



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: June 1, 2023

Re: Special Permit **PB-396, 48-50 Bishop Allen Drive**

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Overview

Submission Type:	Special Permit Application
Applicant:	Dobia Properties Corp.
Zoning District(s):	Business B, Central Square Overlay District
Proposal Summary:	Demolish the existing building and construct a new residential development with 22 dwelling units. The final gross floor area would be 23,603 square feet.
Special Permits Requested:	Additional Height in Central Square Overlay (Section 20.304.2.2); Waiver of Setback Requirements (Section 20.304.4.1); Waiver of Open Space Requirements (Section 20.204.4.2)
Other City Permits Needed:	Historical Commission
Planning Board Action:	Grant or deny requested special permits.
Memo Contents:	CDD Zoning Report & Urban Design Report
Other Staff Reports:	Department of Public Works (DPW), Central Square Advisory Committee in separate documents.

Zoning Section	Required Planning Board Findings <i>(Summary - see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Central Square Overlay District: Standards for Issuance of Special Permits (Section 20.305)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed development is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Central Square Action Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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. • 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” (see summary on following pages). • Building and site designs adequately screen the parking provided and are sensitive to the contributing buildings in the vicinity. • No National Register or contributing building is demolished or so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation (either now or within the past 5 years).
Central Square Overlay District: Building height up to 80 feet by Special Permit (Section 20.304.2.2)	<p><i>Central Square Overlay District findings set forth above.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those portions in excess of sixty (60) feet are set back from the street line at least ten (10) feet and that those portions are also set back from one or more forty-five degree (45°) bulk control planes beginning sixty (60) feet above any streetline in the district and rising over one or more lots at a forty-five degree (45°) angle.
Central Square Overlay District: Waiver of setback requirements by Special Permit (Section 20.304.4.1)	<p><i>Central Square Overlay District findings set forth above.</i></p>
Central Square Overlay District: Waiver open space	<p><i>Central Square Overlay District findings set forth above.</i></p>

Zoning Section	Required Planning Board Findings <i>(Summary - see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
requirements by Special Permit (Section 20.304.4.2)	
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.

Zoning & Development Staff Report

Area Planning and Zoning

Site Context

Neighborhood/Area: Central Square

Development Patterns: The site is located at the eastern end of Central Square on the same block as the recent Market Central development. Building heights and sizes vary; most buildings are built to the lot line and do not provide off-street parking. The site faces Bishop Allen Drive where buildings begin to transition from the mixed-use commercial character of Central Square into the high-density residential character of the Port neighborhood. The area to the north of the site includes a mix of single-, two-, and multifamily houses, typically three stories tall.

Nearby Features: The site is a few blocks away from the MBTA Central Square Station. There are nearby Bluebikes stations and stops for the Route 1 MBTA bus. The nearby Brown-Rhone Park and Lafayette Square create a triangular plaza at the corner where Main Street and Massachusetts Avenue meet.



Site context for 48-50 Bishop Allen Drive (Source: Nearmap, 2023)

