



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: August 3, 2020

Re: Special Permit PB #362, 101 Rogers Street, "The Foundry" (parcel address: 117 Rogers Street)

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

KHALIL MOGASSABI
Deputy Director
Chief of Planning

Submission Type: Special Permit Application

Applicant: City of Cambridge

Zoning District(s): Industry A-1 (IA-1); PUD-4C; Eastern Cambridge Housing Overlay (ECHO) District

Proposal Summary: Preservation/rehabilitation of an existing building for use as a multipurpose center, including community center, arts studio, theatre, and offices, with a total of 50,200 square feet of gross floor area (GFA). A portion of the existing building will be demolished and an addition constructed within the existing footprint. No off-street parking will be provided, but bicycle parking and one off-street loading bay will be provided.

Special Permits Requested: Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20) and special permits for performance space use in Industry A-1 (Section 4.35.h), alteration of an existing non-conforming building (Section 8.22.2.a), and reduction of required parking (Section 6.35.1). *A summary of the applicable special permit findings is listed on the following page. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.*

Other City Permits Needed: Certificate of Appropriateness for alteration of a designated landmark – granted by the Historical Commission on December 5, 2019, subject to continuing staff review; Variance for signage deviating from the standards in Article 7.000 – to be requested from the Board of Zoning Appeal.

Planning Board Action: Grant or deny requested special permits.

Memo Contents: Review of area planning and zoning, comments on proposal addressing planning, zoning, and urban design.

Other Staff Reports: Traffic, Parking and Transportation Dept. (TP+T), Department of Public Works (DPW), in separate documents.

344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139
Voice: 617 349-4600
Fax: 617 349-4669
TTY: 617 349-4621
www.cambridgema.gov

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area, upon review of the traffic impact indicators analyzed in the Transportation Impact Study and mitigation efforts proposed. • The project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the City as set forth in Section 19.30 (see following page).
Special Permit to reduce 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.
Special Permit to alter an existing non-conforming building facade (Section 8.22.2.a)	The changes, extensions, or alterations of a pre-existing nonconforming structure will not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing condition.
Special Permit for performance space use in Industry A-1 (Section 4.35.h) General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or (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 (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 (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 (f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]

Objective	Indicators
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods • Consistency with established streetscape • Compatibility with adjacent uses • Consideration of nearby historic buildings
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhabited ground floor spaces • Discouraged ground-floor parking • Windows on ground floor • Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways • Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/impact of mechanical equipment • Location/impact of loading and trash handling • Stormwater management • Shadow impacts • Retaining walls, if provided • Building scale and wall treatment • Outdoor lighting • Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management • Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service • Efficient design (LEED standards)
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional use focused on existing campuses • Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed • Preservation of historic structures and environment • Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as a component of large, multi-building development • Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families
Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development • Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks • Provide wider range of activities

Area Planning and Zoning

Site Context

The site is located in what has been identified as a “Transition Area,” between the higher-density office and mixed-use areas of Kendall Square and the lower-density residential neighborhood of East Cambridge (refer to Image 1). Kendall Square has seen significant redevelopment recently, which is expected to continue with major projects such as the Volpe site redevelopment. The Transition Area north of Binney Street is characterized by varied building and use types, including older commercial buildings that have been converted to residential and non-residential uses, large telecommunications facilities built in the late 20th century, and newly constructed residential and office/lab buildings. The site is also across Third Street from the public Rogers Street Park, which is planned for future improvements. The Foundry itself is historically an industrial plant that was most recently used as office space.



Image 1: Aerial photograph of the area surrounding the Foundry Building dated March 9, 2020.

Site Zoning

The site is located in the IA-1 base zoning district and the ECHO and PUD-4C overlay zoning districts.

- The **IA-1 zoning district** is considered a light industrial district, which permits limited industrial uses and a broad range of non-industrial uses, including convenience retail, office, local government, social service, arts studios, and multifamily residential. Some educational and theatre uses are conditionally allowed by special permit. Development in IA-1 is expected to be relatively low-scale, with a maximum FAR of 1.25 (except for residential uses, which are permitted a FAR of 1.50) and a height maximum of 45 feet. As such, it functions as a transition district, typically between commercial/industrial and residential uses.

The base zoning is modified in different ways by both the ECHO and the PUD-4C overlay districts.

