



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Date: July 28, 2017
To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner
Re: D-1461: 207 Cambridge Street
Gould House & Bakery (1857)

A new application to demolish a 3-story mixed use building was received on July 10, 2017. The applicant was notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was scheduled for August 3, 2017.

Site Description and Project Timeline

The building at 207 Cambridge Street is located on the north side of Cambridge Street opposite the Registry of Deeds. It is being redeveloped along with the adjacent bank building at the corner of Third Street. When combined, the two lots (Map 20 Lots 75 and 98) form an L-shaped lot of approximately 21,192 square feet. The property is located in a Business A district along Cambridge Street, abutting the C-1 residential district on Gore Street. This business zone allows residential and business uses, with a 1.0 FAR and 35 foot height limit for business uses. The assessed value for the land and existing buildings at 207 Cambridge Street, according to the online assessor's database, is \$1,059,400. The property was purchased by Mark Lechmere LLC in July 2015 for \$3.125,000.

The existing building is built to the sidewalk on Cambridge Street. A five bay masonry block garage behind 207 Cambridge Street was built in 1963 and is also proposed for demolition, but it is not considered significant. The building was last occupied as a constable's office but has been vacant for some time while the owner has pursued permitting approvals for a redevelopment project.

The development project has changed several times in the last year. The demolition of this building was first reviewed by the Commission in April 2016 when a design for a one-story retail store for CVS was presented. A demolition delay and a series of meetings with the East Cambridge Planning Team and a working subcommittee of the Planning Team resulted in a revised proposal for residential and retail uses in a multi-story building. That proposal included the demolition of 207 Cambridge Street with demolition and the preservation of the bank building. On December 1, 2016, the Historical Commission found the building at 207 Cambridge Street to be no longer preferably preserved within the context of the revised project design.

The residential-retail proposal required a zoning amendment to allow for street wall construction, an increase in the height limit and an to allowed gross floor area. The abutters on Gore Street opposed the zoning amendment. The Planning Board voted unanimously to not support the zoning petition. The zoning proceeded to the Ordinance Committee where a working group was formed by Councilor Carlone, but a compromise solution was not found, and the zoning petition did not leave the committee to be considered by the full council. The petition has since expired. The owner went back to the drawing board. This time, support from the abutters has been expressed for the one-story retail and CVS tenant.

The proponents have returned with a new plan that will still preserve the bank building (currently being studied for landmark designation) but proposes demolition of 207 Cambridge Street. The bank would be incorporated into a retail building with a façade of varying heights intended to break up the visual mass of the building. Presumably, the building could be divided up into multiple stores in the future if the CVS tenant were to leave.

207 Cambridge Street

This 3-story mixed use building sits directly opposite the Middlesex County South Registry of Deeds. It has a low hip roof, large frieze band, and wide eaves. The fenestration is divided into three symmetrical bays on the upper two floors and the ground floor is finished with a modern brick storefront. An enclosed stair tower was added along the west elevation. The main block of the building is 36' wide and 22' deep. At the rear is a 3-story ell measuring 20' square. The building is covered with asbestos shingle siding, but an 1875 stereopticon photo depicts the original Italianate detailing including quoins, flanking chimneys, shutters, window trim, and possibly window hoods. The masonry wall on the east side served as a fire wall for this building and the former building at 203 Cambridge Street (a 4-story brick commercial building built in 1889 and demolished 1976).



