

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No: PB#130

Address: 1380 Massachusetts Avenue, 1384-1392 Massachusetts Avenue, 6-8 and 10-14 John F. Kennedy Street

Owner: Cambridge Savings Bank

Applicant: Cambridge Savings Bank, 1374 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138

Application Date: July 24, 1997

Public Hearing: September 30, 1997

Planning Board Decision: October 7, 1997

Date of Filing Decision: October 20, 1997

Application: Special Permit for relief from the parking and loading requirements, Section 11.54.4. in the Harvard Square Overlay District.

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 the 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 Office of the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative to the Planning Board

For more information regarding this special permit, please contact Liza Paden at the Community Development Department, voice: 349-4647; TYY: 349-4621, email lpaden@ci.cambridge.ma.us

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CAMBRIDGE MA.

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Application

The special permit application to renovate the existing building and for some new construction was filed on July 24, 1997. It included the special permit application form, filing fee calculation; CDD certification; dimensional form; Ownership Certificate; project narrative; and site photographs.

Special Permit Plans were submitted July 24, 1997, various scales; site plan, basement & ground floor plans; second floor & third floor; roof mechanical and roof plan; and elevation; drawn by Symmes, Maini & McKee Associates.

Other Documents Submitted

Harvard Square Advisory Committee Report from 9/18/97 review.

Public Hearing

The Public Hearing was held on September 30, 1997. The architect, presented the history of the building and the development of the individual blocks and how this renovation would meet the requirements of the Certificate of Appropriateness issued by the Historical Commission. The basement, first floor, and second floor will be used for retail and the third floor will be occupied by the Cambridge Savings Bank unless a retail tenant is found to want the space.

There was a discussion of the elevations and the ground floor uses. The criteria of section 11.54.4 was discussed and applied to the proposal. The applicant is seeking a waiver of the off street loading facility. The owner proposed to limit the impacts through tenant leases which will restrict the hours of operation and the location of the loading operations. There will be a dedicated trash room with an elevator to service the area as well as a trash compactor. The alley will be gated and accessible at this time only for emergencies. The design will be such that future access may be possible.

There was discussion from the public regarding the type of tenants, specifically the Tasty Restaurant. There were many concerns about the preservation of that particular restaurant. The owners have committed to discussions with the restaurant owner, but a lease has not been signed yet.

The Board reviewed the Harvard Square Advisory Committee Report which was satisfied that the guidelines were being met.

The Board voted to have the CDD staff draft a decision granting the special permit waiver.

At the general business portion of the October 7, 1997 meeting the Planning Board voted to grant the special permit, and to accept the draft decision as follows.

Findings

After review of the application documents and information provided at the public hearing the Planning Board makes the following findings.

a. Compliance with the general purposes of the Harvard Square Overlay District (Section 11.52)

The proposal complies with the general purposes of the Harvard Square Overlay District.

1. Preserve and enhance the District's functional environment and visual character.

The development preserves very important historic structures in the heart of Harvard Square, and only marginally changes the view of this site (through rehabilitation and restoration) as it has been experienced for decades by those who inhabit the Square. By retaining the public facade of three historic structures, by constructing less gross floor area than allowed on the site, and by

keeping the new construction at a height considerably less than permitted as of right, the proposal assures that the public space at the very center of Harvard Square will not be dominated by uniformly tall and dense commercial structures.

2. Mitigate the functional impacts on residential neighborhoods.

The site is well removed from any residential neighborhood as that term is used in the Harvard Square Development Guidelines.

3. Maintain a diversity of development, open space patterns, and building scale.

Retention of the most visible parts of a series of historic structures fronting directly onto Harvard Square and designing new construction so that it is substantially invisible from public streets assures that a significant aspect of the historic, smaller scale development pattern that is frequently lost when modern construction occurs will remain in Harvard Square.

b. Compliance with the general development guidelines outlined in Harvard Square Development Guidelines

The proposal complies with the general development guidelines established for Harvard Square.

1. Retention and upgrading of the existing inventory of old buildings.

Several very significant and prominent historic structures are retained and restored. The structures have been given city landmark status by the Cambridge City Council.

2. Respect for the diversity of building form and scale.

In terms of scale, materials, and character the proposal will serve this objective directly. The wooden and brick facades will be restored and the modest scale of the existing buildings will be matched by the new construction. There will be careful attention to detail, both historic and contemporary, including the design and maintenance of the alleyway system that will border the side and rear of the development.

3. Expansion of a high quality public environment.

The development will enhance the visual environment of the most prominent public space in Harvard Square through the restoration of building facades that have been long neglected and that have evolved over the years into a hodgepodge of alterations and modifications. The site, formerly the location of a prominent billboard and currently the location of large signs significantly out of conformance with the requirements of the current sign ordinance, will be restored in a way that better reflects the current urban design objectives generally, and of the sign ordinance specifically.

