



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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
City of Cambridge Board of Zoning Appeals
From: Central Square Advisory Committee
Date: 2/21/20
Re: 544 Mass Ave

The Central Square Advisory Committee (the "Committee") met on Wednesday, February 19, 2020 to review and comment on the Central Square Redevelopment LLC (c/o Cliff Schorer) (the "Applicant") proposal to build 29 micro-unit apartments – where 20 units of any size are allowed by right – above existing ground-floor retail at 544 Mass Ave.

This meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions of 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").

* * *

According to the Applicant, due to the high costs of construction, a literal enforcement of the ordinance would result in the loss of local retailers and an enlargement of the floorplate on each floor to allow for larger residential units. Additionally, per the Applicant, due to the substantial demand for inclusionary and market units at a smaller scale and lower price point, the addition of 29 micro-units could address this demand, relieve pressure on existing family-size units in the surrounding neighborhood, and alleviate the substantial financial hardship of preserving and renovating the existing building.

The Committee's comments spoke to the complexity of the issues that impact this project, reiterating the need for a wide variety of housing options and the need to preserve and nurture cultural assets. A Committee member stated that, while the use of micro-size seems appropriate on this site, given the project's constraints, there is still a substantial need for family-sized units. Another pointed out the unfortunate nature of pitting housing needs against the arts, however unintentional it may be. Both are critical needs in the District and require creative solutions.

Committee members in attendance were not opposed to the proposed project.

Additional Committee Questions/Comments

- ***Since the Dance Complex is not set back on the upper floors, could you approach this building in the same way? Is it possible to match the massing of the adjacent building?***
 - The current zoning ordinance does not allow it. Also, the current façade is weak and must be restructured in order to accommodate the additional weight.
- ***The property does not extend all the way to Green Street. How do you anticipate constructing on such a limited site?***
 - It's extremely challenging. As much as possible, it must be prepared off-site then assembled on site. In order to access the basement to work on the building's foundation, there must be an arrangement with Teddy's Shoes. The other issue is how to keep retail viable during this process (Teddy's Shoes and Five Spices House).

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- **What's the expected price point for the micro-units?**

- The price points are based on \$47/sf which is the market average in the area. It ranges between \$1320-1800 a month, depending on unit size.

Public Questions/Comment

There were 19 members of the public present.

Members of the public in attendance spoke in support of the existing tenants of the upper floors – Studio 550 and the Center for Marxist Education – who would likely be displaced. The Applicant made known the commitment to assist in finding suitable and appropriate locations for these tenants.

Public comment also spoke to the larger issue of a history in Central Square of the displacement of cultural assets, which is ironic for a place that has been designated as an “cultural district” by the State. How can we put a stop to this cycle? How can we protect the uses in buildings that are used for and by the arts community? “What can the City do to preserve its cultural assets, particularly when the arts are a major factor in creating the social and economic base that facilitate development”, one member of the public expressed.

On the topic of housing in Central Square, a member of the public expressed their lack of enthusiasm for the micro-units. At the time that the inclusionary percentage was increased, they explained, the City said there was a lack of 3bd units. Tenants said they would hold out on studio-size units in favor of the larger ones. In the rezoning of Central Square, many in the community specifically said that micro-units were not a desire. We wanted units that people could stay in for longer periods of time. These units are not providing the kind of housing that we really need.

Letters of support were also sent electronically. They have been attached to this report.

Committee Members Present

- Melissa Greene
- Esther Hanig
- Tahir Kapoor
- Robert Winters

Committee Members Absent

- Joel Altstein
- Christopher Sol Gully
- Michael Monestime

Project Team

- Cliff Schorer, *Central Square Redevelopment LLC*

submitted on behalf of the Committee,
Wendell Joseph, Neighborhood Planner
Community Development Department

IDENTITY

Studio at 550 is a non-profit multidisciplinary arts organization residing at 550 Mass. Ave, in Central Sq on the 3rd floor. The Studio is comprised of one open space of approximately 1,000 sq ft equipped with dance marley floor, mirrors, a sound system, with various theatrical components. This creates a modular environment for rehearsals, classes, and performances across many disciplines (such as dance, music, theatre, photography, videography, and experimental art) to be practiced. Over 750+ artists have walked through Studio at 550's doors over the past 3.8 years it has existed under this organization. Previously the space was home to Boston Dance Company for 20 years, a ballet company which had it's own programming including its annual Nutcracker and various performances throughout the year, lead by former Boston Ballet dancer Jimmy Rearden.

