

PLANNING BOARD
FOR THE
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

GENERAL HEARING
TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2023
6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Mary T. Flynn, Chair
Catherine Preston Connolly, Vice Chair
Louis J. Bacci, Jr.
Steven A. Cohen
H Theodore Cohen
Tom Sienewicz
Ashley Tan

Community Development Staff
Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager
Daniel Messplay
Mason Wells
Evan Spetrini
Adithi Moogoor
Erik Thorkildsen
Suzannah Bigolin
Brian Gregory
Khalil Mogassabi



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P R O C E E D I N G S

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(6:32 p.m.)

Sitting Members: Mary T. Flynn, Catherine Preston Connolly,
Steven A. Cohen, H Theodore Cohen, Tom
Sieniewicz, and Ashley Tan

MARY FLYNN: Good evening. Welcome to the July
18, 2023 meeting of the Cambridge Planning Board. My name
is Mary Flynn, and I am the Chair.

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted
by the Massachusetts General Court and approved by the
Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation
at meetings of the Cambridge Planning Board.

All Board members, applicants, and members of the
public will state their name before speaking. All votes
will be taken by roll call.

Members of the public will be kept on mute until
it is time for public comment. I will give instructions for
public comment at that time, and you can also find
instructions on the City's webpage for remote Planning Board
meetings.

This meeting is being video and audio recorded and

1 is being streamed live on the City of Cambridge online
2 meeting portal and on cable television Channel 22, within
3 Cambridge. There will also be a transcript of the
4 proceedings.

5 I'll start by asking Staff to take Board member
6 attendance and verify that all members are audible.

7 Daniel?

8 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you, Chair Flynn.

9 Lou Bacci, are you present, and is the meeting
10 visible and audible to you?

11 [Pause]

12 Absent.

13 DANIEL MESSPLAY: H Theodore Cohen, are you
14 present, and is the meeting visible and audible to you?

15 H THEODORE COHEN: Present, visible, and audible.

16 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Steve Cohen, are you present,
17 and is the meeting visible and audible to you?

18 STEVEN A. COHEN: Present, visible, and audible.

19 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Tom Sieniewicz, are you present,
20 and is the meeting visible and audible to you?

21 TOM SIENIEWICZ: Present, visible, audible.

22 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Hugh Russell, are you present,

1 and is the meeting visible and audible to you?

2 [Pause]

3 Absent.

4 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Ashley Tan, are you present, and
5 is the meeting visible and audible to you?

6 ASHLEY TAN: Present, visible, and audible.

7 CATHERINE PRESTON CONNOLLY: Catherine Preston
8 Connolly, are you present, and is the meeting visible and
9 audible to you?

10 CATHERINE PRESTON CONNOLLY: Present, visible, and
11 audible.

12 DANIEL MESSPLAY: And Mary Flynn, are you present,
13 and is the meeting visible and audible to you?

14 MARY FLYNN: Present, visible, and audible.

15 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you, Chair Flynn. That is
16 six members present and two members absent, which
17 constitutes a quorum.

18 MARY FLYNN: Excellent. Thank you very much.

19 * * * * *

20 (6:34 p.m.)

21 Sitting Members: Mary T. Flynn, Catherine Preston Connolly,
22 Steven A. Cohen, Theodore Cohen, Tom

1 Sieniewicz, and Ashley Tan

2 MARY FLYNN: The first item is an Update from the
3 Community Development Department. Please start by the Staff
4 present at the meeting.

5 Daniel, are you covering this?

6 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Sure. Thank you, Chair Flynn.
7 Good evening, everybody. I'll quickly introduce the other
8 City Staff that we have present at the meeting this evening.

9 With me here from the Zoning and Development
10 Division we have Mason Wells and Evan Spetrini, our
11 Associate Zoning Planners and Adithi Moogoor, our Zoning and
12 Development Intern. Also, here from CDD from the Community
13 Planning Division we Erik Thorkildsen, one of our Urban
14 Designers. I believe we will also be joined by Suzannah
15 Bigolin a little bit later for the second item.

16 I want to pause and quickly introduce a new Urban
17 Designer that we have on the CDD Staff, Brian Gregory, who
18 just joined us very recently, and you'll be seeing a lot
19 more of with future development projects.

20 And then also from CDD we have Khalil Mogassabi,
21 our CHF Planner, and Iram Farooq our Assistant City Manager
22 for Community Development. I hope I didn't miss anybody,

1 but I think that captures everybody here for right now.

2 So hope everybody is having a great summer so far
3 and staying as cool and dry as possible. I'll just start
4 with some quick Planning Board Updates.

5 So tonight, we'll have our first of two required
6 Advisory Design Consultations on an Affordable Housing
7 Overlay proposal at 1627 Mass Ave. And following that, we
8 will be discussing a Minor Amendment request for the 109
9 First Street PUD.

10 Currently there's no Planning meeting scheduled
11 for next week or the week after, so that's the twenty-fifth
12 of July and the first of August. So we do not plan to
13 reconvene until August 8. And at that August 8 meeting, we
14 will be discussing the proposed amendments to the Affordable
15 Housing Overlay.

16 Likewise, City Council is on their summer recess,
17 but they've scheduled their summer meeting for August 7.
18 The Council committees are also still meeting. So the
19 Ordinance Committee will meet tomorrow evening at 5:30 to
20 discuss the Alewife Overlay Quadrangle Petition that the
21 planning discussed and recommended adoption on back in June.

22 And at the end of the month and beginning of

1 August, the Ordinance Committee is planning to hold hearings
2 on the proposed amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay
3 Zoning.

4 The last thing to note is that this evening will
5 be the last Planning Board meeting for Steve Cohen, who has
6 selflessly served this Board and the City for the past 10
7 plus years. So I hope everyone who's in attendance will
8 just maybe stick on the Zoom for a little bit at the
9 conclusion of our ordinary business, so we could say a few
10 words for Steve and wish him well.

11 And that concludes the Update from CDD, so I will
12 turn it back to the Chair.

13 MARY FLYNN: Thank you, Daniel.

14 * * * * *

15 (6:35 p.m.)

16 Sitting Members: Mary T. Flynn, Catherine Preston Connolly,
17 Steven A. Cohen, Theodore Cohen, Tom
18 Sieniewicz, Ashley Tan, and Lou Bacci, Jr.

19 MARY FLYNN: The next item on our agenda is an
20 Advisory Design Review of Case AHO-6, an Affordable Housing
21 Overlay project proposed by Homeowners Rehab Incorporated,
22 to review an existing structure and construct a new addition

1 to result in 29 affordable apartments at 1627 Massachusetts
2 Avenue.

3 We'll begin with CDD Staff explaining why this is
4 before us, then we will have our presentation from the
5 developer followed by a couple of comments, and then the
6 Board will ask questions and discuss the proposed design.

7 So I'm going to turn this back to Daniel, who is
8 going to summarize the topic for us.

9 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you, Chair Flynn. So as I
10 mentioned just a couple moments ago, this is the first of
11 two required Advisory Design Review sessions for this
12 proposal under the Affordable Housing Overlay.

13 Just as a quick reminder, I know it's been a
14 little bit of time since we've had an Affordable Housing
15 Overlay proposal before us. The Affordable Housing Overlay
16 creates an alternative set of development standards that
17 apply as-of-right for housing developments in which all
18 units are made permanently affordable.

19 And the purpose of this Design Review is not for
20 the Planning Board to grant or deny a permit, but to provide
21 Advisory comments on the design and its overall conformance
22 with the City's Urban Design objectives and guidelines.

1 And we've commented on that a bit in our memos
2 from Zoning and Urban Design Staff. There's also a memo
3 with some comments from our Department of Public Works.

4 The Planning Board will issue an initial report on
5 the proposal, and then the applicant will return to the
6 Planning Board for a second Advisory Design Review session
7 with an updated design that is responsive to the questions
8 and comments received prior to and up through tonight's
9 hearing.

10 So that concludes the introduction.

11 MARY FLYNN: Our presenter this evening is Eleni
12 Macrakis from HRI. You'll have up to 30 minutes for your
13 presentation, though we hope you'll be as concise as
14 possible. Please introduce your project team and begin.

15 Gabby will be sharing the presentation. There we
16 go.

17 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Eleni, can I'm sorry to jump in.
18 Really quickly, I just -- I did notice that Lou Bacci has
19 joined. So I just wanted to --

20 MARY FLYNN: Oh.

21 DANIEL MESSPLAY: -- quickly mark him. Lou Bacci,
22 are you present, and is the meeting visible and audible to

1 you?

2 [Pause]

3 Oh. It looks like he might have dropped back out.
4 I apologize. Perhaps after the presentation, we can quickly
5 try to note him for attendance.

6 Sorry, Eleni. Back to you.

7 ELENI MACRAKIS: No problem. Good evening,
8 members of the Planning Board, members of the community.
9 Thank you very much for having us here today. We are
10 excited to present you with our newest affordable housing
11 project and look forward to discussion in this Design
12 Review.

13 My name is Eleni Macrakis, and I am the HRI
14 Project Manager for this project. Several of my colleagues
15 are with me -- are with us tonight. Sara Barcan, our
16 Executive Director; Susan Twomey, our Director of
17 Construction and Sustainability; and Becky Eidelman, our
18 Project Coordinator.

19 We are also joined by several members of our
20 project team, who will be chiming in throughout the
21 presentation and discussion: Gabby Aitchison, from ICON
22 Architecture; Karen Sebastian from RBLA; and Kevin Quetti,

1 our Civil Engineer.

2 Next slide, please?

3 So quickly, our agenda. We are going to do a few
4 introductions, project goals and timeline, project overview
5 and site context, site design, building design and then our
6 discussion with the Planning Board and with the community.

7 Next slide, please?

8 HRI is a non-profit affordable housing developer.
9 We've worked in Cambridge for over 50 years, and own and
10 manage about 15,000 units of housing in Cambridge. We
11 renovate existing, build new, and continue to operate and
12 manage buildings as affordable housing in perpetuity.

13 We are a leader in high-quality sustainable
14 construction and work with many incredible building
15 professionals to create beautiful homes for low-income
16 individuals and families in Cambridge.

17 Our roots are in this city. And we feel that our
18 work is truly in partnership with City Staff across many
19 departments -- all with the shared mission of developing
20 more affordable housing in Cambridge, across Cambridge.

21 We also provide robust resident services to our
22 residents, including programs such as benefit screenings,

1 ice cream socials, back-to-school events, hosting tutoring
2 classes for school-age children, and info sessions for
3 programs like HRI scholarships and the City's Rise program.

4 We are also committing to updated MBE, WBE goals
5 for our development projects and have set them at 35 percent
6 and 10 percent, starting with this project, which we are
7 very excited about.

8 Next slide, please.

9 As I move into presenting our current project,
10 1627 Mass Ave, I want to start with our three project goals
11 that have informed our entire approach to this project.

12 The first is affordability. This will be a 100
13 percent affordable project. We know the need for more
14 affordable housing in Cambridge is acute, and this project's
15 an important step in meeting the City's goals for production
16 of new affordable housing.

17 We have also prioritized family-sized units, two-
18 and three- bedroom units, which is a shared goal between HRI
19 and the City. We know that too many families are being
20 forced out due to rising rents in the market.

21 Our second goal is historic preservation. The
22 existing house is an historic property with beautiful

1 interior and exterior architectural features, which we will
2 be carefully renovating as part of this project. We are
3 working closely with the Cambridge Historical Commission on
4 the scope of renovation work and continue to work with CHC
5 Staff on the design of the new construction building.

6 The CHC issued an initial Certificate of
7 Appropriateness for whole project in March. In addition,
8 the CHC recommended the property for a Cambridge Landmark
9 status, which HRI supported wholeheartedly. This status was
10 granted in May of this year by City Council.

11 We also submitted a Project Notification Form, or
12 a PNF -- to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, which
13 included the full design -- both existing building
14 renovation and new construction addition, and recently
15 received a "No Adverse Impact" result.

16 The third goal -- Sustainability -- is an
17 important one to us. HRI has been at the forefront of
18 sustainable construction for many years, and this project is
19 no different. Those structures will meet Enterprise Green
20 Community Certification. The existing building will undergo
21 upgrades to the building envelope to increase its energy
22 efficiency, as well as remove gas connections and convert to

1 all-electric.

2 The new construction will also be EGC Certified
3 and all-electric and will pursue Passive House certification
4 through extensive insulation and solar PV on the roof.

5 We pride ourselves with ongoing green operating
6 procedures once the building is complete and residents are
7 living in the apartments.

8 Next slide, please.

9 In 2021, Lesley started selling some of their
10 properties. HRI was encouraged by City Council and City
11 Staff to pursue 1627 Mass Ave for its unique potential with
12 a dual mission of historic preservation and affordable
13 housing.

14 HRI closed on the acquisition in August of last
15 year. In September of 2022, we met with the community to
16 introduce ourselves and our Architect, ICON. We launched
17 our website and started collecting feedback.

18 Through fall and winter 2022, HRI worked
19 extensively with City Staff to develop an initial design
20 that was in line with the City's affordability and Historic
21 Preservation goals. We spoke with the Housing, Zoning, and
22 Urban Design folks at the Community Development Department,

1 and also spoke with Traffic, Parking and Transportation and
2 the Department of Public Works to receive valuable input for
3 the design of this project.

4 We've also worked very closely with the Cambridge
5 Historical Commission, as I mentioned before, to understand
6 the renovations necessary for the Saunders House and
7 grounds, and to design the new construction building to work
8 well with the historic nature of the existing house.

9 During this time, we also heard from and
10 corresponded with community members via our website and
11 through direct e-mail communication.

12 Our second community meeting was held in March of
13 this year. We presented our design and responded to
14 questions about affordability, programs, street conditions
15 and parking, and continued to correspond with neighbors
16 through e-mail and Zoom.

17 Over the spring, we had several meetings with
18 abutters, who raised concerns in the spring after our March
19 community meeting, and we continue to have those
20 conversations. We encourage people to reach out to us, and
21 later this -- actually next week, we will have a meet and
22 greet at the property, which I will explain later.

1 In March, we received our initial Certificate of
2 Appropriateness approval and later this -- actually next
3 week, we will have meet and greet at the property, which I
4 will explain later.

5 In March, we received our initial Certificate of
6 Appropriateness approval, which I mentioned before, and the
7 City Council passed landmark designation early May. And
8 again, we had our PNF come back as a No Adverse Impact.

9 Today is our first Planning Board meeting. We're
10 very excited to hear your feedback and we look forward to
11 hearing how we can improve our project through this process
12 and bring it back to you in our second Planning Board
13 meeting.

14 Our Meet and Greet we find is going to be very
15 important next week. We're hosting this additional
16 community meeting to have neighbors tour the historic house
17 and meet the project team, because we believe that as a
18 community-based organization, it's important to have
19 informal conversations with neighbors, whether they support
20 the project or not.

21 We will have folks from HRI, both from the
22 development side and the resident service side as well as

1 our Architect, our Property Management Staff from Wingate
2 and our General Architect -- Contractor -- excuse me, NEI.

3 We're hoping to have our second Planning Board
4 meeting in late summer 2023, this year, as preapplications
5 for state funding will likely be due in September or October
6 of this year and we're hoping to have completed the AHO
7 process ahead of that.

