

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No.: PB# 164

Address: 125 Mount Auburn Street

Zoning: Business B/Harvard Square Overlay District

Owner: Mount Story Limited Partnership

Applicant: Postauburn, Inc., General Partner, Mount Story Limited Partnership

Original Decision:

Application Date: July 21, 2000

Public Hearing: September 5, 2000

Planning Board Decision: September 12, 2000

Date of Filing Decision: September 27, 2000

Amendment:

Application Date: March 20, 2001

Public Hearing: April 17, 2001

Planning Board Decision: April 17, 2001

Date of Filing Decision: April 27, 2001

Application

1. Application submitted March 20, 2001.

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

2. Plans and elevations entitled "Mount Auburn Place, Reconstruction of United States Post Office and New Office Building, 125 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts," Elkus/Manfredi Architects Ltd., architect, issued for construction under date of March 26, 2001; ten sheets A2.01 – A2.06 and A3.00 – A3.03; scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

Other Documents Submitted

1. Letter to James J. Rafferty, Esq. from Lester Barber and Roger Boothe, CDD, dated 3/1/01 regarding the design review process.
2. Letter to Larissa Brown, Chair of the Planning Board, from Charles M. Sullivan, dated 3/22/01 re: certificates of appropriateness
3. Letter to the Planning Board from John P. DiGiovanni, President of Trinity Property Management, dated 4/16/01 supporting the application.

Findings

The requested amendment would result in an increased setback from 3 feet to 10 feet for a portion of the Story Street façade nearest Mount Auburn Street. This in turn would allow the massing of the Story Street façade to be broken into three distinct planes reflecting a more residential scale. In addition, the applicant proposes to increase the setback of the 5th floor level facing Story Street. There is no increase in the gross floor area of the building, and the space lost to the increased setbacks is relocated to the 2nd story, formerly a mezzanine level.

The Planning Board finds that the proposed revisions are consistent with the findings of the September 12, 2000 Special Permit decision (the "Original Decision"); they include revisions approved by the Cambridge Historical Commission, as anticipated; and they comply with the minimum setback requirements set forth in the Original Decision. The Planning Board further finds the proposed revisions to be in compliance with the general development guidelines outlined in Harvard Square Development Guidelines. The Planning Board reaffirms all of the findings in the Original Decision as appropriate and applicable to the development inclusive of the proposed revisions.

Decision

After review of the application documents and discussion at the public hearing, and based on the findings referenced above, the Planning Board GRANTS an amendment to the Original Decision allowing the building revisions set forth in the application documents, subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Two design elements shall be brought back before the Planning Board for its review and approval in a design consultation session. The first of these is

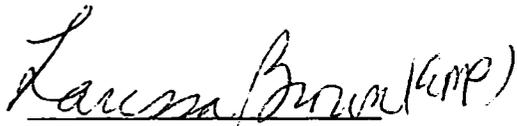
the fifth floor setback along Story Street as it affects the cornice line at the corner of Mount Auburn Street and Story Street. The second is the treatment of the proposed new setback area at ground level along Story Street near Mount Auburn Street. This may include the installation of landscaping or street furniture or other treatment, or may be sidewalk only, as per Planning Board review.

2. The building, revised as presented in the application documents, is consistent with all requirements set forth in Condition No. 1 of the Original Decision. However, should there be further revisions to the design of the building beyond the two elements for which a design consultation session and Planning Board approval is required, the applicant shall be required to obtain further certification of compliance with Condition No. 1 of the original decision.

3. The revisions amount to further setbacks within the envelope of the building as previously approved in the Original Decision, there is no increase or enlargement of the building, and no additional zoning relief is needed beyond that granted in the Original Decision.

Voting to grant the amendment were T. Anninger, F. Darwin, B. Shaw, H. Russell, K. Benjamin, and P. Winters, associated members appointed for this hearing, constituting at least two thirds of the membership of the Board. L. Brown voted against the granting of the amendment.

For the Planning Board,


Larissa Brown, Chair

A copy of this decision, Case No. PB #164 shall be filed with the office of the City Clerk. Appeals, if any shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision filed with the Office the City Clerk on April 27, 2001, by Elizabeth M. Paden, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have likewise been filed with the City Clerk on such date. Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of the decision.
No appeal has been filed.