Site Zoning

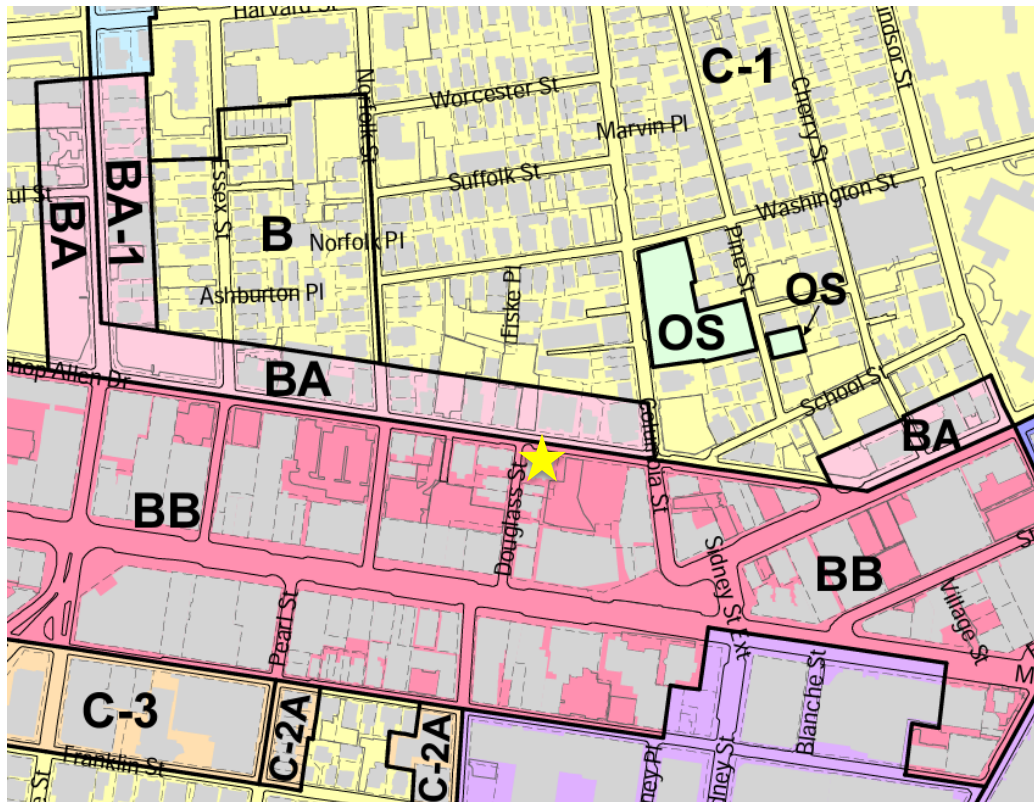
General description: The base zoning for the site is Business B (BB). Business B allows a wide range of typical neighborhood business uses, as well as office and residential uses. The district dimensional standards allow higher-density development, with maximum heights up to 80 feet and floor-area ratios (FAR) up to 3.00. Residential uses are allowed as-of-right in Business B zoning districts and must follow the same dimensional requirements and other restrictions as residential uses in Residence C-3 zoning districts, with maximum heights up to 120 feet and FAR up to 3.00.

The site is also in the Central Square Overlay District (CSOD), which modifies base zoning provisions both as-of-right and by special permit. Within CSOD, all Residential uses in the Business B base zoning district have a 4.0 as-of-right FAR limitation. Use provisions for certain outdoor retail or consumer service establishments were recently amended in the Central Square Overlay District. However, these amendments are not applicable to this proposal.

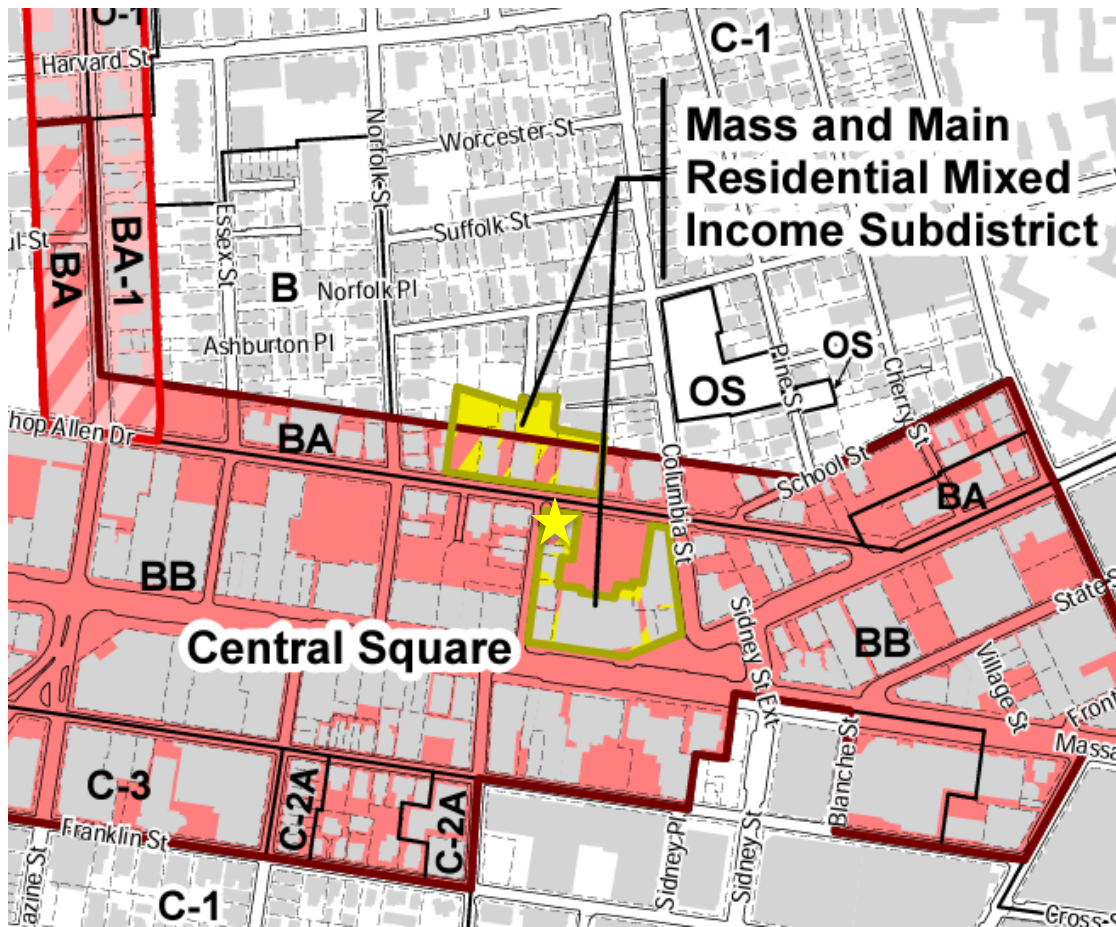
The site is located within the “Mass and Main Residential Mixed Income Subdistrict.” Within this subdistrict, developers may elect to conform to the provisions of zoning Section 20.307, which incentivizes projects with mixed income residential and active ground floor retail. The Applicant has not elected to conform to the provisions of this subdistrict, so the provisions of the underlying base zoning district and applicable Central Square Overlay District provisions apply.

