



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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To: Planning Board
From: Swaathi Joseph, Associate Zoning Planner
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Date: December 27, 2016

Re: Special Permit **PB #320, 47 Bishop Allen Drive – Continued Hearing**

Update

Since the last Planning Board meeting, the Applicant has revised the proposed design. The Applicant's recent submission provides additional information about the project in graphic form, proposing changes to the site layout and building design. This memo comments on the additional information and proposed changes. Previously submitted staff materials are also attached.

Summary of Proposal

The project proposes to replace the existing three-story garage with a new four-story building with 23 residential units, with off-street parking for 12 cars provided off-site (at 65 Bishop Allen Drive), and two sheds for 24 long-term bicycle parking spaces in total in the rear yard. The proposal also includes a shared patio area in the rear yard and private decks in the front and rear yards at ground level.

The project is seeking a Project Review Special Permit for the construction of a new building of gross floor area greater than 20,000 square feet per Section 19.23 *Special Permit Threshold* and a Multifamily Special Permit for the construction of a multifamily dwelling containing 12 or more units per Section 4.26 *Multifamily Special Permit Applicability*. It is also seeking Special Permits to reduce the parking requirements and to locate all parking off-site within 400 feet of the site. The project also seeks a waiver of required front and side yard setbacks in accordance with the Central Square Overlay District zoning. The applicable special permit findings are summarized below.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Construction of Multifamily Dwelling in Residence C-1 & Business A-3 Districts (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>
Waiver of setback requirements in Central Square Overlay District (Section 20.304.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed development is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Central Square Action Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - encourage responsible and orderly development; - strengthen the retail base to more completely serve the needs of the neighborhoods; - preserve the Square’s cultural diversity; - create active people oriented spaces; - improve the physical, and visual environment; - provide retail establishments that serve people of diverse economic and social groups who live in the surrounding neighborhoods; - encourage the development of new mixed income housing; and - promote compatible retail adjacent to residential uses. • Improvements are in conformance with “Urban Design Plan” contained in <i>Central Square Development Guidelines and Central Square Action Plan</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). • Building and site designs adequately screen the parking provided and are sensitive to the contributing buildings in the vicinity (see map attached).
Reduction of parking requirement (Sections 20.304.6 & 6.35.1)	<p>Lesser amount of parking will not cause excessive congestion, endanger public safety, substantially reduce parking availability for other uses or otherwise adversely impact the neighborhood; or will provide positive environmental or other benefits to the users of the lot and the neighborhood, including assisting in provision of affordable housing units. <i>(See appendix for details.)</i></p>

Approval of Off-Site Accessory Parking (Section 6.22.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenient and safe access from the parking facility to the use being served is provided. • No off site accessory parking may be located on a lot which has a more restrictive zoning classification. • Off-site parking is located within 400 feet of the lot being served for residential uses.
Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the City as set forth in Section 19.30 (see appendix).
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).

Central Square Design Guidelines, 2013 – Summary of Design Goals

<i>Streets and Sidewalks</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish Mass Ave and Main Street as great public spaces in an improved system of streets and sidewalks. 2. Enhance the street network to make walking more convenient, safe and fun. 3. Balance the goals of active Street edges and residential privacy on streets other than Mass Ave and Main Street.
<i>Integrating Buildings with Public Places</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As the design of existing public spaces is revisited and redevelopment of adjacent properties occurs, seek to improve the attractiveness and functionality of the open space at all levels. 2. Create new outdoor and indoor gathering spaces.
<i>Ground Floor Design</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Storefronts should be oriented to the pedestrian and provide visual interest both day and night along Mass Ave and Main Street. 2. Pedestrians should be encouraged to window shop by the provision of varied and interesting display areas and ground floor facades. 3. Every effort should be made to create welcoming storefronts and to express an individual building or store identity. 4. Windows should be expansive and illuminated from within to create interesting display or viewing areas for retail space. 5. Provide a framework for variation in the design of the ground floor, so that the architecture of the building does not dominate the architecture of the street. 6. Encourage expansion of the definition of ground floor articulation to the lowest 2 levels to further enhance the pedestrian experience. 7. Pedestrian level treatments should relate to the human dimension and be rich in detail to enhance the pedestrian experience through the use of architectural elements such as trim, sills,

