



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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To: Planning Board
From: Jeff Roberts, Land Use and Zoning Planner
Suzannah Bigolin, Urban Design Planner
Date: February 13, 2015
Re: **PB #296, Proposed Addition to 57 JFK Street**

This memo contains an overview of the proposed development at 57 JFK Street, the special permits being requested, and comments related to planning, zoning and urban design. Comments related to parking are provided in a memo from the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TPT) under separate cover and comments from the staff of the Cambridge Historical Commission are also attached.

Summary of Proposal

The proposed project is a three-story, approximately 18,000 square-foot addition to an existing building that contains retail stores and restaurants in an atrium-style building. The addition would be for office use. The façade of the existing building will also be redesigned as part of the project. No parking spaces are proposed but the project will provide bicycle parking spaces in accordance with Article 6.000.

Requested Special Permits

The Applicant is seeking an exemption from parking and loading requirements in the Harvard Square Overlay District pursuant to Section 20.54.4 of the Zoning Ordinance. This district contains a unique provision that the Planning Board can waive parking requirements if the project meets the urban design objectives for the area, and if the owner makes a cash contribution to a Harvard Square Improvement Fund equivalent to 50% of the cost of constructing parking spaces. This is a different standard than the special permit for reduction of required parking that is applicable elsewhere in the city.

Although the application contains a calculation of the contribution and a suggestion regarding the use of those funds, the Community Development Department will make a final determination of the contribution amount and the City will make a final decision as to the use of the funds following review by the Harvard Square Advisory Committee, in accordance with the zoning. Additional comments on this subject are provided by TPT.

This proposal has sought and received a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Cambridge Historical Commission.

The applicable special permit findings are summarized on the following page, and applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings (see appendix for zoning text excerpts)
Exemption from parking and loading requirements in the Harvard Square Overlay District (Section 20.54.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lot contributes to a development pattern of diverse, small scale, new structures and the retention of existing structures. • Exemption from parking and loading requirements results in a building design that is more appropriate to its location and fabric of the neighborhood. • Design is in conformance with objectives and criteria contained in <i>Harvard Square Development Guidelines</i>. (See attached) • No National Register or contributing building is demolished or altered as to terminate or preclude its designation (either now or within the past 5 years). • Conforms to general criteria for issuance of a special permit. (See attached)

Overall Planning and Zoning – Comments

Planning and zoning for the Harvard Square district, which is one of the most transit-connected areas in Cambridge, supports development of a range of uses at a relatively high density. The requirements and guidelines for the area encourage an urban form that relates to the historic development patterns that defined the area, with active pedestrian-oriented streetfronts and heights up to about 5 stories (by right) or 7 stories (by special permit). The retention of retail at the ground floor and associated façade improvements will maintain a lively ground floor. The size and scale of the addition reflects the predominant character of the area by retaining the footprint of the existing building and raising it to a 5-story height that is similar to surrounding buildings.

Because the existing building was built in the 1970s, it is not a National Register contributing building (although this project was subject to Historical Commission review because it is within the Harvard Square Historic District). However, the project does abut Winthrop Park, a historic open space. The stepping-back of the upper stories of the building is meant to reduce the impact of the building mass on that public space.

Urban Design – Comments

It is important to recognize that the project has been through a robust review process as part of the Cambridge Historical Commission’s review and recently issued Certificate of Appropriateness. Given that the existing Galleria building is non-contributory to the Harvard Square National Register District, the project presents an opportunity for innovative new development, which is compatible with the diverse historic context.

The massing of the addition is principally a response to the need to limit shadow impacts on Winthrop Park, which has resulted in a stepped form. The upper levels of the addition also have a similar scale to the adjoining parking garage and mirror this form in elevation. Changes to the ground floor street facades through new storefront windows assist with articulation and create more vertical rhythm and a human scale, which is in keeping with the commercial storefront character of Harvard Square. There is perhaps an opportunity to further celebrate and define the main building entries with color or contrasting materials. There may also be some potential to break down the horizontal emphasis of the existing building through extension of the structural grid into the horizontal banding. We would recommend that these details of the façade treatment be called out for continuing staff review.

The selected materials and color palette are intended to enable the existing building and new addition to recede into the background. Initially staff expressed some concern with the extent of proposed gray and black color treatment. This has been addressed with improved perspective views showing subtle variations of gray and pale green. The Equitone fiber cement and metal panel sizes and fixing methods will also provide more of a human-scaled dimension and visual interest.

Rooftop mechanicals are sufficiently screened or recessed so as not to intrude upon view lines from public areas. The positioning of one bicycle parking space at the front entry on Winthrop Street appears clumsy and would be better located within the street furniture zone along the curb line and combined with more spaces.