USE

Currently, the Studio has provided platform for a multitude of various rehearsals, photoshoots, videoshoots, performances, events, and classes. Throughout the relatively short period of time of its existence, the Studio has harness so much creative activity within its walls. Not only cultivating the creativity of established artists, but also providing the spark to young and burgeoning artists as well. From providing space for the various documentaries focusing on software engineer Margaret Hamilton, to providing space for the Swissnex to present experimental music performance of Marcel Zeis Studio at 550 has provided necessary platform for the practice, learning, and presentation of arts for not only Central Square, but on an international scale as well.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTS

The Studio prides itself for having a central location that is part of the cultural hub that is Central Sq. Dance, in particular has deep roots here in Central Square and providing multiple dance in relative close proximity is necessary to sustain a community which requires a considerable amount of resources in order to operate. It is not by chance that Studio at 550 has the amenities that make dance "possible". As director I have dedicated my life as a dance artist who has been also practicing and studying media/projection art in parallel. Due to the considerable amount of resources required for dance, it's sometimes more difficult to integrate other arts disciplines due to lack of safe and appropriate amenities in spaces designed for other disciplines. It is with this premise that Studio provides one of the few spaces in Massachusetts outside of University where dance can exist to interact with other disciplines in practice, not only in performance.

TRANSPORTATION

Central Sq provides a unique and important location for Studio at 550. With artists coming from Dorchester, Roxbury, Watertown, Arlington, Somerville, Lynn, Salem, Revere, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Brighton, Boston, and some out of state. Central Square is a transportation center which makes cultivating professional artistic relationships a reality. This is especially important due to the proximity to Dance Complex and formerly Green Street Studios. Dance happens when there are people in a studio space to work. It can't work in our backyards, or kitchens, or a painting studio. Dance requires multiple bodies at time who come from various locations to meet up, and spend a few hours to rehearse, take class, or perform.

METRICS

Studio at 550 has over 57 monthly members, 624 active contacts who rent out the space on the continuum, 18 ongoing weekly classes with over 360 students who come weekly. Over 24 performances per year happen here, and with a staff of 1 + 1 workstudy. I'm sincerely proud of all of what was created and possible within the last 3.8 years.

SOLUTIONS?

We are aware that the space where Studio at 550 currently resides is intended on developing micro unit apartments. And while we feel yes, housing is a benefit of this plan, displacing an arts organization which feeds the cultural vitality of not only Central Sq, but the greater Boston/Cambridge area would be a substantial detriment to the Central Square Cultural District which will ultimately diminish the value of the district considerably. After loosing many arts organizations over the years due to development, and within these last few months another dance organization Green Street Studios, it would be not only a shame, but a slap in the face for the Cultural District who have fewer and fewer arts organizations who help get the district its name. I'm here with an open mind to figure out ways in which we can work together as a community to create solutions for situations such as this.

Callie Chapman
Director
Studio@550

Dear Cambridge Council (via Callie at Studio at 550),

Over the last few years, Central Square (and the greater Cambridge area) has lost important arts communities & venues such as the EMF space, Green Street Studios, and TT the Bears to the "progress" of high end real estate development and raising rents. As a successfully self-employed musician living in Cambridgeport, I marvel and am disgusted by Central Square's Cultural District designation. What can those words mean to those who care about the vitality of the arts in Cambridge and see the city do nothing to support the arts communities that have contributed successfully to the Square to give it that designation? They are empty words and a convenient way for the city to capitalize on the culture that these arts groups have worked so hard to foster without any work from the city. Please do not let the Studio at 550 be another victim of the Cambridge Council's inability to step in to maintain the arts component of Central Square's Cultural District by stopping the proposal of the landlord of 544-550 Mass Ave. to redevelop the property into micro-unit residential apartments. Stop the previous cycle in Cambridge of taking advantage of thriving arts communities for the city's economic gain and support the arts communities that are still left in Central Square while we still have them.

Thank you,
Valerie Thompson

Studio at 550
550 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-863-2550
www.studioat550.org
callie@studioat550.org

January 8, 2020

To the Cambridge Board of Zoning Appeals:

We are writing to protest case# BZA-017219-2019, for a variance for the building addressed at 544 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge due to objections to the following:

The applicant, Cliff Schorer is requesting variance request on 3 ordinances: Lot area for each dwelling unit to be decreased from 300sf to 151ft; Number of dwelling units to be increased from 20 to 29; and Number of parking spaces to be decreased from .5/du to 0.

