lighting and gates.
- Consider providing additional short-term bicycle parking near the lobby for guests and residents.
- To further activate Massachusetts Avenue, explore ways to promote active use and programming of the ground floor community room and expand art display opportunities by adding art to the ground-floor windows.

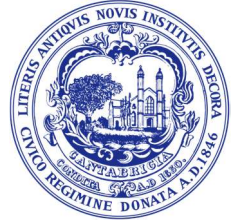
AHO Compliance Summary

This report certifies that the developer has completed the Advisory Design Consultation Process in order to comply with the procedure for development under the Affordable Housing overlay set forth in Section 11.207.8 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance.

Submitted for the Planning Board,

Swaathi Joseph

Representative to the Planning Board, authorized by Tom Sieniewicz, Chair.



To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: February 25, 2026

Re: Affordable Housing Overlay Design Consultation **AHO-9, 2072 Massachusetts Avenue**

Overview

Submission Type: Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Advisory Design Review

Applicant: CC HRE 2072 Mass Ave LLC and CC HRE 2072 Mass Ave Tenant LLC

Zoning District(s): Business A-2/Residence C-1

Proposal Summary: Construction of a 12-story building to create 73 affordable rental units and amenities under the AHO.

Planning Board Action: Review and comment on conformance with AHO Development Standards, City Development Guidelines for the proposal area, Design Guidelines for Multifamily Housing, and Citywide Urban Design Objectives.

Memo Contents: CDD Zoning Report & Urban Design Report

Other Staff Reports: Department of Transportation (DOT) in separate document.

Zoning & Development Staff Report

Overview

The Developer, Capstone Communities LLC (or “Capstone”) and Hope Real Estate Enterprise LLC (or “Hope”), is proposing to demolish the existing single-story restaurant building to construct a new 12-story, 136-foot-tall residential building consisting of 73 affordable rental units and approximately 91,400 square feet of Gross Floor Area. The unit mix will include studios, one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments ranging in size from 667 to 1,042 square feet. The project also includes resident amenities such as a ground-floor community space and a rooftop outdoor terrace. Bicycle parking will be provided with 45 long-term and 1 short-term spaces, supplemented by contributions for a Public Bicycle Sharing Station and Public Bicycle Parking to offset the remaining required spaces.

Planning Board Comments from Initial Consultation Meeting

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, 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 both a structural and aesthetic option. The terrace location with orientation toward the street and city skyline was also highlighted.

As the building design advances, Board members encouraged the Developer to consider increasing ground-floor height and transparency. They also suggested refining the elevations, particularly those facing the neighborhood, with greater attention to materials, fenestration, and recesses. The Board requested more detailed floor plans that align interior layouts with façade articulation and structural grids, as well as additional information to better understand feasibility and users experience of the proposed terrace space.

For site design, the Board asked for a contingency plan to protect the large mature tree on the abutting Russel Apartments lot and urged continued coordination with the City on public realm improvements, including Walden Street widening, loading/unloading and pickup/drop-off areas.

Staff Comments on Revised Submission

The City has received a revised application dated February 5, 2026, including updated forms and narrative volume, revised graphics, and a revised appendix volume with additional Green Factor and Green Building documentation.

CDD Staff have confirmed that the project has provided sufficient documentation to demonstrate compliance with Green Building and Green Factor standards at this stage of review. The Project intends to meet Green Building requirements by targeting Passive House certification. The minimum required Green Factor score is achieved through a combination of understory trees, high planting areas, a green roof area, and shaded areas.

In the initial Zoning Memo on this proposal, CDD provided a summary of compliance with AHO standards. The revised submission presents several modifications, including: increasing the eastern side yard setback from zero to five feet along the Russell Apartments property line; increasing the number of long-term bicycle parking spaces by one; incorporating planters along Massachusetts Avenue; and reducing façade glazing from 45 to 35% along Massachusetts Avenue and 40 to 34% along Walden Street.

CDD staff continue to note two items requiring additional clarification to confirm full compliance with AHO zoning standards.

- **Bicycle Parking:** Article 6.000 requires a minimum 3-foot horizontal clearance perpendicular to the length of the bicycle from the center point of each bicycle rack. Page 26 of the graphic volume shows enlarged bicycle parking plans indicating that the two racks arranged in alignment in the second-floor bicycle room and the proposed short-term rack may not meet this requirement. No dimensions are provided for the short-term space.
- **Rooftop Mechanical equipment:** Section 11.207 requires rooftop mechanical equipment to be set back from the principal wall plane by a distance equal to its height. While some of the equipment appears to be screened by a 10-foot-tall structure, it remains unclear whether the equipment is set back as required.

