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# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

**SANDRA CLARKE**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Administration

Date: September 5, 2023

**KHALIL MOGASSABI**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Planning

Re: **PB-390 Design Update**

The following reflects the CDD staff review of the Design Update to PB-390 (57 JFK Street), which was submitted by the applicant for the Board's discussion and approval. This design update proposes the reconfiguration of the building entrance facing JFK Street to include a new entry to the basement tenant space and a new partial infill at the second floor. Following submittal of the application materials, CDD staff met with the applicant to discuss the proposed design. The primary suggestion to the applicant was to translate the design language of the previously approved Winthrop Street building entrance to this location, as the proposed reconfiguration would result in both locations becoming spatially similar.

### General Comments:

Staff supports the aims of the proposed changes illustrated in the amendment drawings. The inclusion of the stairway to the basement tenant further activates the streetscape through an additional entrance that provides an opportunity for the inclusion of art or unique branding on the rear wall. While it is unfortunate to lose the volume and proportions of the current double-height entry space, the infill will make the interior activities more visible by bringing them closer to the street, while still providing an interstitial covered threshold space on the first-floor level.

### Specific Comments:

Staff acknowledges the positive changes and updates that have been made in response to earlier comments. However, staff feel further opportunities to advance the design and bring it into closer alignment with the previously approved Winthrop St entrance remain.

- **Architectural Frame** - The current design (Sheet A5) doesn't incorporate the thin two-story frame composed of darker bronze cladding depicted for the entrance at Winthrop Street in the approved renderings (See images below) Staff feels this framing device more successfully aligns the scale of the entrance with that of the building and retains the proportions of the existing entry volume. The frame also clearly demarcates it as a primary public entrance, and visually differentiates it from the individual tenant entrances. Staff suggests similar design language be applied at the JFK St entrance.

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*Approved Winthrop St Entrance (Pg 8)*



*Proposed JFK St Entrance (Sheet A5)*



- **Exterior Column** - The column located at the left side of the entrance inset (Sheet A 2.1, Sheet A5) is the only instance of a disengaged column and could appear out of place within the context of the overall building language. Staff suggests that it be treated in a similar manner as its counterpart on the right side of the entrance inset.
- **Exterior Entry Stairs** – The stair’s handrails will likely need to extend beyond the plane of the bottom riser per Building Code. In this case, the current position of the stairs would cause the handrails to project into the sidewalk and past the property line. Staff suggests pushing the stairs further into the space, which would both allow adequate room for the handrail extensions as well as create space at the bottom of the stairs so that patrons aren’t exiting directly onto the sidewalk. The bottom of the stairs could potentially be aligned with the east façade of the new enclosure of the basement stairs.
- **Spandrel** – The signage spandrel on the proposed Winthrop Street Entrance depicted on the approved renderings has thin projecting edges along the top and bottom, which add depth and shadow to the composition. Staff recommend that condition be replicated for the spandrel at the proposed JFK Street entrance.
- **Soffit** – The Winthrop Street entrance depicted in the included renderings shows the underside of the soffit clad in a wood material that mirrors the undersides of the upper-level balconies. Staff recommends the same material be used at the proposed JFK Street entrance.
- **Doors** – Sheet A1 depicts doors into the building at the rear of the recessed entry space into both the building and egress stairs, which are not depicted in Sheets A3-5. The rendered elevations should be updated to accurately reflect this condition so it can be reviewed.
- **Materials** – As noted in the Planning Board decision, Condition 4.d, proposed façade materials, colors, joint patterns, profiles, through-wall vents, and architectural treatments, including those shown in this amendment, will be addressed through continuing design review with CDD Staff.

- **Lighting** – As the height of the entry space is lower due to the second-floor infill, the amount of natural light into the space will be reduced. Lighting will be critical to maintaining a safe and inviting entrance. Sheet A5 depicts a well-lit condition. Staff stresses the importance of ensuring the final condition replicates what is depicted, while ensuring the lighting conforms to the City’s Draft Outdoor Lighting Ordinance recommendations.
- **Signage** – Staff acknowledges that signage is handled under a separate permitting process. However, staff recommends that signage for the new entrance should span the width of the spandrel to match the approved Winthrop Street entry to denote this as a building entrance.

### **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 discussion to a future date, or as conditions for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant design approval:

1. All exterior materials, colors, and details associated with the new entry way and infill, including the signage spandrel.
2. Position of exterior entry stairs in plan.
3. Exterior lighting locations and specifications. Lighting should be designed to conform to the guidelines recommended in the City’s Draft Outdoor Lighting Ordinance.