



# 221 Mount Auburn Street

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

*Updated 8/11/25*

We understand there are a lot of questions related to the 221 Mount Auburn Street building. This document serves to help answer those questions. This is a living document and will be updated regularly.

### **General questions:**

**Q: Who is the point person for the City for any general concerns we have about this project? What about during construction?**

**A:** Kristen Kelleher, Community Relations Manager, 617-349-4825 or [kkelleher@cambridgema.gov](mailto:kkelleher@cambridgema.gov). To ensure you receive updates, please sign up under the “Contact” tab on the project website: [www.cambridgema.gov/221mtauburnst](http://www.cambridgema.gov/221mtauburnst)

Kristen Kelleher and her team will continue to lead the community outreach efforts throughout this process, including demolition.

**Q: Was the July 24 Public Meeting recorded?**

**A:** Yes. The recording was posted on the website. You can also find the July 10 presentation here: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/capitalbuildingprojects/20250710communitymeetingpresentation.pdf>

**Q: Why did you close the streets when demolition won’t start for another couple months?**

**A:** Given the information we have about the building’s structure, the City has closed access to Mt Auburn and Sparks streets in the immediate vicinity of the building to keep the public away from the building and help reduce risks.



**Q: You mentioned direct abutters a number of times. Who are you considering a direct abutter and what does that mean for other residents that live close, but aren't necessarily a direct abutter?**

**A:** Direct abutters – are residents that live adjacent to the building. When the City became involved in early June, we reached out to direct abutters to provide them with updates and answer as many of their questions as possible. While many people in the neighborhood have concerns, those residents that live the closest to the building are the most impacted. Since that time, we have established the website and hosted 2 well attended community meetings to make information available to the broader community.

As the City works through the demolition plans with the contractor, structural engineer, environmental consultant, and MassDEP, we will be developing various protocols for how we demolish this building, with public health and safety as our paramount concern. We will be developing strategies both in terms of how the demolition is planned, as well as monitoring.

At this point, it is not clear what all of the strategies will look like, but it likely won't be a one-size-fits-all approach that will vary depending on the proximity to the building. A residence that is 50 feet away from 221 Mt Auburn Street may need different strategies than a residence that is 500 feet away. We will have more details to share on this at another public meeting in early fall (September).

**Q: I live in the vicinity of 221 Mt Auburn Street and I am worried about my safety before and during the demolition of the building. Should I move out? Will the City be providing any financial assistance to neighbors before and/or during demolition due to health and safety concerns?**

**A:** The City is working with the construction team to determine how best to demolish this building and protect public health and safety. There have not been any city orders or recommendations for residents to move out. We continue to share all of the information we have on the condition of the



building, so that residents understand the situation and can make their own decisions.

**Q: Does the City require builders and developers of new construction to file a bond that covers risks associated with situations like this going forward?**

**A:** The most significant issues associated with this building go back over 60 years to the original construction. Any contractual or performance issues would be between the owner and the contractor. In addition, a Performance Bond would be highly unlikely to cover this type of situation so long after the end of construction.

**Demolition:**

**Q: Does this building really need to be demolished? Have all other options been carefully considered?**

**A:** The Condo Trust, City staff and various consultants have analyzed the building and found structural issues throughout. This situation is significantly different from a typical case where structural repairs might be focused on just one or two locations in a building.

The order of magnitude cost to repair this building is close to \$80 million. In addition to the prohibitive costs, given the structural concerns associated with the building, it is not feasible to have workers in the building performing that scale of construction.

Investigations from various firms and the City's Board of Survey have concluded that this building must be demolished to protect public health and safety. Learn more: [www.cambridgema.gov/221mtauburnst](http://www.cambridgema.gov/221mtauburnst)

**Q: What is the timeline of the demolition and any subsequent work?**

**A:** The City is proceeding expeditiously with both the legal and technical processes to support the City undertaking the demolition and addressing public health and safety concerns.