207 Cambridge Street front and west side. CHC staff photo, 2016.



207 Cambridge Street rear and west side. CHC staff photo, 2016.



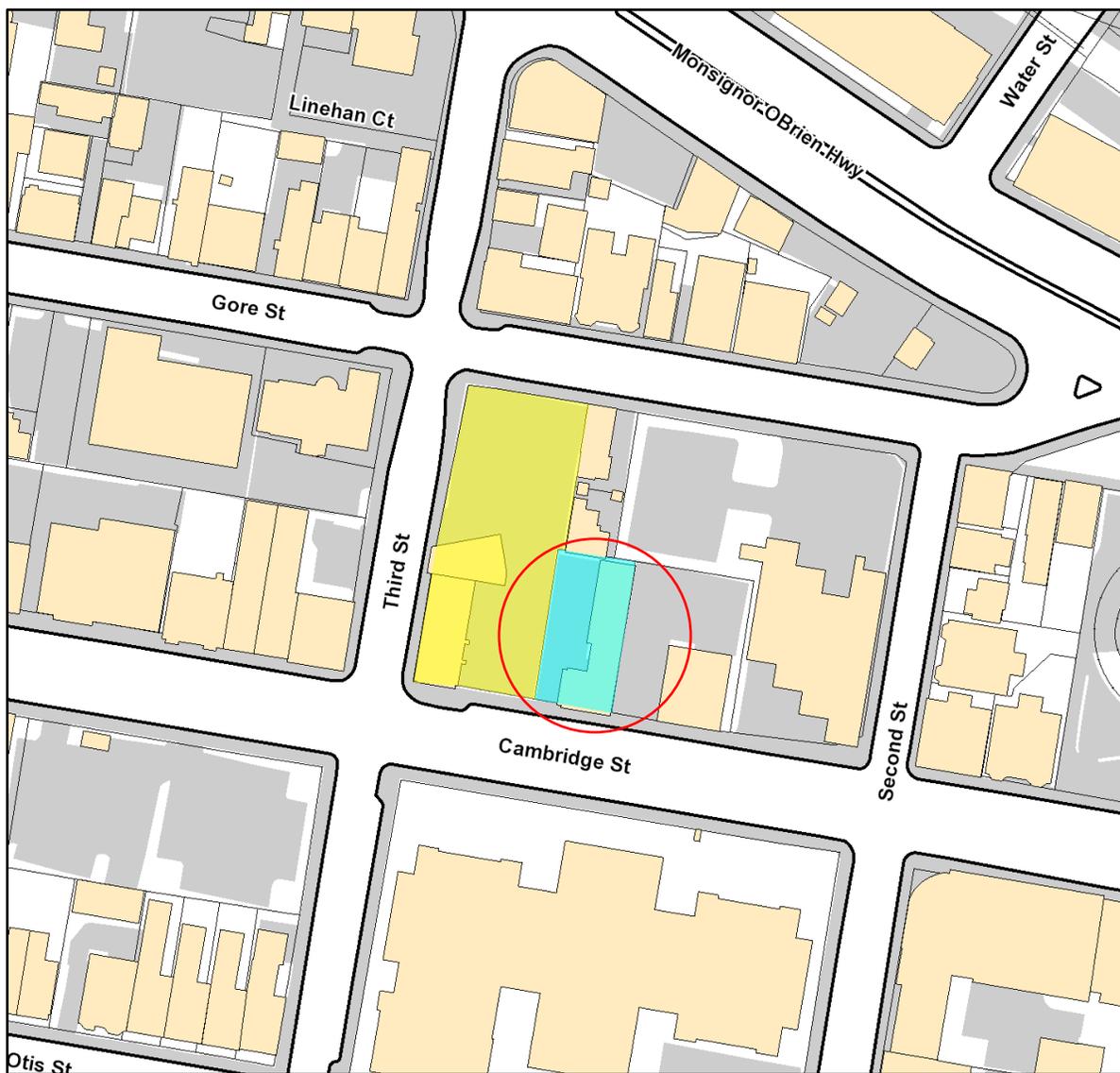
207 Cambridge St (circled), 217 Cambridge St., 221 Cambridge St., and 227 Cambridge St. (far left)



1873 Atlas detail showing bakery and residence at 209 Cambridge Street.

207 Cambridge Street was sided with asbestos shingles in 1943 and the eastern portion of the hipped roof was raised 1963 with zoning approval. The building is in average condition but its exterior character has been diluted by the white siding, replacement windows, and brick storefront. Because of the demolition of the buildings on either side it stands alone in a sea of pavement.

George Fowle built 207 Cambridge Street in 1857 for baker William Gould as both a house and a bakery. The property was sold and leased to a succession of bakers who both lived and worked at the property, including Ezra T. McIntire, Frank M. Doyle, S. H. Mitchell, James Tominy, and Antonio Goncalves. As bakery operations grew, so did the building, with the commercial bakery at the rear of the site. S.H. Mitchell built an addition in 1895. Remarkably, this building remained in its original use as a dwelling and bakery for a hundred years. Goncalves appears to have been the last baker there, and after he retired the rear portion of the building was used as an auto garage and storage. This rear structure was demolished and rebuilt as a 5-bay garage in 1971. From the 1938 to the 1960s, the property was the location of Vito Maida's Italian meat and provisions store, Vito & Sons. After the Maida's store closed, the commercial space was leased for office use by an insurance company and most recently a constable.



207 Cambridge Street (blue) and 227 Cambridge Street (yellow); Cambridge GIS, 2016

The value of parking for the court house block superseded the value of the commercial spaces in this area in the 1970s and several buildings were demolished on the north side of the block. The “missing teeth” between the bank and 207 Cambridge Street include a three-story brick building constructed for the Cambridge National Bank in 1864 at 221 Cambridge Street and a three-story Mansard social hall built for the International Order of Odd Fellows in 1862 at 215-217 Cambridge Street. These two buildings were demolished in 1971 and another four-story brick building of 1889 at 203 Cambridge was demolished in 1976. With several buildings removed from the urban context, this side of the street lost its pedestrian character and now feels disjointed.

Significance and Recommendation

The 1857 Italianate Gould House & Bakery and the 1917 Lechmere National Bank buildings is significant for its architecture as well as for its associations with the commercial and social history of East Cambridge.

The proposed redevelopment for a one-story commercial building on a larger footprint would preserve the two street elevations of the bank building but demolish 207 Cambridge Street. The staff recommends that the Commission carefully review the applicant's proposal for the replacement building and receive public testimony before making a further determination.

cc: Ranjit Singanayagam, Inspectional Services Commissioner
James J. Rafferty, Esq.