	Base District	Special Dimensional Standards Applicable to Dwellings in BB Districts	Overlay District(s)
District(s):	Business B (BB)	Residence C-3 (C-3)	Central Square Overlay District (CSOD)
Allowed Uses:	Most types of residential dwellings; most institutional uses; offices and laboratories; most retail uses	N/A (only modifies dimensional standards, not uses)	No applicable modifications from base zoning
Max. Building Height	80'	120'	55' (80' allowed by Planning Board Special Permit, subject to specific bulk control plane restrictions)
Max. FAR/GFA	3.00	3.00	4.00 for all Residential uses

Required Setbacks	No minimum	Front Yard: (H+L) / 5 At least 5' Side Yard: (H+L) / 6 Rear Yard: (H+L) / 5 At least 20'	Generally, base requirements apply but may be waived by Planning Board Special Permit
Required Open Space	No minimum	10%	Base requirements apply, but may be waived or permitted at levels other than grade by Planning Board Special Permit



Base Zoning Map (Source: City of Cambridge)



Overlay Zoning Map (Source: City of Cambridge)

Development Plans and Guidelines

- [Central Square Overlay District](#). The Central Square Overlay District (CSOD) was created in 1989 following a planning study that established development goals and guidelines for the area; it was also amended in 2017 through a community-led initiative following the K2C2 study. There are a variety of plans and guidelines focused on Central Square, including the [Kendall Square Central Square Planning Study - K2C2 \(2013\)](#), the [Central Square Action Plan](#), and the [Central Square Development Guidelines](#). Overall, these documents envision a Central Square with a strong retail base made up of local, independent retailers; an active arts community; vibrant public spaces; new and historic buildings that are compatible with each other; and more housing options. In granting a special permit for a project in the CSOD, the Planning Board is required to follow Section 20.305 Standards for Issuance of Special Permits, which ensures that the objectives of the [Central Square Action Plan](#) and the [Central Square Development Guidelines](#) are met, and that no National Register-listed buildings are altered so that they would lose their designation.

Current Proposal

Overview

The Applicant proposes to demolish an existing 3-story, 11-unit residential rental building and construct a seven story, 22-unit residential building. The new residential building will be approximately 23,603 square feet and consist of two one-bedroom units, 18 two-bedroom units, and two three-bedroom units. Neither the existing nor proposed building includes off-street parking. Long-term and short-term bicycle parking is proposed on the ground floor.