Citing item B of supporting statement where applicant writes, *"There is no change to the access and egress and no additional parking or traffic impact anticipated. This is perfectly located above public transportation and has been a failure as office and assembly space on the upper floors leading to deterioration."* We object to, especially the last part of the argument noting that Studio at 550 is a very active arts organization who serves nearly 300 artists per week providing much needed rehearsal, class, and performance space which contributes to the cultural identity of Central Square. Since the transfer of ownership of the building Studio at 550 has paid our \$2300/month rent on time every month, contradicting the argument that the business is a "failure" as an assembly space. Studio at 550 provides not just space to artists but also much needed programs and community engagement efforts which not only engage artists, but also neighbors to Central Sq, the greater Boston arts scene, and artists and audiences from throughout New England and beyond.

Studio at 550 has operated in the 3rd floor space since 2016, and while we agree that the building has fallen into disrepair, a more fitting solution to the development of the space would be to make efforts to include an already existing arts space into the plan for development of the building.

Citing item E of the applicant's supporting statement where he argues that the conversion of zoning from retail/office to retail/residential would be "in the spirit of recent Zoning changes to the CSQ Overlay" we would argue the following: There has been some considerable effort in establishing an Arts Overlay District within Central Sq, with Councillor Mallon chairing Mayor McGovern's Arts Task Force in efforts to support existing artists to strengthen Central Square as an Arts and Cultural District. There has been considerable work in advocacy with the newly established Central Square Business Improvement District in the same vein. Converting existing artist space to residential space would directly contradict these efforts blindly knocking out a much needed resource for the community which the City and other agencies are fighting so hard to retain.

From the perspective of leasee of the 3rd floor of 550 Massachusetts Ave., Callie Chapman, Director of Studio at 550:

A) I never was in correspondence with the current landlord (Cliff Schorer) at all before this request was filed. No effort was made on his part to even engage in conversation prior to his application and posting for request of variance..

B) I showed up at 550 Mass Ave. and there was a notice posted on the building only 7 days before the hearing. Even though one of the property owners (Jim) was in the building 1 day before to check on a leak in the ceiling, he never mentioned it while he met with me.

C) The property owner is citing a "hardship" as the reason he is requesting a variance. Whereas due to financial circumstances surrounding his purchase of the building are interesting there is nothing dire to prevent compliance with existing ordinances.

All requests for variance due to the overarching objective to transform existing arts/assembly space into rental apartment units would detrimentally change in the essential character of the neighborhood. Citing multiple efforts by community members, associations, individual businesses, individual artists, arts organizations, City councilors, mayors, and citizens of Cambridge to keep the arts in Central Sq in particular, this project will contradict these efforts and strip one more arts organization from the district. Contributing to the ongoing deterioration of stability for the arts in Cambridge.

With objection to the variances requested,

Signed:

Eric	Bornstein	(617) 417-4961	Artist, Arts Educator, Performer
Aislinn	Brophy	(561) 504-9288	Freelance Theatre Artist & Arts Administrator
Margaux	Skalecki		Director of Theater Arte Being Seen Being Heard
Jack	Tan	(857) 207-7907	Student/Dancer
Irene	Hsi	(510) 304-3877	Choreographer/Renter
Ellen	Godena	(617) 407-2333	Movement Educator/Choreographer
David	Karger	(617) 767-6527	
Katerine	Gagnon	(413) 424-6665	Dancer, Ensemble Inédit
Dayenne	Walters	(617) 894-6885	Member of Dance Community since 1998
Emily	Beattie	(617) 256-8789	Choreographer and Dancer
Carl	Alleyne	(617) 905-0512	Dance Instructor
Anna	Patterson	(781) 439-7601	Arts admin/dancer/choreographer Dance teacher , choreographer and director artistic Papsy Naay Leer Dance Company
Papa	Sy	(631) 805-7172	
Arthur	Duffy	(617) 671-6576	
Meghan	McLyman	(617) 320-4764	Dance Professor at Salem State University
Jason	Weeks	(617) 349-4383	Executive Director/Cambridge Arts Council
Benjamin	Cuba	(508) 736-3871	Dance Accompanist/Studio@550, The Dance Complex
Anastasia	Yendiki	(734) 222-0907	Dance instructor, Flamenco Boston
Erin	Scarry	(857) 600-1714	Independent Performing Artist
Callie	Chapman	(617)863-2550	Director, Studio at 550, Choreographer and Multi-Media Artist
Ivan	Korn	(781)640-7648	Musician