DATE:
City Clerk
City of Cambridge

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139
NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No: PB#164

Address: 125 Mount Auburn Street

Zoning: Business B/Harvard Square Overlay District

Owner: Mount Story Limited Partnership

Applicant: Postauburn, Inc., General Partner, Mount Story Limited Partnership

Application Date: July 21, 2000

Public Hearing: September 5, 2000

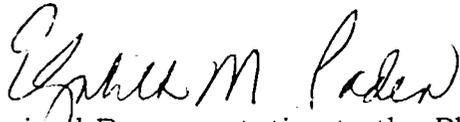
Planning Board Decision: September 12, 2000

Date of Filing Decision: September 27, 2000

Application: Harvard Square Overlay District Special Permit to waive the Parking Requirement for reconstruction of the existing two-story post office building and construction of additional 3 floors of office for a total development of 49,974 square feet of gross floor area.

Decision: GRANTED with conditions

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Office of the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.



Authorized Representative to the Planning Board

For further information concerning this decision, please call Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, TTY: 617-349-4621, email lpaden@ci.cambridge.ma.us.

Case No: PB#164

Address: 125 Mount Auburn Street

Zoning: Business B/Harvard Square Overlay District

Owner: Mount Story Limited Partnership

Applicant: Postauburn, Inc., General Partner, Mount Story Limited Partnership

Application Date: July 21, 2000

Public Hearing: September 5, 2000

Planning Board Decision: September 12, 2000

Date of Filing Decision: September 27, 2000

Application

1. The application was submitted on July 21, 2000, containing the application with a narrative description of the application, description of the current land uses, and photographs of the current conditions.
2. Plans and elevations entitled "Reconstruction of United States Post Office Harvard Square Branch 02138 and Office Building," Elkus/Manfredi Architects Ltd., architect, dated July 21, 2000; cover sheet, index, and twelve drawings SPC.01 and SPA.01 through SPA.11; scale 1" = 16'.
3. The Harvard Square Advisory Committee Report, for Case designated "Harvard Square Post Office."

Other Documents Submitted

1. Plans and elevation entitled "Reconstruction of United States Post Office Harvard Square Branch 02138 and Office Building," Elkus/Manfredi Architects Ltd., architect, dated July 21, 2000, with revisions dated September 5, 2000; consisting of cover sheet and three sheets entitled "Proposed Street Parking," "Revised Site Improvements and Ground Floor Plan - Bus Shelter, 3' setback along Story Street," and "Revised Mount Auburn Street Elevation," respectively, and rendering of pedestrian way; reflecting changes requested by the Department of Traffic and Parking and the Harvard Square Advisory Committee.
2. Fax to the Planning Board from John Moot, 44 Coolidge Hill Road, dated 9/7/00.

3. Letter to the Planning Board from Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, dated 9/11/00, re: the Commission's review of the application.
4. Affidavit of Robert A. Schlager, dated 9/12/00, re: the notification process of the public hearing.
5. Letter to the Planning Board from Martin R. Healy, Goodwin, Procter & Hoar, dated 9/12/00 re: Thomas B. Bracken, Esq letter of 9/12/00.
6. Letter to the Planning Board from Thomas Bracken, Esq., of Bracken and Baram, dated 9/12/00, re: procedural errors in the Board's deliberation.
7. Letter to the Planning Board from Donald R. Ware, dated 9/12/00, stating he did not receive notice.
8. Letter to the Planning Board from Donald R. Ware, dated 9/12/00, withdrawing his letter of 9/12/00.
9. E-mail to the Planning Board from James Williamson, dated 9/7/00.
10. E-mail to the Planning Board from James Williamson, dated 9/11/00.
11. Letter to the Planning Board from Mayor Anthony Galluccio, Councillors Kathy Born, and Jim Braude, dated 9/12/00.
12. Revised plans for the proposal, dated 9/5/00.
13. Harvard Square Advisory Committee report.
14. Copy of letter to Robert Schlager from Susan Clippinger, dated 9/11/00 re: the PTDM plan.