CDD staff has also observed that revisions to the east facade facing the Russell Apartments eliminated the previously proposed recessed and projecting elements. Building and Site Design Standards for AHO projects require building facades not facing the street to incorporate elements that project or recess by at least two feet, occurring at an average interval of 80 linear horizontal feet or less. As currently shown, the east facade does not clearly demonstrate compliance with this standard.

Consistency with AHO Development Standards

The AHO development standards applicable to this project are summarized in the table below.

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Business A-2 Zoning District	Summary of Compliance
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multifamily dwellings allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal includes multifamily dwellings and residence amenities on the ground floor and rooftop.
Building Height & Stories Above Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying District Dimensional Standards allow 6 stories, 75 feet. • AHO Developments are allowed up to 13 stories, 150 feet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed project is 12 stories and 136 feet in height.
Yard Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying District Dimensional Standards have no Side and Rear Yard requirements. • AHO Dimensional Standards have no Front Yard requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parcel is a corner lot, so it contains two front yards and two side yards. A 5-foot setback is provided for both side yards. • The project proposes a 6-inch front yard setback on both street fronts.
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHO Developments require 30% open space or meet the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While no Open Space is required, the project includes an outdoor

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Business A-2 Zoning District	Summary of Compliance
	<p>underlying District Dimensional Standard, whichever is less.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot in a B-A2 has no open space requirement. 	<p>terrace at the 12th floor, planters along the Streets, and ornamental trees along the southern lot line.</p>
<p>Parking and Bicycle Parking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No minimum off-street parking for AHO Developments. • Bicycle parking is required per Article 6.100, but additional flexibility is provided for the location, quantity and type (long-term and short-term) of bicycle parking required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project provides two long-term bicycle parking rooms with a total of 45 parking spaces where 76 spaces would be required for a project of this size. The remaining required spaces will be satisfied through a Public Bicycle Sharing Station contribution of 25 docks. • One short-term bicycle space is provided on Massachusetts Avenue where 8 are required. A Public Bicycle Parking Contribution will offset the remaining required short-term spaces. • Some long- and the short-term bicycle parking spaces do not appear to meet the dimensional standards in Article 6.100.
<p>Site Design and Arrangement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front yards may be landscaped or hardscaped but cannot be used for off-street parking. • Pedestrian entrances shall be visible from the street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed project meets all the Site Design and Arrangement requirements.
<p>Building Facades</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building facades facing public streets shall have a minimum percentage of 20% glazing. • Building facades must include projecting and/or recessed elements of at least two feet on an average interval of 40 linear feet along a Public Street, and 80 feet elsewhere. Such projecting or recessed elements do not apply to the lowest or highest Story Above Grade. • Facades of ground stories shall have expanses of no more than 25' with no windows or pedestrian entryways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed building consists of 35% transparency along Massachusetts Avenue and 34% along Walden Street. • Facade facing the Russell Apartments appear to not include any projecting and or/recessed elements of at least two feet on an average interval of 80 linear feet.
<p>Mechanical Equipment, Refuse Storage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical equipment shall be generally screened from view. Rooftop mechanical equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground story mechanicals and refuse areas appear to be within the building itself. Some rooftop

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Business A-2 Zoning District	Summary of Compliance
and Loading Areas	must be set back from the roof line equal to its height.	equipment appears to be screened by a 10-foot-tall screen, but it is unclear if the equipment is setback by a dimension equal to at least its height.
Environmental Design Standards	This AHO project is subject to the following Sustainable Development Standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 22.20: Green Building • Section 22.90: Green Factor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation demonstrating compliance with all relevant Sustainable Development Standards has been submitted to and certified by CDD staff.

19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]

Objective	Indicators
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods • Consistency with established streetscape • Compatibility with adjacent uses • Consideration of nearby historic buildings
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhabited ground floor spaces • Discouraged ground-floor parking • Windows on ground floor • Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways • Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/impact of mechanical equipment • Location/impact of loading and trash handling • Stormwater management • Shadow impacts • Retaining walls, if provided • Building scale and wall treatment • Outdoor lighting • Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management • Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service • Efficient design (LEED standards)
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional use focused on existing campuses • Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed • Preservation of historic structures and environment • Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as a component of large, multi-building development • Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families

<p>Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development• Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks• Provide wider range of activities
<p>Development should be resilient to the effects of climate change as anticipated in the <i>Resilient Cambridge</i> plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up-to-date projections of climate change impacts over the project's anticipated lifespan are incorporated• Flood Resilience Standard in Section 22.80 and the Green Factor Standard in Section 22.90 are met or exceeded• Use of strategies that have environmental co-benefits• Integrative approach to climate change resilience that accounts for the existing context and promotes the other design objectives of the area and the City.