- The **ECHO district** was created following the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study (see below) and allows an increase in residential density to a FAR of 2.5 and graduated increases in height. A portion of The Foundry site facing Rogers Street allows a residential height of up to 55 feet.
- The **PUD-4C overlay district** was created in 2009 when the City Council adopted the Alexandria Real Estate Equities (“Alexandria”) Zoning Petition, which enabled an approximately 1.75 million square-foot mixed-use redevelopment plan across various sites on Binney Street. The PUD-4C zoning identifies sites to be conveyed by Alexandria to the City as public benefits, including The Foundry site and 2.3 acres of land for use as public open space. Section 13.59.10 of the Zoning Ordinance states a “preference” for The Foundry to be used by municipal or community uses identified in Section 4.33, with at least 10,000 square feet devoted to educational, cultural, or institutional uses, and allows a maximum FAR of 3.0 for the site. The Planning Board granted a PUD special permit for the Alexandria development plan in 2010. Nearly all development has been completed and all required land conveyances have been executed.

Area Planning Studies

The **Eastern Cambridge Planning Study (ECaPS)**, the most recent City-led planning effort for this particular area, was completed in 2001 and outlines a vision for future development in parts of Kendall Square, the North Point area near Lechmere, the East Cambridge residential neighborhood, and parts of the Wellington-Harrington and Port neighborhoods. The study resulted in a set of zoning recommendations that were adopted in 2001 and a set of Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines, which are referenced in the zoning for the area. ECaPS identified the area around 101 Rogers Street as “Transition Area A,” which the study describes as “a perimeter of industrial buildings around three sides of the East Cambridge neighborhood.”

ECaPS envisioned actions that would make the greater East Cambridge area more active by increasing residential development and attracting neighborhood-serving uses such as restaurants, convenience retail, and entertainment. Some ECaPS goals for the Transition Area include encouraging residential uses north of Binney Street, creating a transition in height and density that would gradually decrease from Kendall Square to the neighborhoods, improving pedestrian and bicycle connections, and encouraging new open spaces that connect to existing parks.

The **Alexandria Rezoning Petition**, while not part of a City-led planning process, involved extensive community discussion and deliberation by the Planning Board and City Council. The outcomes of that process, as reflected in the PUD-4C zoning, emphasize certain City goals including increasing public open space, incorporating retail and other active street-level uses in key locations, creating new community spaces, and promoting pedestrian/bicycle facilities.

The **2013 Kendall Square (“K2”) Study** did not include 101 Rogers Street, since it drew a northern boundary at Binney Street, but incorporates goals and recommendations that expand upon ECaPS and are relevant to this site, which is less than a 10-minute walk from the Kendall/MIT MBTA station. Some of these goals include nurturing a culture of innovation, creating places for public interaction, promoting environmental sustainability, and encouraging a mix of uses with a preference for focusing development near transit. Specific recommendations include providing incubator spaces for new, local businesses;

creating shared streets; designing buildings to be more connected to the public realm; and requiring sustainable design for buildings and sites.

The ***Envision Cambridge comprehensive plan*** established high-level planning goals and recommendations throughout the city. It identifies the edges of residential neighborhoods as opportunities to expand the high-quality pedestrian environment, add amenities not already offered in adjacent neighborhoods, and provide a transition between traditional neighborhoods, such as East Cambridge, and denser mixed-use and commercial districts, such as Kendall Square. Although the plan does not identify goals or recommendations specific to this district, it does identify this area as a candidate for future area-specific study.

Planning for the Arts

The **Mayor's Arts Task Force**, which met in 2018-2019, was a special advisory committee comprised of city staff, local community leaders, and members of the artist community. Its final report identified several key barriers to a more thriving arts scene in Cambridge, including a lack of funding for the arts; the increasing scarcity of affordable workspaces; inadequate diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Cambridge arts community; and a need for greater collaboration among City agencies to streamline programs and permitting. The City has already adopted some of the recommendations of the Task Force and taken steps to act on many of the other recommendations.

The final Task Force report emphasizes the importance of the City acquiring real estate for artist space, given the decreasing affordability of existing spaces. It notes, "The City has already invested in The Foundry, which is a multi-use STEAM building in East Cambridge." The report encourages the City to continue identifying unused City-owned spaces that could be repurposed for the arts and to acquire real estate for arts uses.

