



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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October 25, 2016

To: Members of the Cambridge Planning Board

From: Charles Sullivan

Re: PB #321, Mass+Main Development

I am writing with regard to the Lafayette Square Building at 411-413 Massachusetts Avenue, which is proposed to be incorporated into the Mass+Main development.

The Lafayette Square Building is a three-story brick structure that was erected in 1887. No architect is associated with the design, but the smooth brick façade with projecting segmental arches over the windows, a corbelled cornice, and granite sills displays the characteristic features of the Italianate Style. Brick piers descend to the sidewalk on both sides of a modern storefront with granite trim. A marble plaque denoting its location on Lafayette Square is mounted in the center of the façade.



The original owner of the building was William A. Taylor, an undertaker who lived in an apartment above his business, which occupied the entire ground floor. After Taylor's death in 1911 the storefront was occupied by a restaurant and later by a market and package store until the property was acquired by Quest Pharmaceuticals and remodeled in 1997. The storefront and windows date from that project, as does a rear addition and the synthetic stucco that covers the party walls.

The Lafayette Square Building was designated a contributing building in the Central Square National Register District in 1990, and was further identified as significant in the C2 process a few years ago. The significance of the building derives from the integrity of its façade and its prominent position in a setting of undistinguished low-rise structures. Unlike Central Square and Harvard Square, Lafayette Square has never achieved its architectural potential. Along with the far grander Kennedy (CCTV) building opposite, the Lafayette Square Building has survived as a dignified representation of the aspirations of a 19th century businessman.



Lafayette Square, ca. 1948

Planning Board Collection, CHC

The Cambridge Historical Commission welcomes the inclusion of the Lafayette Square Building into the Mass+Main development. We believe that it will contribute significantly to the project by softening the transition to the adjacent low-rise building and adding historical context to the project. The alternative, removing it to create a wider path to the parking lot, would negatively affect the urban fabric of the area. We strongly support the planning principle that new development should be focused on the low-rise placeholder buildings Central Square, while reinforcing the many significant buildings there. The Mass+Main project as presently designed will serve this objective.