



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case Number:	PB-409
Address:	350 Massachusetts Avenue
Zoning:	Cambridgeport Revitalization Development District (CRDD)
Applicant:	BRE-BMR 350 Massachusetts LLC 4570 Executive Drive, San Diego, CA 92121
Owner:	Massachusetts Institute of Technology One Broadway, Suite 09-200, Cambridge, MA 02142
Application Date:	April 15, 2025
Date of Planning Board Public Hearing:	May 20, 2025
Date of Planning Board Decision:	May 20, 2025
Date of Filing Planning Board Decision:	July 24, 2025
Application:	Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20) to renovate the existing building to convert office use to laboratory use.
Decision:	GRANTED with conditions.

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board: Swaathi Joseph

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

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OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Application Documents and Supporting Material

1. Special Permit Application dated 3/20/2025, containing Special Permit Cover Sheet, Dimensional Form, Ownership Certificate, Narrative, Community Outreach Summary, plan set titled BioMed 350 Mass Ave Change of Use Special Permit Volume 2- Graphics, prepared by DiMella Shaffer, dated 3/20/2025, and Appendices Volume.
2. Presentation slides shown to the Planning Board on 5/20/2025.

City of Cambridge Documents

3. Memorandum to the Planning Board from James Wilcox, City Engineer, Department of Public Works (DPW), dated 5/14/2025.
4. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Community Development Department (CDD) staff, dated 5/14/2025.
5. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Brooke McKenna, Transportation Commissioner, Department of Transportation (DOT), dated 5/15/2025.

Other Documents

6. Letter to the Planning Board from Peter DiMuro, dated 5/15/2025.
7. Letter to the Planning Board from Debbie Bonilla, dated 5/16/2025.
8. Letter to the Planning Board from David Maher, dated 5/20/2025.

APPLICATION SUMMARY

The proposal includes renovation of the existing building for technical office/lab use with no change to the existing building footprint. The project would reduce the amount of retail space to roughly 4,000 square feet. The project will include a modern redesign of the façade and a new mechanical penthouse to support the incoming lab use.

FINDINGS

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

1. Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)

The Planning Board finds that the project conforms to the criteria for approval of a Project Review Special Permit, as set forth below:

19.25.1 Traffic Impact Findings. Where a Traffic Study is required as set forth in Section 19.24 (3) above the Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area as analyzed in the Traffic Study. Substantial adverse impact on city traffic shall be measured by reference to the traffic impact indicators set forth in Section 19.25.11 below.

In areas where the Planning Board determines that area-specific traffic guidelines have been established in the Ordinance, the Board recognizes written agreements between project proponents and the City dealing with transportation mitigation strategies.

19.25.11 Traffic Impact Indicators. In determining whether a proposal has substantial adverse impacts on city traffic the Planning Board shall apply the following indicators. When one or more of the indicators is exceeded, it will be indicative of potentially substantial adverse impact on city traffic. In making its findings, however, the Planning Board shall consider the mitigation efforts proposed, their anticipated effectiveness, and other supplemental information that identifies circumstances or actions that will result in a reduction in adverse traffic impacts. Such efforts and actions may include, but are not limited to, transportation demand management plans; roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities improvements; measures to reduce traffic on residential streets; and measures undertaken to improve safety for pedestrians and vehicles, particularly at intersections identified in the Traffic Study as having a history of high crash rates.

The indicators are: (1) Project vehicle trip generation weekdays and weekends for a twenty-four hour period and A. M. and P.M. peak vehicle

trips generated; (2) Change in level of service at identified signalized intersections; (3) Increased volume of trips on residential streets; (4) Increase of length of vehicle queues at identified signalized intersections; and (5) Lack of sufficient pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The precise numerical values that will be deemed to indicate potentially substantial adverse impact for each of these indicators shall be adopted from time to time by the Planning Board in consultation with the TPTD, published and made available to all applicants.