Urban Design Staff Report

Overview

The project at 2072 Massachusetts Avenue proposes to replace the existing single-story commercial building with a 12-story building that will provide 73 affordable residential units. As noted in the memo to the Planning Board for the project's initial hearing on October 7, 2025, the design accords with the intent of Cambridge's Multifamily Design Guidelines, and will contribute to the developing character of Mass Ave. Subsequent to the initial Planning Board hearing, the project team met with staff to review the project's revised design, which incorporates numerous improvements, many of them in response to Planning Board and staff suggestions:

- To reduce the risk of damage to the existing tree at the neighboring Russell Apartment's rear patio, the side setback along the east side of the site has been increased to 5 feet.
- The design of the rooftop outdoor terrace has been developed, including the provision of a small play structure.
- The linear planter along the building's west side—along the Walden Street sidewalk, has been lengthened (still retaining five feet of clear sidewalk width), and an additional planter is provided on the building's north side, in front of the building's Community Room on Mass Ave.
- Improvements to the ground floor facades include greater height, more fenestration, and a lighter brick color. On the Walden Street facade, the transformer door and the adjoining person door are better integrated into the facade's overall composition.
- A placeholder for art is indicated on the ground floor north elevation, behind the existing bus stop shelter.
- The upper story facades have been coordinated with interior layouts, resolving discrepancies present in the earlier design.
- Additional glazing has been provided on the east facade, giving it a more residential appearance.
- A slightly warmer color palette has been adopted.
- The ground floor plan has been reorganized, creating clearer circulation patterns, providing windows to additional rooms and a more accessible route to the bicycle storage room.
- The ground floor bicycle storage room now has a door leading to the east setback, providing an alternate exit (and perhaps entrance) for bicyclists.
- The layout of the second-floor bicycle parking room has been improved.
- The design team will continue to work with DOT and DPW on changes to Walden Street and Mass Avenue.

Urban Design Comments on Design Revisions

Site Design

The changes to the site plan - principally the slightly wider setback on the building's east side, and the additional planters on the west and north sides – are improvements.

- Consideration could be given to planting columnar trees in the portion of the building’s widened east setback adjoining the Russell Apartment Building’s rear patio (with care to not negatively affect the existing tree on the Russell Building’s property).
- Greater clarity on the use of the east side doorway to the bicycle storage room, and the route from it to the public street, would be helpful.
- Consider planting trees with a taller growth habit on the south side of the site, adjoining the city owned parking lot.

Building Design

The changes to the building’s architecture noted above are mostly subtle improvements. The building’s overall appearance is similar to that of the previous design: the residential stories consist of a group of vertical massing elements running from second floor level to the building’s top, separated from each other by vertical reveals, yet unified with each other by a light-colored frame-like grid of double floor proportions that is infilled by panels and fenestration; the residential stories are supported by a ground story that combines brick wall and full height fenestration.

As in the previous design, one of the appealing features of the facades is the low window sills, located just above floor level, which contribute to a sense of light and openness in the residential units—creating almost the sense of an interior porch, and also place the window openings in dialog with the larger-scaled double-story areas framed by the light-colored facade grid.

It’s hard to tell precisely from the renderings, but in some of them the grey infill panels in the residential stories appear to be very close to the plane of the light colored facade grid.

- To enrich the facades with more relief and shadow, consideration could be given to increasing the depth to which the grey infill panels are recessed back from the plane of the light-colored gridded frame elements.

The color scheme is warmer than that of the previous version, but remains quite subdued.

- Consideration could be given to incorporating more color, perhaps in the window mullions, which are very close to the color of the adjoining infill panels.

North Facade (facing Mass Ave):

In the previous design, the north (Mass Ave) facade consisted of a two-bay-wide eastern (left hand) portion, and a four-bay-wide western (right hand) portion, separated by a vertical reveal that was aligned over the solid wall to the east of the entrance door. In the current design the vertical reveal has been shifted west, almost to the middle of the facade. The eastern portion consists of two bays, each wider than in the previous version. To achieve this, the blank panels within the light-colored facade grid have been considerably widened. The western portion of the facade has been reduced to three bays wide. The vertical reveal between the eastern and western portions is now partially over the entrance door fenestration and partly over the solid wall to the east of it, creating a slightly awkward relation between the building’s ground floor base and the residential tower above it.

- Consideration could be given to reverting to the two bay and four bay arrangement for the east and west portions of the facade, and relocating the vertical reveal so that it is east of the entrance fenestration.

In the previous design, the Mass Avenue entrance was recessed into the building, creating a deep sheltered outdoor area at the door. In the current design, the entrance doors and associated fenestration are close to the plane of the masonry facade.

- Consider recessing the building entrance enough to create a shallow sheltered area outside the doors.

West facade (facing Walden Street):

The locations of the reveals between the vertical massing elements of the residential stories have been coordinated with the interior layout. Note that the living room window of the northernmost one-bedroom unit on the west side of the building seems excessively narrow.

- Consideration could be given to widening it.

