



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

2017 OCT 25 PM 1:22
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case Number:	324 Amendment #1
Address:	907 Main Street
Zoning:	Business B (BB)/ Central Square Overlay District
Applicant:	Patrick Barrett for Sean Casey, LLC. 234 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139
Owner:	Sean Casey, LLC 234 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139
Application Date:	September 14, 2017
Date of Planning Board Public Hearing:	October 3, 2017
Date of Planning Board Decision:	October 3, 2017
Date of Filing Planning Board Decision:	October 25, 2017
Application:	Amendment to previously granted Special Permit Decision authorizing conforming additions to and conversion of existing multifamily use to hotel use. The Gross Floor Area is proposed to increase by 3,722 square feet due to the addition of 9 hotel rooms and the addition of a guest suite on the fifth floor of the addition. Special permits were sought for reduction of parking and loading requirement (Section 20.304.6) and for exemption of basement area from the calculation of Gross Floor Area (Article 2.000, Definition of Gross Floor Area). The height of the building is also being increased and an additional Special Permit was sought to exceed a building height of 55 feet in the Central Square Overlay District (Section 20.304.22(a)).
Decision:	GRANTED, with Conditions.

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board: Swaathi Joseph

For further information concerning this decision, please contact Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, or lpaden@cambridgema.gov.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Application Documents and Supporting Material

1. Special Permit Application submitted on September 14, 2017, containing the Special Permit Cover Sheet, Dimensional Form, Ownership Certificate, Project Narrative, plan set entitled 907 Main Street prepared by Boyes-Watson Architects, dated 08/01/17 revised 9/5/2017.

City of Cambridge Documents

2. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Community Development Department staff, dated 9/27/2017.
3. Memorandum to the Community Development Department from Cambridge Historical Commission staff, dated 9/26/2017.

Other Documents

4. Email communication to the Planning Board from Jessica R. Manganello, dated 10/3/2017.
5. Memorandum to the Planning Board from the Central Square Advisory committee, dated 10/3/2017.

APPLICATION SUMMARY

In a February 21, 2017 decision (“Original Decision”) the Planning Board approved a proposal to renovate and construct conforming additions to the existing 4-story building to accommodate a conversion from multifamily housing to a 58-room hotel use, including a new hotel lobby in the first floor, preserving retail space elsewhere on ground floor, providing service areas in the basement, and a bar within the fifth-floor addition. The proposal did not include off-street parking and loading areas and the Board granted a special permit to waive those requirements. The property located at the corner of Main Street and Columbia Street is located in the Business B District within the Central Square Overlay District. The site is entirely within the Central Square National Register District and the building is considered to be a contributing building. The Applicant reviewed the proposal with staff at the Cambridge Historical Commission, who concluded that the project does not require a formal hearing by the Commission. The current application seeks an amendment to the original Decision approval in order to enlarge the addition, resulting in an increase of 3,722 square feet to the Gross Floor Area of the project, which is allowed by right, and an increase in building height to 59.5 feet, which exceeds the as-of-right building height of 55 feet but is below the maximum height of 80 feet allowable by special permit. The Central Square Overlay District was amended in 2017 (Ordinance #1389) to allow a higher floor area ratio (FAR) and lower parking requirements for residential and hotel uses. No bicycle parking is being added, as the proposed use will require less bike parking than the existing use. However, two long-term and four short-term spaces are proposed, which are fewer than the six long-term and six short-term spaces previously approved. The requested special permits are discussed in detail in the Findings below.

FINDINGS

After review of the Application Documents and other documents submitted to the Planning Board, testimony given at the public hearing, and review and consideration of the applicable requirements and criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance with regard to the relief being sought, the Planning Board makes the following Findings:

1. Reduction of Parking and Loading Requirements in Central Square Overlay District (Section 20.304.6)

20.304.6 Parking and Loading Requirements. The provisions set forth in Article 6.000 shall apply except as modified by the provisions set forth below

3. *Waiver of Parking and Loading Requirements. Uses in the Central Square Overlay District which meet the following requirements shall be exempt from the parking and loading requirements as specified in Section 6.36 - Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements and the minimum requirements set forth in Paragraph 2 above.*

- b. *The use is contained in a new structure or new addition to a structure identified in (1.) above, after the issuance of a special permit by the Planning Board provided:*
- (i) *The total development authorized on the site is reduced to ninety (90) percent of the maximum permitted on the lot ****

The proposed project seeks approval to reduce the required amount of on-site parking and loading. No new parking will be created with the proposed development, which will expand the retail use on the ground floor, activating the streetscape while preserving a contributing historic building. The recent zoning amendment reduced the parking requirement for hotels from 0.5 spaces per sleeping room to 0.25 spaces per sleeping room, so the number of spaces required for the project remains at five. Because the total project is less than 90% of the allowed building area, the Planning Board may waive the required parking without requiring an “in-lieu-of” payment into a parking fund. The basis for the requested reduction is that the site is located in an area that is well served by multiple modes of public transit and that by not providing on-site parking, a better streetscape design that is more pedestrian-friendly can be achieved, including the elimination of a curb cut. The proposed building addition provides an active street edge and restores the existing historic building, which are positive urban design outcomes that meet the objectives of the Central Square Development Guidelines.

The Board finds that the standards set forth in Section 6.35 of this Zoning Ordinance are met as set forth below.

6.35.1 Reduction of Required Parking. Any minimum required amount of parking may be reduced only upon issuance of a special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeals. A special permit shall be granted only if the Board determines and cites evidence in its decision that the 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 that such lesser amount of parking will provide positive environmental or other benefits to the users of the lot and the neighborhood, including specifically, among other benefits, assisting in the provision of affordable housing units. ...

The proposed reduction in parking is consistent with the City's goals to discourage driving and encourage other modes of transportation, particularly in areas that are served by public transit. The City's recent Central Square Planning Study encourages shared parking arrangements and the use of existing underutilized parking facilities. The current proposal to remove the existing curb cut will offer opportunities for additional on-street parking or loading and may further help to reduce traffic congestion at the immediate street intersection. Removal of on-site parking will further promote greater use of alternative transportation.

In the Original Decision, the Planning Board found that the requested reduction in required parking will not have substantial adverse transportation impacts on the neighborhood. The Board hereby reasserts its previous finding that there will be minimum impact on availability of parking and no other adverse impacts on the neighborhood. The Board also finds that the reduction in parking will be reasonable in light of the considerations set forth below.

... In making such a determination the Board shall also consider whether or not less off street parking is reasonable in light of the following:

- (1) The availability of surplus off street parking in the vicinity of the use being served and/or the proximity of an MBTA transit station.*

The project is within an area served by the MBTA Central Square Red Line Station and multiple MBTA bus route stops serving the downtown Boston area through Central Square out to Waltham and Watertown.

- (2) The availability of public or commercial parking facilities in the vicinity of the use being served provided the requirements of Section 6.23 are satisfied.*

Parking is available in a commercial parking garage nearby at the 55 Franklin Street parking garage as well as the City's Green Street garage, which could be used by hotel guests who are traveling by car.

- (3) Shared use of off street parking spaces serving other uses having peak user demands at different times, provided that no more than seventy-five (75) percent of the lesser minimum parking requirements for each use shall be satisfied with such shared spaces and that the requirements of Subsection 6.23 are satisfied.*

Shared use of off street parking spaces serving other uses has not been proposed.

- (4) Age or other occupancy restrictions which are likely to result in a lower level of auto usage; and*

No such restrictions exist; however, the reduction in parking anticipates a less auto-dependent future for the area. It is also expected that hotel guests staying in Cambridge are likely to travel by public transportation, taxi or ridesharing service.

- (5) *Impact of the parking requirement on the physical environment of the affected lot or the adjacent lots including reduction in green space, destruction of significant existing trees and other vegetation, destruction of existing dwelling units, significant negative impact on the historic resources on the lot, impairment of the urban design objectives of the city as set forth in Section 19.30 of the Zoning Ordinance, or loss of pedestrian amenities along public ways.*

The reduction in parking is preferable because it will activate the streetscape with expanded retail use and a consistent street edge. It will also enable the creation of a more pedestrian-friendly sidewalk and increase open space on the site, which positively impacts the physical environment and is consistent with the city's urban design objectives.

- (6) *The provision of required parking for developments containing affordable housing units, and especially for developments employing the increased FAR and Dwelling unit density provisions of Section 11.200, will increase the cost of the development, will require variance relief from other zoning requirements applicable to the development because of limitations of space on the lot, or will significantly diminish the environmental quality for all residents of the development.*

The project proposes a new hotel use that is not subject to the Inclusionary Housing provisions of Section 11.200.

The Board also finds that the Standards for Issuance of Special Permits in the Central Square Overlay District set forth in Section 20.305 are met as set forth below. Exemption from parking requirements allows the proposed building to maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood with reduced paved area. Further, the project will provide sufficient bike parking spaces and provide access to public transportation through various Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures that will support the Central Square Development Guidelines to promote modes other than driving.

20.305 Standards for Issuance of Special Permits. In addition to the general standards for the issuance of a special permit found in Section 10.40 of the Zoning Ordinance, the special permit granting authority shall in addition make the following findings:

- (1) *The proposed development is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Central Square Action Plan:*
- *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*

The Board finds the proposed project to be consistent with these goals and objectives. The proposed hotel development will help to strengthen and diversify the retail base, and will improve the physical and visual environment through building design and landscaping that are in keeping with the scale and character of the neighborhood. It will result in a safer and more inviting pedestrian environment on Columbia Street.

- (2) *The building and site designs are consistent with "Urban Design Plan for Central Square" as outlined in the "Central Square Action Plan" and the "Central Square Development Guidelines";*

The improvements respond positively to the Urban Design Plan for Central Square contained in the Central Square Development Guidelines and the Central Square Action Plan. In particular, the proposed waiver of parking and loading will allow for a more continuous retail frontage and a reduction in paved area in exchange for increased usable open space area.

- (3) *The building and site designs adequately screen the parking provided and are sensitive to the contributing buildings in the vicinity;*

The requested waiver of parking and loading results in no new off-street parking spaces to be screened.

- (4) *No National Register or contributing building is demolished or so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation as a National Register or contributing building; and*

- (5) *No National Register or contributing building has been demolished or altered so as to terminate or preclude its designation within the five (5) years preceding the application.*

The existing building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is within the Central Square National Register District. A few buildings in the vicinity on Main Street are contributing buildings in the National Register of Historic Places. The Cambridge Historic Commission considers the proposed renovation and expansion to be appropriate to the historic context and will not preclude its designation as a contributing building.

2. Definition of Gross Floor Area (Article 2.000)

The Zoning Ordinance allows that the definition of Gross Floor Area may be modified by special permit as set forth below.

Gross Floor Area shall not include: ...

- (15) *Any basement or cellar living space in any single-family or two-family home.*
- (16) *Any basement or cellar living space in any other type of structure with the issuance of a special permit. In granting such a special permit, the permit granting authority may approved the exemption of any portion of Gross Floor Area (GFA) located in a basement or cellar from the calculation of GFA, provided the permit granting authority finds that the uses occupying such exempted GFA support the character of the neighborhood or district in which the applicable lot is located.*

The project is designed such that each retail use spans both basement and first floor to provide sufficient service area for each retail use at the basement level. The Board finds the uses proposed for the basement area of the project to be generally consistent with the character of the neighborhood for commercial ground floors. Making existing basements code-compliant for ancillary activities of the commercial use will allow for expanded retail areas at the street level.

3. Increase in Building Height in Central Square Overlay District (Section 20.304.2)

The maximum height of any building by right in Central Square Overlay District is 55 feet.

20.304.2 Building Height Limitations: ...

2. *Special Permit for Additional Height. Additional height may be permitted as follows:*

- (a) *The maximum allowable height in the Central Square Overlay District may be increased up to eighty (80) feet upon issuance of a Special Permit by the Planning Board ...*

The Planning Board finds the building height increase from 55 feet to 59.5 feet is a modest change and that the project meets the standards for issuance of a special permit as per Section 20.305, as noted above. Compared to the plans approved by the Original Decision, the top-floor addition is sufficiently set back and therefore the architectural changes that are visible from the public way not particularly significant. The enclosure of the bar area at the top of the building will improve conditions related to noise, which were a topic of discussion at the public hearing on the prior proposal. The Board acknowledges that the changes have been reviewed by the Cambridge Historical Commission staff and have received a positive recommendation from the Central Square Advisory Committee. Finally, the changes will

enable the addition of nine rooms, which, according to the Applicant, will improve the financial viability of the project.

4. General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit (Section 10.43)

The Planning Board finds that the project meets the General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit, as set forth below.

10.43 Criteria. Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:

(a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or ...

Upon granting of the requested special permits, it appears that the requirements of the Ordinance will be met.

(b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or ...

The proposed conversion and addition to create a hotel and ground-floor spaces in conformance with zoning limitations is not anticipated to cause particular congestion or hazard. The project is expected to have only minor vehicle traffic impact in the neighborhood.

(c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or ...

The proposed non-residential use complies with allowed uses in this district, and will not adversely affect adjacent uses that exist or are anticipated in the future.

(d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or ...

The proposed uses will not create nuisance or hazard, and all development activity will be subject to applicable health and safety regulations.

(e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and ...

The neighborhood has a mix of residential and non-residential uses, including some hotel facilities, and the proposed expansion and conversion would fit this existing and anticipated pattern of development.

(f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

The Board finds no inconsistency with the citywide urban design objectives. The urban design objectives are generally supported in the proposal through improved streetscape appearance and pedestrian amenity, consistency with the pattern of development in the area, minimal environmental impacts on abutters and minimal impact on City infrastructure.

DECISION

Based on a review of the Application Documents, testimony given at the public hearing, and the above Findings, the Planning Board hereby GRANTS the requested Special Permit Amendment subject to the following conditions and limitations. Hereinafter, for purposes of this Decision, the Permittee shall mean the Applicant for the requested Special Permits and any successor or successors in interest.

1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the plan set entitled Special Permit Amendment, prepared by Boyes-Watson Architects, dated September 5, 2017. Appendix I summarizes the amended dimensional features of the project as approved.
2. All other Conditions set forth in the previously granted Special Permit Decision PB #324, attached to this Special Permit Decision, shall continue to apply.

Voting in the affirmative to approve the Special Permit Amendment were Planning Board Members Louis Bacci, Jr., Steven Cohen, H Theodore Cohen, Catherine Preston Connolly, Tom Sieniewicz, Mary Flynn, and Hugh Russell, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board, necessary to grant a special permit.

For the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H Theodore Cohen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

H Theodore Cohen, Chair.

A copy of this decision PB #324 Amendment #1 shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and accurate copy of the above decision has been filed on October 25, 2017, with the Office of the City Clerk by Swaathi Joseph, duly authorized representative of the Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty days have elapsed since the above decision was filed in the office of the City Clerk and:
_____ no appeal has been filed; or

_____ an appeal has been filed within such twenty days.

The person exercising rights under a duly appealed special permit does so at risk that a court will reverse the permit and that any construction performed under the permit may be ordered undone. This certification shall in no event terminate or shorten the tolling, during the pendency of any appeals, of the periods provided under the second paragraph of G.L. c. 40A, §6.

Date: _____, City Clerk

Appeal has been dismissed or denied.

Date: _____, City Clerk

Appendix I: Approved Dimensional Chart

	Existing	Allowed or Required	Proposed	Permitted
Lot Area (sq ft)	9,505	None	No Change	No Change
Lot Width (ft)	115.25	None	No Change	No Change
Total GFA (sq ft)	20,874	38,020	29,860	29,860
Residential Base	15,699	n/a	n/a	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Non-Residential Base	5,175	n/a	n/a	
Inclusionary Bonus	n/a	n/a	0	
Total FAR	2.21	4.0	3.14	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Residential Base	1.67	n/a	n/a	
Non-Residential Base	0.54	n/a	n/a	
Inclusionary Bonus	n/a	n/a	0	
Total Dwelling Units	12	n/a	0	0
Base Units	n/a	n/a	n/a	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Inclusionary Bonus Units	0	n/a	n/a	
Base Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Total Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Height (ft)	45	55	59.5	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Front Setbacks (ft)	0	0	No change	
Side Setback (ft)	29.5 & 0	0 & 0	0 & No change	
Rear Setback (ft)	0	0	No change	
Open Space (% of Lot Area)	0	0	20	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Private Open Space	0	0	15	
Permeable Open Space	0	0	0	
Off-Street Parking Spaces	0	5	0 ¹	0
Long-Term Bicycle Parking	0	2	2	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Short-Term Bicycle Parking	0	1	4	
Loading Bays	0	1	0 ¹	

¹ With Planning Board Special Permit for reduction of parking and loading requirements.