The Applicant completed a Transportation Impact Study (TIS), which was certified as complete and reliable by DOT on March 3, 2025. The Board received a memorandum from DOT dated May 15, 2025 commenting on the findings of the TIS, other project considerations related to traffic and transportation, and recommended planning, design, and mitigation strategies. The Board discussed such material with DOT staff at its public hearings and references such material in making these Findings.

The TIS indicated that the Project is not expected to increase vehicle trip generation and DOT has confirmed the development at University Park continues to comply with the 1988 Traffic Mitigation Conditions. Based on the information provided, the Board finds that there will be no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area.

19.25.2 Urban Design Findings. The Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the city as set forth in Section 19.30. In making that determination the Board may be guided by or make reference to urban design guidelines or planning reports that may have been developed for specific areas of the city and shall apply the standards herein contained in a reasonable manner to nonprofit religious and educational organizations in light of the special circumstances applicable to nonprofit religious and educational activities.

The Board finds that the proposed project is consistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30, which also reference plans and guidelines established by the City for particular areas, such as University Park.

19.31 New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.

The reuse of an existing building helps to maintain the prevailing pattern of development in the neighborhood.

19.32 Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.

The Project will not add any new off-street parking spaces but will add 30 new long-term bicycle parking spaces. The ground story of the Project will include roughly 4,000 square feet of retail space along the Mass Ave front of the building, which will help to bolster street-level activity. The Sidney Street façade will include an additional entrance to the bicycle parking area and window box art walls providing color and visual interest.

- 19.33 *The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.*

The Project includes a mechanical penthouse that is well-screened and set back from Massachusetts Avenue and Sidney Street, which will mitigate any potential adverse impacts on neighboring properties. The proposed transformer will be incorporated within the footprint of the building, and all refuse and recyclables will be stored within the building to minimize potential visual impacts.

- 19.34 *Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.*

The Planning Board received a memorandum from the City Engineer indicating that the infrastructure impacts of the proposal have been reviewed. The project will need to obtain a Stormwater Control Permit from the Department of Public Works (DPW) ahead of receiving a Building Permit. The Applicant has acknowledged the requirements for the permit and indicated that the project would meet those standards to the maximum extent practicable.

- 19.35 *New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.*

The project does not include new construction.

- 19.36 *Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.*

The Project involves the conversion of an existing general office use to a laboratory use, and no residential dwelling units are being removed or added by the proposal.

- 19.37 *Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.*

The Project is currently a zero lot line condition, and the existing building footprint will not change as a result of this proposal. There is currently no open space on the site and no open space is proposed to be removed or added.

- 19.38 *Development should be resilient to the effects of climate change as anticipated in the Resilient Cambridge plan published by the City.*

The Project is designed to meet all of the City's climate resilience standards, including the City's flood resilience standards and Green Factor standard. The Project is subject to the City's Green Building requirements in Section 22.20 and is targeting a LEED BD+C: Core and Shell v4 certification.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Transportation impacts have been carefully assessed as described above in these Findings. No changes to patterns of access or egress are anticipated that would cause substantial adverse impact.

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

The project is bound by similarly sized commercial buildings. As described above, the project will mitigate potential noise and visual impacts of proposed rooftop equipment through the use of a mechanical penthouse structure.

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

The proposed development will not cause nuisance or hazard.

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

The adaptive reuse of an existing, vacant office building for permitted laboratory use will not impair the integrity of the zoning district or detract from the existing, mixed-use character of the area.

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

The proposed development is consistent with the Citywide Urban Design Objectives, as set forth further above in these Findings.

