



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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Community Development

To: Planning Board
From: Swaathi Joseph, Associate Zoning Planner
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Date: August 31, 2016
Re: **Special Permit PB #313, 135 Fulkerson St – Continued Hearing**

Update

Since the last Planning Board meeting, the Applicant has worked with staff to respond to comments and questions raised in the initial review of the application. The Applicant’s recent submission provides additional information about the project in narrative and graphic form, proposes changes to the site layout, and proposed some changes to the building’s exterior design. This memo comments on the additional information and proposed changes. Previously submitted staff materials are also attached.

Planning Board Action

As a reminder, the project is seeking a Special Permit for construction of a multifamily dwelling containing 12 or more units in the Residence C-1 (C-1) District. The required special permits and applicable criteria are summarized below.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Construction of Multifamily Dwelling in Residence C-1 District (Section 4.26.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key features of natural landscape are preserved. • New buildings relate sensitively to existing built environment. • Open space provides visual benefits to abutters and passersby and functional benefits to occupants. • Parking, access and egress are safe and convenient. • Intrusion of onsite parking is minimized. • Services such as trash collection and utility boxes are convenient yet unobtrusive. <p>(See full 10.47.4 criteria in appendix)</p>
General special permit criteria (Section 10.43)	Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43 (see appendix).

If the Board acts to grant a special permit, the approval would be conditioned on continuing design review by CDD staff and on fulfillment of transportation demand management measures recommended by the Traffic Parking & Transportation Department, along with any other conditions the Board deems to be appropriate.

Planning Board comments from First Hearing

The following summarizes some of the key comments made by the Planning Board at the July 26, 2016 hearing. The Applicant has provided some responses in the submitted materials.

- Explore the opportunity of planning both the site and the Met Pipe parcel together, possibly “square off” the parcel and discuss with Met Pipe.
- Review the extent of hardscape, redesign the parking lot and provide additional open space.
- Review the location and screening of the trash – should be enclosed.
- The project does not have much \ residential appeal, and is more like an office building. The west façade is cold/flat and could use warmer color treatment.
- Provide dimensions of balconies and other projecting façade elements.
- Review landscape screening of parking – should be at least as tall as the hood of a car, while meeting line-of-sight safety standards.
- Screening of transformer needs to be more permanent.
- Address stoop issue. Unclear how the landscape is treated under and around the ground-floor balconies. Appearance in renderings is very suburban.
- Visual and noise impacts of rooftop mechanicals.
- Residential and industrial interface issues – need to consider noise, dust control and buffers.

Staff Comments on New Materials

Site design

Since the first hearing, changes have been made to improve the site design and the streetscape experience. The Applicant has redesigned the parking lot, which has resulted in several significant site layout improvements, including a reduced extent of hardscape, additional open space with a streetscape presence, and internal handling of trash. In addition, street trees have been added to the sidewalk edge, which further enhances the pedestrian environment and creates a layered landscape effect, while also providing shade.

With regard to site landscaping, taller plantings are proposed along the frontage of the transformer; however, a combination of landscape materials and screen wall/fencing would perhaps provide a more robust treatment. While a solid fence will help address interface issues with the adjoining industrial use, the design and detailing of such a long expanse of stockade fencing should be carefully reviewed so that it does not have an overwhelming presence within the site. Similarly, while the extent of hardscape has reduced, there is still a considerable expanse of paving, which should be designed to create a more

interesting pedestrian experience. These landscape details have been called out as items for continuing review below.

Architectural design

Efforts have also been made to enliven the elevations and address the Planning Board's comments about the commercial feel of the project through the addition of wood and bronze accents. Additional articulation has been introduced, including the cornice treatment and vertical trim, which helps create a more domestic character, and minimizes the building's linear appearance. While modest in nature, these modifications have had a positive impact on the residential scale and form of the project.

Further details have been provided regarding the treatment of the rooftop mechanical systems. All units seem sufficiently organized, recessed and screened by the parapet and condenser wall. The units have been sited in the center of the roof and maximize potential installation of solar panels in the future.

Continuing Review

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends should be subject to continuing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- Review of all exterior materials, colors and details.
- Review of landscape details, particularly associated with screening elements, fencing and hardscape materials.
- Review of sidewalk design, parking, bicycle parking, access and egress by the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department (see accompanying memo).