Proposed Uses

The Application proposes the following uses on the site:

Proposed Uses	Location/Size	Allowed/Special Permit?
4.31.g. Multifamily dwelling	22 residential units over 7 stories	Multifamily dwelling uses are allowed as-of-right

Proposed Dimensions

The Application proposes the following dimensions for development on the site:

Dimension	Proposal	Relief Sought?
Gross Floor Area (GFA)	23,603	No relief sought
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	4.58	No relief sought
Height and Stories	69'11"	Special Permit for additional height per Section 20.304.2.2
Setbacks	<p>Front Yard: Bishop Allen Drive – 5' Douglas Street – 5'</p> <p>Side Yard: Left – 5' Right – 5'</p> <p>Rear Yard: N/A to corner lots</p>	<p>Special Permit for waiver of yard setbacks per Section 20.304.4.1.</p> <p>Front Yard: Relief sought for Bishop Allen Drive and Douglass Street.</p> <p>Side Yard: Relief sought for side yards.</p>
Open Space	1,858 S.F. of private open space provided on patios and balconies, all less than 15' by 15.'	Special Permit per Section 20.304.4.2 to allow Private Open Space located at levels other than at grade and to allow it to comprise more than 25% of the total Private Open Space.

The applicant is seeking several special permits through the Central Square Overlay District. The project is additionally utilizing the Inclusionary Bonus in Section 11.200, which allows an additional 30% of residential GFA and an increase of allowable dwelling units by 30%.

Building Height

The Applicant is seeking a special permit under Section 20.304.2 of the Zoning Ordinance to increase the building height to 69'11." As noted above, the Central Square Overlay District allows the Planning Board to approve heights up to 80' provided that those portions of the building above 60' feet are set back at least 10' and at a 45° angle from the street line. Sheets A300-303 appear to show that the proposed design meets these minimums, but additional detail showing these distances and the setback drawn from the street centerline could be provided.

FAR

The Applicant is proposing a total residential FAR of approximately 4.58, inclusive of the Inclusionary Bonus (there are instances in the application with minor discrepancies in the listed FAR that require correction). The allowable residential GFA on this site would therefore be 20,600 SF. This GFA may be increased by up to 30% to 26,780 SF, if such additional GFA is used for residential uses not including a hotel or motel use. The applicant is proposing a total of 23,533 SF of residential uses. The application notes that 20% of the proposed floor area is set aside for affordable housing units. This is not consistent with the application document later stating that 3,523 SF will be devoted exclusively to affordable housing. Additional clarification or corrections should be provided. The final configuration and allotted inclusionary square footage will require approval by Housing staff.

Yard Setbacks and Required Open Space

The Applicant is seeking special permits to waive the setback and open space requirements under Section 20.304.4. The base zoning for this site, Business B, does not require any setbacks. However, since residential uses in Business B zoning districts must follow the same dimensional requirements and other restrictions as residential uses in Residence C-3 zoning districts per [Section 5.28.1](#), this project would require waivers to the front and side yard setbacks (no yard is considered a rear yard on a corner lot).

Similarly, while there is no open space requirement in the Business B district, the Residence C-3 district requires that 10% of the lot area is reserved for private open space. It is important to note that the recently adopted Climate Resiliency Zoning has modified elements of the open space requirements that may be applicable to this project. Private Open Space, as recently amended in the recently-adopted Climate Resiliency Zoning, includes the following elements:

- May not have a slope greater than ten percent (10%).
- With the exception of balconies, Private Open Space must have both a width and a length of at least fifteen (15) feet and shall be accessible to all occupants of a building.
- At least fifty percent (50%) of the required private open space shall be provided at ground level, within ten (10) feet of the level of the lowest floor used for residential purposes, or elevated to the 1%-Probability Long-Term Flood Elevation as determined by the Flood Resilience Standards set forth in Section 22.80 of this Zoning Ordinance.

- Areas at other levels, such as balconies, decks, and roofs of garages and buildings, may be calculated as Private Open Space if they are accessible to all occupants of buildings, are not used as walkways or corridors, have both a width and a length of at least six (6) feet, and have a minimum area of seventy-two (72) square feet.
- Any other Private Open Space, such as balconies and decks accessible only to some building occupants, shall count for no more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the required Private Open Space.”

At the ground level the applicant proposes a combination of landscaped and permeable area that does not meet the minimum required dimensions of 15’ by 15’. Other Private Open Space is shown on private residential balconies and exceeds the permitted 25% of required Private Open Space. These elements would require the issuance of a waiver by the Planning Board.

Additional details on the open space and related stormwater management can be found in the DPW staff memo.