DECISION

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

1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the Application Documents and other supporting materials submitted to the Planning Board, except as modified by the additional Conditions of this Special Permit Decision. The project plans hereby approved by the Planning Board are the plan set titled BioMed 350 Mass Ave Change of Use Special Permit Volume 2- Graphics, prepared by DiMella Shaffer, dated 3/20/2025. Appendix I summarizes the dimensional features of the project as approved.
2. The Planning Board approves the uses as described and depicted in the Application Documents, which include General office (Section 4.34.d) and Technical office for research and development, laboratory & research facility (Section 4.34.f), except in the indicated ground-story spaces where only Retail or Consumer Service Establishments listed in Section 4.35, as permitted in the zoning district, are allowed. Any other use shall require approval from the Planning Board.
3. The project shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department (“CDD”). Before issuance of each Building Permit for the project, CDD shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the final plans submitted to secure the Building Permit are consistent with and meet all conditions of this Decision. As part of CDD’s administrative review of the project, and prior to any certification to the Superintendent of Buildings, CDD may present any design changes made subsequent to this Decision to the Planning Board for its review and comment.
4. The Permittee shall address the following comments through the continuing design review process set forth above. Each of the below items shall be subject to CDD review and approval of the final design details prior to issuance of a Building Permit:
 - a. Review of all exterior façade alterations and additions, including glazing materials – visible light transmittance and reflectance, and the mechanical penthouse.
 - b. Detailed review of the design and programming of the lobby space, including consideration of the following:
 - i. Incorporating public amenities such as community bulletin boards, seating, public art, or free Wi-Fi zones.
 - ii. Providing physical connections between the lobby and the adjoining retail spaces.
 - c. Detailed review of the window box art walls, including consideration of the following:
 - i. Clarification of extent – the bike room façade appears part of the art wall installation in the renderings, but this is not reflected in the elevations.
 - ii. Showcasing local artists, community history, or rotating installations.
 - iii. Inviting local schools, groups, or nonprofits to help curate space content.
 - d. Review of all sidewalk and site alterations, including new paving, planters, and other details.

5. The final selection of colors and textures for façade materials, including rooftop screening elements shall be made by the Permittee in consultation with CDD staff. Members of the Planning Board shall be notified by CDD if input is needed on this matter based on the extent of changes to the existing facade.
6. The Permittee shall implement the following Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) measures which are consistent with requirements under the original 1988 University Park Special Permit, consistent with requirements of the University Park Phase IV PTDM Plan F10 (approved August 26, 1999), or proposed by the applicant in Volume III of their application. These measures shall be subject to monitoring by the City's Parking & Transportation Demand (PTDM) Officer:
 - a. Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC): An ETC will be designated to support and promote sustainable transportation options. The ETC will also publish a quarterly newsletter/bulletin highlighting alternative commuting options.
 - b. Transportation Packets: The ETC will prepare and distribute updated transportation packets outlining available commuting options to all tenants, for inclusion in new employee orientation materials.
 - c. Market-Rate Parking: All new tenants will be required to charge market rates for parking.
 - d. Transit Pass Subsidy: Require tenants to offer employees a 100% monthly transit pass subsidy up to the federal transportation fringe benefit limit.
 - e. Carpool Parking Discount: Charge a discounted parking rate for employees who carpool.
 - f. Ridematching: Provide ridematching services through the Charles River Transportation Management Association (CRTMA) to assist employees with forming carpools and vanpools.
 - g. Emergency Ride Home: An Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program will be provided through the CRTMA. Emergency rides home will be available for all employees who commute by non-SOV mode at least three days a week and who are eligible to park in the project's parking facility.
 - h. Flexible Work Schedules: Encourage tenants to allow flexible work schedules.
 - i. Annual Bike Maintenance Day: Host a free annual bike maintenance day for employees.
 - j. Free Shuttle Service: Extend BMR's EZRide membership with CRTMA to cover 350 Massachusetts Avenue. Provide fare-free shuttle service through EZRide or another service with equivalent service area, operating hours, and headways.
7. Throughout design development and construction, the project shall conform to the Green Building Requirements set forth in Section 22.20 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. CDD shall certify that the applicable requirements are met prior to issuance of a Building Permit, and again prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, for development authorized by this Special Permit.
8. Throughout design development and construction, the project shall conform to the Green Factor Standard set forth in Section 22.90 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. CDD shall certify that the applicable requirements are met prior to issuance of a Building Permit, and again prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, for development authorized by this Special Permit.
9. The Project shall be subject to the applicable Incentive Zoning requirements set forth in Section 11.202 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. The applicable Housing Contribution

shall be calculated at the time of issuance of a Building Permit and the Housing Contribution shall be made prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. Housing Department shall certify that the applicable requirements are met prior to issuance of a Building Permit, and again prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, for development authorized by this Special Permit.