Findings

The Planning Board finds the proposed development consistent with the intent of the Zoning Ordinance generally, the objectives of the Harvard Square Overlay District, and the requirements of Sections 10.43 and 11.54.4 of the Ordinance, as set forth below.

1. The proposal is in compliance with the general purposes of the Harvard Square Overlay District (Section 11.52):
 - a. Preservation and enhancement of the District's unique functional environment and visual character.

The new building would be in harmony with the new construction that has occurred in the area over the past thirty years and will

complete the pedestrian way that is only partially realized on the adjacent Mifflin Place parcel.

- b. Mitigation of the functional impacts on residential neighborhoods.

The site is a block from the start of the residential neighborhood. The Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) plan will assure mitigation of traffic impacts on residents. The proposal also mitigates any impact of rooftop elements through the use of screening.

- c. Maintenance of a diversity of development, open space patterns, and building scale.

The existing post office building has become an anomaly at this location as it is the only remaining one story building in the high density Business B district that ends at Story Street. While small in size, the existing building is not a distinguished one and generally relates poorly to the public streets it abuts and to the pedestrian way.

The proposal would respond to the criteria by maintaining the post office use, by improving pedestrian ways, and by relating well to the scale of its abutting neighbors.

- 2. The proposal is in compliance with the general development guidelines outlined in Harvard Square Development Guidelines

- a. Retention and upgrading of the existing inventory of old buildings.

The existing building is not known to be of historic significance. The Cambridge Historical Commission reviewed the project and voted to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness in principle at its September 7th meeting, requesting certain design changes which also will be subject to design review under this Decision. The Commission is acting on this building as if the Neighborhood Conservation District proposed for Harvard Square were enacted.

- b. Respect for the diversity of building form and scale.

The proposal is building out the last of the small lots in this area, advancing the objective of seeing smaller scaled construction rather than the assembly of small lots into larger parcels for development.

- c. Expansion of a high quality public environment.

Completion of the pedestrian connector to Brattle Street and installation of brick sidewalks, Harvard Square lighting, pedestrian

benches, consolidated newsboxes, bus shelter through the installation of a canopy on the building, and recessed mailboxes will significantly upgrade the public environment. The design and materials of the new building will harmonize the façade of the building with adjacent buildings and be compatible with the design of neighboring buildings.

- d. Expansion of the network of pedestrian walkways.

The final link in the pedestrian connector to Brattle Street will be completed and a mid-walkway courtyard will be created at the entrance to the building's office floor.

- e. Expansion of residential living within the Square.

No housing is proposed. However, the proposed expansion and modernization of the Post Office will allow the facility to better serve neighborhood needs.

- f. Creative solutions to the Square's parking problems.

The project will not provide a significant amount of parking. The waiver requested is similar to those granted elsewhere for development in Harvard Square. The excellent public transit available in Harvard Square has made it possible for private development to proceed without the usual complement of accessory parking. The additional traffic that would be generated by additional parking spaces does not occur, and the savings from eliminating costly underground parking can be devoted to public improvements and enhanced building design.

- 3. The proposal complies with the specific guidelines for the Brattle Square subdistrict.

The guidelines suggest constructing streetwall buildings and extending the system of mid block pedestrian connections. This proposal does both. The guidelines also call for the further extension of the sidewalk improvements initially installed by the MBTA elsewhere in Harvard Square in the mid 1980s. The proposal will involve the addition of trees and benches to the adjacent sidewalk, and replacement of the existing concrete-paved sidewalks with brick.

- 4. The proposal complies with criteria for the granting of a Special Permit to reduce parking requirements [Section 11.54.4 (b)].

- a. The lot is sufficiently small in size as to contribute to a development pattern of diverse, small scale, new structures and the retention of existing structures.

The lot is 12,803 square feet in area and has been in this configuration for generations. The proposed development retains the perception of the site as separate from all other adjacent sites and contributes to the sense of incremental change in the block encouraged by this provision of the ordinance.

- b. The reduction in required parking will result in a more appropriate design for its location and the neighborhood.