<p>lintels, awnings and canopies or, in more modern fashion, should be inviting and interesting through dramatic treatment of space, lighting, and signage.</p> <p>8. Enliven the public realm by expanding the publicly accessible private spaces along sidewalk, in association with the creation of retail, cultural and office space.</p>
<p><i>Built Form - height</i></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Variation of height is encouraged.2. While buildings are encouraged to align facade elements with tops of adjacent buildings, overall building height does not necessarily need to be uniform from one building to another.3. Allow the greatest height and bulk on Mass Ave with a diminution in height and bulk as the project approaches the lower residential uses in abutting areas4. Consider opportunities to maintain and enhance views to significant historic structures when composing building height and bulk.
<p><i>Built Form - massing</i></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Continuation of a strong linear retail frontage is critical to preserving the strength and historic character of the commercial district.2. Building fronts should maintain a strong linear edge along Mass Ave.3. Adjacent structures should build to a common party wall, although occasional setbacks of up to 15 feet to accommodate outdoor dining or retail sales, integrated with ground floor design and programming, are encouraged.4. Alleyways between buildings are not encouraged except at identified locations where public pedestrian passages are desirable.5. Limit shadow impacts of new development on portions of neighborhoods outside the study area and public parks within approximately 1-2 blocks or 500 feet of development site. Shadow impacts should not substantially reduce the appeal of public spaces, nor direct sun access to neighborhood housing, during spring and fall.
<p><i>Streetwalls and Bulk Control</i></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Building facades along Mass Ave and Main Street should both reinforce the traditional 55 foot height range of traditional buildings, and introduce variation in height.2. Added height is especially encouraged where it can help buildings serve as attractive landmarks.3. Streetwall height should step down towards the neighborhoods.4. Relate architectural elements of new construction to significant architectural elements, including cornice heights, on adjacent buildings.
<p><i>Building Facade</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond to orientation with regard to environment, place, and site, while providing context by acknowledging the importance of building profile, edges and corners.• New projects should be conceived with enduring and durable qualities, such that, many years from their conception, they are seen as strong contributors to the liveliness of the Square and to its role as presenting a diverse set of architectural statements over a century or more.

Parking and service areas

1. Off-street parking and service areas should be screened from the public realm wherever possible
2. Enrich neighborhood walkability with safe, green streets. Promote use of transportation modes other than driving.

Planning Board comments from First Hearing

The Planning Board opened and continued the hearing on November 15, 2016. Hence no discussion or comments are available from that hearing.

Staff Comments on New Materials

Site layout and landscape design

Since the hearing was continued, the site design has further advanced and now provides greater clarity in terms of proposed plantings, access, bicycle storage, and more useable and attractive amenity space for residents. Staff particularly appreciate the effort that has gone into designing the bike storage sheds and the patio spaces. Initially, it was hoped that the front decks could be utilized as stoops, however due to accessibility requirements this has not been achieved.

There is some duplication between the two walkways, which impacts the ability to provide landscaping along the northwest property line. In addition, the landscaping along the street edge requires careful consideration to ensure that it successfully moderates the transition between the public realm of the sidewalk and private space. The sidewalk width should also be evaluated to determine if additional streets trees can be provided.

Architectural Design

The revised design appears to more closely take cues from nearby multi-family housing typologies, which results in an improved relationship with the surrounding neighborhood character. The bay elements across the front facade have been strengthened, and the recessed portions of the front and side façades are further articulated by a darker color, which helps to breakdown the scale and creates a more interesting roofline. Combined with the stronger cornice line, the revised approach to the building’s articulation softens the boxlike form.

The rear and sides of the building have been further articulated with a modest notch that relates to entrances, and the project’s corners are celebrated helping the front facade wrap around to the side elevations. The metal-framed corner elements demarcate important moments such as the front entrance and corners of the bays, and add texture and variety of shadows that will play across the building throughout the day. The move to more of a “punched window” character has also enabled the building to fit into the context, while maintaining a contemporary aesthetic.

At the ground floor, relevant design guidelines call for a human scale and rich details. The proposal with the wider siding profile partly achieves this, although the use of PVC siding should be reviewed as this material can lack character and texture. While a more contemporary color palette of crisp gray and white is proposed, warmer trim materials highlight openings and provide a sense of domesticity. Continuing review of materials and details is suggested, particularly to consider material transitions and trim details. All elevations should also show the elevator overrun and any projections above the parapet.

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 and a materials mockup on site.
- Review of landscape details, particularly associated with plantings, edge treatments, and hardscape design and materials.
- The location and screening of any utility boxes and electrical infrastructure, such as transformers.
- Review of sidewalk design, bicycle parking, off-site parking by the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department.
- Review of stormwater management by the Department of Public Works.