Once the City has the demolition contractor on board, we anticipate 6 to 8 weeks for engineering planning and permitting, followed by 12-16 weeks for the actual demolition. We are working toward starting demolition in late fall of this year, before snowfall. A public meeting to discuss the details of how the demolition will be undertaken and managed is expected in early fall (September).

**Q: Will the City seek restitution for demolition?**

**A:** The City will recover the costs associated with the demolition of the Riverview Condominiums. Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 143, Section 9 and Chapter 139, Section 3A empowers municipalities to collect expenses incurred in addressing public health or safety nuisances and hazards, such as this situation.

Following the completion of the demolition, the City will issue bills to all the unit owners with their pro-rata share of the costs. Additionally, a statement of claim will be filed at the Registry of Deeds, placing a lien on the properties. Any charges that remain unpaid at the time of the FY27 tax billing (Fall 2026), will be added to the real estate tax bills of each condominium. Once added, these charges will be collected as part of the regular tax bill.

**Q: What techniques will be used for the demolition? What are the structural implications for surrounding buildings? Does the demolition cause health concerns?**

**A:** The demolition will be conducted by a qualified, professional contractor who has experience in complex demolitions in dense, urban environments. The contractor will develop a demolition plan that will be permitted through MassDEP for “non-traditional demolition,” and an environmental consultant will be brought on board to address hazardous building materials like asbestos. The demolition plan typically includes misting, air monitoring, vibration monitoring and other precautionary measures. Before demolition takes place, the City will host another public meeting in early fall



(September) to discuss many more details, including the demolition plan, and to address questions and concerns.

**Q: Is there asbestos in the building and who is primarily responsible for ensuring that environmental regulations concerning asbestos and other contaminants are followed in the demolition process?**

**A:** Consistent with buildings constructed in the 1960s, there is asbestos-containing material in the building. The asbestos-containing material is generally in popcorn ceilings, floor tiles, etc.

MassDEP regulates abatement, construction and demolition projects that involve asbestos. The contractor, working with a specialized environmental consultant and city staff, will develop a demolition plan that includes measures protective of public health. MassDEP will review and permit that plan.

Before demolition takes place, the City will host another public meeting in early fall (September) to discuss how the demolition work will be managed, including asbestos, and to address questions and concerns.

**Q: Will the Bradbury Street building be demolished as well? What is the plan for that building? Are residents still living there?**

**A:** The Bradbury building is connected to Riverview by utilities and is part of the Riverview-in-Cambridge Condominium Association Trust, but does not have the same construction issues as 221 Mt Auburn St. Residents were evacuated from the Bradbury units by order of the Condo Trust in early July, as utilities were being disconnected in preparation for demolition. The City's role in demolition is limited to addressing the public safety issues associated with 221 Mt Auburn Street; we will not be demolishing the Bradbury building.

**Temporary traffic detours/closures:**

**Q: Will any of these street detours and closures appear on Google maps?**



**A:** Yes. These closures will be visible in Waze, Google Maps, and Apple Maps. This is the best way to reduce regional traffic in the immediate area.

**Q: When will the road closures be lifted?**

**A:** The City is anticipating street closures will be in place through demolition, likely through the end of the year. But this is subject to change.

**Q: Will the detours and traffic be monitored when students are back in session in September?**

**A:** The detours have been going very smoothly, with limited traffic impacts. The clear detours, extensive communication about the detours, routing through apps and low summer traffic volumes have all helped. We anticipate that when school resumes in September and folks return from vacation, we will see an uptick in traffic and are planning for this with another round of communications in late August. The focus of that outreach will be with the local schools, the bus operators, and the universities that run shuttles along this route.

**Q: Will there be police at the critical intersections daily to override lights and stop signs should the traffic warrant their presence?**

**A:** When the traffic closures and detours went into effect, the City incorporated police details to help ensure traffic was moving smoothly. As people have gotten use to the detours, we have reduced the number of police details. In late August / early September, we will increase the police details again to help minimize traffic disruptions until people readjust their commutes.