Flood Elevations and Stormwater Management

Per the DPW memo, the Application uses outdated Flood Elevation maps. The updated flood elevations dated March 2022 are considerably higher with potential impacts on the elevation of first floor residential units, the transformer, and the design of the lobby. DPW staff recommends submission of additional information by the applicant prior to the Planning Board granting a Special Permit for the Project.

Proposed Parking, Bicycle Parking, and Loading

The proposal includes no off-street parking spaces, which is consistent with the recently-adopted zoning amendment to eliminate all off-street parking requirements. Developers building more than 4 units of housing are required to provide a written report detailing the number of proposed parking and loading spaces, and how that number was determined, including any surveys, parking demand studies or other research that was conducted. In compliance with this requirement, the applicant has provided reports detailing traffic counts and proposed conditions. In consultation with TP+T and E&T staff, the Applicant has agreed to a program of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures attached in a communication from the PTDM Planner to be included as conditions of a decision.

The Dimensional Form notes the provision of 24 long-term bicycle parking spaces in a ground floor facility and 4 short-term spaces located near the building entrance. In order to determine whether the proposed bike parking spaces are compliant with the City’s design standards, the Applicant should provide a Bicycle Parking Plan at a scale of 1’:10” that details the design of the proposed rack types and the path of travel from the public streets to the long-term bicycle parking.

Other Zoning Requirements

- *Green Building Requirements:* This project is not required to comply with the Green Building Requirements or Green Roofs requirement since it is less than 25,000 square feet.

- *Green Factor Standard:* CDD staff received the Green Factor Report (GFR) for the Special Permit Stage and found that the project adequately demonstrates compliance with the Green Factor Standard pursuant to Section 22.96 of the Zoning Ordinance. The Solar Reflectance Index of the roof was reported as 84 and the cool factor score as 1.28.
- *Inclusionary Zoning Requirements:* The application materials include tables showing the unit sizes by gross and net floor area. In order for staff to evaluate the units for their compliance with the Inclusionary Housing Requirements, it will be important to accurately reflect the net floor area of each unit as well as other residential spaces. The proposal includes a mix of unit sizes, but primarily consists of 2-bedroom units. Because the project is subject to Inclusionary Housing Requirements, 20% of the net floor area will need to be devoted to units that are permanently affordable.

Advisory Review

Central Square Advisory Committee (CSAC) reviewed the proposal pursuant to the provisions of Section 20.300 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. The Committee voted to forward a report to the Planning Board with a positive recommendation. The Committee report and comments are included with the Planning Board’s materials.

Non-Zoning Requirements

- Historical Commission review
 - The property is not listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In October 2019 the Cambridge Historical Commission found 48-50 Bishop Allen Drive to be significant but not preferably preserved under the demolition delay ordinance and as such was not a Contributing Building per Section 20.303.3 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- PTDM
 - Although not required to conduct a TIS, the applicant has agreed to a program of TDM measures for the Project.

Community Engagement

According to the applicant’s Pre-application Community Engagement summary, four community meetings were held between December 2020 and September 2022 and noted the number of attendees, the types of invitations sent, and the comments received. These summaries are included in Volume 1 of the final application submission.

Specific issues raised during these meetings included the amount of available parking in the area, the architectural relationship of the building to the neighborhood, the preservation of the existing tree on Douglass Street, the inactive façade at street level, and plans for construction management and tenant relocation.

Special Permit Conditions

If the Board decides to grant the special permit, the following list summarizes the general categories of conditions recommended for this development based on the requested special permits:

1. **Approved Development:** Authorized development would need to conform with the submitted application materials. An Approved Dimensional Form would be attached as an Appendix.
2. **Design Review:** CDD staff would review and approve design details at the construction documents phase, prior to issuance of a building permit, to certify that the plans conform to the Planning Board’s approval. Board members may cite specific areas of focus for detailed review, based on the Urban Design Report and Board discussion.
3. **Transportation and Infrastructure:** Work being done on City property would be subject to review and approval by appropriate City departments, including DPW, TP+T and CDD. Transportation mitigation measures agreed to by the applicant would be included as conditions. DPW approvals and requirements for flood elevation and stormwater management approvals would also be included as conditions.
4. **Housing:** Development will be subject to Inclusionary Housing requirements, which will be certified by the CDD Housing staff at the building permit and certificate of occupancy stages. Specifically, the correct allocation of square footage to affordable units will need to be additionally confirmed.
5. **Construction Management Program:** Per Section 18.20, staff would recommend a Construction Management Program be provided and approved by TP+T, DPW, and other applicable City departments before issuance of a building permit. This program would also include a community outreach program designating a point of contact to provide information to the public during the construction process and notification panels posted on the site with project information.

