

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Wednesday, December 3, 2025, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*, Catherine Tice, Katinka Hakuta, Charles Redmon

Absent: Monika Pauli

Staff present: Allison Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public: See attached list

This meeting was held via online zoom webinar <https://tinyurl.com/MC12032025> with remote participation and was closed to in-person attendance. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform. The meeting ID was 827 2501 9731.

Commission Chair Tony Hsiao made introductions and called the meeting to order at 6:05.

MC-7445: 22-24 Myrtle Avenue, by Ori Porat. Partial demolition and construction of addition.

Ms. Crosbie gave a brief overview of the building and summarized the Commission's purview. The applicant Ori Porat made a few introductory remarks regarding the project that will have a total of four units, and introduced architect Elena Razeto who presented the project. She explained that they are building an addition in the rear and on top of the house. The existing house will be partially demolished, including the roof, and the window openings will be altered as well. The intent is to differentiate the existing portion with the new addition. Ms. Razeto showed 3-d views of the proposal and pointed out the differences between the existing house alterations and the addition. She also pointed out that there will be permeable paving, stepping stones going to the back, and a privacy fence. She pointed out that the left side yard setback is currently less than the required five feet, but they are not making it worse. She went over the interior plans and noted that about 80% of the existing floor area will be demolished.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked how much of the structure is really being maintained, because it appears to be a total demolition. Ms. Razeto replied that they are keeping the left and front sides and a portion of the rear.

Commissioner Nan Laird asked if they considered a total demolition and building a completely new structure similar to the existing one. Mr. Porat responded, saying they did a feasibility study and a total demolition presented challenges and no benefits. He pointed out that gable roofs don't provide enough livable space, and he noted that there are triple-deckers in the neighborhood with flat roofs. He also mentioned that there are ways to more fully maximize the site, but that is not his intention.

Commissioner Katinka Hakuta asked if the front doors on the drawings are the actual doors they want to install, because they look more commercial than residential. Ms. Razeto said she had noticed that too and can look at more residential-looking entrance doors.

Commissioner Catherine Tice asked for clarification on what is being retained. Ms. Razeto answered that the left and front sides will remain, but the windows will be reconfigured.

Public Questions

Jeremy Flower of 18 Myrtle Avenue asked how the upper floors are allowed to extend beyond the setback. Ms. Razeto answered that the zoning allows bays to project 3 ½ feet over the setback. Mr. Flower expressed concern about the applicant being able to see into his windows. Ms. Razeto stated that the new windows will be higher than his windows and therefore she thinks that will limit the ability to see into his home. Ms. Razeto pointed out that a couple of the windows can't move because they are for egress. Mr. Flower also asked for clarification on what a bay is. Ms. Razeto pointed out the bays on the building. Mr. Flower then asked about the potential of his foundation being impacted by the work. Ms. Razeto explained that they will have a structural engineer who will address these issues.

James Zall of 203 Pemberton Place asked for clarification on the Commission's purview over the exterior versus the interior. Mr. Hsiao explained what the Commission is charged with reviewing.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if the driveway would be permeable. Ms. Razeto answered no, just the pavers. Ms. Meyer asked what is on the top of the building. Ms. Razeto explained that there will be an elevator. Ms. Meyer asked if they considered dormers. Ms. Razeto replied that the owner wishes to have a roof deck.

Public Comments

Ms. Meyer expressed disappointment in the proposed design and that a whole new modern house would be better, and it should still incorporate some context.

Mr. Zall spoke about the changes in zoning that are intended to eliminate exclusion.

Juliane Smith of 19 Line Street expressed concern about shadows being cast on her solar panels.

Michael Russem of 28 Myrtle also expressed concern about shadows having a significant impact on his house, and he felt the overall design did not fit in with the neighborhood

Commission Comments

Commissioner Nan Laird commented that the blue portion that makes up the existing portion of the new design does not work. She said she understands the idea of triple-deckers as the inspiration for the design, but right now it looks like a hospital around the remaining structure.

Ms. Tice commented that while she is not looking for a recreation of a 19th-century building, she would like to see actual double-hung windows. She concurred with Ms. Laird in that there is an incongruity of the style and form of the proposed design. She suggested rethinking how these two differing pieces are integrated.

Commissioner Charles Redmon stated that what is proposed is in conflict with the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Hsiao commented that the attempt to hold onto any vestiges of the remaining house isn't working, that the design suffers as a result of trying to mitigate between multiple competing interests. He pointed out that triple-deckers have a consistency, an integral approach. He recommended creating a consistent look for the whole building and reorganizing the entire façade; there are too many things going on right now.

Mr. Hsiao asked Mr. Porat if he was willing to continue the meeting to return with revisions addressing the concerns brought up by the commission. Mr. Porat agreed.

MC-7446: 406 Broadway, by S&J Broadway RE LLC. Demolish structure and construct 6-story building.

