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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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**IRAM FAROOQ**  
Assistant City Manager for  
Community Development

**SANDRA CLARKE**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Administration

**KHALIL MOGASSABI**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Planning

**To:** City of Cambridge Planning Board  
**From:** Central Square Advisory Committee  
**Date:** 9/18/2019  
**Re:** Cambridge Gas & Light Building – 727 Mass Ave

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The Central Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on September 18, 2019 to review and comment on the Gas Light Building LLC and Chevron Partners (the “Applicant”) proposal for a 37-room boutique hotel at 727 Mass Ave. This meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions outlined in Section 20.300 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. The Committee is appointed by the City Manager to undertake all large project reviews of variances and special permits for activities within the Central Square Overlay District (the “District”), and to monitor the progress of the Central Square Non-Zoning Recommendations of the 2013 K2C2 Study (the “Study”).

\* \* \*

The Applicant purchased the Cambridge Gas and Light Building over two (2) years ago with the intention of renovating the building. The proposal calls for a substantial renovation and rehabilitation of the historic building and construction of a new hotel addition behind and above the existing building. According to the Applicant, the recently adopted Central Square Restoration Zoning Petition has really been helpful in making this project a reality, specifically with regards to rooftop uses, exemption of retail under 1500 sq.ft., and parking waivers.

Committee members who were present spoke in favor of the Applicant’s proposal, particularly the effort to honor the building’s existing design. Specific questions/comments are as follows:

- **Have you done any shadow and shade studies?**
  - The new addition will cast some shadows onto the public realm and surrounding buildings, but the bulk of that is already being cast by the existing building.
- **Why not take up the whole third floor for hotel functions?**
  - It made sense to extend that function from the second floor to the third floor. With the office space on the third floor, it may create opportunities for collaborative uses between the office and hotel uses.
- **Temple Street is a very narrow street. How would that work for snow removal with the proposed changes?**
  - We are continuing those conversations with the City. Once the hotel begins operations, we will have to figure out the best way to manage this space.
- **What made you decide to do a hotel and not just housing?**
  - Chevron Partners developed a small hotel management brand here in Boston. Our intention is to develop and manage the hotel itself.
- **Are these extended stay hotel rooms? Are there kitchenettes?**
  - Our intended client base, our target group, does see it as a benefit to have a kitchenette in the hotel room. The hotel market here is shifting in that direction. Our perspective is to keep this building, and we do not have residential buildings in our portfolio.
- **Are you expecting the convenience store to stay?**
  - We will discuss this with them, but we don’t know for sure.

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- **Regarding ground-floor retail, I'm assuming you'd be working with the Central Square Business Association on this point? My initial reaction is that we don't need another café in the Square.**
  - There's been some interest on the part of the owner to figure out what opportunities there are in Central Square for retail uses that support what already exists in the Square.
- **Regarding the architectural expression, I do like your approach. Thinking about similar projects in the area, some have quite a bit of detail in their additions. I'll be interested to see how those details are articulated and what the final materials will be on the building. I like the way the proportions are basically the same. In terms of the type panel system will be used here, would it be more of a matte finish or a more glossy, shiny finish?**
  - We are exploring both options right now in combination with the glass. It's a question of the extent to which we mimic the existing building or not.

**Committee Members Present**

- Joel Altstein
- Esther Hanig
- Melissa Greene
- Christopher Sol Gully
- Robert Winters

**Committee Members Absent**

- Tahir Kapoor
- Michael Monestime

**Project Team**

- Julian Bluemle, *Chevron Partners*
- Ozge Diler Himes, *Finegold Alexander Architects*
- Tony Hsiao, *Finegold Alexander Architects*
- Sean Manning, *VHB, Inc.*
- Thomas Murray, *Casali Group, Inc.*
- Sarah Like Rhatigan, *Trilogy Law LLC*

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**Public Questions/Comment**

- **Everybody seems to agree that there is a need for more affordable housing, so I'm not excited about a hotel. I am concerned about the impact to the adjacent building, but that remains to be seen.**
- **I'm concerned about the people who live in the CHA building at 5 Temple Street. How much higher and closer is the proposed addition to the existing building? If people in that building have concerns about this proposal, how could that be expressed?**
  - A community meeting has been scheduled for October 17, 2019 at the Citywide Senior Center.



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- ***Is the alley currently being used for parking/loading? If so, how will that change with this proposal?***
  - With this proposal, we are adding a loading zone to Temple Street. It would not exclusively service this project its supporting uses but service other businesses in the area as well.
- ***What are the approximate rates for this boutique hotel?***
  - We don't know currently. Boston is an expensive market for hotels and our intention is not to be at the high end.
- ***I'm very familiar with this area and I do have a concern with what this change in scale is going to bring to this piece of Central Square, which is quieter, more hospitable, more comfortable. This project is nicely done work, but I'm not comfortable with it at this point being in Central Square.***

submitted on behalf of the Committee,

**Wendell Joseph, Neighborhood Planner**  
Community Development Department