



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139.

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No: PB #193
Address: 449 Broadway
Zoning: Residence C-3 and Open Space
Owners: City of Cambridge, City Manager, City Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139
Applicants: Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139
Application Date: April 20, 2004
Public Hearing: May 4, 2004
Decision: June 15, 2004
Filing of Decision: August 2, 2004

2004 AUG - 2 P 6: 24
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CITY HALL, MASSACHUSETTS

Application: Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Footnote 54 to the Table of Use Regulations – Section 4.40.

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 of the Planning Board:

For further information concerning this decision, please call Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, TTY: 617-349-4621, lpaden@Cambridgema.gov.

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Application Documents Submitted

1. Special Permit Application, including narrative; plans, elevations, photographs; deed; executive summary of the traffic study; Certificate of Appropriateness, Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District; transmittal from the State Historic Preservation Office. Filed with the City Clerk on April 20, 2004.
2. *Cambridge Public Library, Main Library Expansion Project, Zoning Analysis*, dated April 8, 2004, by the Sullivan Code Group.
3. Plans entitled: *Cambridge Public Library, Main Library – Addition and Renovations; Design Development Pricing Set*, dated March 19, 2004, volume 1; William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc.; various scales.

Supplemental Materials Submitted

1. Document submitted to the Planning Board by Allen Burne entitled *Answers to Questions from the May 4th Planning Board Hearing re: Library Design*, containing answers to eleven questions, description of zoning relief, shadow study, massing diagram, massing summary, open space site diagram, proposed site plan with illustration locations noted, perspective of proposed play area, analysis of building separation, perspective of pedestrian walkway – east approach, perspective of pedestrian walkway – west approach
2. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Lester Barber dated June 8, 2004 outlining the relief sought and the criteria upon which a decision is to be based.

Other Documents

1. Letter to the Planning Board from mayor Michael Sullivan dated April 26, 2004.
2. Memo to the Planning Board from Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager, dated April 27, 2004.
3. Letter to the Planning Board from William F Schreiber dated April 27, 2004.
4. Comments of Dick Dionne to the Planning Board dated May 4, 2004.
5. Multiple page (14) petition presented to the Planning Board on May 4, 2004
6. Letter to the Planning Board from David Szlag et al dated June 11, 2004.
7. Letter by FAX to the Planning Board from John Pitkin dated June 11, 2004.
8. Letter to the Planning Board from Joan Pickett, President of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association, dated June 12, 2004.

Application The applicant requests a Special Permit from the Planning Board pursuant to the provisions of Footnote 54 – Section 4.40 of the Zoning Ordinance for the construction of a municipal library in Residence C-3 and Open Space zoning districts.

Findings

After review of the application documents and other documents submitted to the Board, testimony taken at the public hearing, and review and consideration of the applicable special permit criteria, the Board makes the following findings.

1. General Findings

a. The Board finds that the library addition as designed and sited is appropriate to its location and advances the general public interest to provide necessary library services in a suitable location. The library use is permitted as of right at this location within both of the zoning districts on the Zoning Map applicable to the site.

Concern has been expressed about the location of the facility in an Open Space zoning district and in association with the mixed use campus that houses the high school, main branch of the library, and open space and recreational facilities. It is the Board's view that the multiple reasons for locating the facility at this location are compelling and that any perceived harm to the open space is minimal and far outweighed by the enhanced library services that will accrue from the construction of the library addition and by improvements to be made to the open space facility itself.

(i) After an exhaustive search, it was the determination of the Cambridge City Council that this was the best location for the establishment of a modern library facility for the entire City of Cambridge.

(ii) This central location allows the continued use of the existing historic library structure in a newly restored state, reinforces the natural alliance between the main city library and the city high school, and enhances the value of the adjacent open space as a citywide as well as a neighborhood recreational resource.

(iii) Extraordinary efforts have been made to minimize any impact on the open space, including location of substantial elements of the building's program underground to minimize the area of the building's footprint and restriction of that footprint to an area behind the façade of the historic structure on an area of land that currently functions primarily as a surface parking lot for the existing library facility.

(iv) Several initiatives associated with the development of the library addition will actually enhance the use of the open space: the surface parking lot and the intrusive access drive to it will be eliminated, allowing the entire open space area to be merged and to be functionally and visually integrated; the physical barrier in the form of a concrete wall between the high school and the open space in front of the library will be eliminated, allowing better integration of those two activities; a 1967 addition to the historic library will be demolished to create more open space adjacent to both the library and the high school.

The location and design of the new library addition has undergone exhaustive study and analysis, has been subject to extraordinary public scrutiny through both the City Council process and through the work of the Library Design Advisory Committee. All the public interests have been considered, weighed, and balanced comprehensively. The Board finds the current proposal to be a reasonable and worthy outcome of that process.

b. The aspects of the project that require relief, whether dimensionally or procedurally, are logical responses to the library program, the commitment to minimally impact the existing open space abutting the library, and to limitations imposed by the somewhat arbitrary delineation of the Open Space/Residence C-3 boundary line.