Comments on Development Proposal

Zoning Standards

The proposal is to alter the existing building to accommodate a variety of non-residential uses within a total GFA of 50,200 square feet. The various components include 12,950 square feet for a community center (4.33(e)(2) in the Table of Use Regulations), 23,350 square feet for general office use (4.34(d)), 4,750 square feet for a theatre (identified in Section 4.35(h)), and 6,450 square feet for art/craft studios (identified in Section 4.35(q)). Although these are all considered distinct principal uses in zoning, they are intended to function as an integrated whole served by common space inside and outside the building.

The proposal conforms to the limitations of Section 13.59.10 by remaining below the FAR limit of 3.0 and devoting at least 10,000 square feet to educational, cultural, or institutional uses as listed in Section 4.33 with the inclusion of a community center. Although the other proposed uses are not listed in Section 4.33, the proposed theater and arts/crafts studio uses are supportive of the City's goals for the arts. The office space is intended to complement other uses in the building and provide revenue to support the arts and community components of the center.

The building height will be increased slightly from 43'-6" to 45', which is the maximum allowed for the site. As a non-residential building in the IA-1 district, setbacks and open space are generally not required and therefore the existing building is conforming with the exception of one setback issue requiring a special permit (described below). The proposal would decrease the total amount of open space slightly from 37% of the lot area to 34% of the lot area but would substantially increase the permeable open space; there are no minimum open space requirements for a non-residential use in this district. The project will provide bicycle parking and one loading bay to comply with zoning requirements for the proposed uses.

Special Permits

In addition to the Project Review Special Permit, which requires review of the transportation impacts (discussed in the TP+T memo) and urban design characteristics (discussed in the next section of this memo) of the project, the proposal seeks special permit relief in three areas:

- **Theatre Use:** All of the uses proposed for The Foundry are allowed as-of-right except for the theatre, which is a "conditional use" allowed by special permit. Conditional use special permits are normally supposed to be granted except if the special permit granting authority finds that there would be a detrimental public impact based on the unique characteristics of the proposal or site.

Given the City's aforementioned interest in supporting the arts, the proposed theatre would not be in conflict with City planning objectives. Traffic impacts, which are another consideration for conditional uses, are addressed in the Transportation Impact Study, which has been reviewed by the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department (TP+T). Other considerations include noise and other potential impacts on adjacent uses, particularly residential uses. Mechanical equipment on the roof is located away from residential uses and will be surrounded by a sound barrier to provide noise mitigation. Additional information about the operation of the theater would help to assess other potential impacts on residential neighbors, such as hours of operation for the theatre, use of outdoor spaces, and outdoor lighting.

- **Alterations Within Setback:** Generally speaking, zoning allows non-conforming setbacks to be maintained as-of-right, but a special permit is required where new windows or other openings are created in a wall that encroaches into a required setback. There are usually no setback requirements for a non-residential use in IA-1 except where it abuts a residential use. In this case, the new residential building at 249 Third Street creates a non-conforming setback even though the actual setback distance will not be changed.

The project proposes to replace historic window openings that were infilled with brick with new glass openings that match the historic fenestration pattern, restoring a key feature of this landmark building and creating a positive historic preservation outcome. The Foundry and the adjacent residential building will also be separated by a border fence at the ground level, so the proposed new openings will be visually screened.

- **Parking:** The third special permit that the applicant seeks is to waive the 83 off-street parking spaces that would be required for the proposed mix of uses. It is proposed to create two accessible on-street spaces on the opposite side of Rogers Street (which is a private street) as part of an

agreement with the abutting property owner. The application materials include a Parking Analysis to support the request, which has been reviewed by TP+T. The purpose of this analysis is to assess the actual parking demand for the entire proposal, including the potential for reduced overall parking demand when different uses are active at different times throughout the day and week. The uses proposed would likely generate peak demand at different times. The accompanying memo from TP+T provides more comments on the Parking Analysis.

The Planning Board can approve the waiver of required parking if it is found not to have a significant adverse effect on parking availability in the area, considering factors such as off-site parking facilities and transit options, both of which are available in the area and identified in the application. It should be noted that the Kendall Center Blue Garage is identified as one of the commercial parking facilities that could accommodate users, but recent discussions around a proposed Eversource electrical substation indicate that that garage may be demolished and rebuilt in the future.

Another consideration for granting the special permit is how the design of the project might be negatively impacted by building the required parking spaces. By not providing parking on-site, the project is able to accommodate universal access, provide appropriate floor-to-floor heights for arts uses, and facilitate preservation of the historic building.