LALA ROBERTS 617 331 7729 - DANCER
Jacquelyn Bowden 617-429-4656 dancer
Richard Tibodeur 617 953 9103 dancer
Malick ngom 646 934 3047
Cassandre Charles 857-318-5546
Joe Buego 617 686 4146 director, ensemble Inédit

| THE DanceComplex |

536 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

February 18, 2020

To: Central Square Advisory Committee
Cc: Callie Chapman, Director, Studio 550; Michael Monestime, Executive Director, Central Square Business Improvement District; Jason Weeks, Executive Director, Cambridge Arts; Vice Mayor Alana Mallon, City of Cambridge (chair of Mayor's Arts Task Force); Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui, City of Cambridge

To Our Friends of the Central Square Advisory Committee:

I am writing today to express concern for more development that would infringe on at least two arts institutions in Central Square, a state-designated Cultural District: Studio 550 at 550 Mass Ave, and our own The Dance Complex.

There has been great effort and articulation heeding us as a city to be aware of how our specific arts ecology is eroding in the Square. In recent discussions, including those of the 10th months study the Mayor's Arts Task Force undertook, the closure of Green Street Studios, the EMF artists' studios, great and sound statements are made that we can't allow more of our arts businesses and community to be forced out.

I bring these thoughts to the discussion on February 19th, as Central Square Development proposes plans to develop the buildings where Studio 550 is housed, and adjacent to our property. We would welcome in-depth discussion with the developers on their plans, and would also welcome a guiding hand from the City that would encourage these and any developers to work with us in the arts community. If the goal is to retain the unique-ness of Central Square as a vibrant and dynamic center of art and culture – and developers are using this as a selling point to their tenants – then we have the opportunity to stop the erosion of long standing contributors to that vibrancy and dynamism we as arts institutions bring.

I appreciate the many discussions that have occurred since the Green Street closure- the ones we have been included in and, likely, countless other ones that have occurred. I know there is great sentiment to support the arts. It is time for us as citizens to act upon the wishes of what we want Central Square to be, what we want it to sustain. And we count on our city government, including its arts council, to find ways to encourage all who have a stake here to work together toward our goals.


Aside from being introduced to the developers proposing the build-up of 550 Mass Ave, we have not been engaged by the developers in any discussions regarding their plans, seeking our input. We would hope that any developer would be seeking to sustain the arts organization on site or find ways to support it in transition; and as a neighboring business alone we should be consulted; that we are a nonprofit and arts organization should make the consult even more necessary.

New development should contribute to the place keeping of our community and in this specific case, to the sustenance of the cultural and arts community. It should not be allowed to dismantle it. We are Cambridge, and we know better. Happy to be part of further discussions.

