



February 24, 2021

Catherine Preston Connolly, Chair
Cambridge Planning Board
344 Broadway,
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Re: Special Permit #241: Saint James Place Retail/Office Leasing

Dear Chair Connolly,

I am writing with an update regarding the leasing of storefront space at the Saint James Church redevelopment project at 1991 Mass. Ave, (Special Permit #241).

We have signed a lease with the Army Corps of Engineers for approximately 1,100 square feet of storefront space facing Mass. Ave. The space would be used as recruitment center for the armed forces.

We have applied for a Building Permit for the fit out of the space. Inspectional Services and the Community Development Department have determined that the recruitment center is more of an “office” use than a “retail” use, so they have requested that we notify the Planning Board, since our Special Permit describes the storefront space as “retail”. The project is in the Business A-2 Zone and the Mass. Ave. Overlay District, so both office and retail are allowed uses under Cambridge Zoning. The Saint James project, as approved, already has church offices facing Mass. Ave, (right next to the proposed recruitment center space), and we have an additional 800 square feet of storefront available to lease, also facing Mass. Ave.

Essentially, these recruitment centers serve as community outreach for the Armed Forces. Clare Nawrocki, the Army Corps leasing manager, offered the following description of how sites are selected and how they function in the community:



“We look for retail space because the recruiting program wants to be visible within the communities. They want the ability for someone walking along the street that sees the store and thinks “Hmm, I might be interested in joining a military service” and walks in for more information. However the space is used more like an office. They will not be selling a product and no money transactions will be taking place. We plan on having about 5 recruiters located at this office. However the chance that all 5 are in the office at the same time is very, very low. The recruiters go out to high schools and colleges to promote the benefits of joining their service. Candidates that visit the office will have scheduled appointments. Appointments for candidates are comprised of interviews, to take aptitude tests and to complete paperwork. Once the candidate is approved to join the service, they are provided with the location of their assignment. Their assigned base for training will be somewhere else within the US and not in Cambridge.”

It is critical to the project that we move forward with this lease. It has been difficult, (bordering on impossible) to find a tenant for the space during the pandemic, so we feel lucky to find a solid tenant to activate this large empty storefront. We hope that the Planning Board can approve this minor change of use, since it is an allowed use under Cambridge Zoning.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, or if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Terzis', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Phil Terzis
VP of Development
Acorn Holdings LLC
Email: pterzis@acornh.com
Phone: 617-433-9700 ext. 202