In the previous design, the northern of the two vertical reveals on the west facade had fenestration in it for the associated unit's living room.

- Consideration could be given to reinstating the fenestration, both to give more natural light to the living room and to enrich the facade.

East Facade (facing Russell Apartments):

Improvements include wider windows and reductions to the widths of the blank infill panels, the relocation of the vertical strip that divides the facade into an eastern and western portion closer to Mass Ave, and the elimination of the small punched windows that had been in that strip.

In contrast to the previous version, which stepped in plan, the east facade is now flat (or very close to flat).

- While this does not appear to be problematic, a change in plane at the two vertical strips – recessing them relative to the gridded portions of the facade - could be considered.

South Facade (facing the city parking lot)

The facade benefits from the simplification of the vertical strip that divides the facade into two portions.

- Consideration could be given to widening the windows, and to increasing the depth to which the infill panels are recessed.



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.

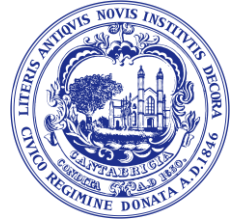
- Provide examples or precedents that illustrate how roof gardens can function effectively for residents on upper floors of taller buildings.
- Evaluate the possibility of incorporating a basement or partial basement to accommodate bicycle parking and laundry facilities, allowing more active residential 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.



To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: September 30, 2025

Re: Affordable Housing Overlay Design Consultation **AHO-9, 2072 Massachusetts Avenue**

Overview

Submission Type: Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Advisory Design Review

Applicant: CC HRE 2072 Mass Ave LLC and CC HRE 2072 Mass Ave Tenant LLC

Zoning District(s): Business A-2/Residence C-1

Proposal Summary: Construction of a 12-story building to create 73 affordable rental units and amenities under the AHO.

Planning Board Action: Review and comment on conformance with AHO Development Standards, City Development Guidelines for the proposal area, Design Guidelines for Multifamily Housing, and Citywide Urban Design Objectives.

Memo Contents: CDD Zoning Report & Urban Design Report

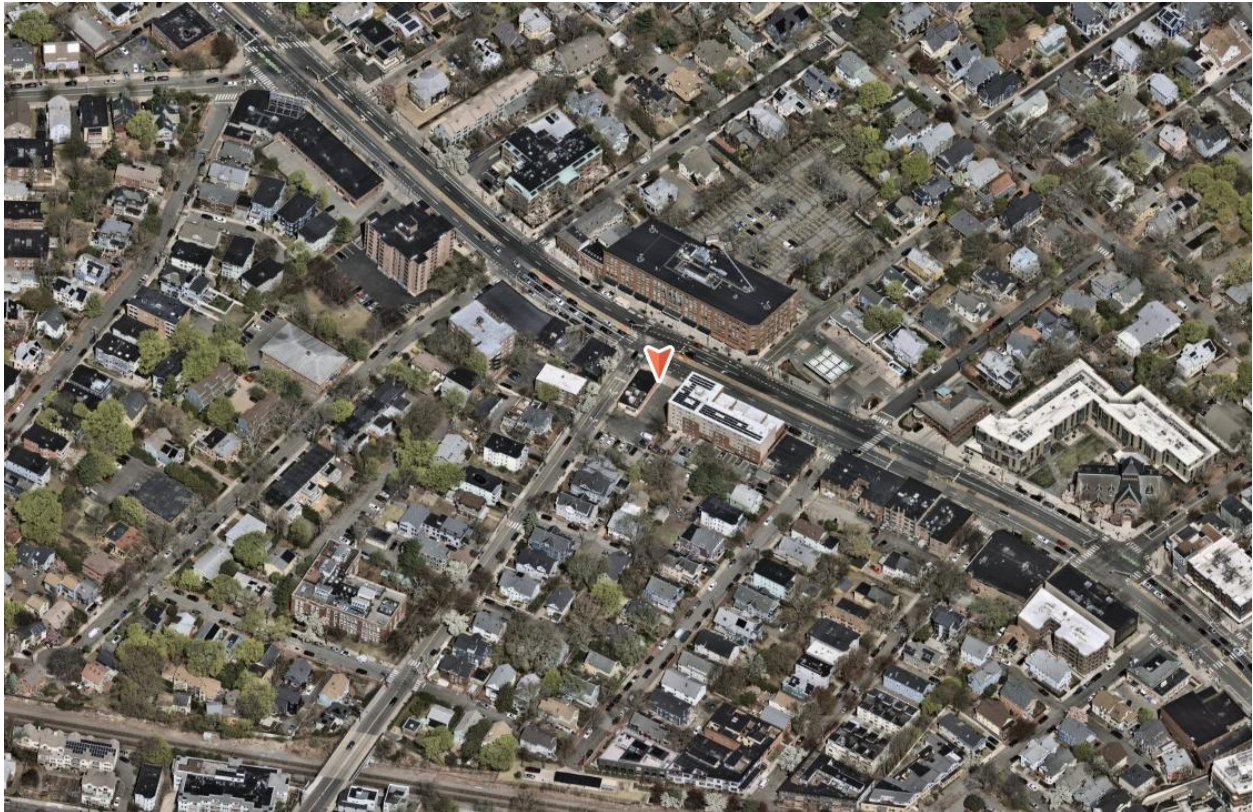
Other Staff Reports: Department of Public Works (DPW) Report in separate document.