Urban Design Comments

The Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) granted a certificate of appropriateness for this project at its meeting on December 5, 2019 and delegated review and approval of details of the masonry restoration, building cladding material, landscape design, and building entry to the CHC staff.

As noted above, the project preserves, restores and reuses the existing Foundry Building, which is consistent with citywide urban design objectives. Additionally, the project will activate a currently underutilized building and streetscape, thereby creating a neighborhood amenity as well as a connected and a pedestrian-friendly public realm. Specific design guidance can be found in the Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines; a summary of relevant guidelines is included in the Special Permit Criteria Appendix.

Built form - massing

The new addition is sited on the western side of the original building, within the footprint of a more recent CMU addition that will be removed. The addition will face both Rogers and Bent Streets, and has been carefully set back from the historic façades. The contemporary nature of the addition offsets the more robust, historic brick structure, creating an appropriate juxtaposition between old and new in an evolving district.

Façade design and details

While the existing building's historic masonry will be restored, the new addition will be clad in metal wall panels that clearly distinguish it from the original construction. Due to constraints associated with the proximity of the property lines, opportunities for new windows in the addition are limited. This is particularly noticeable at the northern end of the addition facing Bent Street. Notwithstanding these limitations, the playfulness of the metal panel with its vertical striations and metallic finish (as evidenced

in the precedent images) provides visual interest on Rogers Street and celebrates the public and theatrical nature of the building. Similarly, the building entrance on Rogers Street will be given prominence with the addition of a portal made of perforated metal, related in color to the addition's wall cladding material. As part of the continuing review process, it will be important to ensure that the selected metallic finish for the cladding and entry portal does not result in glare issues. Consideration should be given to enhancing transparency and visibility through the Rogers Street portal.

The reveal between the addition and the existing building is somewhat unclear in the renderings (refer to sheet A-15); staff would have preferred to see exploration of more depth, particularly between the addition and the existing building's upper mass. Similarly, the transition between the west plane of metallic cladding and the front brick façade at the Bent Street end of the building appears unresolved in the renderings (refer to A-16). While the brick does turn the corner, it is unclear if the downspout obscures the junction or if the metal panel is held away from the brick. Staff suggests continuing review of these transition details as the project advances.

To preserve the integrity of the architectural and historical aspects of the façade's original foundation wall, specifically its continuous interface with the ground plane, staff recommends providing a continuous perimeter separation space between the wall and landscaped areas, planters, and built-in seating around the building to the maximum extent possible.

Various details have been reviewed by the CHC in its consideration of the project. Some of the details are more modern in character, such as the box gutters and the rake flashing; however, these have been considered appropriate. While the CHC approved the design of the perforated metal entrance enclosure, they anticipated that this feature might undergo further evolution during CDD staff and Planning Board review. If the design of the enclosure is substantially revised, it must go back to the full CHC for further review at a public hearing.

Mechanical equipment and services

Mechanical equipment will primarily be located in a mechanical penthouse on top of the addition, with some ductwork, vents, and Photovoltaics installed on the roof of the existing building. The penthouse will be set back from the Rogers Street façade. The Penthouse appears to be very subtle in the renderings; it will be important to review the proposed screening materials in detail to ensure appropriate material finish, color, and detailing. It should be no taller than necessary to hide roof top equipment. In addition, the elevations should be amended to clearly show all other rooftop appurtenances.

Loading will be via Rogers Street into a small dock located in the addition. The color and material of the loading dock door should be carefully selected relative to the addition's metal cladding system.

Open space, public realm, and pedestrian and bicycle connections

The major public realm improvements associated with the project involve the transformation of Rogers Street into a shared street and the creation of "The Yard," which provides a pedestrian connection between Rogers and Bent Streets, usable open space, and bicycle parking areas. These improvements will help create a more pleasant, accommodating, and connective public realm.

If possible, consideration could be given to providing more curbside street trees at a reduced spacing on Rogers Street, adding street trees at the northeast and southeast corners of the site, and to providing continuous street trees on the south side of Rogers Street.

The Landscape Plan (refer to L-1) indicates that artificial turf will be used at the southern entrance of The Yard; however, the perspective shows grass. Natural grass and plantings are preferred over artificial materials.