8 Our funding applications, the earliest possible
9 would be winter, spring of 2024. We will be pursuing this
10 funding from -- through the state. The timeline is
11 dependent on state funding constraints and demand for
12 limited resources.

13 Based on how that goes, we will hopefully secure
14 financing in the summer or fall of 2024 and start
15 construction in the spring of 2025.

16 Next slide, please.

17 So this -- just a quick Project Overview. And
18 Gabby from ICON will go into this in more detail. But we
19 will be referring to this project. It is at 1627 Mass Ave
20 at the original address. However, the City has told us that
21 we would like to call 4 Mellen Street. So you might hear
22 both. It's officially 1627 Mass Ave as the AHO name, but

1 eventually 4 Mellen Street will be the address of the
2 project.

3 So the history of the property; 1627 Mass Ave was
4 built in 1862 when it was part of the historic North Avenue
5 mansions, with front lawns and houses that face Mass Ave.
6 Over the years, it started out as a single-family residence,
7 became a dormitory, and most recently was the Lesley
8 Admissions Office.

9 We are proposing 29 total units -- four in the
10 existing building and 25 in the proposed new construction.
11 That comes out to 65 percent of it as large, family-sized
12 units, those twos and threes, I mentioned before.

13 14 of the units will be for households earning 60
14 percent of AMI. For a one-person household, this means
15 earning up to \$62,000 a year. For a four-person household,
16 this means earning up to \$89,000. Rents for these units
17 would be set at 55 percent of AMI, which equates to \$1,500-
18 \$2,100 of rent.

19 Fifteen of these units we are proposing as
20 project-based subsidies in order to provide deeper
21 affordability for these apartments. Households would pay a
22 straight 30 percent of their income, not set apartment

1 rents.

2 As we move through our presentation, and our
3 architect Gabby from ICON explains our design, you will see
4 the new construction intentionally does not try to be a
5 historic structure.

6 The design is meant to allow the existing building
7 to shine. There are architectural features from the
8 existing building and the neighborhood echoed in the
9 contemporary building. Gabby will explain in detail later
10 on.

11 Next slide, please.

12 4 Mellen Street is extremely well located just
13 north of Harvard Square and in close proximity to many
14 community amenities such as the Baldwin and Graham And Parks
15 Schools, numerous parks, the Harvard Natural History Museum,
16 and the Peabody Museum.

17 There are also two vibrant and active community
18 organizations in the immediate and larger neighbors. The
19 site is also directly connected via Mass Ave to two larger
20 commercial cultural hubs in Harvard and Porter Squares.

21 Next slide, please.

22 The neighborhood is a mix of larger existing

1 multifamily buildings on the Mass Ave Corridor mixed with
2 the North Avenue historic mansions and three- to four-story
3 residential homes on Mellen Street further away from Mass
4 Ave. There's a mix of architectural styles from the
5 Victorian such as the existing building to the more
6 contemporary construction by Harvard just one building away
7 from our site.

8 Next slide, please.

9 In addition to the rich amenities available in the
10 neighborhood, this site is particularly well located for
11 public transportation.

12 There are two bus routes that run along Mass Ave
13 and will connect residents to North Cambridge, Arlington,
14 Davis Square, and parts of Medford. Residents will also be
15 able to access the larger MBTA subway and bus network at the
16 Harvard Square Station, about a half mile from the site.
17 The Red Line takes riders into downtown Boston and out to
18 Alewife.

19 I will now pass this over to Gabby, our architect,
20 who will discuss the site and building design.

21 GABBY AITCHESON: Thanks, Eleni. As Eleni
22 mentioned, I will start with the overall site design, and

1 then I'll get into the building.

2 On this slide, I'm showing the site plan just to
3 orient everybody here. North is at the top of the slide, so
4 Mellen Street is on the north side of our property here.
5 And then on the west is Massachusetts Avenue.

6 We are preserving the lawns that are associated
7 with each of those streets. That was really important to
8 the Cambridge Historic Commission and is also mandated by
9 the recent Landmark designation.

10 The red triangle shown here is the main entry into
11 both properties. So that is where you would decide either
12 stay within the new construction portion of the site or go
13 into the existing mansion. And I'll explain that more as I
14 get to the floor plans. You can see how the main entry is
15 set in to be a welcoming area and designate the entry of the
16 property.

17 A couple of things to highlight on zoning -- I'm
18 not going to go through all this, but we're not going as
19 high as we could as-of-right keeping it to six stories, and
20 then stepping down to five stories adjacent to the lower
21 density area of the C-1 zoning.

22 We are providing about two-and-a-half-times the

1 open space that is required. We're able to achieve that
2 through the gracious lawns that are being preserved, as well
3 as an inset of the front area that I showed on the previous
4 slide.

5 We have requested pickup and drop-off area on
6 Mellen Street through Transit, Parking and Transportation
7 Department. They reviewed that, and they agree that it
8 would be sufficient based on our project size and location.
9 And I'll get a little bit more into parking in a few slides.

10 This is a little bit more detailed of a site plan
11 showing the landscaping that's proposed for this site.

12 Just a couple of things to note here. One is that
13 on the east and south sides, we are keeping to the minimum
14 the side yard setbacks of seven-and-a-half feet. But the
15 abutter at 8 Mellen Street and the abutter at 1619 Mass Ave,
16 the closest façade with windows is actually more than 20'
17 away from where our building is sited.

18 And other than the landscaping that's on the site,
19 which I'll show more in the next slide, in terms of
20 utilities, we do have a trash and recycling area to the
21 south of the mansion, and then a pad-mounted transformer
22 adjacent to that. That's the only utility on the site.

1 A little bit more about the plantings that we're
2 prospecting: In general, we have a focus on native species,
3 preserving the open lawn of course. But also, along that
4 porch area, we're looking to frame the views of the mansion.
5 So small, adjacent trees, evergreen shrubs and perennials to
6 help achieve that.

7 Whereas most properties the south side of the site
8 might be the sunniest, in our case we have really large oak
9 trees that really well shade the mansion and lawn areas, as
10 well as the 1619 Mass Ave building, which will shade a
11 portion of our site as well.

12 So adjacent to the new construction portion of the
13 property, on the east and south side there's minimal space
14 there and pretty well shaded. We'll keep that to shade-
15 tolerant ground covers.

16 On the north side of the mansion, there is an
17 existing hedge, which we are looking to maintain. And that
18 will help delineate the sidewalk and our property. We will
19 be adding plantings along the north side of the new
20 construction building to achieve the same effect.

21 Looking at the trees on our site, so I mentioned
22 the three oak trees. These are in light green shown here,

1 which will remain and provide lots of shade. We are also
2 looking to preserve the small serviceberry on the north side
3 of the mansion facing Mellen Street.

4 There is one tree on our property next to the oaks
5 that is in very, very bad shape. And the arborist has
6 indicated it's best that that tree come down.

7 The other tree that we're looking to anticipating
8 to remove is on the east side, and that's to allow us to
9 build up to the setback.

10 We are looking to add two new trees, and there are
11 two trees on the abutter 1619 Mass Ave property that are in
12 poor condition we will be communicating with them about.

13 In terms of City trees, in blue the small circles
14 are because they're very new trees, they're quite small at
15 the moment, but those will continue to grow and enhance the
16 streetscape. And there is one other larger City tree that
17 has been there for quite some time.

18 For hardscape, first was screening. So I
19 mentioned the trash and recycling area to the south of the
20 existing mansion. Those will be fully enclosed, so it will
21 be solid board fences and gates for access there. We're
22 going to screen the pad-mounted transformer as much as

1 allowed by the utility company with any combination of
2 lattices, fencing or evergreen shrubs.

3 In terms of paving, there is some natural stone
4 that's on the site right now that we're looking to reclaim
5 and reuse other portions of the site, and then we'll be
6 adding concrete unit pavers to the new seating area and the
7 concrete or the trash and recycling enclosures.

8 A parking study was completed in November of 2022.
9 And this was based on the feedback we were hearing from the
10 community that they were worried about the area not having
11 enough street parking with this added project.

12 The study found that there was adequate parking
13 within a 500' radius of the site. That is taking into
14 account other projects and operation as well as the added
15 residents that would be living at -- in these new 29 units.

16 And this is such a -- the study also took into
17 account what a transportation-rich area this is, and HRI
18 will be promoting that for the residents and providing
19 initial funding with discounted MBTA passes for them.

20 In terms of circulation, how one might enter the
21 site, so vehicular traffic, obviously very heavy on Mass
22 Ave, and then lighter as you turn onto Mellen Street. It's

1 still a two-way, but much more narrow.

2 The bicycle parking -- the bicycle paths are
3 completely separate from the vehicular traffic, and as you
4 would approach our building, you would come through the main
5 entry.

6 As a visitor, there's a couple of Visitor Parking
7 spaces for bikes outside the entry. As a resident, you can
8 come in with your bike and use the elevator to access the
9 basement where we have permanent bike parking.

10 And then a pedestrian could use the sidewalk, but
11 the same main entry. But they also have access as a
12 resident to a couple of the rear entries as egress or as
13 access to trash and recycling.

14 Just a blowup of that bike parking situation. So
15 there's four short-term spots that are adjacent to the entry
16 that are covered by the building above. And then in the
17 basement -- so that's the existing basement of the mansion
18 -- we have 30 spots, which have been slightly rearranged to
19 help move around some existing columns in the mansion
20 basement.

21 Now, moving from site design to building design in
22 terms of massing, so keeping it to six stories and then

1 stepping down as you get to the reduced density area at the
2 rear of the site, you can see it in contrast to the mansion
3 in front.

4 There is a prominent bay at the corner to help
5 guide people to the main entry of the building, which is
6 also, as I mentioned, recessed. So that recessed area is
7 the same volume as the mansion porch to help those two
8 relate to one another.

9 And then there are also secondary bays on the side
10 façades, which also help with the unit layouts.

11 We're looking to preserve the exterior of the
12 existing mansion. And this scope of work has been developed
13 with CHD staff. So all the wood elements on the exterior,
14 there's existing wood siding. That's, we're going to delead
15 and repaint. We'll replace in kind wherever needed, but
16 really looking to restore as much as possible. So that
17 includes all of the wood elements, brackets, moulding,
18 shutters and railings.

19 The slate roof has been assessed by the JC. It
20 will have to be replaced at least in part, but likely in
21 totality.

22 And then we'll also be replacing the windows to

1 look similar, but much higher performing.

2 In terms of the interior, so we're maintaining the
3 main volumes of the spaces that were present in the mansion
4 doing light demo to make the new units functional, but
5 maintaining the unique elements that are part of the mansion
6 on the interior. So that includes the fireplaces, the main
7 central stair, any unique wood accents or moldings.

8 The things that we are removing, which has been
9 discussed with CHC, is the modern ramp that was added to
10 make the building accessible.

11 And the rear ell, or addition, that is not
12 original to the building. By removing that, we can connect
13 to the new construction portion of the site and make the
14 mansion accessible.

15 You can see that better in this first-floor plan.
16 Again, that triangle showing you where you would enter the
17 building. So you'd be in the new construction portion in
18 the lobby with package and mail and all of that, and you can
19 decide whether or not you want to go up an open stair or
20 through the elevator to the existing mansion portion of the
21 site. So that elevator connects to the basement, first and
22 second floor.

1 This level has all one-bedrooms, including
2 accessible ones, as well as an amenity space on the corner.
3 HRI is working with Resident Services to design this, so
4 it's useful for them as well as the residents.

5 So if we move up to the second floor, we're
6 maintain that connection between the new construction
7 portion and the existing mansion. So on this level are the
8 first level of three-bedroom duplexes in the mansion, making
9 this level completely accessible from the elevator.

10 And this is starting to be a more typical floor
11 plate for the new construction with the difference of the
12 corner here with the one-bedroom to allow that corridor
13 access. So once we go up to the third floor, this starts to
14 stack with the two-bedroom in this corner.

15 And you can see on the third floor of the mansion
16 is then the second floor of the three-bedroom duplexes --
17 basically the attic of the mansion, which is the bedrooms
18 and second bath up there.

19 And so, this stacks to the fifth floor, and then
20 once we reach the sixth floor, since we're stepping down to
21 relay to the context to the east of the site, just two units
22 remain here, but both stairs continue to this level, and

1 then one goes fully up to the roof.

2 You can see here in the roof plan the red line is
3 a 10' setback from the edge. So all the equipment is within
4 that. There's very little equipment here. We've got one
5 really large ERB for ventilation that's going to serve both
6 buildings. It's quite large, so I -- it's right in the
7 middle of the roof so that it can't be seen from the street.

8 And then there are very few condensers, since this
9 will be a central system. Those aren't quite as big, but
10 also set back from the 10' mark, so that they are not
11 visible from the street.

12 And then looking at this in section, you can see
13 how the elevator allows that accessibility across the three
14 levels of the mansion and the connector kind of replacing
15 that existing ell right now.

16 And then the second section showing that stair
17 going all the way up to the roof.

18 And looking in elevation, so starting on Mass Ave
19 with the mansion in the foreground, you can see the new
20 construction portion behind that. That corner tower element
21 helps guide people to the new entry into both areas, which
22 you can also see at the Mellen Street elevation. So lots of

1 glazing on the ground floor to invite people in under that
2 tower.

3 And then getting into the secondary façades,
4 pulling in some wood accents siding to bring some warmth to
5 that as well. You can see that in a little bit more detail
6 on this slide showing the different materials we're using.

7 So the main body of the building is a 6"
8 horizontal siding, kind of an modern interpretation of the
9 clapboard siding shown in the neighborhood. And that can be
10 installed vertically, so we'll be using that at the sixth
11 floor for a little bit of variation there, broken up with a
12 fiberglass cornice.

13 And I mentioned the wood accent, which brings some
14 warmth to the façade. But we also have some composite metal
15 panel shown here in orange. That is not necessarily the
16 color it needs to be, but we do like that we're bringing
17 some color to the façade as a variation, and as an accent.

18 And just a note that this is the same
19 manufacturer. So this is a really dense fiber cement
20 product that was used in Cambridge just as a reference of
21 install.

22 And then looking out that elevation in greater

1 context, you can see the surroundings. Keeping it to six
2 stories allows it to fit in with the larger buildings that
3 are along Mass Ave, both on our side of the street and
4 across the way.

5 And the views in perspective are a better
6 orientation of how the two buildings will relate to each
7 other, rather than in elevation.

8 So this one shows how one would enter into the new
9 construction portion and have that decision to go into the
10 mansion or not. And we wanted to make it really clear that
11 that was the entryway, make it inviting, so that it has the
12 wood trellis, accent lighting, signage. We have plantings.
13 We'll have outdoor seating, the bike parking to really
14 engage the space.

15 And then if you're looking at the building from
16 further down Mellen Street, you can see the amenity space on
17 the ground floor with lots of glazing and the accent of the
18 composite metal panels, and then bringing in some of that
19 wood accent.

20 And you can also see one of the secondary bays
21 that are on both sides of the building, which were really
22 important to make the units work with such a tight site and

1 also give some variation of façade.