4. Expansion of the network of pedestrian walkways.

While they are not planned to be open at this time, the proposal upgrades and retains a series of interconnecting passageways through this block that might be available for public passage in the future, and that will in part of their length immediately serve the general public as access to the office portion of the new building.

5. Expansion of residential living within the Square.

No housing is proposed

6. Creative solutions to the Square's parking problems.

While the project will not provide any parking, it is located directly adjacent to the main entry to bus and rapid transit facilities serving all of Harvard Square and providing direct access to downtown Boston and the northwestern suburbs via Alewife Station.

c. Compliance with the specific guidelines for the *Harvard Square - Massachusetts Avenue* subdistrict.

The guidelines do not anticipate or encourage substantial new construction within this district but any construction is urged to respect the eclectic character of the existing pattern of building. This proposal does that most directly by little changing, and then only through rehabilitation and restoration, a cluster of buildings that are major element in that eclectic assemblage of buildings.

d. Compliance with criteria for the granting of a Special Permit to waive the parking and loading requirements [Section 11.54.4 (b)].

1. The lot is sufficiently small to contribute to a pattern of small scale new structures and the retention of existing structures.

The lot is 12,359 square feet in area and has been in this configuration for generations. The proposed development retains and enhances the perception of the site as three separate buildings, and by not approaching either the height or gross floor area permitted on the site, retains the sense of modest scale that has long characterized this site.

2. The waiver will result in a more appropriate design for its location and the neighborhood.

A proposal that would accommodate all parking and loading required would likely result in the destruction of much of the fabric of the old buildings and disrupt the public street and sidewalk with a very intrusive loading facility that could not be integrated in the historic preservation design that is proposed.

3. No National Register or contributing building is demolished, or had been demolished in the preceding five (5) years.

The Cambridge Historical Commission has approved the proposal and will regulate and control any changes to the structures as city landmarks. The demolition of those portions of the historic structures behind the public facades has been approved by the Commission. The remaining portions of the historic structures have been given city landmark status.

4. An in lieu payment is made or the total gross floor area is 80% or less of that which is permitted.

At 37,632 square feet, the proposed development is less than 80% of the 49,436 square feet allowed on the lot in the Business B district.

e. Compliance with the general criteria for issuance of a Special Permit.

1. The requirements of the Ordinance can be met.

The criteria for the issuance of the required special permit under the provisions of the Harvard Square Overlay District have been met.

2. Traffic patterns will not cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in the established neighborhood character.

The waiver of parking is reasonable and logical, as the site sits at the main entrance to bus and rapid transit service to the entire region. At this congested heart of Harvard Square, the provision of on site parking would likely cause increased congestion and some hazard to pedestrian as well as vehicular movement; the present development has not been served by accessory parking.

Physically accommodating a service by would likely also be more problematic at this congested location than continuing the current practice, as proposed by the applicants, of servicing the building from the loading zone now abutting the site on JFK Street.

Furthermore, the applicant has indicated a willingness to impose requirements in individual tenant leases limiting the hours of the delivery of goods to the site, to ensure the least disruption to the normal activities in the Square.

3. Continued operation or development of adjacent uses will not be adversely affected.

Adjacent uses will generally be enhanced by the retention of the small scale of the existing development and by the upgrading of building facades and the alleyways that border the site. More complete development of the site for active retail uses is a benefit to the district.

4. No nuisance or hazard will be created to the detriment of the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants or the citizens of the City.

The one area of possible disruption, i.e. deliveries to the site, can be adequately handled by management of deliveries by the owner and individual tenants and by continuing to use on-street loading as has been the custom for this site for many years. A deteriorating historic structure will be restored or rehabilitated. Trash management will be greatly improved to the benefit of abutters and the general public.

5. The use will not impair the integrity of the district or adjoining districts or derogate from the intent or purposes of the Ordinance.

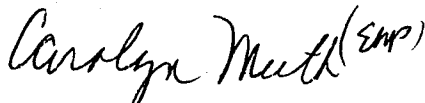
To a substantial degree the proposal advances the major objectives of the Harvard Square Overlay District.

Decision

Based on review of the application documents, testimony presented at the public hearing, and based on the findings set forth, the Planning Board **GRANTS** the special permit to waive parking and loading requirements in the Harvard Square Overlay District. Section 11.54.4 b provided the final plans submitted to the Superintendent of Buildings are in substantial compliance with the above referenced application documents dated July 24, 1997.

Voting to grant the permit were: F. Darwin, S. Lewis, C. Mieth, H. Salemme, A. Cohn, and H. Russell, constituting at least two thirds of the membership of the Board.

For the Planning Board,



Carolyn Mieth, Vice Chair

A copy of this decision 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 filed with the Office of the City Clerk on, **10/20/97** by Elizabeth M. Paden, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have likewise been filed with the City Clerk on such date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of this decision.

No appeal has been filed.

DATE: