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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: August 1, 2018

Re: Special Permit **PB #336, 1043-1059 Cambridge Street - – 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. This memo comments on the additional information and proposed changes. The applicant is in communication with the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TP&T) and Department of Public Works (DPW).

### **Planning Board Action**

As a reminder, the applicant is proposing to demolish the two existing buildings located on two adjacent parcels, 1043 and 1059 Cambridge Street, to construct a new building with commercial space in the first floor, 18 residential units on three floors above, on grade parking within a structure for 13 cars, 18 long-term bicycle parking spaces, and 8 short-term bicycle parking spaces. The proposal also includes a patio and addition of street trees on Webster Avenue. The project will require variances for side yard setback requirements and green area open space requirements from the Board of Zoning Appeal.

The project is located in the Business A (BA) district and seeks a Project Review Special Permit per Section 19.20, Special Permits for reduction of required parking per Section 6.35.1 and for exemption of basement area from the definition of Gross Floor Area pursuant to Article 2.000. The applicable special permit findings are summarized below.

<b>Requested Special Permits</b>	<b>Summarized Findings</b> <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)	Project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the City as set forth in Section 19.30 (see appendix).
Reduction in required parking (Section 6.35.1)	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.
Exemption of basement area in the calculation of Gross Floor Area (GFA)	The uses occupying such exempted GFA support the character of the neighborhood or district in which the applicable lot is located.
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).

**Planning Board Comments from the First Hearing**

The following summarizes some of the key comments made by the Planning Board at the May 15, 2018 hearing.

- Respond to questions about inclusionary housing and the need for 3-bedroom units.
- Clarify intentions for the Elm Street parcel.
- Concrete walls next to the garage should have trellises on them or additional plantings.
- Respond to concerns about exterior building materials and provide samples.
- Provide further details on privacy screening for units and terraces.
- Reduce width of curb cut and garage door to the extent possible.
- Bicycle egress through parking garage seems unsafe.
- Confirm transformer location and propose screening.
- Work toward final agreement with TP&T on transportation demand management (TDM) commitments for the retail use.
- Consider loading needs for the retail.
- Review impacts of the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) with DPW.
- Board members discussed the impacts of the Cambridge Street upper level setback. Some Board members would have preferred a uniform façade built to the street (which would require a zoning

variance), while others felt it would be appropriate in the context, provide an opportunity for balconies, mitigate the massing and enable the street trees to grow

### **Staff Comments on New Materials**

The revised application materials dated July 3, 2018 address many of the concerns raised by the Planning Board and staff, and incorporate the following specific changes:

- Addition of one three-bedroom unit to the housing mix (which would become an affordable unit per the City's new inclusionary housing requirements).
- A gate for the Elm Street parcel, which will be clad in the same fiber-cement panels as the building façade.
- Use of a trellis and plantings on each side of the garage entrance to mitigate the blank walls.
- Reduction of the curb cut width to 18 feet, which enables more site landscaping.
- Clarification of access through the garage for trash and bicycles.
- Identification of three different railing/screening types, which appropriately respond to residential privacy concerns.
- Widening of the sidewalk at the corner of Cambridge Street and Columbia Street by setting back the patio space.

Some issues that should be given further consideration include:

- Potential to make the staff access down the side alley to the bicycle storage area more attractive and amenable.
- Possible rearrangement of the bicycle and trash rooms so that the bicycle room has more direct access through the garage. Some pavement markings would also assist with delineating the access route.
- While the transformer location has been determined, the transformer should be set back from the property line so that it can be screened either by landscaping or a fence/gate.
- Since the façade materials remain unchanged, staff has suggested review of construction details and specific color choices as part of a visual mock-up.

### *DPW Comments*

The revised documentation includes a narrative that acknowledges the November 2015 CCVA flooding elevations that were provided to the Applicant initially in October of 2017 and again in the DPW's Letter to the Planning Board dated May 8, 2018. The discussion indicates that the building structure, first floor slab, is established above the 2070 - 100 year projected flood elevation. This satisfies the DPW's request to understand how the project would recover from a 2070 - 100 year flood by designing the structure to eliminate the potential for flooding based on the projected elevations.

*TP&T Comments*

TP&T has worked with the Applicant and reached an agreement on TDM measures. Detailed comments can be found in the TP&T memo.

**Continuing Review**

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends should be further studied by the Applicant, either in preparing revised materials if the Planning Board continues the hearing to a future date, or as conditions for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- Review of landscape details, including pavers, planters, benches, fences, railings and bus stop details.
- Review of the proposed siting and screening of the transformer.
- Review of sidewalk improvements and street trees (with DPW and TP&T).
- Review of façade design details, including louvers and exhaust vents, window reveals and other ground floor details.
- Review of all exterior materials and colors, including a materials mock-up of all wall assemblies and details on the site.