2 And we did want to include a view as seen from the
3 1619 Mass Ave abutter, what they would see on our property
4 after new construction portion was built. Since we have
5 those large oak trees already there, that really do shield a
6 lot of the view. So this view is showing it with a little
7 bit of transparency there so you can see how the building
8 would be sited behind that.

9 And we're really excited about this project in
10 terms of sustainability. I think it's a great showcase on
11 what we really want to do whole scale, which is to take our
12 existing building stock and make it high performance and
13 build affordable housing that is high performance in any
14 urban infill that we can.

15 So the mansion envelope will be highly upgraded,
16 and then the new construction portion will go to Passive
17 House Standards. HRI and ICON built the Finch Cambridge
18 together, which was on the previous slide, which was --
19 which is the largest Passive House building in
20 Massachusetts.

21 And we're excited to do this again. Because of
22 the high-performance envelope, we can go all-electric,

1 certainly looking at renewably energy as well as low
2 embodied carbon, which we're are really ahead of the game
3 because we're repurposing the existing mansion.

4 And that concludes our presentation. Thank you so
5 much for being a part of this Design Review. We look
6 forward to the discussion on 1627 Mass Ave/4 Mellen Street.

7 MARY FLYNN: Great. Thank you very much. We
8 appreciate the presentation. So now, according to this
9 Zoning, we do take public comment on these Design Review
10 sessions or at the sessions. So we're going to go to that
11 now.

12 I'd like to remind speakers that the Board's
13 action this evening is not to approve or deny an
14 application, but to provide advisory comments on the design
15 that was presented. It would be most helpful if members of
16 the public who are speaking would also focus on those
17 aspects that we're reviewing tonight, which is specifically
18 the design.

19 Any members of the public who wish to speak should
20 now click the button that says, "Raise hand." If you're
21 calling in by phone, you can raise your hand by pressing *9.

22 As of 5:00 p.m. yesterday, the Board had received

1 written comments from Suzanne Blier, Esther Hanig, Rachel
2 Plummer, George Beal, Aviva Rothman-Shore, Marilee Meyer,
3 Elizabeth Houghteling, Itamar Turner-Trauring, David
4 Bloomberg, Nina Schwarzschild, Eugenia Schraa, and Louise
5 Elving. I apologize if I mispronounced anybody's name.

6 Written communications received after 5:00 p.m.
7 yesterday will be entered into the record.

8 So I would ask anyone who is interested in
9 speaking if you would please raise your hand now. There are
10 quite a number of people on the call to the meeting, and so,
11 I want to try to judge whether we are going to do the full
12 three minutes or go to a shorter time for public comment.

13 So again, if you are planning on speaking, please
14 raise your hand now.

15 MARY FLYNN: Okay. So it looks like we have three
16 -- all right. It looks like we have a fair number of
17 speakers. So I -- unless any members of the Planning Board
18 object, I would suggest that we set the public comment to
19 two minutes this evening, which would then give us
20 sufficient time to get through our own discussion and manage
21 the rest of the evening's agenda.

22 Are there any objections?

1 Okay. So hearing none, we'll go to the two
2 minutes. So I'll now ask Staff to unmute speakers one at a
3 time. You should begin by saying your name and address, and
4 Staff can confirm that we can hear you. After that, you'll
5 have up to two minutes to speak before I ask you to wrap up.

6 And Daniel, I will turn it over to you to manage
7 from here out.

8 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you, Chair Flynn. And
9 maybe just as a quick matter of housekeeping, I did notice
10 we had our Planning Board member Lou Bacci join at the
11 beginning of the presentation. So Lou Bacci, for the
12 record, are you present, and is the meeting visible and
13 audible to you?

14 [Pause]

15 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Present, visible, and
16 audible.

17 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you, Lou. So we'll mark
18 Lou as present.

19 And now we will flip over to public comments. So
20 it looks like our first speaker is James Zall followed by
21 Suzanne Blier. So James, please begin by giving your name
22 and address.

1 JAMES ZALL: I am James Zall, 203 Pemberton
2 Street. And I'm speaking tonight in support of HRI's
3 proposal to convert a parking lot into 25 affordable homes
4 with another four homes to be built inside the former
5 single-family dwelling.

6 This location is unusually well suited for
7 affordable housing with convenient access to public transit,
8 schools, parks, and other amenities.

9 HRI's main goal here, the provision of affordable
10 housing, coincides with a number of the City's housing
11 goals, and with the purpose of the Affordable Housing
12 Overlay itself.

13 CDD's memo on the plan suggests a number of
14 changes -- mostly cosmetic -- in the outward appearance of
15 the part of the new housing that will be seen by neighbors
16 and the general public.

17 While some residents of Cambridge have expressed
18 preferences that the outward appearance of new Cambridge
19 housing match the styles of housing built a century or more
20 ago, the AHO's goal is to overcome the biases and
21 restrictions against affordable housing that have been woven
22 into our laws over several decades.

1 The AHO portion of the Zoning Code says that its
2 purpose is "to promote the public good by supporting the
3 development of housing that is affordable to households
4 earning up to 100 percent of the area median income." The
5 AHO's purpose statement also refers to achieving greater
6 socioeconomic diversity.

7 The AHO in fact owes its existence to the current
8 shortage of housing we're facing and the painfully high
9 housing costs, financial and social burdens, and
10 displacement of residents that result from that shortage.

11 I ask the Board to keep in mind the purpose of the
12 AHO and the residents that it intends to help in applying
13 this law to HRI's proposed new housing.

14 Thank you.

15 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
16 Suzanne Blier, followed by Jessica Sheehan. Suzanne, please
17 begin by unmuting yourself and giving your name and address.

18 SUZANNE BLIER: Thank you. Suzanne Blier, 5
19 Fuller Place. And I agree that the siting is a really
20 terrific one, and it is wonderful to be preserving this
21 structure.

22 My concerns, though, are about the design of the

1 façade. And I read closely the Urban Planning Report. And
2 I would urge you to really encourage ICON, even though with
3 the AHO you and neighbors and residents really have no
4 power, but to follow the design criteria that are stipulated
5 in the AHO report vis-à-vis an interesting façade, breaking
6 up of flat, large places, stepbacks -- adding really visual
7 interest.

8 And I -- I'm sorry, when I sent it, twice
9 actually, I put in a comparison with Frost Terrace in a
10 structure. Because Frost Terrace, although it was built
11 before the AHO is a really stunning retention of an earlier
12 building with a beautiful design.

13 The neighbors and others played a really critical
14 role in it, and I fear that this design as is is just going
15 to be one of those things that we will point to saying this
16 was not well done.

17 I don't like the materials that are being proposed
18 for the exterior. There's no complementarity between the
19 coloring and other elements, the treatment of the windows,
20 the kinds of things that I really am seeing in Frost Terrace
21 that I would love to see here, so that the two are very
22 different. I'm not urging the same thing. And I love bold

1 design. And I would hope that any new building will stand
2 on its own, and this is more of a building addition.

3 I compared it to putting a Ferrari, mixing that
4 with a school bus, also a fox with a cow. The two just
5 don't integrate together. And the materials look relatively
6 cheap, the entry unimaginative. And I just hope that you'll
7 focus on the exterior, because this is going to be a
8 building that's going to have real ramifications going
9 forward. Thank you.

10 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
11 Jessica Sheehan, followed by David Blumberg.

12 Jessica, please begin by unmuting yourself and
13 giving your name and address.

14 JESSICA SHEEAN: Hi. I'm Jessica Sheehan. I live
15 at 48 Fairmont Street.

16 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thanks, Jessica. Go ahead.

17 JESSICA SHEEAN: I -- thanks so much. I know this
18 area well. I'm a 2022 Harvard grad. And I think it looks
19 beautiful. And anybody who recognizes my name knows I'm a
20 big proponent of affordable housing, so aesthetics are not
21 usually my top concern. I didn't know much about the design
22 elements before watching this presentation.

1 But personally, I mean, I do think it's gorgeous.
2 And the places where design elements have been changed from
3 what was existing there, there seems like excellent
4 rationale for it, right? You're maximizing units, even
5 though you're not maximizing the height. The things of like
6 the window treatments are to increase efficiency, which is a
7 huge goal of Cambridge.

8 It's just -- I don't know. It looks beautiful to
9 me, and it makes me smile to look at it. I think it'll fit
10 in well.

11 And I just want to, I guess, commend the Design
12 team on a really well-thought-out and thoughtful proposal.
13 Thank you very much.

14 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
15 David Bloomberg, followed by Bill Jo Joy.

16 David, please begin by unmuting yourself and
17 giving your name and address.

18 DAVID BLUMBERG: Thanks. Yeah, before you start
19 the clock: David Blumberg with Bernkopf representing Beth
20 Zeitlin and Michael Way, homeowners at 8 Mellen Street. I'm
21 here with highlights from the letter -- the nine-page letter
22 we submitted in opposition to the proposal.

1 So to be clear, this isn't about opposing all
2 development of this site or all affordable housing.

3 Instead, it's about holding the City to the bargain it made
4 with residents when it adopted the Affordable Housing
5 Overlay.

6 The Overlay was not a blank check for development.
7 It did not greenlight all affordable housing citywide. It
8 gave developers favorable standards, but two key promises
9 remained to the residents.

10 Promise one: All proposals would meet all the
11 requirements of the normal or the normal standards of the
12 district would apply. Compliance should be irrefutable; you
13 can't cut corners.

14 But the project lacks the required pickup, drop-
15 off and loading spaces. So Cambridge Traffic must certify
16 that it be accommodated without causing significant hazard
17 or congestion, which the Department cannot do because of the
18 parking challenges on Mellen Street and the longstanding
19 safety issues at the intersection, which the City identified
20 in it's own studies in '08 and '03.

21 The City now suggests certification can be
22 provided in the building permit stage if it doesn't work,

1 because the Board must decide on compliance with the Overlay
2 now, and it can't unless it receives a certification with a
3 chance for review.

4 Full compliance is crucial because the City is
5 conflicted. It has a direct financial stake in the project.
6 The purchase of the property was funded by the City using
7 taxpayer Community Preservation funds.

8 The City has a mortgage on the property and an
9 agreement to reconvey the City retains an interest and is
10 incentivized to push permitting approval, because HRI can
11 give the property back to the City if approvals are not
12 secured in time.

13 Promise two to the community is all projects be
14 sensitive to the existing neighbors, because they will meet
15 the Design Guidelines in case the project fails. My letter
16 quotes 14 Guidelines left unsatisfied. The City's memo
17 steers clear of these 14 amendments and comprehensive City
18 studies of the Baldwin Neighborhood that call for smaller-
19 scale affordable housing that works with the existing
20 aesthetics.

21 The new building is not harmonious with the
22 Saunders House in the neighborhood in its size, setbacks,

1 design and materials. And the structure blocks the Saunders
2 House from its peers on Mellen Street and will forever
3 disrupt what's now a cohesive built environment.

4 This draft, supersized building is alien to its
5 surroundings and the Overlay it was intended to create. You
6 recall Harvard relocated three significant buildings in '07
7 for a campus expansion for this project. The design could
8 flip with the Saunders House moved to where the parking lot
9 is today and the new building in front of Mass Ave where
10 it's form works better.

11 To be clear, this project can also move forward to
12 provide --

13 MARY FLYNN: Mr. Blumberg, could you please wrap
14 up?

15 DAVID BLUMBERG: Yep. Got it. I'm wrapping.

16 MARY FLYNN: Thank you.

17 DAVID BLUMBERG: The project can also move forward
18 or provide affordable housing under the normal Zoning rules,
19 which would result in a smaller building.

20 I encourage the Board to enforce the Overlay and
21 hold the project to its Standards before issuing a final
22 report, both to protect the neighborhood and to avoid a

1 troubling precedent in the City.

2 Thank you for your time and consideration.

3 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
4 Billie Jo Joy, followed by Lauren Curry.

5 Billie, please begin by giving your name and
6 address.

7 BILLIE JO JOY: Hello, everyone. I'm Billie Jo
8 Joy, and I live at 77 New Street. And this is the first
9 time I've seen anything about this project.

10 So excuse me, it gives me a -- kind of a fresh
11 view. I just thought it was so exciting to see, you know,
12 what's going on with this building. It seems like a very
13 thoughtful design. It's a kind of affordable housing I hope
14 we can replicate in Cambridge. I think Frost Street down
15 the -- up toward Porter Square is a great neighbor showing a
16 similar design.

17 So I can't say all the good things, I don't have
18 enough time. So I'll just say the couple of things that
19 struck me: That there could be more integration with the
20 mansion and the new building. They do feel very discordant
21 to me, just from what I could see on my screen.

22 And so, please, please, please just find more and

1 more ways to integrate and find some of those little motifs
2 that are in the -- both in the outside and the inside.

3 So the Liberty Hotel in downtown Boston, the way
4 they took that old jail and made it into a hotel, they did a
5 great job, so there's a model there.

6 The other thing is I wonder about infrastructure.
7 So we have a combined sewer system in Cambridge and so, when
8 it's raining a lot like this, the sewage backs up into the
9 Alewife Brook, and it also backs up into the Charles River,
10 and sometimes it backs up into homeowners' basements. So
11 that's been happening this week. It's seven times in July
12 the sewer -- sewage went into waterways.

13 So I just want to flag infrastructure for all the
14 growth that's going on in Cambridge, and also just to put in
15 a plug for ownership. So as long as people rent, landlords
16 get richer, and people don't build equity.

17 So if we're looking at being a progressive city
18 and really empowering people, let's look at ownership,
19 ownership, ownership, equity and not just making the rich
20 richer and people renting.

21 So -- but other than that, the project is
22 beautiful. I'm glad to see it happening.

1 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
2 Lauren Curry, followed by Stephen Lapointe. Lauren, please
3 begin by giving your name and address.

4 LAUREN CURRY: Hi. My name is Lauren Curry, and I
5 live at 3 Concord Ave in Cambridge. And I just want to say
6 that I am related to the HRI. I'm a member of the Board,
7 proudly, for a number of years, because I really appreciate
8 the work that they are doing in creating and maintaining
9 wonderful affordable housing opportunities -- wonderfully
10 cared for, with good consideration of the tenants and
11 services for the tenants.

12 I would ask that you support this application,
13 because I think it's an excellent achievement of the goals
14 and the requirements of the ordinance Affordable Housing
15 Overlay. It creates 29 very much needed units in an area of
16 the City where affordable housing is actually sparse.

17 There's certainly no naturally affordable housing,
18 and there have not been affordable housing developments in
19 this area of the city. It's nice to see one here that's
20 near where I live, and I appreciate it being there.

21 I just want to address briefly the Mass Ave
22 context. Because I think this really -- the thing about

1 that area of Mass Ave: Well, first of all, it is one of the
2 areas that was laid out in the Affordable Housing Ordinance
3 to have the highest density, the largest buildings possible.
4 And that does allow this property to be taken advantage of.

5 But it's also a part of Mass Ave where there's
6 some of everything. And I think there's large, very large
7 [UNCLEAR] six-story buildings. And then there are some
8 remaining houses. I think this fits in well with what
9 exists there, and it adds to an imaginative and it
10 integrates well into the community that it's designed to sit
11 in. Thank you.

12 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
13 Stephen Lapointe, followed by Marilee Meyer. Stephen,
14 please begin by giving your name and address.