**Q: Will I still be able to access Mount Auburn Hospital during the detours and road closures?**

**A:** Yes. We are coordinating closely with the hospital to maintain access and will be posting signage to help people navigate the detours to the hospital. Mount Auburn Hospital is also conducting its own outreach efforts to inform its staff, patients and other visitors of the detours and closures. Find the



detour maps here: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/Traffic/mt,-d-,auburnstdetours/mtauburnclosuremap2025.pdf>

**Q: My street will be open to abutters only during the traffic closure. Can I still receive deliveries and can emergency vehicles still travel down my street?**

**A:** Emergency vehicles and deliveries will still have access to abutter-only areas.

**Q: With this new traffic pattern, do I need to show ID to access an abutters' only section, or is my entry allowed through trust?**

**A:** The City will post signage, which will discourage non-abutters, but no IDs will be required to access the areas.

**Q: Sparks Street and Sparks Place Abutters:** We can get in, but we can't get out – how are we supposed to exit Sparks Street?

**A:** Sparks Street will be a two-way street for abutters only in the closure area. How does this work? If someone is coming toward you and you're trying to exit out of Sparks Street, let them pass before proceeding.

**Q: Why are Willard and Channing streets turning into one-way routes during this closure?**

**A:** The City is in close coordination with Mount Auburn Hospital to ensure emergency services are able to access the hospital. Temporarily turning Channing and Willard streets into one-ways allows enough room on the streets for emergency vehicles to pass cars in case of an emergency.

**Q: On Brattle Street, traffic is dense, even before rush hour. Will you assess the timing of stoplights?**

**A:** We will continue to monitor the detours and make adjustments as necessary to mitigate the added volumes.

**Q: Will you lift the No-Left-Turn onto Appleton off Brattle Street?**

**A:** We will be keeping the same traffic patterns in place at that intersection. No, Allowing the left turns would create more delay on Brattle Street, as left turning vehicles need to yield to westbound Brattle Street



traffic, pedestrians walking along the north side of Brattle Street, as well as cyclists travelling in the 2-way separated bike lanes.

**Q: Where can I park during this closure?**

**A:** Parking spots outside of the hard closure area will, in large part, remain the same. A map will be shared at the upcoming public meeting on July 24 of parking spaces in the nearby vicinity of the traffic closures.

**Q: Are Memorial Drive improvements impacted?**

**A:** We are having conversations with DCR and evaluating alternatives so that the work is not impacted. Visit the DCR project webpage to learn more:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/memorial-drive-greenway-improvements-phase-iii>

**New development:**

**Q: What is the process and timeline for new construction?**

**A:** There is no identified timeline for the redevelopment of the site at this time. The current focus is on the demolition of the building and prioritizing public health and public safety. Once the City completes the demolition, it will be up to the owners to determine how to proceed with the site, consistent with zoning and other ordinances. The owners anticipate that it will take approximately 1 year for them to obtain the necessary legal authority to convert the property out of condominium ownership and thus be eligible to be sold/redeveloped.

**Q: How big is the site and what is the existing zoning for the parcel?**

**A:** The parcel is approximately 2 acres and the existing buildings are just over 100,000 square feet. The entire site is zoned residential.

Below is a high-level description of the 2 residential zoning districts that cover the site, however, it is important to note that there are many nuances associated with zoning and development that would be worked through as part of a redevelopment process.





- ☐ The section of the site **along Mt. Auburn Street** is zoned **Residence C-2**, which allows multifamily housing up to 7 stories above grade (85 feet).
- ☐ The **rear section** of the site is zoned **Residence C-1**, which allows multifamily housing up to 6 stories above grade (74 feet), if the housing complies with inclusionary housing requirements.
- ☐ **Inclusionary housing** means that some units are required to be affordable to low and moderate income households.
- ☐ All developments of at least 10,000 square feet or 10 units of housing must meet inclusionary housing requirements.

New projects that are larger than 75,000 square feet require special permit approval by the Planning Board, including a transportation impact study and public hearings.