Much larger and more intrusive access would have to be provided on Story Street if the full parking and loading requirements were to be met.

- c. No National Register or contributing building is demolished, or had been demolished in the preceding five (5) years.

The post office building is less than 50 years old and has not been identified as a contributing building in the Harvard Square National Register Historic district.

- d. The Post Office use is exempt from parking and loading requirements under Section 6.36.3g of the Ordinance. Accordingly without a parking waiver the proposed building would require 41 parking spaces and one loading bay. The proposal is for 6 parking spaces and one loading bay, a reduction of 35 parking spaces based upon the proposed occupancy. Accordingly, the project shall be subject to the Cash Contribution payment to the Harvard Square Improvement Fund required in Section 11.54.4.

- 5. The general criteria for issuance of a Special Permit are met.

- a. The requirements of the Ordinance can be met.

The proposed building will comply with all applicable and dimensional requirements of the Business B Zoning District.

The criteria for the issuance of the required special permit under the provisions of the Harvard Square Overlay District will be met.

- b. Traffic patterns will not cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in the established neighborhood character.

In general, Harvard Square, with its good public transit access, is thought to be the best location in the city in which to emphasize non-auto modes of travel. This site is, however, close to the residential streets that are most impacted by non-residents parking on those residential streets in order to do business in Harvard Square. With

the voluntary compliance with the Parking Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Ordinance, potential negative impacts on residential streets should be minimized.

- c. Continued operation or development of adjacent uses will not be adversely affected.

The building is consistent in scale and use with adjacent buildings and is lower than would be allowed for new construction across Story Street (85 feet). Existing construction on Story Street across from the site consists of three and four story wood frame structures.

- d. No nuisance or hazard will be created to the detriment of the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants or the citizens of the City.

No nuisance or hazard will be created and there is the potential to reduce the congestion that is evident on the adjacent public sidewalks through widening of pathways.

- e. The use will not impair the integrity of the district or adjoining districts or derogate from the intent or purpose of the Ordinance.

To a substantial degree, the proposal advances the major objectives of the Harvard Square Overlay District and the base Business B district.

Decision

After review of the application documents and discussion at the public hearing and discussion at a subsequent Planning Board meeting, and based on the above findings, the Planning Board GRANTS a Special Permit to reduce the number of required parking spaces to six in order to permit the construction of a new building containing 49,974 square feet GFA, as outlined in the above application documents, subject to the following conditions and limitations:

1. The project shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department, which may include revisions approved by the Cambridge Historical Commission acting as if the Neighborhood Conservation District proposed for Harvard Square were enacted. Final plans submitted for issuance of a building permit shall include setbacks from the property line of not less than 3 feet along Story Street and not less than 5 feet along the pedestrian connector to Brattle Street substantially as shown in the September 5, 2000 revised plans, and otherwise shall be generally consistent with the approved plans dated July 21, 2000 and with the approved dimensional limitations set forth in Appendix 1. Before issuance of a building permit the Community Development Department shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the final plans are consistent with

and meet all conditions of this Decision

2. A Payment to the Harvard Square Improvement Fund shall be made prior to the issuance of any Certificate of Occupancy, in fulfillment of the requirements of Section 11.54.4 of the Zoning Ordinance. The project shall not be providing 35 of the required parking spaces. A payment to the Harvard Square Improvement Fund shall therefore be required in the amount of \$369,740 [$\$21,128 \times 35$ waived parking spaces $\times 50\%$].

*Per formula developed by the Planning Board in Case #96, Major Amendment #1, March 1992: the median cost of constructing a parking space in an underground parking facility, which cost is adjusted for the Boston Metropolitan Area, as determined by the most recently published edition of "Means Square Foot Costs: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Institutional"; R. S. Means Company, Inc. A space is assumed to be 400 square feet in area. The Twenty-first Annual Edition sets the median cost per square foot at \$45.15 plus a Boston metropolitan area adjustment of 1.17 for a total of \$52.82 per foot.