15 STEPHEN LAPOINTE: Okay, thanks, everyone. My
16 name is Stephen Lapointe, and I live at 1619 Massachusetts
17 Avenue, which is an abutting property. And I will say that
18 we've been engaging with Eleni and HRI, and we appreciate
19 that, but we still have concerns that we would like to raise
20 just briefly in this meeting and continue to do so.

21 One is regarding the height of the building. We
22 view the Mellen Street character to be essentially wood

1 frame homes with no more than three stories. That's been
2 kind of codified since Harvard moved those buildings to this
3 side of Mellen Street, and we just continue to hope that
4 they will reconsider the height of the building.

5 Secondly, regarding the parking study that was
6 referred to, apparently that was done in November of 2022,
7 and we know that Mellen Street is in the midst of a
8 transition with Lesley, having sold a lot of buildings as
9 was referenced. And many of the buildings on the odd side
10 of the street on Mellen are vacant, or they're not occupied
11 right now. And as a result, that study as far as we know at
12 least, it appears to vastly undercount the actual parking
13 demand in this area and Mellen Street, because it's not
14 normal occupancy.

15 And when we get back to normal occupancy at Mellen
16 Street, we would expect a much higher parking demand. And
17 it seems very natural for the designers to be considering
18 that, and ideally to be incorporating some kind of off-
19 street parking into the design.

20 So again, we appreciate the opportunity to engage,
21 and we fully support the idea of affordable housing, we just
22 hope that it can be done more thoughtfully incorporating

1 these concerns.

2 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
3 Marilee Meyer, followed by Louise Elving.

4 Marilee, please begin by giving your name and
5 address.

6 MARILEE MEYER: Hi. Marilee Meyer, 10 Dana
7 Street. And I appreciate HRI as being one of the better,
8 more respectable organizations out there. And this -- what
9 gets me is of these kinds of meetings, we are not
10 challenging -- I approve of affordable housing, I know 29
11 units is important. I like the location. I like the
12 preservation of the front of the front building.

13 But we are -- that is not what I'm personally
14 concerned with. I am concerned about design. Because we
15 have to live with this for the foreseeable future.

16 And if there's -- the materials, the context,
17 there is -- needs to be a better transition between the old
18 and new. The -- to me, it reads as a standard square box
19 with fluff on it to kind of make it different. You know?
20 But it's not different. It is a square box.

21 The windows, if they were recessed a little bit
22 more, they would have a little bit more shade. The mullions

1 are very confusing. Are -- do the windows open? It is a
2 flat façade, and size and the bulk does not fit into the
3 neighborhood. And we are talking neighborhood here.

4 The Urban Planning Committee breaks down a lot of
5 the details and goals of good design. And this building
6 does not adhere to a lot of that stuff.

7 We are -- again, I am for affordable housing, but
8 this design does not work for the location and the height.
9 Thank you.

10 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
11 Louise Elving, followed by Kate Frank.

12 Louise, please begin by unmuting yourself and
13 giving your name and address.

14 LOUISE ELVING: Thank you. I'm Louise Elving. I
15 live at 36 Cottage Street in Cambridge. And I just want to
16 say that I think this is a very important and respectful and
17 needed project in Cambridge. And I think the design that a
18 decision was made with a new building and an old building
19 coming together on a site.

20 The question is do you in a new building mimic the
21 old building, or do you create some contrast, so you
22 understand one is old and one is new? And I think a

1 decision was made here in consultation with talking with
2 people in the City to go forward. One is old and one is
3 new, and they are not quite the same.

4 And there was a real effort to meet as many needs
5 for as many Cambridge households as possible on this site,
6 leading to the development of 29 units with a big emphasis
7 -- roughly two-thirds of them for families being units with
8 two and three bedrooms.

9 So I appreciate the Planning Board's attention,
10 and I hope you will approve, support this building. I guess
11 you don't give formal approval -- so that it can proceed and
12 go ahead providing vital and needed housing for our
13 neighbors.

14 Thank you.

15 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
16 Kate Frank, followed by Charles Hefling.

17 Kate, please begin by unmuting yourself and giving
18 your name and address.

19 [Pause]

20 Kate Frank, you have the floor.

21 KATIE FRANK: I'm trying. I was just having
22 trouble with the technical stuff. Am I now unmuted?

1 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Yes. Please go ahead.

2 KATE FRANK: Okay. My name is Kate Frank. I live
3 at 53 Crescent Street in the Baldwin Neighborhood, formerly
4 known as Agassiz.

5 This building is on the edge of this new site.
6 Although I've been active in our neighborhood council for
7 many years, not enough people have been involved for me to
8 present a neighborhood response. So I'm just speaking for
9 myself.

10 It may sound briefly off the subject, but as a
11 child I lived in rental housing in apartments that even for
12 those times were lower cost, and still required two families
13 to share. I can't emphasize enough how special it seems
14 that our City and this project commit to maximizing the
15 number of affordable units.

16 And while I respect people who are interested in
17 home ownership, I don't think that these can compete. And I
18 think we have a real dearth of important affordable rental
19 units.

20 I could go on, but so many of the other statements
21 have been particularly eloquent. And I just want to express
22 my strong support for the project itself and patience among

1 people who are commenting on the design and the designers,
2 since there's plenty of time still to work on refinements
3 with some of the ideas expressed this evening.

4 Thank you very much for the chance to be heard.

5 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The next speaker is
6 Charles Hefling, followed by Beth Zeitlin.

7 Charles, please begin by unmuting yourself and
8 giving your name and address.

9 CHARLES HEFLING: My name is Charles Hefling. I
10 am a neighbor, a next-door neighbor on the south side of the
11 Mellen Street building. And like many of the other
12 speakers, I want to say at the beginning that I'm entirely
13 in favor of the purpose of this project, how it fulfills
14 that purpose and in particular how it has been designed --
15 not so much.

16 I've noticed in the materials available on the
17 website that there are no renderings from the south or from
18 the east. So I appreciated the very brief appearance of a
19 rendering on the south side, which is the side that our
20 property at 1619 Massachusetts Avenue abuts.

21 You get a very different impression of the
22 building from the other renderings, all of which are very

1 elegant.

2 And the reason is that the building itself has
3 been crammed into the southeast corner just as close as it
4 can be. And the result, as you saw briefly on those
5 illustrations, renderings, is there's a canyon -- a deep,
6 dark, airless canyon with no possibility of very much of
7 anything green.

8 And as you move towards Mass Ave from the east end
9 of the proposed building, what you get is the trash bins.
10 I'm not clear whether there will be trees. You get a
11 transformer, which the CDD Staff mentioned.

12 I hope the Planning Board will take seriously that
13 and the other CDC recommendations, and I thank you.

14 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you. The last speaker is
15 Beth Zeitlin.

16 Beth, please begin by unmuting yourself and giving
17 your name and address.

18 BETH ZEITLIN: Hi. My name is Beth Zeitlin. I
19 live at No. 8 Mellen. I think I'm the primary abutter, if
20 that's the correct terminology. We live in the blue house
21 at No. 8 Mellen Street. We love living here. This is a
22 neighborhood full of wonderful people. We fully support in

1 theory the idea of affordable housing and support the idea
2 of the project on that piece of land.

3 I was excited when I moved here to learn that the
4 -- the house that's owned by Harvard Law School was actually
5 moved there to preserve the historic nature of the street.

6 So Saunders House and the property across the
7 street on Mellen right on the corner serve as sort of
8 decorative entryways to the street, so to speak. It's a
9 very busy little street. It's not a through street.

10 I agree with the person who lives in the condo who
11 talked about the traffic study. I think the study is
12 flawed. Those of us that live here know that there is not
13 enough parking for the existing -- those of us that live
14 here, let alone for that many units.

15 I would really hope that the Planning Board takes
16 a serious look from our perspective -- our literal
17 perspective. We're going to lose all of our light. We're
18 going to lose all of our privacy, and if those buildings
19 could be flipped the way they were moved back -- I think it
20 was in 2008 -- three historic buildings were moved -- then
21 Saunders House would look beautiful next to No. 4 Mellen.
22 It would become No. 4 Mellen Street.

1 And then you could actually go full maximum
2 density on Mass Avenue, which would be appropriate with
3 setbacks and with perhaps parking and drop-off areas and all
4 the rest of it that David mentioned earlier.

5 So just want to iterate it's a privilege to live
6 here. I would welcome new neighbors and would hope, though,
7 that they would also have really what they deserve as
8 neighbors, which is privacy and easy access and parking and
9 all the things that they deserve to enjoy in this
10 neighborhood. Thank you.

11 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you.

12 Chair Flynn, that concludes the speakers on the
13 list, so I will turn it back to you.

14 MARY FLYNN: Okay. Thank you very much. And
15 thank you for members of the public who spoke this evening.

16 We're now going to move from public comment to
17 Board discussion. Additional written comments may be
18 submitted to the Board for the record. There will be time
19 between now and the next public hearing on this project.

20 So let's start off with questions. Do Board
21 members have questions for either the project team or CDD
22 Staff? And Tom, you've got your hand up first, so we'll

1 start with you.

2 TOM SIENIEWICZ: Thank you, Madam Chair. A series
3 of questions; I hope they're fairly straightforward and
4 should be straightforward to answer. I wanted an estimate
5 of how many residents would be in the total development.

6 I probably could do that just by counting beds,
7 but -- and then by extension, if there's some way there was
8 some estimate of how many children might also be living at
9 the address, that would be great too. I think that affects
10 some of my questions about the landscape design.

11 I have a question about how much the bays -- the
12 bay that's on the southeast corner as well as the bay on
13 Mellen Street -- what's the dimension of the projection of
14 those architectural bays.

15 A question on the historic building front yard.
16 One of the slides seemed to indicate that the curvilinear
17 stair extending into the front lawn was dotted, and I hope
18 that there isn't a proposal there to demolish that
19 ornamental stair. I think it's an important part of the
20 building. I may be just misreading that particular slide.

21 And lastly, a technical question for the architect
22 on strategies around embodied carbon. You're talking about

1 using a cement material for the enclosure. That's obviously
2 the material which contains the largest amount of embodied
3 carbon of any material choice.

4 So just questions about details of how serious we
5 are about trying to eliminate or reduce embodied carbon in
6 the design details.

7 Thank you.

8 MARY FLYNN: Thank you. And I think rather than
9 collect questions, since -- that we'll just try to answer
10 them as we go because some are going to be more detailed
11 than others. So let me turn it over to Eleni. If you want
12 to begin by fielding the resident and children question, and
13 then maybe -- I don't know, do you want to address the rest,
14 or the architect does?

15 ELENI MACRAKIS: Great. Thank you, Chair Flynn
16 and thank you Tom for those questions. In terms of the
17 number of people at the property, it's hard to tell exactly,
18 since it depends on the household size.

19 For a one-bedroom apartment, that can be one to
20 two people. A two-bedroom can be two to four, and a three-
21 bedroom can be three to six. And that's depending -- that's
22 based on the Sanitary Code. So that could be -- you know,

1 anywhere around 50 to 100 people, depending on how large
2 those households are.

3 In terms of children, that largely is based on the
4 local preference category that the City has. So we found
5 with the Finch Cambridge lottery that we had a lot of
6 children on our property, because local preference
7 prioritizes families with kids under 5.

8 But I can't answer how many kids we would have.

9 And the rest of the questions I will turn that
10 over to Gabby, unless you have any follow-ups on the number
11 of people.

12 MARY FLYNN: Let's go over to Gabby.

13 GABBY AITCHESON: Thanks. I think your first
14 architectural question was on the projection of the bays.
15 As shown in the renderings right now, they are 18", but we
16 are prepared to increase that to 2' to further align with
17 the recommendations of the AHO in terms of projections from
18 that façade.

19 We are not intending on demoing the front stair of
20 the mansion. That will remain. Sorry for the confusion on
21 the graphics there.

22 And in terms of embodied carbon, we will be doing

1 -- looking at the -- the numbers in terms of the cladding,
2 more specifically. I will say the concept of fiber cement
3 doesn't actually have as much embodied carbon as concrete or
4 cement does as like a port-in-place elements.

5 And the other -- we'll certainly look at the range
6 of things that we can use but as compared to metal or brick,
7 it is actually much less than I found in my studies.

8 MARY FLYNN: Okay. Tom, did you have any follow-
9 up?

10 TOM SIENIEWICZ: Not a follow-up, just one
11 question that I forgot --

12 MARY FLYNN: Okay.

13 TOM SIENIEWICZ: -- in my notes was simply a
14 question about the floor-to-floor decision on that; the
15 first floor to go to 17'9" on the floor-to-floor. I know
16 that it aligns with the floor of the mansion, and maybe
17 that's a simple answer, and also, it's encouraged in the
18 Overlay.

19 But it seems inconsistent with the pattern of
20 development on Mellen Street, which is also something that's
21 demended on the Overlay. I wonder if you could comment on
22 the decision to make such a high first floor?

1 GABBY AITCHESON: Yeah. It is really meant to
2 align with where the floor of the mansion is. We definitely
3 want that to be accessible. We still have the elevator, so
4 there may be other ways around it, but we're pretty tight,
5 even with our ramp or something. It's just limited space to
6 be able to make that work.

7 MARY FLYNN: Ashley?

8 ASHLEY TAN: Thank you. Just a quick one. I know
9 I saw a roof plan for the sixth floor. I was wondering if
10 there's anything that was proposed for -- fifth floor I
11 think is on the east side or is stepped back. There was a
12 good amount of space, so I was just wondering if anything
13 was proposed there.

14 GABBY AITCHESON: We're doing a PV solar study.
15 But aside from that, there's nothing planned for the roof on
16 the lower side.

17 MARY FLYNN: And Steve?

18 STEVEN A. COHEN: I just want to confirm to
19 everybody that this project is going to happen. There may
20 be some who are happy, some who are not happy -- yeah -- but
21 the project is going to happen.

22 The only thing that we are really -- have the

1 opportunity to discuss today is the design. And we did get
2 a number of comments from neighbors that they are not very
3 positive about the design.

4 So I would like to hear from our Staff to address
5 the design, how this design was established, whether there
6 are other options and whether there's anything that they
7 might say or suggest that might be a positive response to
8 the issues and concerns raised by some of the neighbors.

9 MARY FLYNN: Okay. Thank you. Yeah. I know Erik
10 is present. But before we go to him, Lou, do you have a
11 question for the proponent or for the Staff?

12 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Either way, I guess. Mostly
13 for the proponent. So looks like they're discontinuing the
14 use of the front entrance off of Mass Ave. They took the
15 walkway out and not going to use that. I'd like -- curious
16 about that, and why they wouldn't use that.

17 I don't see any new transformers or any electrical
18 equipment. I'm sure this new building is going to have new
19 electric service and so forth, and I'd like to know more on
20 those.

21 Same complaint as everybody about -- as a lot of
22 people about the appearance of the building. It's very

1 flat, very featureless. It seems a shame up against a very
2 feature-filled building in front of it. It would be nice to
3 have some more articulation here. I don't know.

4 Balconies. I always like balconies on residential
5 buildings. Seems like a good place. It would be nice also
6 to have elevations from the south and the east.