Ms. Crosbie gave a brief introduction to the case. The architect, Geoff Farrell, explained that the project has challenges, it's located on a very prominently visible corner, and with the reduced required setbacks and the 6 stories, it is a very visible, large building. He presented the proposed design, including bay windows, balconies, and several cladding types that will visually break up the massing. He noted that it will be a complete demolition of the existing building because they found that they can't reuse any portion of the structure, and it wouldn't meet the primary goal of increased housing density. There will be 34 units, including studios, 1 and 2-bedroom units, 2 of which will be accessible and 7 will be inclusionary. He referred to other multi-family buildings in the vicinity as a precedent. He then presented the landscape plan and pointed out the proposed new retaining wall system, which will incorporate plantings. All units will have access to a balcony or outdoor space. He also showed the entrance located at the corner of the building, the roof deck, streetscape elevations, and two types of balconies. He also pointed out that there will be no parking, as it is no longer required.

Commission Questions

Ms. Hakuta asked about the main entrance, noting that it looks hidden. Mr. Farrell answered that they didn't want to create a grand, imposing entrance; the intent is to maintain a human scale, and they want to bring people to the corner, where there's an overhang and a vestibule area when you enter. Ms. Hakuta asked about the basement door on Broadway, wondering if people would see that as the entrance. Mr. Farrell said that the basement access is utilitarian; they are using the existing curb cut to access the basement for trash and bicycle drop-off. They intend to make this entry less obvious.

Mr. Hsiao asked about the material on the terraced retaining walls. Mr. Farrell answered that they are using a stacked block wall, but haven't finalized it, and it will be finished with a stone material. Mr. Hsiao then asked about the exterior cladding. Mr. Farrell said they are proposing several types, including aluminum panels that look like wood, Hardieplank lap siding, a Hardie fiber cement panel system, and brick in several colors.

Ms. Tice asked for clarification on the dark black horizontal cladding. Mr. Farrell confirmed those panels are aluminum. Ms. Tice asked about heat retention in the building. Mr. Farrell answered that the glazing will comply with the Stretch code, they will all be very efficient and reduce solar heat gain. He mentioned the walls will be well-insulated and waterproofed. Ms. Tice asked for additional clarification on cladding materials.

Ms. Laird asked about the retaining walls in front. Mr. Farrell explained the grading and the tiered wall system with landscaping. Regarding the basement entry, Mr. Farrell pointed out that two means of egress are required.

Public Questions

James Williamson of 32 Churchill Street asked about the square footage of the affordable units. Mr. Farrell answered that there will be 7 units of varying sizes, but he didn't know the total square footage.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about the floor-to-ceiling windows, the balconies, and railings. Mr. Farrell explained that the Juliet balconies have metal railings, and the other balconies will have glass railings. He then showed elevations.

Barbara Hirsch of 44 Dana Street asked about the top floor and roof, and if there was any consideration of parking. Mr. Farrell replied that on the roof there will be a head house for the elevator and an egress stair, and a common area for residents. Regarding parking, Mr. Farrell reiterated that parking is no longer required by the City, and public transportation is available on Broadway.

Public Comments

Mr. Williamson stated it's very disappointing that a building of this scale is allowed here and noted that the public transportation is not as great as people try to say it is. He pointed out that it should only be four stories and that right now the building design is too busy.

Ms. Meyer stated that there are way too many materials on the exterior; it really needs to be simplified.

Mr. Ted McGlone of 4 Ellsworth Avenue stated that this is an atrocity. Although legal, it is creating too much density and will worsen the parking situation.

Commission Comments

Given time constraints that evening, Mr. Hsiao asked the applicant to continue the meeting.

The applicant agreed to continue the hearing.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present December 3, 2025

Panelists:

Ori Porat, owner
Elena Razeto, architect
Geoff Farrell, architect
Sam and Sunny Zuo, owners

22-24 Myrtle Avenue

Joe The Architect
406 Broadway

Attendees:

Kevin F. Branley
Sarah Allison
John Cunha
Gw S
Marilee Meyer
Brian Branley
Lacey McCafferty
Michael Russem
Julie Baine
Eric Pham
Daniel Salomon
Elisa Flower
Nancy Seidman
Suzanne Lee
John Cornelio
Debby Knight
Ted McGlone
Debra Shapiro
Jeremy Flower
Juliann Smith
Ingrid Shuttleworth
Felix Rieper
James Stathis
Martin Wartak
James Zall
John Pitkin
Helen Walker
Marc Levy
Catiana jp
James Williamson

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28 Myrtle Avenue
28 Myrtle Avenue
95 Prescott St
6 Cleveland St
18 Myrtle Ave
9 Cleveland St
9 Goodman Road
407 Broadway
380 Broadway
3 Ellsworth Ave
404A Broadway
18 Myrtle Ave
19 Line Street
1572 Massachusetts Ave., #42
44 Dana Street # 2
4 Ellery Square
23 Myrtle Avenue
203 pemberton st
18 Fayette st
43 Linnaean Street
3 Potter Park #1
City of Cambridge
Churchill St