10. All plantings proposed in the public right-of-way shall be in accordance with the Tree Planting Standards and the Urban Forestry Master Plan, subject to approval by DPW.
11. Throughout design development and construction, the project shall conform to the Flood Resilience Standards set forth in Section 22.80 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. DPW shall certify that the applicable requirements are met prior to issuance of a Building Permit, and again prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, for development authorized by this Special Permit.
12. The Permittee shall be required to prepare and implement a Construction Management Program in accordance with Section 18.20 of the Zoning Ordinance, which shall be reviewed and certified by DOT and DPW prior to issuance of a Building Permit for development authorized by this Special Permit. Such a program shall include, in addition to the specific items required by said Section 18.20:
 - a. A plan for site remediation in accordance with applicable local, state and federal requirements;
 - b. Identification of all work to take place in the public right of way including but not limited to potential impacts to existing public shade trees to be coordinated early in the design process with the City Arborist; and
 - c. A community outreach program including, at a minimum, the following elements:
 - i. An identified point of e-mail and telephone contact to respond to community questions and feedback throughout the construction process;
 - ii. A system for communicating ongoing project updates, which may include a web page, e-mail list, social media presence, direct outreach, and/or other measures; and
 - iii. One or more signs posted on-site, legible from the public way, providing the information above along with a brief description of the project, the amount of commercial space, an expected completion date, and a rendering of the street-facing elevations.
13. All authorized development shall abide by all applicable City of Cambridge Ordinances, including the Noise Ordinance (Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code).

Voting in the affirmative to grant the requested Special Permits were Planning Board Members H Theodore Cohen, Mary Lydecker, Diego Macias, Tom Sieniewicz, Ashley Tan, Carolyn Zern, and Associate Member Joy Jackson, appointed by the Vice-Chair to act on the case, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board.

For the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Sieniewicz", with a stylized, cursive script.

Tom Sieniewicz, Vice-Chair

A copy of this decision PB-409 shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision has been filed on July 24, 2025 with the Office of the City Clerk, by Swaathi Joseph, duly authorized representative of the Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty days have elapsed since the above decision was filed in the office of the City Clerk and:
_____ no appeal has been filed; or

_____ an appeal has been filed within such twenty days.

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

Date: _____, City Clerk

Appeal has been dismissed or denied.

Date: _____, City Clerk

Appendix I: Approved Dimensional Chart

	Existing	Allowed or Required (max/min)	Proposed	Permitted
Lot Area (sq ft)	26,075	N/A	No Change	No Change
Total Gross Floor Area (sq ft)	118,265	2,545,000 (in CRDD)	112,600	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Residential Uses	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Non-Residential Use	118,265	1,820,000 (in CRDD)	112,600	
Total Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	4.54	N/A	4.32	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Residential Uses	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Non-Residential Uses	4.54	N/A	4.32	
Total Dwelling Units	N/A	N/A	N/A	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Total Stories Above Grade	5	N/A	No Change	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Max. Height – Residential (ft)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Max. Height – Non-Residential (ft)	69.5	N/A	No Change	
Front Yard Setback(s) (ft)	0	N/A	No Change	
Side Yard Setback(s) (ft)	0	N/A	No Change	
Rear Yard Setback(s) (ft)	0	N/A	No Change	
Total Open Space (% of Lot Area)	0	N/A	No Change	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Private Open Space	0	N/A	No Change	
Permeable Open Space	0	N/A	No Change	
Publicly Beneficial Open Space	0	N/A	No Change	
Off-Street Parking Spaces	0*	168	0*	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Long-Term Bicycle Parking	0	0	30	
Short-Term Bicycle Parking	0	0	0	
Loading Bays	2	2	2	

* Off-Street Parking is in the parking building at 55 Franklin Street.