Zoning & Development Staff Report

Site & Zoning Context

Site Context

The site consists of a single parcel at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Walden Street in the North Cambridge neighborhood, a few blocks north of Porter Station and just one block south of the Somerville border. Directly across Massachusetts Avenue stands the historic Henderson Carriage Building, and an MBTA bus stop shelter is located along the parcel's northeastern edge. The surrounding neighborhood features a diverse mix of uses, including commercial, mixed-use, office, and residential buildings of varying densities. Building types also range widely. Massachusetts Avenue is lined primarily with single-story commercial structures and mixed-use buildings up to eight stories in height, while Walden Street is predominantly 2½-story residential buildings. The site currently contains a one-story vacant building that most recently housed Darul Kabab, an Indian-Pakistani restaurant, along with a surface parking lot.



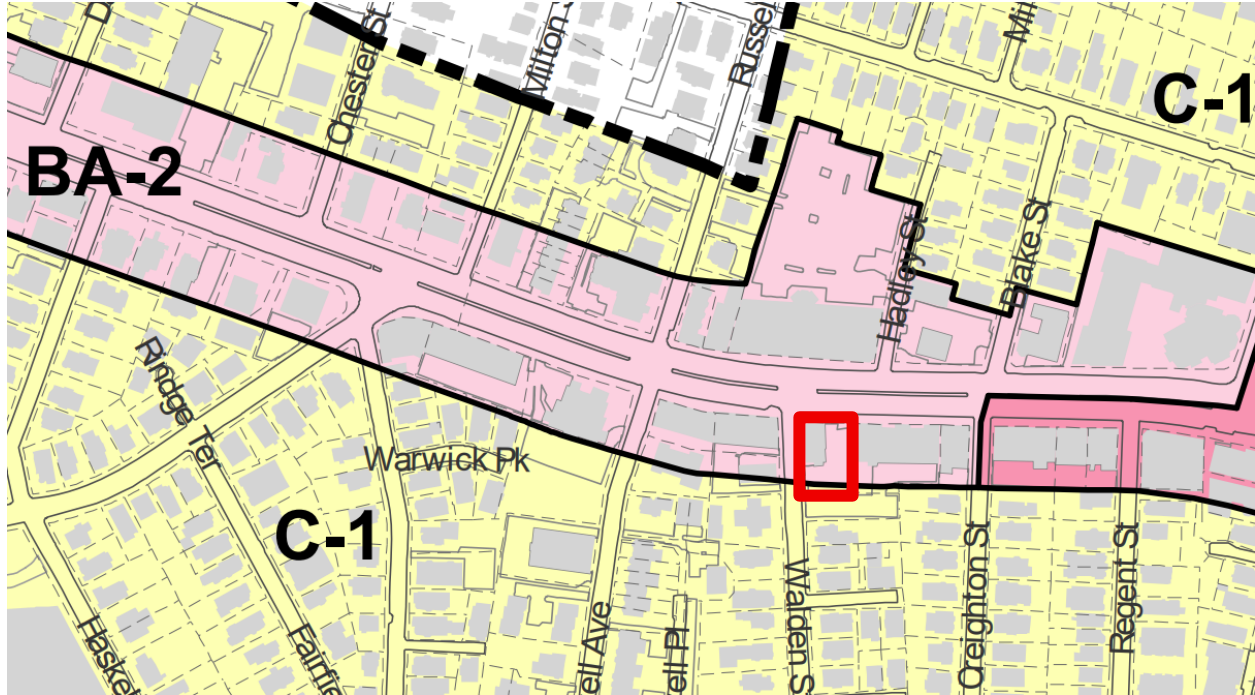
Context Map for 2072 Massachusetts Avenue. Source: Nearmap Aerial Imagery, April 2025

Site Zoning

This site spans two zoning districts, with the majority located in a Business A-2 (BA-2) district and a small rear portion situated in a Residence C-1 district. As a development carried under the AHO, per Section 11.207.5.1, the project may apply the zoning requirements of the district covering most of the lot to the entire parcel. Accordingly, the BA-2 district, which is the more permissive base zoning, is extended to

AHO Design Consultation AHO-9, 2072 Massachusetts Avenue – CDD Memo to Planning Board

the approximately 13-foot portion zoned C-1. The BA-2 district has no minimum Open Space or Side/Rear Setback requirements for residential uses, and under the AHO, no minimum front yard setback is required. Additionally, while base BA-2 zoning limits residential building height to 6 stories and 75 feet, the AHO allows up to 13 stories above grade and a maximum height of 150 feet. Because this AHO development exceeds 50,000 square feet, it is subject to the two-session Planning Board Advisory Consultation process.