(i) The boundaries of the Open Space district within which a portion of the library is located, and from which regulations most of the zoning relief must be sought, were defined in 1997 by the boundary lines of an old assessor's parcel that had no particular relationship to the actual area of the open space it was meant to protect. In addition to the parking lot and tennis courts the Open Space district encompasses a significant portion of the High School field house and all of the accessory parking serving the school. The library addition will be located in that portion of the Open Space district that is even now dominated by non-recreational facilities.

(ii) The additional height proposed (from 35 to 64 feet in the Open Space district) is reasonable to permit construction of the library program on as little of the open area available at the site as possible. The library is a permitted use even in the open space district and probably could be constructed without any discretionary permit if it were allowed to spread broadly across that open space area known as Joan Lorenz Park. At 64 feet the library building can be confined to a small footprint within the surface parking lot and the adjacent landscaped pathway area, without intruding into the open space itself. At 64 feet the library would still be shorter than the 77 feet that is the maximum height of the high school building and the 120 foot height allowed in the Residence C-3 district.

(iii) The Gross Floor Area proposed is well within the limits allowed on the site as a whole and is again concentrated in that portion of the Open Space district that is even now dominated by the high school facilities.

(iv) The 13 foot distance at one point between the proposed library addition and the high school field house is adequate to meet all safety needs of both the library and the high school and to allow continued public passage from Joan Lorenz Park to Cambridge Street in a safe and pleasant way for neighborhood residents (and without denying sunlight to school facilities because those walls are essentially windowless at this location). This "pinch point" is also of minimal concern given that the two buildings are not parallel, and the space between them quickly opens wide as one walks beyond that point. The distance required between the buildings is also artificially increased because the height of the school building is taken as the maximum height that occurs on that portion of the building well away from the library addition, near Felton Street.

(v) The requested reduction in provided parking is based on an analysis of the demand generated by the library patrons and staff; given the cost of constructing that parking underground and the city policy to encourage non-auto travel, supplying only the minimum necessary is reasonable and prudent.

(vi) The height of the loading bay is reasonable for the same reason; the 11 feet provided is all that is needed to accommodate the van that delivers books to the facility. Attempting to meet the 14-foot requirements would serve no practical purpose and would greatly increase the cost of the underground parking facility.

(vii) The procedural and substantive requirements of both the Project Review Special Permit and the Non-Open Space Uses in Open Space Districts provisions have been fully met with the long public process preceding this application and with the official hearing held as required for processing any special permit request.

2. Conformance to the General criteria for the Issuance of Special Permits Contained in Section 10.40 of the Zoning Ordinance

A special permit will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except where the particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because of the following.

a. The requirements of the Ordinance cannot be met.

With the granting of this special permit all requirements of the Zoning Ordinance will be met.

b. Traffic generated or patterns of access and egress will cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character.

An extensive traffic study has been undertaken and a Parking and Transportation Demand Management Plan developed for the library. No nuisance or hazard will be created with the new construction and the modest increase in additional parking spaces to be provided on site will not result in a substantial change in the established neighborhood character. In addition, traffic calming initiatives on abutting streets will be undertaken to improve pedestrian circulation and safety in the neighborhood.

c. The continued operation of, or development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance will be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use.

Neither the high school nor Joan Lorenz Park will be adversely affected by the authorized addition. Many of the site improvements proposed will enhance the setting of the high school and will allow a better integration of its landscape and circulation patterns with the adjacent open space facilities. Elimination of the parking lot service driveway that now divides the open space, demolition of the concrete wall between the open space in front of the library park and the high school, demolition of the 1967 children's library wing, and reworking of the pedestrian circulation system throughout the area, among other actions, will result in an enhanced public environment that will serve high school students, patrons of the library, and neighborhood users of the library and Joan Lorenz Park open space areas.

The new addition will undoubtedly present a more substantial building face to the open space than has been the case with the current library or the field house wing of the High School. Nevertheless, the library addition is consistent with the scale of the buildings within the sprawling high school campus. The addition serves more to complete and regularize the entire complex of buildings on the site than it does to intrude upon the amenities of the open space areas.

d. Nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City.

No nuisance or hazard will be created to the detriment of the health, safety, or welfare of the occupants of either the high school or the library or of the residents in the abutting neighborhood.

e. For other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or the adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance.

The library addition will not impair the integrity of either the Open Space or Residence C-3 districts or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of the Ordinance.

3. Conformance with Urban Design Findings required in Section 19.30 – Citywide Urban Design Objectives

a. Responsive to the existing or the anticipated pattern of development.

The addition is carefully inserted into an already existing assemblage of large institutional buildings, at a location that is presently dominated by an at grade parking lot and the large expanse of windowless wall on the field house. The addition regularizes, unites and completes what is now a disparate, unrelated series of buildings and provides for the first time a coherent and appealing backdrop to the open space lying in front of it.

b. Pedestrian and bicycle friendly development.

All pedestrian movements possible on the entire site now will be possible after completion of the addition. More importantly, pedestrian circulation between and among all the functions and activities hosted on the site will be greatly enhanced through the elimination of existing physical barriers that now interfere with pedestrian movement. Bicycle movements and storage will be amply accommodated.

c. Building and site design mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.