7 And there's no real facility here for children. I
8 know the documents said they aren't very close by, I guess.
9 It would be nice for Mom and the kids or Dad and the kids to
10 be able to do something on the site itself, not have to go
11 down the street.

12 Those are my basic concerns.

13 MARY FLYNN: Okay.

14 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: I think it's a great place
15 to have this project, but I'm --

16 MARY FLYNN: Right.

17 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: -- I think they're not quite
18 there.

19 MARY FLYNN: Yeah. Well, we're going to come back
20 around again for comments. So at this point, it's really
21 sort of questions. So let me go back to the development
22 team. If you want to address the issue of the front

1 entrance on Mass Ave -- the historic entrance -- and the
2 location of the balconies -- I'm sorry, the transformer.
3 There are no balconies.

4 And then -- and also Lou's question about will
5 there be any activities or available space onsite for the
6 kids? And then we'll go over to Eric, who can give us more
7 of an overview of the CDD's review process and comments on
8 this project. So Gabby, let's start with you.

9 GABBY AITCHESON: Sure. So the removal of the
10 entry at the front was intentional. That would not be
11 accessible, by any means. So we really wanted every person
12 to be coming in the same place to have a sense of arrival.

13 The porch will still be accessible if needed and
14 will be used as an area of rescue. But we didn't want to
15 confuse where to go into to the building there.

16 There is a transformer on the site. It's adjacent
17 to the trash and recycling area, close enough to Mass Ave
18 that it's accessible by the utility company.

19 MARY FLYNN: So just to follow up on that, I
20 thought there was some comment that there was a possibility
21 of putting the transformer in the basement. Is that still
22 an option? No?

1 GABBY AITCHESON: That was a comment. I do not
2 see that as being feasible. The one thing that we have
3 discussed as a team is whether or not they could go in a
4 vault underground, but not in a basement.

5 MARY FLYNN: Oh, okay. Okay. And will there be
6 any dedicated spaces within the building for children? Play
7 areas, anything like that?

8 ELENI MACRAKIS: I can speak a little to that,
9 Gabby. So we did look into, you know, some sort of play
10 structure on the front lawn. That was something that we
11 thought would be nice. Landscape architects looked at the
12 clearances and found that it wasn't going to be possible in
13 terms of the fall radius.

14 I think we can certainly look at some ideas around
15 that and how to activate the space, but we also are trying
16 to keep that as a historic front lawn in accordance with the
17 Historic Commission's wishes.

18 In terms of some other spaces on the property, we
19 will have that amenity space on the first floor of the
20 building. And our Resident Services staff are really
21 wonderful at finding activities and events and programs for
22 kids at our properties.

1 We have some really wonderful programs at our
2 other properties. We have The Nature Connection comes in,
3 Tutoring Plus comes in just to interact with the kids, and
4 we have kids of all ages. We have young kids, older kids,
5 kids in high school.

6 And so, they try to program the space based on the
7 needs that they find at the property. So that's something
8 that happens to some extent before the property is built,
9 but then really develops as the property is under
10 operations, and they understand what the needs are at the
11 property.

12 So that's -- the amenity space there is something
13 that will be used in many different ways. We have a little
14 meeting area currently designed, you know, if someone needs
15 to meet one-on-one with someone. And then the main space
16 will have chairs and tables that can be used in different
17 ways.

18 MARY FLYNN: All right. Thank you. All right.
19 I'm going to go now to Erik for the CDD -- your memo was
20 quite detailed. So thank you for all the effort that you
21 put into it, and we're anxious to hear what you have to say.

22 ERIK THORKILDSEN: Okay. Great. Yeah. Here's a

1 quick summary. We thought it's great that the project is
2 protecting and restoring the Saunders House and that it's
3 constructing additional affordable housing, especially with
4 family-sized units. That's all fantastic.

5 There was an earlier scheme which was similar in
6 size and had more emphasis on sort of corner tower turret
7 sorts of bay windows and had a double height recessed entry
8 rather than the kind of first floor only, which seemed to
9 have a -- was trying to kind of peek up on the height of the
10 cornice of the existing Saunders House.

11 It sort of had this sort of unfortunate
12 relationship. It seemed too directly run into it, as though
13 the new building was -- there was a bite out of it that the
14 existing house could slide into.

15 And so, we encouraged the architects to think of
16 this as a bit more of an independent project -- you know, as
17 a separate building that happens to be connected that has
18 its own sort of identity and integrity.

19 And we also considered -- we suggested that they
20 take a good look at some of the pretty large turn-of-the-
21 century residential buildings on -- nearby on Mass Ave that
22 have a lot of effort made to kind of break down their large

1 massing and articulations like bay windows and changes in
2 material sort of elaborations of entry and so on.

3 Not so much in the sense of -- well, really not at
4 all in the sense of stylistically imitating them but picking
5 up on some of the principles they use to kind of mediate
6 between the scale of a big building and smaller, you know,
7 sort of pedestrian and residential scale.

8 So the memo for the design that we're looking at
9 basically focused on sort of some of the things you've heard
10 about -- focused on the building's fit within compatibility
11 with its context.

12 The building currently raises a big cubicle block,
13 and that's partly because it's a big building and has a very
14 different scale than the other buildings on Mellen Street.
15 It's less articulate than the other buildings on both Mellen
16 Street and the big buildings on Mass Avenue.

17 So we'd like to encourage that its façades and
18 massing could be further articulated and create a better fit
19 between its considerable bulk in the other buildings on
20 Mellen Street, including the neighbor -- immediate neighbor
21 to the east, suggesting things like more vertical emphasis,
22 adjustments to window-to-wall ratio, breaking up massing of

1 the top floor.

2 So also, to create a more positive relationship to
3 the design and scale of the Saunders House, which needn't
4 mean imitating it; it's more a question of how massing and
5 details are used, and also to look a bit more for additional
6 strategies and how to handle a large building; strategies
7 that could be seen in the other nearby buildings on Mass
8 Ave.

9 It would be good to do some more thinking about
10 the exterior materials, which ultimately relate -- hope
11 relate between the scale -- relate to the scale of the
12 nearby buildings.

13 So the memo suggested the site design also in
14 addition to the building can make further contributions to
15 Mellen Street in the residents' life in the building, really
16 two sort of main points there, provide more continuity if
17 possible with street trees, but certainly with hedge that
18 lines much of Mellen Street on the other houses as you head
19 east and try to make the recessed entry terrace, which seems
20 like a wonderful feature on a building that has -- on a site
21 that has not a lot of open space at least adjoining the new
22 building.

1 It has a lot of opportunity to be a strong
2 gathering place for the resident community, so to try to
3 enhance that almost is a sort of outdoor living room by --
4 you know, further potential design, lighting, furnishings,
5 things like that.

6 So that's a quick summary. So thanks and let me
7 know if you want to have further questions.

8 MARY FLYNN: Okay. Thank you.

9 Steve, did you want to follow up with anything
10 specific with Erik right now, or did that answer your
11 overall concern?

12 STEVEN A. COHEN: Well, I don't think that he
13 really addressed some of the issues and concerns expressed
14 from the neighbors.

15 And I guess, you know, I guess I'd like to hear
16 him about the design and whether he thinks that any of those
17 issues and concerns raised by neighbors could be addressed
18 at all to make it more positive to them.

19 You know, the fundamental project isn't changing.
20 All I'm talking about is design details.

21 ERIK THORKILDSEN: Sure. Yeah. I could go into
22 more detail. To me, the really important thing is the

1 Mellen Street design, which I think could benefit by being
2 thought of in a different way, rather than a single big
3 surface with a kind of corner turret at the corner, the
4 northwest corner facing Mass Ave.

5 Think of that possibly as almost two separate
6 façades that might be in slightly different planes from each
7 other and might have different sorts of expression.

8 One thought that we had was one could treat the
9 right-hand half of it above the recessed entry zone as a
10 vertical -- sort of vertically striated, vertically grained
11 element that can -- that links that recess entry to the
12 taller, you know, to the sixth-floor partial floor on the
13 top and sort of carrying bay windows -- say two or three bay
14 windows up vertically and linking those, linking bottom to
15 top, and having a more sort of neutral façade on the left-
16 hand side, in other words the eastern side.

17 Also think about maybe should the upper floor of
18 the -- say fifth floor or fourth and fifth floors of the
19 east side be slightly pushed back? Slight balcony? Think
20 about sort of breaking down the massing on that side.

21 There are a lot of really wonderful things about
22 the other buildings on the street in terms of the, you know,

1 detail that's kind of idiomatic of the period they were
2 designed, that's sort of late 19th century, which needn't be
3 imitated at all in its particulars, but that sort of finer
4 grain elaboration of corners and surfaces I think could do a
5 lot. I would basically suggest sort of focusing that on
6 that entry terrace.

7 But also, just another thought that one could
8 probably remove the top floor unit on the east side, the
9 fifth-floor unit, and just relocate it back to the sixth-
10 floor southwest corner. That way you'd have to look at the
11 implications for the kind of interior. That would reduce
12 the sense of mass joining the neighborhood house.

13 I'm not saying that -- to do that, just sort of --
14 those sorts of things might be looked at to try to kind of
15 give the building a kind of grain that it doesn't have right
16 now. So does that sort of get at what you were asking
17 about?

18 STEVEN A. COHEN: Well, that's -- in general, it's
19 a -- it's the fact that you're the design guy. I might have
20 some views and others do, but you're the design guy and we
21 respect your outlook and rely on you to have input in a
22 project like this to make the project look and feel a little

1 better.

2 I like the suggestions that you've had, and I
3 would really urge you to deal with the owners here to really
4 have that input, so that you are satisfied that this project
5 can be as positive as it can be.

6 And when we hear some concerns from neighbors, I'm
7 sure you will listen to them as well. You may agree with
8 them, you may disagree with them, but if you hear that and
9 you are influenced by it, you're the guy who can make some
10 changes and improve the project.

11 So I'm looking for you. Thank you.

12 ERIK THORKILDSEN: Well, thanks. As you say that,
13 I'm thinking back to Frost Terrace, 1791 Mass Ave, where
14 between the first Planning Board hearing and the second one
15 really huge changes were made, and they're not things that I
16 would have particularly thought of, or at least I didn't
17 think of. So it was really just kind of the creative
18 efforts of the architects.

19 So basically, in saying certain things, I'm not
20 saying those are the only things that might solve the
21 problem, there could easily be others.

22 But yeah.

1 MARY FLYNN: But certainly, as Steve mentioned,
2 your -- I mean, your input is tremendously valuable. But
3 certainly, many members of the public have talked about
4 their concerns with the design, and I'm sure that the
5 architects and proponents in general have heard that and
6 will think of ways to address their concerns between now and
7 the next iteration.

8 I do think getting some additional perspectives
9 from the two hedges, looking at the project and looking at
10 its impact on those -- on the abutters -- is going to be
11 really helpful and needs to be thought through very
12 carefully.

13 Anyway, let me go back to the Board now. Let's --
14 comments. Comments or additional information, changes you'd
15 like to see, et cetera. Tom?

16 TOM SIENIEWICZ: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll try
17 to summarize a number of thoughts that I've had. First of
18 all, very much appreciated Louise Elving's comments.

19 One, have patience, because there's a lot of time.
20 The schedule was eye-popping, right? This thing isn't going
21 into construction for a number of years because of the
22 vagaries of the financing. It just takes time through

1 government. So there is plenty of time to make adjustment
2 here. And also appreciated very much her perspective on
3 affordable housing and her personal experience. So it
4 really brings this all into focus.

5 And I don't think there's a single voice in the
6 comments that took issue with the program; that we are
7 deeply unified, and proudly unified as a community that this
8 is something that's of value and we have to figure out a way
9 to make it happen.

10 The other comment I would say at the outset here,
11 although I was surprised by the scale of the proposal when I
12 first saw it, when you compare it to the base zoning, I'm
13 actually also surprised at how close it is to the base
14 zoning. It's only nine feet higher than what would be
15 allowed as-of-right for instance on this site.

16 Probably the toughest route where the Affordable
17 Housing Overlay works with the zoning is with setbacks. And
18 so, hence really good and thoughtful comments from abutters,
19 which are most directly affected by that.

20 So I would say I'm interested in looking at that
21 height of that first floor. For me, the entranceway and the
22 details on the Mellen Street side look institutional. They

1 look out of character with Mellen Street, which I know is to
2 be a really beautiful street, not a true street; it has the
3 turnaround at the end by that -- by Lesley University.

4 And I know there's a -- you know, a first-
5 principle's idea, let's align the elevator in that first
6 floor for economics, but you can have a half stop, it is
7 possible to drop that floor. You would then address the
8 sensitivity around height here, which affects shadow, and
9 affects on the abutters.

10 So I think there's a possibility to look at that
11 again. And I think that will reduce the kind of
12 institutional nature of what that first-floor does for
13 Mellen Street. Appropriate if that was facing Mass Ave, but
14 it's facing the small-scale residential street.

15 Other detail on that side, in one of the letters
16 in read seems to be a consistent pattern of privet hedge
17 along that edge of the street. I don't know why, it's not
18 going to be a budget buster to put in privet hedge and make
19 that landscape detail consistent with the rest of the street
20 there, and I think it would help the character.

21 Relative to the building, the architecture itself,
22 I think the building is extremely flat, and hence my

1 question about the bay. I don't know if 6" makes a
2 difference. I would welcome it to go to 24". I'd love to
3 have windows on the sides of those bays.

4 I think again that would be consistent with the
5 character in some way, a nod to the character of Mellen
6 Street that there was actual three-dimensionality.

7 I think Erik's comments about compositional
8 strategies for the Mellen Street façade are really well
9 taken, that it shouldn't be considered as one plane. I
10 think there should be some exploration about that.

11 To the landscape design, I think that the
12 landscape -- the transformer location is tragic. It's in
13 the front yard by the historic mansion. And yeah, we'll put
14 a fence around it, but boy I wish there was some other place
15 that we could put that. And I think it does detract from
16 the mansion itself.

17 But the Historic Commission has opined on that,
18 and I don't know if they looked at the transformer location,
19 but so that raises questions about that landscape for me.
20 When I was questioning about the number of children and
21 people here. Yes, you've got awful lot of open space, but
22 those are formal lawns on the mansion.

1 And it's hard to imagine, are we going to have
2 children with a tether ball or badminton or kids running
3 around there, or is that -- a birthday party going to happen
4 out there? I don't know. That landscape doesn't seem to
5 suggest that. It defers almost wholly in its detail to
6 setting it up as its glory as a mansion.

7 And I don't think -- I'm not sure that's the right
8 way to look at that landscape. I think it should serve the
9 100 plus people that might be living in this building and
10 those families, and maybe there's a way in which that could
11 be programmed so that it isn't just a set piece for the
12 mansion so that it actually reflects the program.

13 I know Mass Ave's a busy street, but boy, you
14 know, it would be great if we could have activity on those
15 lawns.

16 So I think those are my notes and my comments. I
17 think this is a -- I really appreciate Ms. Curry's comments.
18 This is a rare place to get affordable housing right in the
19 heart, close to Harvard Square and I'm 1000 percent in
20 support of this program at this site. We've got some work
21 to do on the design in my opinion.