Zoning Map. Source: Zoning Districts, City of Cambridge, February 2025

Comments on Proposal

Project Description

The applicants, Capstone Communities LLC (or “Capstone”) and Hope Real Estate Enterprise LLC or (“Hope”) are proposing to demolish the existing single-story restaurant building to construct a new 12-story, 126-foot-tall residential building consisting of 73 affordable rental units and 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.

Consistency with AHO Development Standards

The AHO development standards applicable to this project are summarized in the table below.

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Business A-2 Zoning District	Summary of Compliance
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multifamily dwellings allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal includes multifamily dwellings and residence amenities on the ground floor and rooftop.
Building Height & Stories Above Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying District Dimensional Standards allow 6 stories, 75 feet • AHO Developments are allowed up to 13 stories, 150 feet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed project is 12 stories and 126 feet in height.
Yard Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying District Dimensional Standards have no Side and Rear Yard requirements. • AHO Dimensional Standards have no Front Yard requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parcel is a corner lot, so it contains two front yards and two side yards. A 5-foot setback is provided at its southern side yard and no setback to the east. • The project proposes a 6-inch front yard setback on both street fronts.
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHO Developments require 30% open space or meet the underlying District Dimensional Standard, whichever is less. • A lot in a B-A2 has no open space requirement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While no Open Space is required, the project includes an outdoor terrace at the 12th floor, planters along Walden Street, and ornamental trees along the southern lot line.
Parking and Bicycle Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No minimum off-street parking for AHO Developments. • Bicycle parking is required per Article 6.100, but additional flexibility is provided for the location, quantity and type (long-term and short-term) of bicycle parking required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project provides two long-term bicycle parking rooms with 44 parking spaces and one short-term space on Massachusetts Avenue. Under Article 6.100, 76 long-term bicycle parking spaces and 8 short-term spaces would be required for a project of this size. The remaining long and short-term spaces required will be satisfied through a Public Bicycle Sharing Station contribution. • Some long-term bicycle parking spaces do not appear to meet the dimensional standards in Article 6.100.
Site Design and Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front yards may be landscaped or hardscaped but cannot be used for off-street parking. • Pedestrian entrances shall be visible from the street. • Buildings with front facades in excess of 250' in length shall provide forecourts to break up massing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed project meets all the Site Design and Arrangement requirements.

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Business A-2 Zoning District	Summary of Compliance
Building Facades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building facades facing public streets shall have a minimum percentage of 20% glazing. • Building facades must include projecting and/or recessed elements of at least two feet on an average interval of 40 linear feet along a Public Street, and 80 feet elsewhere. Such projecting or recessed elements do not apply to the lowest or highest Story Above Grade. • Facades of ground stories shall have expanses of no more than 25' with no windows or pedestrian entryways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed building consists of 45% transparency along Massachusetts Avenue and 40% along Walden Street.
Mechanical Equipment, Refuse Storage and Loading Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical equipment shall be generally screened from view. Rooftop mechanical equipment must be set back from the roof line equal to its height. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground story mechanicals and refuse areas appear to be within the building itself. All rooftop equipment appears to be screened by a 10 feet high screen, but it is unclear if the equipment is setback by a dimension equal to at least its height.
Environmental Design Standards	<p>This AHO project is subject to the following Sustainable Development Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 22.20: Green Building • Section 22.90: Green Factor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project intends to meet Green Building requirements by targeting Passive House certification. A Green Building Report will be required ahead of the final Planning Board Advisory Consultation. • A Cool Score sheet has been submitted but complete documentation showing compliance with Green Factor Standards will be required ahead of the final Planning Board Advisory Consultation.

Recommendations

The following is a summary of recommendations that may be considered for revised submission:

- Detail of long-term bicycle parking layout to confirm compliance with design standards in Article 6.100.
- Information about number of Public Bicycle Sharing Stations and docks to ensure compliance with AHO Bicycle Parking Standards.

- Further review of all rooftop mechanical equipment to ensure the screening requirements of the AHO design standards are met.

Transportation Comments

The Department of Transportation (DOT) staff has been working with the applicant and provided the following comments on the proposal:

- DOT is very supportive of the developer’s plan to pull back the building’s first floor in order to widen Walden Street as it approaches the intersection with Massachusetts Avenue. The revised curb line will accommodate two ten-foot lanes traveling north and one ten-foot lane traveling south. This is a significant improvement over current conditions and will improve the operation and safety for all road users.
- Further review the configuration of the northernmost racks in the ground-floor bicycle parking room to ensure that the access aisle is sufficient and racks are not blocked once bicycles are parked.
- Further review both bicycle parking rooms to ensure compliance with Bicycle Parking Guidelines for accessibility and improve circulation challenges, including providing more direct exterior access to the ground floor room, improving turns, and avoiding reliance on circulation through the trash room.

