



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: Harvard Square Advisory Committee

Date: October 8, 2021

Re: **98 Winthrop Street – Cannabis Retail Store Special Permit**

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

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Deputy Director
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Overview

The Harvard Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on Thursday, September 30, 2021 to discuss the application by Western Front, LLC for a Cannabis Retail Store special permit. The meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions of Section 20.50 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in advance of the applicant’s request for a special permit from the Planning Board. Committee members present were Allison Crosbie, Lauren Curry, Jemel Derbali, Frank Kramer, Kari Kuelzer, Sara Li, Steven Ng, Alexandra Offiong, Matt Simitis, and Nicola Williams. After discussion, the Committee decided unanimously to forward a report to the Planning Board with a positive recommendation.

Proposal Description

The applicant proposes to operate a Cannabis Retail Store in the vacant retail space in the rear of 98 Winthrop Street. This use requires a Planning Board special permit per Section 11.800 of the Zoning Ordinance. The applicant does not propose to make any physical alterations to the building besides installing signage and lighting. The other use located in the building, The Red House restaurant, will continue operation.

Committee Comments

Members of the Committee were overwhelmingly supportive of the applicant’s proposal. They appreciated the thorough and thoughtful application, which demonstrated a respect for both neighbors and the historic building. They also appreciated that the application responded to community concerns, especially regarding the stewardship of Winthrop Park.

Committee members found that the proposed use was appropriate for the site because the building had already been renovated for a similar use. One member had concerns about how late the store would be open but was confident that the applicant would modify their business hours as needed. Other committee members noted that more extensive business hours could reduce queuing and that all Cannabis Retail Stores should be allowed to be open for the same hours. Committee members also liked the applicant’s community norms agreement and thought that it could be repurposed in some way for other applicants.

Given the Committee's discussion, a motion was made and seconded to forward a report to the Planning Board with a recommendation that it grant the requested special permit. Committee members offered the applicant their heartfelt support and recognized the lifetime accomplishments of the business owners. All 10 members present voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted for the Committee,

Sarah Scott

Associate Zoning Planner

Community Development Department