Sincerely,



Peter DiMuro
Executive Artistic Director

 617-547-9363

 /DanceComplex

 /TheDanceComplex

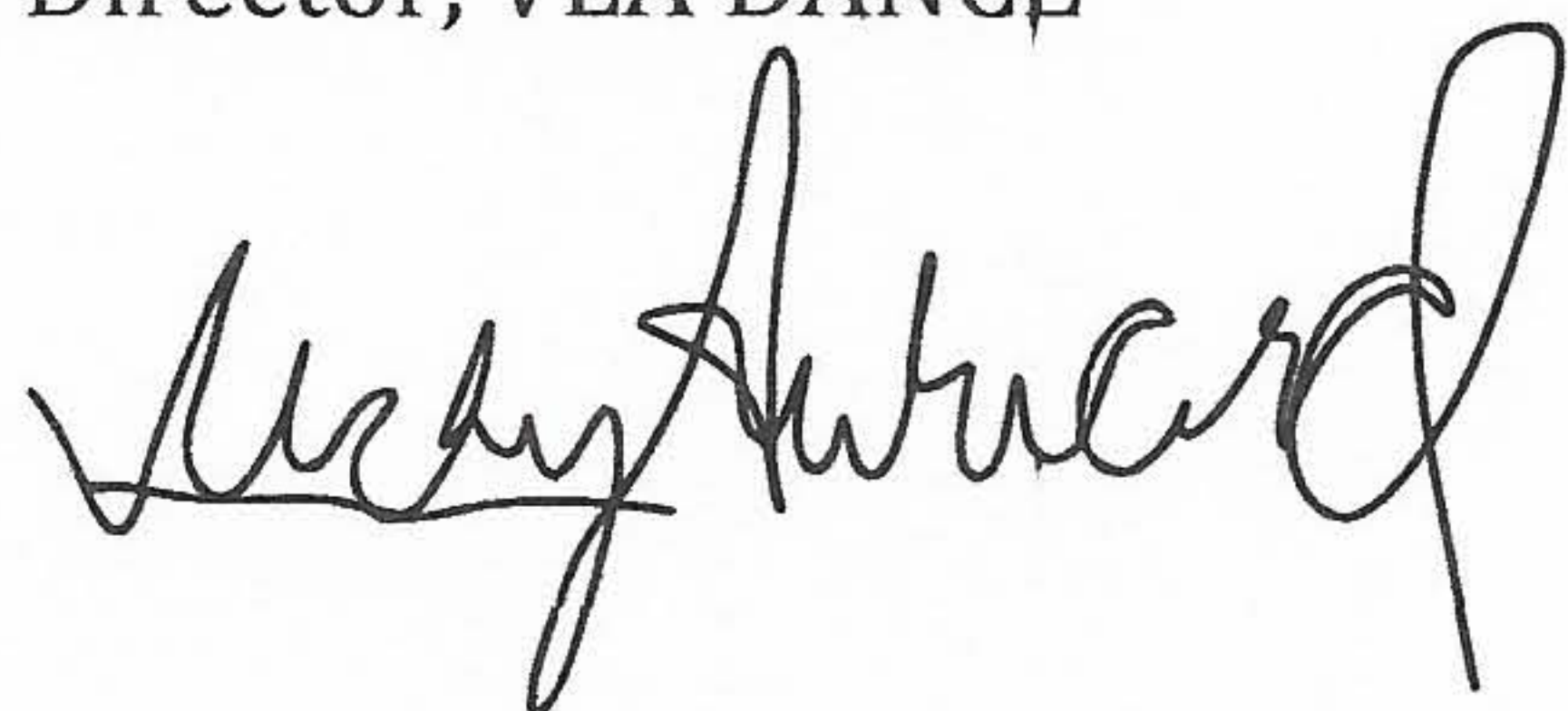
 /DanceComplex

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing in regards to Studio at 550.

I am a professional dance artist who got their start working with organizations such as Studio at 550. When I first graduated from college and moved back home to the Cambridge area, I did a work-study program led by Callie Chapman at Studio at 550. In exchange for strengthening my administrative skills via work at Studio at 550 I received studio space for rehearsals. These rehearsals served as a stepping ground for my new dance company (2 years later) VLA DANCE. Without organizations like Studio at 550 so many artists, dancers, musicians, and community members would not have access to structures that support their first steps in creating on a larger scale. Studio at 550 is integral to Cambridge and Boston arts scene. Without Studio at 550 the performing arts community would only have one accessible dance studio in Central Square, Cambridge and that is not a sustainable structure. Thus we also need Studio at 550 to continue on because it provides options and more space. Studio at 550 serves people of all kind – not just professional dancers, although the support for professional dancers is currently unparalleled in this city. Recently I met a woman who holds SOCA dance classes at Studio at 550 and she told me that her main clientele are people who work in the corporate sector (based in both Cambridge and Boston) who want to dance to balance out their work life schedule. This serves as a wonderful example as to how the arts support a livable community. No one wants to live somewhere where there are no arts. Central Square is the art capital of Cambridge. I grew up in the suburbs of Boston and traveled 30-minutes on the weekends to come take dance classes in Central Square, Cambridge. People travel to Central Square for the arts; it's one of the most beautiful and authentic places in Massachusetts. Studio at 550 contributes to that landscape and it would be an incredibly horrendous mistake to get rid of this wonderful organization.

Thank you for your time,
Victoria Lynn Awkward
Director, VLA DANCE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Lynn Awkward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Subject: Studio @ 550

From: Eric Bornstein <behindthemask1@gmail.com>

Date: 2/18/2020, 10:57 PM

To: Callie Chapman <callie@studioat550.org>

Letter of support for the Studio at 550

To Whom It May Concern,

I lived in Central for over 20 years from 1981. I still go onto Central regularly for dance classes and other arts programming. This is where the young artist I was evolved into a career professional artist who has contributed to the cultural life of Cambridge and beyond for almost 40 years as a Fulbright Scholar, IRNE award winner, and designer for institutions like Boston Ballet, Boston Lyric Opera, Underground Railway Theater, and many others. Central Square was essential not just for me but to generations of artists who are daily nurtured and inspired by the dance schools and other artist spaces. So many arts orgs have closed over the past 30+ years. Our cultural centers have become gentrified and sterilized. There are fewer places for young artists to thrive and for professional artists to work and teach. Artists need urban cultural centers like Central to create their necessary work. Callie has been an ardent and tireless advocate of the arts as well as a brilliant artist herself. Her Studio at 550 is the kind of institution that makes Central a desirable destination for dance students and professionals. After the loss of the Green Street Studios, I would think that those who are caretakers of the Central legacy would protect this vital institution. Please support Callie's effort to preserve the Studio at 550.

Thank you,

Eric Bornstein

To the Central Square Advisory Committee:

I'm writing in support of keeping Studio at 550 in Central Square, ideally in its current building.

I live in North Cambridge, work at a tech company in Kendall Square, and have been taking flamenco classes for the past five years; these classes just moved to Studio at 550 after the Green Street Studios closure this past fall.

The recent Mayor's Arts Task Force Report noted the importance of having artist space within a 5-minute "pedestrian walkshed" of the Central T stop for accessibility. Accepting the loss of Studio at 550 would mean losing 900 square feet of artist space that is very much within this pedestrian walkshed.

This space has been used for dance for decades. While The Dance Complex is wonderful, it cannot absorb everyone who has been displaced from Green Street Studios and may be displaced from Studio at 550.

Employers locate in Cambridge because this is a desirable place to live for the talented, creative, passionate people they want to hire and retain. Cambridge's creative economy connects its residents to one another, enriching the lives and opportunities of all people, particularly those in marginalized groups.

If we treat this as an externality which can be taken for granted, it will disappear. This city's innovation economy will become even more unequal, and eventually hollow out.

Cambridge is a vital and growing city in need of more housing, in no small part because of why Central Square was named a Cultural District. Let's find a way to have residential, retail, and artist space here.

Sincerely,
Barb Strom

February 7, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

I have been a Boston based dancer my whole life. As a life long resident, it is especially apparent to me that art spaces, particularly dance spaces are disappearing at a rapid rate. Studio at 550 is one of the few affordable dance spaces within the Boston/Cambridge area. It is incredibly important for dance makers, particularly those who are not established yet (I am 31 and just honing in on my professional career) to have affordable spaces to rent.

Studio at 550 has housed rehearsals for my small dance company, I have participated in performances in the space, and they support the arts community in Cambridge/Boston in a myriad of ways. They offer a residency program for companies that provides free rental space and mentor-ship.

In a city that is becoming every increasing difficult to live in due to cost, it is paramount that we support our cities artists and those who make Cambridge an interesting place to live. Artists need spaces in which to practice. The dance community just lost Green St Studios, one of the only other affordable performance/rental spaces. Don't let Boston/Cambridge loose one of our last creative spaces in support of affordable housing. We need your help to keep the creativity in our city.

Best,
Adriane Brayton

12 Adelaide St.
Boston, MA

Dear Advisory Committee Members,

I'm writing in support of Studio at 550 in Central Square to try to ensure that the studio is not displaced by development in the building. Although I understand the need for housing in Cambridge, Studio 550 is a venue that provides critical rehearsal and teaching space for dance artists from Cambridge and beyond.

With the loss of Green Street Studio in the Square, the arts community can't afford to lose another space. Central Square has been a magnet for artists since the 1970s because of affordable rehearsal, teaching and performance space. In addition to bringing working artists to the neighborhood, these spaces attract students, audience members and others who come to the square for classes and rehearsals but also eat at the restaurants, shop at stores and generally bring a lively, engaged and positive energy to Central Square.

Please make certain that this important space continues to be a resource to Cambridge and the wider community.

Respectfully,

Amy Zell Ellsworth

Board Member, New England Foundation for the Arts

January 9, 2020

Dear City of Cambridge,

My name is Benjamin Cuba, and I am active, working musician in the Somerville and Cambridge arts community. This letter is in response to the potential and possible closing or rezoning of Studio @550 and other business at the 550 Massachusetts Ave. address. Studio @550 and other businesses and units should not be closed in this process.