19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]

Objective	Indicators
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods • Consistency with established streetscape • Compatibility with adjacent uses • Consideration of nearby historic buildings
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhabited ground floor spaces • Discouraged ground-floor parking • Windows on ground floor • Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways • Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/impact of mechanical equipment • Location/impact of loading and trash handling • Stormwater management • Shadow impacts • Retaining walls, if provided • Building scale and wall treatment • Outdoor lighting • Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management • Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service • Efficient design (LEED standards)

<p>New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional use focused on existing campuses • Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed • Preservation of historic structures and environment • Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities
<p>Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as a component of large, multi-building development • Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families
<p>Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development • Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks • Provide wider range of activities
<p>Development should be resilient to the effects of climate change as anticipated in the <i>Resilient Cambridge</i> plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-to-date projections of climate change impacts over the project's anticipated lifespan are incorporated • Flood Resilience Standard in Section 22.80 and the Green Factor Standard in Section 22.90 are met or exceeded • Use of strategies that have environmental co-benefits • Integrative approach to climate change resilience that accounts for the existing context and promotes the other design objectives of the area and the City.

Urban Design Staff Report

Urban Design Comments

Consistency with Multifamily Design Guidelines

The design as proposed generally adheres to the applicable principles as outlined in the Multifamily Design Guidelines:

- The building is appropriately sited to maintain the streetwall on Massachusetts Avenue.
- Its vertical massing articulates the public realm by providing a visual target at the bend in Mass Avenue.
- Together with the Henderson Carriage Building on the opposite side of Mass Ave, it creates a gateway to the Porter Square area as one approaches it from the west.
- The building's distinct ground story base is constructed of appealingly textured materials and includes a large glazed area at the corner.

Site Design

The building fills most of the site, leaving little space for landscape improvements.

On its west side, the ground floor is set back from Walden Street. As part of improvements to Walden Street suggested by city staff, the curb and sidewalk will be relocated farther east from its current location, widening the currently constricted street. The sidewalk will be partially under the building's cantilevered upper floors. Underground utilities in the affected area may introduce complications, however; further investigations of subsurface conditions will be made.

New trees are provided along the parcel's south edge, between the building and the city-owned parking lot on Walden Street.

The project refrains from proposing improvements to the Mass Ave sidewalk and existing bus stop, as the sidewalk's revised design (expected as part of City-led improvements to Mass Ave) is still in process.

Recommendations

- Planters are shown against the building on the Walden Street sidewalk. Whether the resulting restrictions in sidewalk width (to approximately 5'-2" clear) is advisable should be evaluated.
- The applicant should continue to coordinate with city staff on changes to Walden Street and Mass Ave.

Building Design

The building's general concept a good response to the site: The division of its broad faces into two (or three) elements, separated by vertical grooves, emphasizes the building's verticality and breaks up its mass. The slight bend in the Mass Ave facade will create an appealing foreshortened view as one

approaches the building from either direction on Mass Ave. The brick ground floor facade will provide texture at the pedestrian level.

Recommendations

- Massing
 - Consider relocating the 12th story terrace (currently at the building's northwest corner) to the southwest corner, so as to accentuate the building's verticality at the intersection of Mass Ave and Walden Street, and to step down toward the neighborhood to the south.
- Facades
 - The earlier version of this project, dated October 27, 2020, with vertically striated light colored cladding, punched windows on the west and north facades, and more solid wall surface, was very successful. Consideration could be given to reinstating that aesthetic on at least some of the facades.
 - Consideration could be given to further breaking up the facades by using *both* the earlier wall and punched window expression and the current frame and infill expression, using one system in the northern portion of the mass and the other in the southern portion.
 - In the frame and infill system, consider differentiating the widths of the piers and the horizontal members.
 - Consider providing larger windows on the east facade.
 - Consider locating the east facade's vertical division farther north, so as to separate the northern Mass Ave facing component from the southern element that faces the interior of the block.
 - The lengths of blank ground story wall without openings may be excessive.
 - Careful treatment of doorways and other openings in the brick of the ground floor facades, and the contrast between the brick walls and the highly glazed Community Room at the northwest corner design of the ground floor facades will contribute to a rich pedestrian experience. (Sert's treatment of similar conditions in his office building at the intersection of Prospect Street and Bishop Allen Drive could be a useful reference.)
 - The locations of fenestration on the ground story Walden Street facade should be coordinated with the interior layout.
 - Whether sufficient access is provided to the transformer room should be evaluated. If a large door is required, it should be designed to complement the rest of the facade.
 - Consider alternative color palettes for the exterior.
 - The use of an exposed mass timber structural system will enrich the building's appearance. The ground floor structure is proposed to be steel frame, however. Can the steel be expressed in a way that complements the exposed mass timber?