Appendix - Zoning Text Excerpts

Special Permit for Additional Height in Central Square Overlay

20.304.2.2 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 provided that those portions in excess of sixty (60) feet are set back from the street line at least ten (10) feet and that those portions are also set back from one or more forty-five degree (45°) bulk control planes beginning sixty (60) feet above any streetline in the district and rising over one or more lots at a forty-five degree (45°) angle.

Special Permit for Waiver of Setback and Open Space Requirements in Central Square Overlay

20.304.4 Waiver of Setback and Open Space Requirements.

1. Yard Setbacks. Upon issuance of a special permit from the Planning Board the yard requirements of a base zoning district may be waived except where such yard abuts a lot, but not a public way, outside the Overlay District. However, in waiving or reducing a front yard setback, the Planning Board shall take into account the width of the adjacent public sidewalk and may limit the reduction of the setback in order to provide additional sidewalk width within the front yard setback where appropriate, taking into account applicable City standards and expected pedestrian traffic on the street.

2. Private Open Space. Open Space shall be provided as required in the Base Zoning District, however the Planning Board may allow, by Special Permit, the reduction of required Open Space, and permit such Open Space to be located at levels other than at grade if the applicant can demonstrate that the urban design objectives as set forth in the Central Square Overlay District can be met.

General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit

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
- (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
- (g) 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
- (h) 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

Urban Design Staff Report

Urban Design Comments

The proposed seven-floor twenty-two-unit residential building will replace the existing three-floor eight-unit residential building on the site. While the proposed building is taller and larger than its immediate neighbors, the project can be seen as stepping down to the lower scale residential neighborhood to the north from the 19-floor Market Central residential tower at the opposite corner of the block. The project does not provide parking, but is close to Central Square's numerous public transportation options.

The Central Square Design Guidelines (2013) focus more on buildings that front directly onto Massachusetts Avenue than on buildings that address the parallel streets, but their emphasis on streetwalls, compatibility of building heights and massing, and the provision of rich detail in ground floor facades to engage the interest of pedestrians are all relevant to the project under consideration.

Architectural Design

The building's blocky form faces the adjoining streets, the neighboring house to the southwest, and the parking lot to the southeast. A projecting corner turret emphasizes the intersection of Bishop Allen Drive and Douglass Street, and the vertical grain of the facades helps reduce the building's sense of bulk. The Bishop Allen and Douglass facades are given lightly different treatments in response to the different characters of the two streets. The detailed massing and façade designs, however, could do more to relate to the building's neighbors and to contribute to the quality of the public realm.

- Recommendations for further development of the facades include:
 - Study of the size and proportions of windows.
 - Emphasizing the windows and articulating them with additional elements such as trim, frames, or shading elements to add visual interest and to increase their apparent size.
 - Subdividing the windows with mullions to provide additional detail and create a finer grained sense of scale.
 - Widening the fenestration of the projecting bay windows to the full width of their outer faces, and providing fenestration on their short side faces.
 - Widening the windows of the corner turret to meet at the turret's angled corners, ie: eliminating the angled solid piers that currently separate these windows.
- In undertaking these refinements, further study of existing buildings in the area may be profitable: their use of detail to provide visual interest, their use of contrast between simple surfaces and more heavily articulated elements, their use of detail to add visual interest, the treatment of their first floors, etc.
- To enhance the building's contribution to the framing of Bishop Allen Drive, consideration should be given to giving the three bay windows on the building's northeast side a consistent shape parallel to the street (as shown on the cover of the application's Volume 1), rather than angling two of them in plan (as shown in volume 2).

