



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: September 9, 2019

Re: Special Permit **PB #349, 599 Massachusetts Avenue – Continued Hearing**

IRAM FAROOQ
*Assistant City Manager for
Community Development*

SANDRA CLARKE
*Deputy Director
Chief of Administration*

KHALIL MOGASSABI
*Deputy Director
Chief of Planning*

Update

Since the last Planning Board meeting, the Applicant met with staff to discuss comments and questions raised in the initial review of the application. The Applicant's recent submission provides narrative explanation for retaining the original proposal. This memo comments on that material.

Planning Board Action

Santander Bank is proposing to relocate the existing branch of the bank to the first floor of the existing building at 599 Massachusetts Avenue in Central Square. The proposal includes installation of Santander Bank's standardized signage on the exterior of the building and the use of its standard red coloring scheme in the building exterior and certain locations within the interior of the premises.

The business will be located in the existing building, which is a contributing structure within the Central Square National Register District. The Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) staff has reviewed the application and provided some comments regarding the proposed design details. The project is within the Central Square Overlay District and requires Special Permits for Formula Business and for waiving the limitations on bank frontage. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(detailed zoning text on following pages)</i>
Special Permit for Formula Business in Central Square Overlay District (Sections 20.304.5.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design shall reflect, amplify, and strengthen the established historical character of existing buildings and store fronts in Central Square. • The particulars of the building or storefront design shall be varied from the formula or standard design of the chain in order to reflect the unique character and conditions of Central Square generally or the specific location in particular. • The standard elements of the enterprise defining it as a Formula Business shall be modified to respect and provide unique expressions of Central Square history and traditions as well as innovation in physical design and marketing that will distinguish the Central Square location from other locations of the Formula Business.
Special Permit to waive restricted use of bank frontage in Central Square Overlay District (Sections 20.304.5.3.b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements are in conformance with objectives contained in <i>Central Square Development Guidelines and Central Square Action Plan</i> (see next page). • 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.
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 First Hearing

The following summarizes some of the key comments made by the Planning Board at the August 13, 2019 hearing. The Applicant has provided responses in the submitted materials.

- Consider restoring the historic storefront design with a central door location.
- Review layout options to accommodate a door in the center of the storefront.

Staff Comments on New Materials

In response to the Board’s comments, the Applicant has further studied the interior layout of the proposed bank. The Applicant prefers to keep the existing storefront with the door located to one side as it minimizes accessibility issues around the proposed seating nook and ATM vestibule at the front of the bank.

As recommended by the CHC staff, the projecting banner has been relocated to the vertical strip of brick to the left of the stone pilaster. The new materials still show the “Santander” storefront sign located in the middle of the signage band. As shown in earlier renderings (dated 8/9/2019), the proposed sign should be moved down so that the original Central Trust Co. sign is visible.

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 all exterior signage and attachments, and façade alterations and details with staff at the Cambridge Historical Commission.
- Review of rooftop mechanical equipment, and materials and details of any necessary visual/acoustical screening.