- Plans
 - Note that better coordination between the vertical notches in the west facade and the interior layouts would improve the unit configurations.

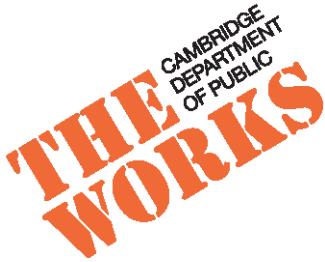
Sustainable Design

Recommendations

- The possibility of dedicating portions of the roof to green roof systems should be investigated.
- Clarify whether the seemingly high window to wall ratio on the west facade will meet passive house standards.

Consistency with City wide Urban Design Objectives

The project appears to meet the Citywide Urban Design Objectives.



City of Cambridge Department of Public Works

John F. Nardone, Acting Commissioner

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September 25, 2025

TO: Planning Board

FROM: James Wilcox, PE
City Engineer

RE: 2072 Massachusetts Ave AHO Submission

We are in receipt of the AHO Submission Documents for the project at 2072 Massachusetts Ave , dated September 4, 2025.

The DPW supports the project and acknowledges that the Development Team and their consultants have demonstrated a general understanding of our Department's requirements for development projects and have indicated a willingness to work with the DPW to meet the requirements and to address our concerns. With the understanding that the project will be subject to a thorough and complete engineering review at the time of the Building Permit Application, we anticipate continuing to work with the Applicant. Items discussed with the Development Team related to our purview are summarized below.

Stormwater Management:

The development will be required to obtain a Stormwater Control Permit prior to the issuance of a Building Permit which will include a detailed review of the proposed stormwater management system, plans for erosion and sedimentation control during construction and the plans for long term operation and maintenance of the system.

The submitted narrative includes an acknowledgement of some of the Stormwater Standards and some discussion related to how the Standards will be met. The Development Team and their consultants should review the City's Stormwater Control Permit Standards to confirm compliance with all water quality and quantity Standards. Methodology for calculating water quality mitigation, specifically Total Phosphorous removal, shall be consistent with methods and standards outlined in Appendix F of the Massachusetts MS4 General Permit. Final review and approval of the design will occur with the Building Permit.

Sewer Mitigation:

The development may trigger Inflow and Infiltration Mitigation if it increases the flow to the City's infrastructure by more than 15,000 gallons per day. The requirement is to mitigate the additional flow at a rate of 4:1. The proposed bedroom count has the design flow approaching this limit and should be evaluated by the development to clearly understand the net increase in flow to the City's system, as the program is finalized. Mitigation requirements, if triggered, will need to be agreed with the City and the Development Team prior to Building Permit.

Urban Canopy:

The submitted documentation notes that there are no trees on the parcel that are jurisdictional under the Tree Protection Ordinance. There is a tree on the abutting parcel that is immediately adjacent to the lot line and has the potential to be impacted by the construction. The Team has presented a Tree Protection Plan that outlines specific measures to be taken by the contractor to ensure that the tree is not adversely impacted by the project. The plan includes monitoring the tree for a full growing season after the completion of construction. The Urban Forestry Division agrees with this approach but would ask that in addition to the protections proposed that the arborist evaluate canopy impacts along with rootzone impacts.

Specific to Public Shade Trees, the DPW would note that all street trees located along the project frontage shall be maintained and protected during all construction activities. Also, we would ask that street trees be considered along all frontages as is allowed by the design standards and utility conflicts.

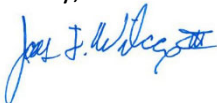
Public Right of Way:

DPW will review and evaluate all proposed work and impacts in the public right of way, as the design is developed. Connections to both public and private utilities as well as all proposed disruption in the public right of way shall be reviewed as part of the Building Permit and construction permit processes. As noted in the Application, the development will support, as needed, improvements to the public sidewalk, as needed, to obtain an accessible and comfortable sidewalk width for the project frontage.

The project proposes widening Walden Street for a portion of their frontage to support a second lane for turning movements. As this widening is supported by CAMDOT, DPW will work with the Development Team and CAMDOT on detailed review of plans for this work. The Team proactively engaged a survey consultant to establish the depth and sizes of some of the underground utilities that are in the vicinity of the proposed widening (curb relocation). Preliminary review indicates that widening is possible. Relevant City departments will work the team to progress plans for this work.

We look forward to working with the Development Team and other City Departments on this project. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns related to the comments or information provided above.

Sincerely,



James Wilcox, P.E.
City Engineer