3. The project shall complete a PTDM plan in coordination with the PTDM officer as if the project were subject to the PTDM Ordinance as a Large Project. Compliance with the conditions and requirements of the PTDM plan as approved by the PTDM planning officer shall be a condition of this permit.
4. Subject to applicable City approval, the proponent shall provide or pay for pedestrian, bicycle and transit enhancements as listed below and further described in a letter to the proponent from the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department, dated 9/11/00, to support the employee and visitor uses of non-auto modes of access to the building.
 - a. The street shall be ground and overlaid in the section between Nutting and Mifflin Place.
 - b. The proponent shall perform a warrant analysis and a pedestrian compliance study of the signal at University Road and Mt. Auburn. If the Department of Traffic, Parking & Transportation makes a decision that the signal can be removed, the proponent will pay for the removal of the signal.
 - c. The proponent shall install meter poles at 124 Mt. Auburn.
 - d. The proponent shall install the curb extension at the relocated crosswalk.
 - e. Subject to approval of the Postal Service, the proponent shall install a multibox news box structure, and mailboxes will be located against the building. Benches will be installed.
 - f. The project shall include a brick sidewalk around the Story Street and Mount Auburn Street perimeter of the site and the

portion of the pedestrian connector to Brattle Street that is within the Owner's property.

- g. The project shall include tree plantings substantially as shown in the landscape plan included in the application, in consultation with the City arborist.
5. Rooftop mechanical equipment shall be screened using materials similar to those used on the building façade generally.
6. The portion of the project devoted to uses other than post office use will be subject to the requirements of Section 11.200 of the Zoning Ordinance Incentive Zoning as that portion of the proposal constituting a "Covered Project" exceeds 30,000 square feet (the portion of the project devoted to post office use shall not be included within the "Covered Project" under the definition in Section 11.200). Therefore, prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the project a payment shall be made in the amount of \$124,751.52 [40,543 square feet - 2500 square feet = 38,034 square feet x \$3.28/square foot = \$124,751.52].
7. The first floor shall be devoted to post office use. Any other use of the first floor shall require approval of the Planning Board of any parking relief. To the extent that any such change of use would trigger the requirement for additional parking spaces under the provisions of Section 11.54.4 or incentive zoning payments under the provisions of Section 11.200, a corresponding additional payment shall be required for those parking spaces and additional Gross Floor Area within the definition of "Covered Project" under the formulas set forth in Condition 2 and Condition 6 above, to be paid prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the new use.
8. For purposes of dimensional requirements only, to the extent that the six parking spaces and one loading to be provided do not conform to any dimensional requirement or Article 6.000, this decision shall also waive the requirement for those facilities.

Voting to grant the special permit were T. Anninger, L. Brown, B. Shaw, H. Russell, W. Tibbs, constituting at least two thirds of the membership of the Board. Also present and voting in place of an absent Planning Board member was Associate Member P. Winters who abstained.

For the Planning Board,



Larissa Brown, Chair

A copy of this decision #164 shall be filed with the Office of the City clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on September 27, 2000, by Elizabeth M. Paden, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have likewise been filed with the City Clerk on such date. Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of the decision. No appeal has been filed.

DATE:
City Clerk
City of Cambridge

	Allowed/Required	Existing	Proposed	Granted
FAR	4.0	.92	3.9	3.9
Floor Area	51,212 SF	11,758 SF	49,974 SF	49,974 SF
Max Height	60 feet	27 feet	60 feet	60 feet
Max Angle above cornice line	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Min Lot Size	None	12,803 SF	12,803 SF	12,803 SF
Min Lot area/du	300	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max # du	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Min Lot Width	none	100 SF	No change	No change
Min Yard Setbacks				
Front Mt Auburn Story	None	0	0	0
Side Left 14 Story	None	9 feet	.66	.66
Side Right Mifflin	None	2.33 feet	3.66-5.33	3.66-5.33
Rear	none	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ratio Usuable O.S.	none	none	11% (1,400 SF)	11% (1,400 SF)
Off Street Parking				
Min #	41 notes	9	6	6
Max #	61			
Handicapped	2	0	1	1
Bicycle spaces	5	0	5	5
Loading Bays	1	1	1	1

Notes: The existing post office does not require parking spaces, section 6.36.3g; minimum shown is calculated based on proposed office space.