Studio @550 provides a useful and exciting space for rehearsals, residencies, and performances for creative, intelligent artists in the Boston dance community. A lot of purposeful and engaging work has been crafted and presented in such a space. Studio @550 has showcased and harnessed the talent from the dancers, choreographers, musicians, and artists across this city, and continues to support projects from experts and novices alike. It is more than merely a studio, but rather a keystone community center where patrons and lovers of the arts can admire and learn from each other.

Furthermore, this rezoning situation has not been executed with much clarity or consideration to the working parties involved.

Central Square should not lose another creative space. Cambridge can achieve a more vibrant artistic community. Please reconsider your efforts to close an already functioning and successful creative space.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Benjamin Cuba

Dear Board of Zoning Appeals City of Cambridge,

My name is Carl Alleyne and I am a dance instructor and performing artist teaching in the city of Cambridge. I teach at Studio 550, and I and my students love it there! The studio has a great owner in Callie Chapman and a fantastic community.

I am writing in support of Callie Chapman of Studio 550. I've known Callie for a number of years and have rented studio space for a number of years. Studio at 550 is active and has a great community, and is one of the pillars when it comes to dance in Cambridge. Musicians and other artists also go to this location to enhance their craft. I even had the TV show "Chronicle" come and interview me, and we did the interview at the Studio at 550.

This is a very dire time right now, as a lot of artists are displaced and do not have homes to continue to enhance community and culture through the arts.

Converting existing arts space to residential space would put a big dent in our community. I ask that this letter be considered.

Sincerely,

Carl Alleyne
Dance Instructor/ Performing Artist

January 9, 2020

To: The Board of Zoning Appeals
City of Cambridge

From: the undersigned dancers

We are writing about the Variance Request submitted by Clifford Schorer. If his variance is granted, Studio 550 will be impacted, possibly removed. Studio 550 is an important resource for the dance community in Cambridge and several of the surrounding cities and towns. It provides rehearsal space for dancers and musicians and performance space for various events. The dance community in Central Square has already been very hard hit by the closure of Green Street Studios to development. Central Square prides itself on being a center for the arts. Don't let Studio 550 be yet another loss for the local dance community.

Sincerely,

Allison Ross
Vicky Steinfeld
Sue Purvey
Julie Leavitt
Joanie Block
Karen Klein

Dear CDD and staff:

I want to register my horror that the city would even consider taking over one of the LAST public art spaces in Central Sq. I know how hard it has been to keep the Dance Complex from being taken over and Callie Chapman has put in her own resources to provide a place to make art - It is not only unfair unjust and unnecessary but a contradiction to the promises the city manager and staff has made to make Central sq. a registered artistic center. I know there are alternatives for building micro-units so please keep the studio open for me and all the other artists in Cambridge .

Sincerely
Alice Heller
22 Corporal Burns Rd

Joseph, Wendell

From: Flightorvisibility Music <flightorvisibilitymusic@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 7:39 PM
To: Joseph, Wendell
Subject: Statement read at committee meeting

Hello Mr. Joseph,

Thanks for asking me to send you the statement I read at your committee meeting.

Here's the statement:

Hi, my name is Rafael Natan, I am a local performance artist and I am also the events coordinator at Make Shift Boston. I was a Cambridge resident last year but was priced out.

Today I am here in Solidarity with Studio at 550. Like Make Shift, Studio 550 is one of the few spaces in the greater city where any artist can rent space affordably to realize their vision. I remember going to one particularly memorable event at Studio 550 where musicians and dancers were encouraged to develop an improvised story performance together. This event completely changed the way I perform and teach and it is of utmost importance that we as citizens of the Greater Boston area continue to hold space for these kinds of community events.

In my 9 years in Boston, I have seen at least 12 different community spaces like Studio 550 shut down, that rate being greater than 1 per year. Rents for such spaces are going up and we honestly can't afford to lose any more of these spaces.

Additionally, I've seen an influx of new luxury housing units, often remaining vacant for years while market rate of the neighborhood catches up to the rate of the new developments. Meanwhile our homeless population is growing and the income metric to consider a unit "affordable" is significantly higher than the annual income made by anyone I know in the extended artist community.

The landlord of 550 mass ave mentioned \$30,000 a year as a metric for affordability. As a full-time artist, I make about \$5,000 a year and I'm one of the lucky ones, one of the few people who does not have student debt. If I did, I would not be able to live in Boston at all.

So my question is how are we going to continue to hold space for working artists and how are we going to insure that new housing projects actually cater to those who need housing the most?