22 Thank you.

1 MARY FLYNN: Thank you. Appreciate your comments.
2 Lou?

3 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Yeah. I kind of goal the
4 lines that Tom was using. Did I -- I think I missed part of
5 the response about the lawn area. Is there some restriction
6 to this lawn area being used?

7 ELENI MACRAKIS: So there's kind of two things at
8 play. One is the Cambridge Historical Commission's desire
9 to keep this as a historic front lawn. So, you know, any
10 changes that we make there we have to discuss with them and
11 get their approval, as this is a landmark property.

12 And then the other portion of that is the -- if we
13 wanted some sort of play structure, there are certain
14 requirements on fall radius. And our Landscape Architect
15 didn't believe that we could fit one in in the front lawn.
16 It's surprising how big you need those spaces for a fall
17 radius.

18 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Yeah. No, I understand
19 about that. But we're not talking about a new -- a whole
20 park here, but some useable area for children to play and
21 maybe down on the Mellen Street façade would be another spot
22 that would work, that corner.

1 Really surprised you're taking the front entrance
2 out of use. It's kind of makes it kind of -- when you walk,
3 when you go by this place -- and I don't know what the
4 confusion would be when people live there -- I can see when
5 people would be visiting there that they maybe have
6 confusion about entrances, but people live here.

7 So taking that walkway out makes it kind of
8 disconnected from the street. Kind of foreboding. Don't
9 come here. So I'd like you to look at that.

10 And that, like I said, the Mellen Street corner
11 and length down to the new entrance looks like there's
12 enough real estate there to do something. Maybe you can
13 incorporate it into the entrance and make a more useable
14 spot. There are going to be a lot of children here, never
15 mind moms and dads and so forth. So I think that needs to
16 be done. Yeah. This building is very flat and has very
17 little articulation.

18 Material wise, I'm not always happy myself, but I
19 would like to see something. It has no residential
20 character, it's in a residential neighborhood. It looks
21 like any old office building, except the windows are a
22 little smaller here. It needs some help. I think some

1 further work on that would help.

2 The transformer is a travesty. We know that these
3 are necessary, but yes, the low-grade transformer and a
4 vault would be a good idea, free up some more open space.
5 Maybe you could put a smaller play area there.

6 So you can see where this is going. I mean, the
7 project's in a great location. I think preserving this
8 historical building is a great thing, and also remember,
9 this is (for) historical building; it did not reside here
10 until very shortly ago. So the changes are acceptable, I
11 think in the progress we're making.

12 So I'd like to just think about some of that and
13 come back to us.

14 MARY FLYNN: Thank you, Lou. Ted, you're next.

15 H THEODORE COHEN: Thank you. So I 100 percent
16 applaud the idea of the number of units on the site, of
17 affordable housing, and I mostly subscribe to everything
18 that my colleagues have said.

19 I think in terms of contextualization in the
20 neighborhood, it actually fits in very well when you think
21 of the neighborhood as being Mass Ave, which has one large
22 apartment building after another. It's a couple of

1 buildings away from what used to be a Holiday Inn. It's
2 very close to Harvard buildings. So from the Mass Ave side,
3 I think it fits perfectly.

4 Obviously, on Mellen Street it needs to address
5 the houses on Mellen Street to a greater extent.

6 And I will, you know, leave that up to Staff and
7 the comments of my colleagues of what to do about the Mellen
8 Street façade, which obviously needs a lot of work.

9 I am concerned about the Mass Ave façade, which is
10 incredibly flat. And I think, you know, I can understand
11 the concept of being, you know, a flat background for the
12 mansion. But I think they ought to relate to each other to
13 a much greater extent than they do now.

14 Whether they should be the same paint, but - or
15 have more design elements that are, you know, from the
16 mansion, I don't know what the answer is. But it is much
17 too flat at the moment. And I think that needs a lot of
18 work.

19 I'm not, you know, having had a small child in
20 this neighborhood many years ago, I'm not that concerned
21 about whether there needs to be play structures on this
22 particular site. There are lots of open spaces in the

1 immediate neighborhood. The Harvard Law School campus is
2 maybe 100 yards away. The Lesley campus is right down the
3 block. The Cambridge Common is not far away. You know, we
4 live in a dense urban environment and, you know, kids learn
5 where they get to play.

6 I'm much more concerned -- I think Lou makes a
7 very good point about whether with the front door not being
8 utilized it's just going to look like this is a forbidden
9 area that nobody should go to. And I think, you know, how
10 you deal with the front of the mansion is significant.

11 Obviously, the transformer is in a horrible
12 location, and it would be wonderful if that could be moved
13 or put underground.

14 Basically, I think -- you know, Staff in it's
15 Design Review raised very many issues that, you know, I
16 subscribe to, and would hope that the Staff and the
17 architects involved go through them very carefully and can
18 come up with something that's more acceptable to everybody.

19 But the concept of 29 fully affordable units in
20 this location and a lot of family-sized units is just a
21 wonderful outcome.

22 MARY FLYNN: Thank you, Ted.

1 Ashley, what are your thoughts?

2 ASHLEY TAN: Thank you. First of all, I really
3 appreciate how the proponent has given a lot of thought into
4 creating units that are suitable for families focusing on
5 the two beds but having three beds. So that is wonderful.

6 And I know this has been repeated multiple times,
7 but in terms of design, the building is definitely very
8 flat. And, like, 6", 10" protrusions are -- bays are not
9 enough.

10 And so, overall, I think the massing is fine, but
11 definitely needs to be articulated more, and I know Lou and
12 Tom mentioned this earlier, but I know numbers wise, the
13 Open Space Requirements are met. And I know there's, you
14 know, you have to deal with Historic Commission about a flat
15 lawn and also getting their, you know, Certificate or
16 approvals of what not, but you know, part of our purpose for
17 requiring open space is to have useable, enjoyable space.

18 And so, I think a little more thought needs to be
19 put into can the landscape or any furniture, whether it's
20 benches or what not can be added to -- maybe, I don't know
21 what Historic required, but if it's only the front lawn, can
22 anything be added to the Mellen Street side front lawn or

1 side lawn, I guess? And, or, you know, if -- is there any
2 even space on the roof on the fifth floor to add some open
3 space that residents can enjoy.

4 So I think that needs to be looked into a little
5 bit. Otherwise, very excited for affordable housing in this
6 neighborhood.

7 MARY FLYNN: Thank you so much. Catherine?

8 CATHERINE PRESTON CONNOLLY: So I don't have a lot
9 to add that hasn't already been said, either by my
10 colleagues or in Erik's fine memo, but we've seen a few of
11 these now, and I did just want to comment on what seems to
12 be a developing process question, which is we seem to be
13 getting kind of the bulk and program of these developments
14 in the first hearing, and because there is a second hearing
15 mandated regardless of our feedback, very little design -- I
16 mean, I hope, frankly, that this reflects very little design
17 development to this point.

18 And again, we've seen this with several projects
19 that come in with very low detail designs, flat designs, and
20 they get our feedback and, you know, become a whole lot
21 better.

22 And I'd love to think that's because we as Board

1 members give such brilliant feedback, but it feels a lot
2 more like no one is spending the time or money on design
3 before they come the first time, because they're going to
4 wait what everybody says. And maybe that's okay. Maybe
5 that's exactly what needs to happen. But I do feel like it
6 needs to be said that that is what is happening.

7 Because if neighbors understood that as the
8 process a proponent was going through, they might receive
9 the design a whole lot better -- or the bulk and program a
10 whole lot better than if they see this and think it's the
11 final product.

12 And I feel like the very plain design we're
13 getting in the first hearing is off-putting to neighbors
14 throughout the city in ways that are unnecessary if we as
15 Planning Board, as Staff and ultimately with the City
16 Council were to better articulate the process so that it fit
17 with the development process better, and frankly didn't
18 scare the neighbors that what they were going to end up with
19 was really bland, ugly boxes from the get-go.

20 So I again, commend all of the comments of design-
21 specific projects to the proponent here. But I do just want
22 to take the opportunity to say that to Board members like I

1 feel like, you know, at least in the PUD process everyone's
2 clear. We're doing bulk and program first, and then design
3 details later.

4 And because we articulate it that way, the tone of
5 the conversation and the comments from the public are
6 different and maybe it's something that we as a city should
7 think through. So that's all.

8 MARY FLYNN: Great. Yeah. Thank you for those
9 comments. They put a lot of perspective. Ted? Do you have
10 some follow-up thoughts?

11 H THEODORE COHEN: Yeah. I'm following up on what
12 Catherine just said, and asking her and asking you know, my
13 other colleagues, do you think this process would work
14 better if the first Planning Board Design Review was much
15 earlier in the process, where it was really like what we do
16 with the PUDs, that we meet with the developers and the
17 proponents very early on and get their ideas and give them
18 feedback on it at that point?

19 I mean, I understand what you're saying, and I
20 think it's very valid that we're seeing something -- now in
21 this situation, there's a long timespan before they're
22 actually going to go to construction. That may not always

1 be true, and also, the point of the AHO was not to make it
2 so expensive that we lost units.

3 But I'm just curious; and whether it might make
4 sense to move our role to an earlier point. And --

5 MARY FLYNN: Mm-hm.

6 H THEODORE COHEN: -- just throwing that out.

7 MARY FLYNN: Yeah. No, it's a good idea,
8 something to think about. Do other Board members have
9 thoughts on that?

10 Yes. Steve.

11 STEVEN A. COHEN: I think I would almost say that
12 the Staff -- the Design Staff in particular -- has very high
13 standards. And they kind of know what we're about and what
14 sort of issues we have.

15 I'm not clear exactly what role they play prior to
16 this point, but I think they could be playing a much more
17 fundamental role before it gets to us. They know what sort
18 of issues we will have, and they can be addressing them and
19 make these designs better before it gets to us. I think
20 that would be more efficient. It will not waste some time.
21 They don't have to design in wrong directions and then have
22 to redo it.

1 So I don't think it's something that we should be
2 doing, I think it's what the Design Staff can be doing and
3 be more aggressive in their role.

4 MARY FLYNN: Well, I know -- let's remember, this
5 is a review, an Advisory Review process.

6 STEVEN A. COHEN: Yeah.

7 MARY FLYNN: Neither the Staff nor we have the
8 ability to say no to anything. We're just advising. And I
9 think now that the Staff has been involved and they have
10 made suggestions but again, you know, I think it's up to the
11 proponent to decide when they want to come to the Board.

12 I'm not suggesting that Catherine's idea is a bad one.
13 It may be something to ponder a little bit further. But I
14 think we'll have to remember in this that we have limited
15 power, shall we say. But there are some other thoughts
16 here. So Tom, let's go to you next, Catherine, and then
17 Iram after you.

18 TOM SIENIEWICZ: Well, first of all, thank you,
19 Catherine, for the observation. I'm certainly feeling it.
20 And, you know, well put. And it's wonderful to kind of
21 think about why that is.

22 But, you know, I'm going to be the first one to

1 say we as a Planning Board, you know, are not responsible
2 for designing these things, but we are responsible for --
3 and neither is the Staff, by the way -- we are responsible
4 for setting high standards that design matters, that
5 everybody deserves great design, and it doesn't matter what
6 economic path you are on in life.

7 That said, the extraordinary people that advocate
8 and develop affordable housing have a pile of constraints
9 that they're working on, not the least of which are
10 financial.

11 And, but I do believe that you can pile up the
12 same set of materials in different ways and in an
13 imaginative way -- it doesn't cost a whole lot more money --
14 and make really, really beautiful things.

15 It takes more time. It definitely takes more
16 time, and certainly the architects at ICON know that
17 building type better than I do. But it is something that we
18 should insist on that it's beautiful.

19 We should insist on because our Regulations say
20 that it needs to fit into the context, and that's our role.
21 It's up to the proponents and the proponents' designers to
22 bring us beautiful design, which is what we expect. If I

1 was to do it tactically, Catherine, I don't know. I think I
2 would lead with my best effort and dazzle the Planning Board
3 and go from there.

4 MARY FLYNN: I like that. Catherine, did you want
5 to say something?

6 CATHERINE PRESTON CONNOLLY: Yeah, I mean very
7 quickly, because I don't want to derail the conversation and
8 I do think it is bigger than just this proponent and I more
9 than anything I just wanted to put it out there as this is
10 still a fairly new process to all of us. Let's think about
11 how it's working.

12 And precisely because of what you said, Mary, that
13 I know that Staff has been giving this feedback to the
14 developer all along, and I don't think there's any intention
15 with any of the developers -- affordable housing developers
16 -- to not be responsive.

17 But there is a desire to save money and be
18 efficient with design costs, which is totally appropriate,
19 and to get that feedback early enough that they're only
20 designing it once. And that's all -- I just kind of wanted
21 to get it out there as food for thought.

22 I think the Design comments that have been given

1 both by Staff -- the fellow Board members, the community --
2 are all going to drive this in a really good direction. I'm
3 really excited to see what they come up with.

4 It was really more of a, like, hey let's put a PIN
5 in this for later to think about how this process is working
6 overall.

7 Because I hate to see unnecessary angst over
8 affordable housing projects when there is a real desire, as
9 I think there is here, of the developer to ultimately do
10 exactly what Tom is saying, a beautiful building for
11 residents regardless of income and be responsive to the
12 Board in that way.

13 MARY FLYNN: Yeah. Well put. Iram?

14 IRAM FAROOQ: Thank you, Chair. I think that
15 Catherine said a lot of what I was going to say, which is,
16 you know, I think the idea of really clarifying what each of
17 the check-ins with the Planning Board focus on --

18 MARY FLYNN: Mm-hm.

19 IRAM FAROOQ: -- is actually really well worth
20 considering. And I think Catherine and Tom have sort of put
21 it in a nice context of why we are seeing the progression
22 that we are seeing, because as we have talked to the various

1 builders who have worked on AHO projects, to try to get the
2 feedback in terms of what's working and what's not working.

3 I think one of the large pieces of feedback that
4 we have received from them is how much more they are
5 actually spending in the early stages than they ever used to
6 when they were going through permit process because the
7 review is happening earlier, and they're engaging much
8 deeper design expertise earlier on in the project, and
9 they're having a lot more -- certainly more conversations
10 with Staff early on that that back and forth is in fact
11 happening.

12 There is a lot work that both our Housing team as
13 well as our Urban Design team are doing with them early on,
14 but the phenomenon that I forget who mentioned, but one of
15 you mentioned that what they are after our review, what
16 they're waiting to see is what does the Board have to say so
17 they're not having to do multiple iterations of design
18 changes just because they need to also make that design
19 process economical.

20 I also think one other piece that our affordable
21 housing builders under AHO has to face that others don't in
22 quite the same way is that the entire premise of the AHO is

1 that the buildings will be larger than what is around them.

2 And so, the consternation or the set of comments
3 around this is bigger than what would be allowed under base
4 zoning is something that I think we will continue to hear,
5 no matter how beautiful the building is. And I think that
6 we have witnessed that in some instances.

7 So it's a little bit of a combination of that.
8 But I do think that the comment is a really good one, and we
9 will take it back and have conversation with the Urban
10 Design team, the Housing team, as well as, you know, try to
11 convene the affordable housing builders to try to get a
12 sense of how to make the process a little smoother, both for
13 the Planning Board, as well for them.