Clearly, there is a positive urban design outcome to not providing loading and parking, which results in continuity of the active ground floor facades. In terms of the proposal's contribution to the public realm and open space, there seems to be a lost opportunity to improve pedestrian access to the alley between 57 JFK Street and 96 Winthrop Street, as well as the 18th Century wall that runs behind properties on Winthrop and Eliot Streets. While there is a significant grade change between the site and the property to the rear at 16-18 Eliot Street, this opportunity should be explored by the Applicant. Encouraging improved public access to alleys and midblock pedestrian connections are goals of the Harvard Square Development Guidelines, as is the need to expose the historic wall to public view.




CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
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MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Planning Board
From: Monica R. Lamboy, Interim Director 
Date: February 12, 2015
Re: 57 JFK Street – Proposed Office Addition (PB#296)

The Traffic, Parking & Transportation (TP&T) Department has the following comments on the proposed 3-story, approximately 18,000 square foot office addition to the existing 57 JFK Street commercial building.

1. TP&T believes the project will not create any significant traffic impacts or traffic hazards. The Project is not large enough to trigger the requirement for a Transportation Impact Study (TIS).
2. The Project is seeking an exemption from parking and loading requirements pursuant to Section 20.54.4 of the Zoning Ordinance, which allows the Planning Board to waive the parking and loading requirements if the Project meets certain criteria, which are discussed in the Community Development Department's memo. TP&T supports the exemption because: 1) Harvard Square has very good public transportation access; 2) there are existing commercial parking facilities in the area; and, 3) Winthrop Street provides space for loading needs in the morning hours (between 2 am and 11 am).
3. TP&T will coordinate with CDD and the Department of Public Works (DPW) to determine the amount of the cash contribution that is required in lieu of constructing parking spaces and to recommend potential uses for those funds. The amount cited in the Application will need to be verified per the formula indicated in the Zoning Ordinance. Per zoning, the final determination on the use of the funds will be made by the City after review and comment from the Harvard Square Advisory Committee (HSAC). TP&T does not currently support the applicant's proposal to use the funds for improvements to a private building. TP&T will make recommendations on the use of those funds to the CDD and HSAC at the appropriate time.
4. During the building permit process, TP&T will work with CDD and the Applicant to determine the best location for short-term bicycle parking spaces. Given the constraints of the site, it may be preferable to meet the requirement with a cash contribution to the City's public bicycle parking fund, as allowed by zoning.
5. Finally, to minimize traffic and parking impacts, TP&T recommends the Applicant implement or require in tenants' leases the following Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures to encourage employees to choose transit, bicycling, walking, or carpooling as a preferred method over driving alone to work:
 - a. Either install a real-time multimodal transportation display screen in a permanent and central location to show arrival times and availability for nearby buses, trains, shuttles, Hubway bikes, and carshare vehicles, etc., or establish a transportation information center located in an area that is central, visible, convenient, and equally accessible to all employees of the 57 JFK building. An information center shall feature information on:
 - i. Available pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the vicinity of the Project site;
 - ii. MBTA maps, schedules, and fares;

- iii. Hubway regional bikeshare system;
 - iv. Carsharing;
 - v. Ride-matching; and,
 - vi. Other pertinent transportation information.
- b. Provide 50% subsidy of MBTA monthly Link Passes to full-time employees.
 - c. Provide Hubway membership (minimum Gold Level) for employees that selected to become Hubway members.
 - d. Provide Corporate membership paid by the employer at a local carshare company to allow employees to use a carshare vehicle for work-related trips during the day instead of needing to drive private vehicles to work.

Cc: Jeff Roberts, Liza Paden, Susanne Rasmussen, Stuart Dash, Stephanie Groll, CDD; Adam Shulman, TPT; Raj Dhanda, Peter Quinn.



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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February 12, 2015

To: Members of the Cambridge Planning Board

From: Charles Sullivan, Executive Director
Cambridge Historical Commission *CAS*

Re: PB#296, 57 J.F. Kennedy Street

I am writing to confirm that the Cambridge Historical Commission has granted a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed addition to the Galeria at 57 J.F. Kennedy Street.

I understand that the proponent, Raj Dhanda, has proposed to apply his required contribution to the Harvard Square Improvement Fund to renovations of the building he owns at 96 Winthrop Street. This former residence was built in 1846 and is a contributing building in the Harvard Square National Register District. The early 19th century stone retaining wall that abuts this property is also a significant historic resource jointly owned by several abutters.

The ordinance states that funds may be used (among other things) for "improvements to public parks, or restoration of historic structures, monuments and other features owned by the City of Cambridge or other public agency or a nonprofit organization." The Historical Commission supports restoration of 96 Winthrop Street and/or the retaining wall, but we defer to the Planning Board on the question of whether that would be an allowable allocation of Harvard Square Improvement funds.

cc: Joseph Barr, Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department
Raj Dhanda