- To further delineate the space of Bishop Allen Drive and Douglas Street, consideration could be given to expanding the corner turret in plan so as to align its outer facets with the outer faces of the building's bay windows and balconies.
- To establish a more sympathetic relationship with the neighboring buildings, consideration should be given to eliminating the open top floor of the corner turret: matching the level of its top with that of the building's bay windows and balconies instead of extending it up through the sixth floor.
- In response to the scale of the adjoining two-story house on Douglass Street, consideration should be given to stepping down the height of building's southwest side.
- The building's southwest elevation - facing the neighboring building on Douglass Street and the interior of the block - is flat, but is designed in imitation of the bay windows on the building's northeast side. To reduce the building's tendency to read as a free-standing element and so to collaborate more effectively with its neighbors in creating a legible urban block, a design strategy that treats this portion of the building more as side - interior to the block - and less as a modified version of a front, could be explored.
- Consideration could be given to creating a deeper setback on a portion of the building's southwest side. While doing so would impact the building's gross square footage and perhaps its unit count, it could improve the building's relationship to the adjoining building on Douglass Street.
- To further reduce the building's sense of bulk, more irregular massing options for the building's top floor should be explored.

The building fills most of the site, leaving little open space at ground level. As a result, the contributions of its first-floor facades to the pedestrian experience are particularly important.

- Materials and details, the potential for the incorporation of art, the location and proportions of openings, the treatment of solid wall areas, and the appearance of the lobby as seen through its windows should all be explored for their contributions to the public realm.
- Consideration should be given to establishing a more decisive division between the first-floor façade and the residential floors – a datum line that separates distinguishes the ground level “people zone” from the building's upper volume.

Staff appreciates that the building's transformer is located inside the building rather than as a site feature. The transformer room's access door and ventilation louver panels are located on the Bishop Allen Drive façade and are combined to create a very large façade element - about 15 feet wide and tall - which has a considerable impact on the ground floor façade.

- Consideration should be given to treating the transformer room's tall louvers and door as compositional elements that deliberately extend through the division between the first and upper floor facades.
- According to the Eversource requirements included on the first-floor plan (sheet A100) the minimum width of the access door is 10 feet. The feasibility of using a smaller door than is currently proposed should be explored, as well as the possibilities of reducing the area of the louvers and of locating them on the building's northeast side instead its Bishop Allen Drive front.

Wall mounted downlights are shown on either side of the louvers and door to the transformer room.

- The need for lighting in this location should be evaluated, and more subdued alternatives should be considered.

Two different types of cementitious panels are proposed for exterior cladding: at the top floor and the balcony faces, a system with exposed aluminum reglets in the joints, and elsewhere, an open joint rain screen system.

- Staff discourages the use of the system with the aluminum reglets. In numerous existing installations in Cambridge, the panels of this system are warped, the joints are uneven, and the aluminum reglets meet awkwardly. A more substantial material - one more conducive to successful installation - should be substituted.
- The panels of the rain screen system are large. Consideration should be given to substituting a material with a scale more in keeping with the materials of the neighboring buildings.

It is not clear from the application how ventilation will be provided for unit kitchens, laundries, and bathrooms.

- Consideration should be given to extending ductwork up to the roof, rather than using through-wall vents, at least on the building's two front facades.
- If through-wall vents are used, they should be carefully located as elements of the façade design.

The window glazing appears to be very reflective in the renderings.

- Additional information should be provided regarding glazing specifications.

The lobby is shown as open to the long-term bicycle storage area; the space remaining for circulation and other lobby functions is very limited.

- The possibility of separating the bicycle storage room from the lobby proper should be explored.
- The possibility of reducing the size of the transformer room, so as to increase the size of the lobby, should be investigated.
- Alternative configurations should be explored for the lobby.

Many of the residential units seem to lack sufficient living space.

- Ways to increase the sizes of their living rooms, and to give them more easily furnished configurations, should be explored.

The building has a flat roof, indicated as "solar ready".

- Consideration could be given to providing a green roof and/or a rooftop photovoltaic system as part of the base building.

The building's southwest facing windows will be prone to solar heat gain.

- Consideration should be given to providing sun shading devices.

The project does not appear to particularly emphasize energy efficiency.

- Consideration could be given to utilizing the principles incorporated in “Passive House” or other systems to reduce environmental impacts.

As noted in the DPW memo, the application appears to have used Flood Elevations published several years ago that are now superseded by new ones.

- The updated elevations, dated March 2022, are considerably higher than those listed in the application, and will affect the elevation of the first-floor residential units, the transformer, and the design of the lobby.

The survey site plan on the last page of the application indicates a basement, but it is not shown elsewhere in the application.

- This should be clarified.

Site Design:

The building has fairly small front yard setbacks on Bishop Allen Drive and Douglass Street, similar to those of other nearby buildings. The setbacks are approximately 50% paved and 50% planted.