Sincerely,

--

Rafael Natan
Oboist, Violinist, Singer, Songwriter, Educator
pronouns: They/Them/Theirs

IG: @flightorvisibility
New single: [Always](#)

Joseph, Wendell

From: Studio at 550 <callie@studioat550.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2020 12:07 AM
To: Joseph, Wendell
Subject: Fwd: support letter

Dear Central Square Advisory Committee,

I write this letter as a performing artist who moved to Cambridge 10 years ago because of the work and professional development opportunities this city offered. While I no longer live in Cambridge due to rising rents, it has continued to be the home of my artistic practice thanks to places like Studio550, The Dance Complex and Green Street Studios, which have been the equivalents of offices or workshops for me and so many other artists who need the resource of space to develop their work. It is due to this practice, in these places, that I am able to teach and enrich the lives of people in the community at places like the Cambridge Public Library, Cambridge Citywide Senior Center and Cambridge Friends School, and create and perform work in countless venues and public places around the Boston area.

As arts organizations and businesses such as Out of the Blue Gallery, EMF, Green Street Studios and others have been forced to close due to egregious rents and what seems to be the prioritizing of income versus healthy, robust communities by both property owners and the city, I am deeply concerned that these places of work, creation and leisure are not being protected. Once a beacon of productivity, hope and innovation in the arts, Cambridge is becoming a place of gentrified, class homogeny.

I urge you to actually demonstrate your proclamation of Central Square being a "Cultural District" by saving our spaces for arts and culture for all residents and visitors alike. Insist that developers and property owners respect Cambridge's long standing commitment to supporting people of all walks of life. Help them to realize that taking away spaces for arts and culture takes away jobs, opportunities for personal and communal growth and the character that helps to make Cambridge the special city that it is.

I am happy to discuss this further and help advocate for Studio 550 and other spaces. I can be reached at kara@karafili.com should you like to connect.

Thank you for reading and for your work on this matter,

Kara Fili

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Educator / Artist / Administrator
MFA Interdisciplinary Arts; Concentration in Performance Creation
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She / Her / Hers

"It Goes Like This...Stories of Movement"
a multi-modal evening of storytelling at The Dance Complex
March 27, 2020
<https://storiesofmovement20.eventbrite.com>
IGLT fundraising page: gf.me/u/xf3ct5

@ItGoesLikeThis_Events

#itgoeslikethis2020

FB Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/156699349082500/>

Joseph, Wendell

From: Olive Rappoli <orappoli@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2020 6:31 PM
To: Joseph, Wendell
Cc: sjoseph@cambridge.gov
Subject: 550 Massachusetts Ave

Hello Wendell,

My name is Olive, I attended the Central Square Advisory Committee meeting on February 19th regarding the proposed development at 544-550 Massachusetts Avenue. I'd like to say first off, thank you for facilitating the meeting, I found it very informative! I am a shy soul and this was the first meeting of its kind that I have attended, but I felt very much compelled to be present to support the case for preserving the arts scene in Central Square.

I have been coming to Central Square for dance, music and art for the last 7+ years. I am a dance student with Flamenco Boston, which holds its classes at Studio@550, and prior to its closing I also took classes at Green Street Studios. I have lived and worked in the Boston/Cambridge area my entire life, and Central Square has one of the most vibrant personalities of all the neighborhoods that I have come to know. All of the squares in Cambridge have restaurants, bars and storefronts, but Central Square has so much more than that. The high concentration of artists, music venues, dance studios and socials has provided a home for the arts community that is extremely unique. To have so many businesses and organizations dedicated to the arts clustered together and accessible to the public is truly special and important to the strength of the community, and is not something that can be easily rebuilt once dispersed. As a hub for the arts community, these spaces also draw consumers for other businesses in Central Square.

The loss of Green Street Studios was a difficult one, and it would be a shame to see the same happen to Studio@550. I could go on for many pages describing what dancing means to me personally, and can only imagine how devastated other members of the dance community were, who rely on these spaces for their livelihood, physical and mental health, and recreation. It is so important to preserve places like these that bring together people of all races, ages and backgrounds. So many diverse artists were displaced with the closure of GSS, and many have found new home at Studio@550. Spaces like Studio@550 need to remain open not only for the existing community but also to inspire and foster future artists and allow unique cultural neighborhoods like Central Square to thrive.

Thank you so much for your time, and best of luck on your new position!

Best Regards,
Olive Rappoli