At the loading dock, it would be helpful to show the bollards in plan (see sheet A-15), and to clarify if such separation is necessary. Consideration should also be given to extending the pavers across the loading driveway for greater continuity along the street edge, and consistency with the pavers proposed on Roger's Street.

Looking more broadly at access within the building, the elevators are located in the new addition, at some distance from the building entrance and main stairs. The proposed location is obscure from a wayfinding perspective and will be heavily reliant on signage. Opportunities to improve the elevator location should be further studied.

Shadow and noise studies have been submitted with the design review application materials. Given the scale of the addition, the impacts are expected to be negligible.

Sustainability

The proposed project is subject to the Green Building Requirements in Section 22.20 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. Section 22.20, which was recently amended in December 2019, requires projects over 50,000 square feet GFA to be designed to meet the USGBC LEED Certification, Gold level. According to the Green Building submission, the proposed project is currently proposed to achieve a LEED Gold standard under LEED v4 New Construction and Major Renovation, with 66 "Yes" credit points, and an additional 19 points designated as "possible." The project is also pursuing LEED's Enhanced Commissioning Credit, which is a requirement under the recently amended zoning. As required, the submission includes a Net Zero Narrative providing details of design considerations to reduce energy use with regard to building envelope, HVAC systems, hot water systems, solar energy, and renewable energy.

The project is also pursuing LEED's Integrative Design Process credit, which promotes high-performance, cost-effective project outcomes through the early analysis, synergies across disciplines and building systems, assembling and involving the Project Team early in the design and development process, and engaging in design charrettes and trades training sessions. Staff supports this approach to the design and construction of green buildings.

The proposal follows many of the general approaches recommended in the City's Net Zero Action Plan, while acknowledging that some interventions are challenging due to the historic nature of building. Envelope performance will be improved by insulating above the roof membrane and installing high-performance windows and skylights; however, additional interior or exterior wall insulation are not proposed given the desire to preserve the existing masonry walls. High-efficiency, all-electric building systems are proposed, eliminating the use of fossil fuel energy on-site. A photovoltaic array proposed on part of the roof will provide about a quarter of the building's energy; full roof coverage could account

for closer to half of the energy use, but would require more significant structural improvements that were reported not to be cost feasible at this time.

Beyond meeting the minimum Green Building Requirements, this project incorporates many positive elements such as high-performance windows and roof cladding, full electrification, and solar energy. Additional improvements that could be sought as the project is further refined include the following:

- Consider pursuing additional points for Energy and Atmosphere credits under Optimize Energy Performance and Demand Response.
- Consider pursuing additional points for Regional Priority credits related to Indoor Water Use Reduction.
- Consider implementing the additional 15-25 kW on-site energy production mentioned in the Net Zero narrative.
- Though there are limitations on pursuing envelope commissioning, better glazing performance could be considered with improved U-value for the additional windows.
- Consider referencing the current ASHRAE energy standards that comply with current building codes.

Staff will continue to work with the Applicant through continuing design review. The project will be reviewed again at the building permit and certificate of occupancy stages to certify that it remains in compliance with the Green Building Requirements.

Continuing Review

CDD staff have met with the project team on multiple occasions to discuss the proposal and provide comments. Staff are appreciative of the project team's efforts to shape this proposal, and look forward to continued collaboration as the project moves forward.

The following is a summary of issues that may be addressed further at the public hearing, or may be incorporated into conditions for continuing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- More information about the theatre use, including hours of operation and expected spillover activity outside the building, to assess potential effects on neighboring residences and how they might be mitigated.
- Updated elevations to more accurately show rooftop equipment on top of the existing building e.g., the elevator overrun, ductwork, and vents.
- Review of outdoor lighting design and specifications. Lighting should be designed to minimize light trespass, using the recommendations of the draft Outdoor Lighting Ordinance as guidance.
- Review of the internal ground floor layout of the building to consider improved universal access from the entrance to the elevators.
- Review of all exterior materials, colors, and details, including a materials wall mock-up of the addition on the site prior to any exterior materials being ordered. The mock-up should be sited to match the orientation of predominant public facades, in a location where varying light conditions can be experienced. Focus of this exercise should be the addition, particularly the selected color and perforations.

- Review of historic renovation details (including masonry restoration, window details, and colors) in conjunction with the CHC staff, and of details where the new addition meets the existing building.
- Review of all proposed public realm, open space, and streetscape design details and materials, including details of the shared street, planting materials, and loading driveway.