- Opportunities to increase the extent of the planting areas should be explored.
- The paving materials, configuration of the knee walls, and other features of the setback zones should be developed to further contribute to the pedestrian experience.

There are three significant trees on and adjoining the property. The existing tree within the property line at the northern corner of the site is proposed to be removed as it will be very close to the proposed building. The existing Norway Maple on Douglass Street is proposed to be removed and replaced by a Valley Forge Elm. The existing Bradford Pear on Bishop Allen Drive will be retained and protected through construction.

- Staff recommends that the existing tree on Douglass Street be retained unless there is a compelling reason to replace it. As noted in the DPW memo, the tree’s removal will require a public hearing.
- An additional new street tree on Bishop Allen Drive would further enhance the street. Unless precluded by utilities or sightlines, an additional new tree on Douglass Street would also be beneficial.

As noted in the DPW memo, the Applicant will need to obtain a Stormwater Control Permit from the Department of Public Works.

- It is not clear from the application how the design standards and operation and maintenance of the stormwater system will be addressed.

Continuing Review

The following are additional recommendations for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- Review of all exterior materials, details, and colors by city staff and the Planning Board, including a material wall mock-up on site prior to any exterior materials being ordered.
- Review of the building's ground floor and upper facades.
- Review of building massing.
- Review of design changes necessitated by the current flood elevations.
- Review of changes to accommodate stormwater requirements.
- Review the of the sitework and utility design relative to City standards and requirements.
- Review of the sitework for its contribution to the pedestrian experience.
- Review of the proposed replacement of the existing street tree on Douglass Street, and of the possibility of providing additional street trees.
- Review of exterior lighting.
- Review of the lobby design and of unit layouts for the Inclusionary housing program.
- Review of the long-term bicycle storage room.

Green Factor Standard - Article 22.000, Section 22.90 of Cambridge Zoning Ordinance

Certification for Green Factor Standard - Special Permit Stage

Project: 48-50 Bishop Allen Drive

CDD Determination and/or comments for Special Permit submission

The Community Development Department (CDD) received the Green Factor Report (GFR) for the Special Permit stage. Pursuant to Section 22.96 of the Zoning Ordinance, CDD staff have reviewed the project's GFR and provide the following Determination and Summary of Compliance.

CDD Determination: The documentation provided by the Applicant is adequate and demonstrates compliance with the Green Factor Standard applicable to the Special Permit stage.

Summary of Compliance:

- Solar Reflectance Index of Roof – 84
- Cool Score – 1.28



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board
From: Central Square Advisory Committee
Date: August 29, 2022
Re: **48-50 Bishop Allen Drive**

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

KHALIL MOGASSABI
Deputy Director
Chief of Planning

Overview

The Central Square Advisory Committee (the "Committee") met on Wednesday, July 6, 2022 to discuss the Special Permit Application for 48-50 Bishop Allen Drive.

Committee members present were Melisa Greene and Tahir Kapoor. Esther Hanig and Robert Winters joined later in the meeting. After discussion, the Committee decided to forward a report with a positive recommendation.

Proposal Description

The applicant proposes to construct a seven-story, multifamily residential building with 22 dwelling units. The building abuts and is across from buildings that are smaller in scale, but it is also proposing itself as a transition in scale and height from Market Central to the adjacent neighborhoods. The proposed development will include long-term and short-term bicycle parking; no off-street parking is proposed. The applicant is seeking several special permits from the Planning Board.

Committee Comments

Members of the Committee were supportive of the project for bringing more affordable housing to the city and liked the fact that larger units were included as part of the building design/programming. They were fine with reduced parking, as well, and while they would like to see additional open space on-site, they were accepting of the limitation.

In later conversation, some members expressed concern over the building design and aesthetic. They didn't like the use of materials and the color palette, as well as elements of the facade, such as how the corner of the building is being treated.

Public Comments

There was concern expressed about the way that the required pre-application community meeting was held for this project. The applicant stated that they will hold

another community meeting to satisfy the requirement. A member of the public expressed concern for the fate of the current tenants and said that some tenants were unaware that the building would be demolished. They were also concerned that the project will remove some below-market rentals from the neighborhood.

Respectfully submitted for the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Drew Kane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and "K".

Drew Kane
Land Use Planner
Community Development Department