Joan Lorenz Park is an important amenity for the neighborhood that abuts and surrounds the library site. Every effort has been made to ensure that the new construction will not permanently detract from that resource. Much of the relief sought through this special permit is prompted by a desire to minimize the physical impact of the new addition on the open space by restricting the building's footprint and locating it tightly against already existing buildings on the site.

Great expense has been added to the cost of construction of the library addition (with much of the building's functions located below ground, including the entire accessory parking and loading activities) in order to ensure that after the completion of construction all open space amenities on the site are held harmless or significantly enhanced.

d. Impact on the City of Cambridge infrastructure, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system and sewer

There will be no significant negative impact on the city infrastructure serving the site.

e. New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.

Locating the main library at Broadway continues a long tradition. School and library functions have been sited here for more than a century. Retaining a significant library function in Mid Cambridge continues that tradition both operationally and as a physical symbol of the City's commitment to educational opportunities.

f. Expansion of housing inventory.

No housing will be created

g. Open space enhancement and expansion.

The impact of the new library construction on open space resources at the site has been the center of concern for those who have not enthusiastically supported the project. The Board finds that in straightforward physical terms a strong case can be made that the open space will in the end be expanded and enhanced: the intrusion of the access drive to an at grade parking lot will be eliminated; the wall separating the high school entry plaza from the open space in front of the library will be eliminated; open space will replace the 1967 children's wing of the library, which will be demolished; circulation patterns will be rethought and realigned to take advantage of new possibilities; and the tot lot will be retained but rebuilt.

The new library wing will undoubtedly have a physical presence on the open space that the small historic library and the recessive backside of the field house do not now have. However, in cities and dense urban environments, the juxtaposition of open spaces and buildings is neither an unusual nor necessarily negative circumstance. While reasonable people may disagree as to the subjective impact of such a large new building on the feel and ambience of the open space for those who will use it, the Board finds that the design of the library addition has been sensitive to this urban design challenge. The open space in both objective and subjective ways has been carefully and sensitively treated in the design process and in the final design that is the subject of this special permit. In the end the many positive community interests that are being served by the creation of a beautifully renovated historic library structure carefully connected to a contemporary addition at this location more than compensate for what the Board finds to be minimal impact on the open space resources surrounding it.

4. Required Findings in Footnote 54 Where the Library is Located in an Open Space District.

a. There is no substantial reduction in the recreational and/or open space use, excluding parking areas and roadways.

No core recreational or open space functions or uses are being eliminated or reduced as a result of the construction of the library addition. Much of the portion of the building footprint in the Open Space District is located on the on grade parking lot. Portions of

abutting walkways and landscaped areas will also be occupied by the new building. The walkway that now runs between the parking lot and existing library building and the High School will be displaced by the new building but the function will continue in a slightly altered location.

The new entry to the underground parking facility will displace about 4,200 square feet of the open space in front of the library.

b. Where there is a finding of substantial reduction, there is an assurance by the City Manager that the reduction will be offset by increased recreational and/or open space uses at another location.

However the loss of open space is characterized, there will be a net increase in open space area on the entire site after construction of the addition. Much of that increase is as a result of elimination of the surface parking lot and the access drive to it from Broadway and an expansion of landscaping and sitting areas adjacent to the library where the 1967 addition will be demolished. Circa 10,000 square feet of landscaped area will be lost to the construction while almost 15,000 square feet will be added for a net gain of about 4,500 square feet. Furthermore, the walkway between the library and the high school will be relocated and restored.

Decision

Based on a review of the application documents, comments made at the public hearings, and based on the above findings, the Planning Board **GRANTS** by Special Permit all relief necessary to permit the construction of the library addition described in the above referenced documents, as permitted in Footnote 54 – Section 4.40 of the Zoning Ordinance, subject to the following conditions and limitations.

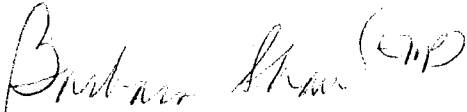
1. All use and building construction for which a building permit is issued shall be in substantial conformance with the plans and application documents submitted to the Planning Board as referenced above. Appendix I summarizes the dimensional features of the Project as presented to the Board in the application documents.

It is understood by the Planning Board that the site plan and landscaping elements of the plan as submitted in the application documents, including the final location of the tot lot, will be subject to further refinement and community review; such refinements shall be permitted within the scope of this special permit decision as long as the general quantities and distribution of open space and landscaping indicated, the general location of the garage entry ramp, and the general location of the pedestrian path behind the library are reflected in the final plans.

2. The Planning Board leaves to the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District approval of the final details of the library building and any associated landscape improvements within its jurisdiction.

Voting in the affirmative to grant the Special Permit were P. Winters, T. Anninger, H. Russell, T. Carpenter, and B Shaw, full members of the Board, and J. Hrabchak and K. Benjamin, associate members appointed by the Chair to act on this decision.

For the Planning Board,



Barbara Shaw, Chair

A copy of this decision #193 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 August 2, 2004, By Elizabeth M. Paden, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of the decision.
No appeal has been filed.

DATE:

City Clerk City of Cambridge