14 MARY FLYNN: Mm-hm.

15 IRAM FAROOQ: And as the AHO amendments are being
16 considered, there's a little bit of an opportunity right now
17 to clarify --

18 MARY FLYNN: Yes.

19 IRAM FAROOQ: -- the process as well.

20 MARY FLYNN: Yeah. Yeah. I think that that's a
21 very good point. You know, when there are other -- we're
22 looking at other cases of the program, this definitely

1 should be one of them.

2 Lou, did you want to add something?

3 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Yeah. A quick comment. You
4 know, we always hear about the economics of all of these
5 things. And I know they have quite a hurdle to get through
6 with all the different financing.

7 But these are million-dollar-per-unit facilities.
8 I don't know if it's really a financial burden to have good
9 design and good materials and so forth. I think they're
10 already at that pinnacle, and to tell you the truth, at some
11 point a lot of this time, a lot of it I figure because they
12 deal -- because they've dealt with Staff so long and so
13 forth, it seems like they're holding back. It seems like it
14 could be better when we first see it. It seems like they're
15 trying to keep something in their wallet.

16 So I'd really ask the developers to try to step up
17 their game and come out with a better product at first, and
18 not have to go around with all the black magic and so forth
19 and be really critical on them, and then they come back with
20 a much better project.

21 Like I said, these are a million dollars apiece to
22 build. I think that's plenty of money for these units.

1 They should be able to do something a little better. I
2 don't like to be too critical, but listening to this
3 sometimes gets a little long in the tooth. So that's where
4 I'll leave it.

5 MARY FLYNN: Okay. Thank you. Well, I think --
6 you know, we're all learning, it's a new process for every
7 and I do think, you know, we have seen situations where some
8 improvements have been made before it gets us, but I think
9 there is a little bit of let's, you know, wait and see what
10 the Planning Board has to say.

11 So to whatever extent we can clarify or streamline
12 a process that would make it better for both applicant and
13 the neighborhood and the Planning Board, I think that's
14 worthy of additional discussion. And so, we will be
15 visiting that again I'm sure in the future.

16 For the purposes of tonight, I don't have really
17 anything to add. I agree pretty much with what my
18 colleagues say. Again, I think really the issues are design
19 ones, and I think a lot more could be done to integrate the
20 building into more of a neighborhood -- more of the
21 neighborhood context.

22 And even the Mass Ave side, I mean I agree with

1 Ted. There are apartment buildings all along Mass Ave, but
2 the others that we have, yes, have more historical character
3 to them, they're -- you know, a little bit more detailed and
4 while this one doesn't have to mimic anything, I think, you
5 know, more detail and breaks in the massing would certainly
6 help and not only in terms of it fitting into the
7 neighborhood, but also in relating to the mansion.

8 So I think -- let me just ask Daniel, we've said a
9 lot. You folks have given us a lot of information. Do you
10 have any questions for us at this point as to clarification
11 for the report, or do you feel like you have enough at this
12 point to deal with?

13 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Thank you, Chair Flynn. I've
14 been taking diligent notes. I feel like I've captured most
15 of the comments that I've heard from the Planning Board and
16 from the public. I do want to just check in with Erik as
17 our Urban Designer if there's any --

18 MARY FLYNN: Mm-hm.

19 DANIEL MESSPLAY: -- any additional clarifications
20 or questions he had before we work on putting this in a
21 short report together.

22 ERIK THORKILDSEN: No. I think this is great.

1 Thanks really a lot for all your thoughts and input. And
2 really interesting thoughts about the process too. We'll
3 definitely take that back and think about it.

4 MARY FLYNN: Great. Okay. So then we need to
5 make a motion regarding the status of the Design Review. So
6 let me ask is there a motion to conclude this Design Review
7 session and submit an initial report with our comments to
8 the developer?

9 TOM SIENIEWICZ: So moved.

10 MARY FLYNN: Thank you, Tom. Is there a second?

11 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Second.

12 MARY FLYNN: Thank you, Lou.

13 Daniel, could we have a roll call vote, please?

14 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Yes. Roll call on that motion:

15 Lou Bacci?

16 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Yes.

17 DANIEL MESSPLAY: H Theodore Cohen?

18 H THEODORE COHEN: Yes.

19 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Steve Cohen?

20 STEVEN A. COHEN: Yes.

21 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Tom Sieniewicz?

22 TOM SIENIEWICZ: Yes.

1 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Ashley Tan?

2 ASHLEY TAN: Yes.

3 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Catherine Preston Connolly?

4 CATHERINE PRESTON CONNOLLY: Yes.

5 DANIEL MESSPLAY: And Mary Flynn?

6 MARY FLYNN: Yes.

7 [All vote YES]

8 DANIEL MESSPLAY: That's all members voting in
9 favor.

10 MARY FLYNN: Okay. Thank you very much and thank
11 you to the development team. We appreciate your team. And
12 thank you to the members of the public who both listened in
13 and provided comments. It's very much appreciated.

14 * * * * *

15 (8:38 p.m.)

16 Sitting Members: Mary T. Flynn, Catherine Preston Connolly,
17 Steven A. Cohen, Theodore Cohen, Tom
18 Sieniewicz, and Lou Bacci.

19 MARY FLYNN: We're going to move on now to the
20 next item on the agenda. If any members of the Planning
21 Board need a break or whatever, you know, please feel free
22 to take one and come right back. We're going to plough

1 ahead here.

2 So the next item is a requested Minor Amendment
3 for Case PB-231A, a previously approved Planned Unit
4 Development special permit at 109 First Street. We're going
5 to begin with an update from CDD Staff. We're then going to
6 hear an update from the applicant followed by public
7 comment. And then the Board will discuss the application.

8 Our action is to grant or deny the requested
9 special permit or we could ask for additional information
10 and continue the hearing to a future date.

11 I do want to point out that Associate Planning
12 Board Member Ashley Tan has recused herself from this item.

13 So let me turn it over to Mason, who is going to
14 summarize the project, and why this is before us.

15 Mason?

16 MASON WELLS: Thank you, Chair. So this PUD
17 special permit was granted in 2010 and it's been amended as
18 recently as this year. It contains multiple building sites,
19 many of which have been completed.

20 This proposal involves converting a portion of the
21 ground story of Parcel B previously approved for retail and
22 consumer services to a day care use, which is permitted

1 under the conditions of the special permit and the
2 applicable zoning only after a written determination of the
3 Planning Board.

4 The Board's action is to find whether the proposed
5 change can be approved as a Minor Amendment, and if so,
6 grant that amendment subject to any conditions.

7 The criteria for taking this action along with
8 comments on the proposal are in the memo from CDD Staff.
9 Thank you.

10 MARY FLYNN: Thank you, Mason. This evening,
11 Gregory Sampson is representing the applicant.

12 Mr. Sampson, you have up to 30 minutes for your
13 presentation, but please be as concise as possible. We can
14 allow additional time at our discretion if need be.

15 So if you would please start by introducing
16 yourself and any other members of your team who are present,
17 and please begin.

18 JORDAN SMITH: Hi. Just for -- good evening,
19 Board. Just for a point of clarification Gregory Sampson is
20 my colleague. He is -- I will be here instead tonight. And
21 my name is Jordan Smith with Sullivan & Worcester.

22 But I believe there will be others who are running

1 the presentation and at least the beginning of it, and I
2 will hand it over to them now. Thank you.

3 MARY FLYNN: Thank you. Do we know who that is?

4 JORDAN SMITH: Yes. I believe it's Bryan and the
5 architect. They may be muted.

6 MARY FLYNN: Okay.

7 H THEODORE COHEN: They look pretty young.

8 MARY FLYNN: [Laughter] Bryan. Mr. Slonski? Oh,
9 no you just -- now you're fine. You're unmuted, I think, so
10 you can proceed. Oh no, we can't hear you.

11 JORDAN SMITH: If no one else is able to unmute
12 themselves, I will begin the presentation of course. So --
13 and if the person who's moving the slides can do it as we
14 go, that would be very appreciated.

15 So members of the Board, thank you. As you know,
16 we are here before you for a Minor Amendment to this PUD
17 application for Day Care use. This is Parcel B. This --
18 please advance to the next slide.

19 So if we can just go around and do a quick
20 introduction, if they will work. Brian Slonski, VP of Real
21 Estate Development for Gardner School and Elliott Wren
22 (phonetic); Elise Renwick, who I believe I running the

1 presentation right now.

2 Next slide, please?

3 So the Gardner School is -- they have a number of
4 locations throughout the country, and this is -- they hope
5 to be their first in Massachusetts area. They have a very
6 academically focused program for the preschool children up
7 to the ages of 5 years old that they are looking forward to
8 introducing and bringing to the Massachusetts area.

9 Next slide, please?

10 I don't know if Bryan, you'd like to hop in here
11 to maybe say a little bit more about the program. Please do
12 at anytime. But these are obviously highly regulated and
13 very well programmed on -- programs obviously for these
14 children that are coming to these schools.

15 And they are -- what really sets them apart,
16 again, is the academic focus compared to other day care
17 facilities.

18 But they bring that in a really well-structured
19 environment with a high degree of focus on food and
20 interaction with the community.

21 Next slide, please?

22 Yes. So again, the highly academic focus of these

1 schools and these day care facilities with certified
2 teachers running these programs.

3 Next slide, please?

4 And here, as you can see here, are some of the
5 offerings that the Gardner School provides, you know,
6 obviously focusing on movement, language and dance.

7 Next slide, please?

8 The Gardner School, obviously, they take the
9 security and safety very seriously, as is important for any
10 of this type of day care facilities. If there are any
11 further questions on that from the Board, we would be happy
12 to answer those.

13 Next slide, please?

14 And here, this is a really helpful slide we think
15 to kind of show how many locations there are throughout the
16 country, how important, you know, they think the
17 Massachusetts market it as they move into it.

18 As you can see for locations when they move into
19 states, there are multiples of them. And so, rolling these
20 programs out in a thoughtful way is very important to the
21 Gardner School. And so, you know, this being the first
22 location in Massachusetts is very important, and is not, you

1 know, this isn't -- they don't want this to be the only one,
2 right? This is a program that they really like to roll out
3 in states. And so, we're looking to have this have a good
4 and meaningful impact with the community.

5 Next slide, please.

6 So as I'm sure you all know, the location here at
7 109 First Street, it also is bordering Hurley and Charles
8 Street and is going to take up about approximately 10,000
9 square feet of ground floor space on First Street.

10 Next slide, please?

11 BRYAN SLONSKI: Can you hear me now?

12 JORDAN SMITH: Oh, Brian. There you are.

13 BRYAN SLONSKI: Apologies about that. I had to
14 join from my phone. For some reason, my computer microphone
15 was not working.

16 JORDAN SMITH: That's great. You know, Bryan,
17 I'll hand it over to you, because I think you can provide
18 much more detail than I can.

19 BRYAN SLONSKI: All right. Well, I appreciate you
20 covering while I was having technical difficulties.
21 Unfortunately, it looks like you have gone through the
22 majority of my slides.

1 So we can hand it over to David with NORR to talk
2 through some of the architectural portion of the proposal,
3 and then maybe if there's any questions specifically on the
4 Gardner School, I can handle those.

5 DAVID BABNIGG: Great, thank you. Can everyone
6 hear me?

7 STEVEN A. COHEN: Yes.

8 MARY FLYNN: We can.

9 DAVID BABNIGG: Great. Great. I'm filling in for
10 Elise Renwick. My name is David Babnigg from NORR.

11 And on the screen here you can see the site plan
12 for the proposed school. The proposed school exists at the
13 corner of Charles Street and First Street. North is
14 indicated here and will be on the right-hand side of the
15 screen.

16 The main entrance, also indicated with the small
17 gray arrows, is at the corner of Charles and First Street
18 maintaining the existing vestibule entrance that was planned
19 for this development.

20 Parking area for the school, which will serve as a
21 drop-off zone, is located in a courtyard space accessed
22 through Hurley Street. And there will be allocated spaces

as shown in a tan color.

Next slide, please?

Here are the proposed elevations for the Gardner School. These elevations are of the existing building. We are not proposing any modifications to the existing materials and are only planning for a proposed sign on First Street as well as a proposed sign on Charles Street.

Next slide, please?

This is the floor plan of the school. The design calls for 11 classrooms oriented along the existing transparent façades along First Street and along Charles Street with a few classrooms facing the parking area in the rear of the space.

These are arranged around a core of amenity spaces, which were showcased on some of the previous slides, and included a kitchen, a science and technology exploration room, and an indoor activity space called The Enrichment Room.

The existing glass along all of of exterior walls will remain, and roller shades plan to be installed in the classrooms to facilitate naptimes for the children.

If we could go on to the next slide?

1 Here we're showing the proposed roller blind
2 specification. This is important because it's showcasing a
3 10 percent openness, which was selected to allow a gentle
4 filter of light into the classrooms.

5 These roller shades shall only be closed during
6 naptimes, which are also listed here in the schedules for
7 infants and toddlers. A total of three naptimes for infants
8 is being considered, and one naptime for toddlers.

9 In orienting the spaces and classrooms for this
10 project, views along First Street were prioritized, and
11 classrooms with only one naptime were arranged along this
12 primary façade to promote a connection with the
13 neighborhood.

14 Next slide?

15 JORDAN SMITH: Hi. All right. And back to the
16 Zoning. So again, as you all know, this is Parcel B under
17 the PUD special permit. So the day care use: Any change of
18 use under the special permit can be done via a Minor
19 Amendment. And that is what we are seeking here tonight.

20 The Day Care Use -- just for background -- as I'm
21 sure you all know is a Dover Amendment Protected Use. And
22 it also, importantly for underlying zoning, would be an

1 Allowed Use. Simply that under the PUD, it's specifically
2 lists that the ground floor uses are retail. And so, the
3 ask that we have for the Board tonight is to allow the use
4 to be also a day care and educational facility use.

5 The reason that we believe that that -- the
6 applicant believes that that is a congruent use with the
7 retail and is a good replacement for it: Of course, as you
8 all know, the retail is a challenged use currently. But
9 more importantly -- next slide, please?

10 That the Cambridge Zoning when it lists active
11 uses for streetscapes, which is obviously a very important
12 kind of goal for the cities on the ground floors lists both
13 retail and day care use as those active uses.

14 And I think, as the architect well explained,
15 there has been a lot of thought put into how the conditions
16 in terms of porosity, transparency, and the relation of
17 those interior spaces will relate to the outdoor ground
18 floor space so that this day care and educational facility
19 use will be an active ground floor use at the ground floor.

20 I think that -- I believe that is the last slide
21 we have here.

22 Bryan, I'm just going to hand it back to you,

1 because I know you are going to be able to talk fully about
2 Gardner School to fill in anything else there, and of course
3 we look forward to any questions from the Board. Thank you.

4 BRYAN SLONSKI: Yeah. Thank you very much,
5 Jordan. I don't have anything additional to present. I
6 assume that Jordan went through my slides and introduced the
7 Gardner School well. But I'm happy to answer any questions
8 that anybody has.

9 MARY FLYNN: Okay. Well thank you, Bryan. I
10 think what we'll do first is we'll take public comment if
11 there is any, and then we'll move into questions and
12 discussion from the Board.

13 So at this point, there are a few people still in
14 attendance at the meeting. So let's say any members of the
15 public who wish to speak should now press the button that
16 says, "Raise hand." If you're calling in by phone, you can
17 raise your hand by pressing *9.

18 As of 5:00 p.m. yesterday, the Board had
19 received no written communications on this case. Written
20 communications received after 5:00 p.m. yesterday will be
21 entered into the record. So let's just check and see if we
22 have any public comment. If anyone is interested in

1 commenting, please raise your hand now.

2 [Pause]

3 I'm not seeing any. Daniel, do you want to just
4 confirm that you too are not seeing any hands going up?

5 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Confirming the same, Chair
6 Flynn. I do not see any hands raised at this time.

7 MARY FLYNN: Okay. All right. Well then, we're
8 going to move on to Board questions and discussions. So
9 first, let's start with any questions Board members might
10 have for the applicant.

11 Lou?

12 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: A quick one. This is more
13 for Daniel, I believe. I keep on hearing this "Educational
14 Use" and "Day Care Use" combined. Is there one specific use
15 here or are they parallel uses. I'm curious how that works
16 out in the Zoning?

17 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Sure. Thank you, Lou. I can
18 speak to that. So "Day Care" -- I'll actually pull up the
19 Zoning and read the specific use category that this falls
20 under. I think that might be helpful.

21 So just generally speaking, Day Care Uses fall
22 within a subcategory of Institutional Uses. So we have a

1 whole kind of subcategory of Institutional Uses called,
2 "Educational Purposes."

3 And this particular use would be under 4.33.b.2,
4 which is "Preschool, day care center, kindergarten, not
5 exempt by statute." So preschool, day Ccare and
6 kindergarten are all sort of lumped into the same
7 Educational Use.

8 But the key here is that they're not exempt by
9 statute. So there's other Educational Uses like when you've
10 got for instance a public school or a state university,
11 where there are certain state statutes that would apply and
12 protect that specific school. In this case, this is a
13 private educational establishment, so it falls in that
14 "Preschool, day care, kindergarten, not exempt by statute"
15 category.

16 MARY FLYNN: Okay.

17 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Thank you. I just needed
18 that clarification.

19 MARY FLYNN: Are there other questions? No.
20 Okay, seeing none, comments from the Board?

21 [Pause]

22 Okay. Lou, I think your hand is still up from the

1 question. Is that correct? Yeah, okay.

2 So Tom, let's hear what your thoughts are.

3 TOM SIENIEWICZ: Well, my primary question that
4 was swimming in my head was answered in the materials, which
5 is around the drop-off and pickup.

6 And this is something that this owner is well
7 schooled in, and I appreciate the analysis here that no more
8 than four cars will probably be stacked in that parking lot
9 at that time. My personal experience with that is that the
10 one rub where a preschool can agitate a community.

11 I think this is a terrific use of the retail space
12 fronting on First Street. It makes good sense, and I think
13 that it's consistent with the spirit of the PUD and warrants
14 determination that this is a Minor Amendment.

15 MARY FLYNN: All right. Thank you. Ted?

16 H THEODORE COHEN: Yes. I agree with what Tom
17 just said. I think Mr. Smith was very polite in talking
18 about retail being challenging at the moment. I would have
19 used a different adjective, but yes, I think this is a
20 perfectly fine use. I walk by several day cares every day,
21 and it's kind of fun to look in the windows and see the kids
22 playing. Plus, we're arranging for a lot more residential

1 in -- immediately in this neighborhood and across McGrath
2 and Cambridge Crossing.

3 And so, I think this is a facility that will, you
4 know, find a lot of neighbors who want to use it. So I
5 would think it's a Minor Amendment, and I think it's a
6 perfectly fine use for this particular facility and
7 location.

8 MARY FLYNN: All right. Any other thoughts from
9 Board members? Okay. Seeing no hands going up -- okay, so
10 to take action on this Minor Amendment request, we need
11 first to make a determination as to whether the change can
12 be considered a Minor Amendment, and if it is the Amendment
13 can be granted by a vote of the Board.

14 So let me just review quickly the criteria for
15 granting Minor Amendments. The following guidance is
16 provided in Zoning 12.37.2:

17 "Minor amendments are changes which do not alter
18 the concept of the PUD in terms of density, floor area
19 ratio, land usage, height, provision of open space, or the
20 physical relationship of elements of the development. Minor
21 amendments shall include, but not be limited to, small
22 changes in the location of buildings, open space, or

1 parking; or realignment of minor streets."

2 Let's see. I think that's all. The other --
3 Daniel, just correct me if I'm wrong. Is that the only
4 thing I have to read into the record? Because 12.37.3
5 regards major amendments.

6 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Yes, that's correct. It's a
7 short provision, but an important one and you recited it
8 very well.

9 MARY FLYNN: Oh, thank you. Much appreciated.
10 Okay. So can we make the finding, then, that it is a minor
11 amendment? I can just see nods of heads or whatever?

12 Yes, okay. So then is there a motion to determine
13 that the proposed amendment to the Final Development Plan is
14 a minor amendment and to approve that minor amendment?

15 STEVEN A. COHEN: So moved.

16 MARY FLYNN: Thank you, Steve. Is there a second?

17 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Second.

18 MARY FLYNN: Thank you. Roll call vote, Daniel?

19 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Roll call on that motion: Lou
20 Bacci?

21 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Yes.

22 DANIEL MESSPLAY: H Theodore Cohen?

1 H THEODORE COHEN: Yes.

2 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Steve Cohen?

3 STEVEN A. COHEN: Yes.

4 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Tom Sieniewicz?

5 TOM SIENIEWICZ: Yes.

6 DANIEL MESSPLAY: Catherine Preston Connolly?

7 MARY FLYNN: Yes.

8 DANIEL MESSPLAY: And Mary Flynn?

9 MARY FLYNN: Yes.

10 [All vote YES]

11 DANIEL MESSPLAY: That is all members voting in
12 favor.

13 MARY FLYNN: Excellent. Well thank you to the
14 proponent. We appreciate your presentation and, as Ted
15 said, there are certainly a lot of new housing opportunities
16 that are being developed in East Cambridge. So hopefully
17 there will be many, many families looking for your services,
18 so --

19 BRYAN SLONSKI: Hopefully. Well, thank you all
20 for your time this evening. And again, I apologize for the
21 technical issue earlier.

22 MARY FLYNN: Yeah. No worries. We all have them,

1 believe me.

2 BRYAN SLONSKI: Yep.

3 MARY FLYNN: Thank you very much.

4 BRYAN SLONSKI: Goodnight.

5 MARY FLYNN: So that concludes the business on our
6 agenda, but as Daniel mentioned earlier, tonight is Steven
7 Cohen's last evening with us on the Planning Board. So
8 before we adjourn, I would just like to take a moment to
9 acknowledge Steve's incredible service to the Planning Board
10 and to the City of Cambridge, the Cambridge community.

11 So first a few facts. Steve was appointed to the
12 Planning Board on March 26, 2013 after serving for many
13 years as Representative of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood
14 Conservation District Commission.

15 In just over 10 years on the Planning Board, Steve
16 participated in more than 350 meetings and reviewed more
17 than 300 million square feet of development. He has
18 contributed his expertise and thoughtful opinions and
19 comments on the review of 1,200 cases, including 290 Special
20 Permit decisions and 160 Zoning Amendments and Petitions.
21 Additionally, Steve has served as the Planning Board
22 Representative to the Housing Working Group on the Envision

1 Cambridge Comprehensive Plan.

2 All of this adds up to thousands of hours spent
3 not only in meetings, but also in preparation and study of
4 the issues before the Board.

5 Steve, it's been a pleasure to get to know you and
6 to work with you on this Board.

7 And on behalf of the Planning Board, we'd like to
8 extend our sincere thanks to you for your significant
9 contributions to our city. And I hope, going forward, that
10 you enjoy many new interesting and less demanding ways to
11 spend your Tuesday evenings.

12 Best wishes from all of us, and again --

13 STEVEN A. COHEN: Not less demanding.

14 MARY FLYNN: -- many thanks. But before we move
15 forward, I just want to open it up to any of the other
16 Planning Board members who would like to share their
17 comments or best wishes.

18 [Pause]

19 Everybody's being shy now.

20 CATHERINE PRESTON CONNOLLY: I think you said it
21 well, Mary.

22 MARY FLYNN: Yes. Well, it is all very much

1 appreciated. Iram, would you like to say something on
2 behalf of the Staff?

3 IRAM FAROOQ: Yes. Thank you, Mary.

4 Steve, it has been incredibly interesting and
5 incredibly great working with you over the last 10 years on
6 the Planning Board.

7 And I want to extend thanks to you on behalf of
8 the City of Cambridge, not just from the City Administration
9 and Staff, but also, I would say from the City community as
10 a whole. I mean, Mary laid out the range and the scope and
11 the time that you have committed to this endeavor. And it
12 is mind boggling when we see that all in one place. I mean,
13 you've specifically worked on some of the biggest and most
14 significant projects that make Cambridge what it is today,
15 and will be shaping it into the future for many years;
16 things like the Volpe Block, the rezoning and the special
17 permit; the MXD District that allowed an Eversource
18 substation to be built -- something that hasn't happen in
19 U.S at all -- or I should say in North America at all --
20 underneath, I mean, in combination with commercial and
21 residential development below grate.

22 You worked on the rezoning and permitting of the

1 BioMed property that allows the move of a gas transfer
2 station which we never thought could be moved, and to enable
3 them the development of this hybrid model of lab and arts
4 space which, again, is something that is somewhat
5 unprecedented, at least in North America.

6 And the MIT NoMa and SoMa projects that have
7 completely transformed Main Street already; we can see what
8 an impact that has had already in Kendall Square.

9 All of the work in Alewife that's really to hear
10 that emerging district and changing it from what used to be
11 just industrial into something that's really shaping up to
12 be more of a neighborhood.

13 And through this all, I guess, you know, we've all
14 been really polite and nice about this, but I do want to
15 mention that you of all of the Planning Board members have
16 probably challenged us all the most. You are never shy to
17 say what's on your mind, and you are never shy to say if
18 it's different from what everybody else is thinking, and
19 that has certainly really kept Staff on our toes; I'm sure
20 that is also true for Board members. And I have to say that
21 is something that we have really appreciated about you, not
22 just because you are stating your mind but because it is

1 also emblematic of the passion and the energy and the truth
2 telling that you have brought to your work on the Board.

3 It has been an incredible pleasure to work with
4 you all these years. We wish you the very best. And as
5 Mary said, hopefully many more relaxed Tuesday evenings than
6 you've had over the last 10 years. So thank you, so much
7 gratitude from all of us here.

8 MARY FLYNN: Thank you, Iram. Yeah.

9 Steve, would you like to say a few things?

10 H THEODORE COHEN: Can I just jump in to say
11 something first?

12 MARY FLYNN: Sure.

13 H THEODORE COHEN: Steve, I just want to reiterate
14 everything that Iram said. It's just been an absolute
15 pleasure serving with you for the past 10 years.

16 You've always had a different point of view that
17 was really welcome and really interesting, and, you know,
18 made me think, and challenged, and coming professionally
19 where you were coming from and the work you had done, it was
20 just great to hear that.

21 And, I think, right before the pandemic struck, we
22 were in the process of scheduling another luncheon together,

1 that I hope we can do that very soon now.

2 But really, it is just been terrific working with
3 you and getting to know you and working with you, and I wish
4 you many pleasant, quiet Tuesday evenings.

5 MARY FLYNN: Louis?

6 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR.: Yes. Steve, I would like to
7 thank you for your commitment to our city and simply, your
8 presence will be missed.

9 MARY FLYNN: It is very true. All right, if we --

10 TOM SIENIEWICZ: I was just going to promise Steve
11 that I will always try to anticipate all the unintended
12 consequences, which is the turn of phrase that you often
13 brought to the discourse.

14 STEVEN A. COHEN: I specialize on that.

15 [Laughter]

16 MARY FLYNN: That's a very good phrase. All
17 right.

18 STEVEN A. COHEN: And before this, I worked for
19 about 10 years in Mid-Cambridge area, which was great.
20 Unfortunately, there was hardly anything left to do in Mid-
21 Cambridge; that's why I had to move on. But, you know, it
22 was very meaningful for me. After all these years, it's a

1 little difficult to move on, but me, as somebody like me,
2 and probably somebody like any -- you guys, when you move on
3 from age or for whatever reason, you're probably not going
4 to sit around and watch TV. You're going to find something
5 else to do that is going to be meaningful and satisfying and
6 try to have a positive impact on your community.

7 I have some thoughts that I'm going to be working
8 on, so I'm looking for all of that, but this will be very
9 compromising for me, to be gone, and my wife will probably
10 be happy to have another day for me. Or, I don't know, she
11 may be unhappy.

12 But, you know, it's a fundamental thing in life.
13 You have to make adjustments as you get older and as -- if,
14 instead of -- move on. So here we are.

15 I thank you for all of you -- for your words and
16 thank you, especially, for the Staff, and for this amazing
17 place that we live in. You know, it isn't just a
18 coincidence that we live in Cambridge. We made that
19 judgment. I mean, we could have lived anywhere. This is a
20 wonderful city and all of us here are trying to do
21 everything that we can to contribute to it, physically,
22 emotionally, and otherwise. I'd like to think that I did my

1 share, and you all are going forward and will continue to do
2 so. It's a great city, and it's only going to get better.

3 So anyway, thank you for all of you. I appreciate
4 it, and I hope to see you all, you know, probably in the
5 streets, and morally and otherwise. I'm not dying. I'm
6 here, so.

7 MARY FLYNN: There you go. Yes, yeah. Well,
8 thank you, and best wishes. Yeah, I'm sure you'll find lots
9 of interesting things to do.

10 So anything -- any other points to be made by
11 either the Planning Board or questions from Planning Board
12 or staff before we adjourn?

13 No? Okay. Well, seeing that, again,
14 congratulations, Steve. You will be missed, and we are
15 adjourned. Good night, everybody.

16 LOUIS J. BACCI, JR: Good night, everyone.

17 COLLECTIVE: Good night. Thank you. Thank you,
18 everyone. Good night. Thank you, Steve. Good night,
19 everybody. Thanks, Steve.

20 [09:12 p.m. End of proceedings.]

21

22

E R R A T A S H E E T

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I have read the foregoing transcript of the Planning Board meeting, and except for any corrections or changes noted above, I hereby subscribe to the transcript as an accurate record of the proceedings.

Name

Date

CERTIFICATE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Middlesex, ss.

I, Michele Dent, Notary Public in and for the
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do hereby certify that the
above transcript is a true record, to the best of my
ability, of the proceedings.

I further certify that I am neither related to nor
employed by any of the parties in or counsel to this action,
nor am I financially interested in the outcome of this
action.

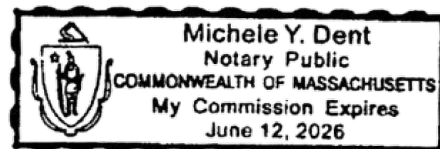
In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this
tenth day of August, 2023.



Notary Public

My commission expires:

June 12, 2026



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