

CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139 Telephone: 617 349 4683 TTY: 617 349 6112 Fax: 617-349-6165 E-mail: histcomm@cambridgema.gov URL: http://www.cambridgema.gov/Historic



Bruce A. Irving, *Chair*, Susannah Barton Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Charles M. Sullivan, *Executive Director* Joseph V. Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Elizabeth Lyster, Caroline Shannon Jo M. Solet, *Members* Gavin W. Kleespies, Paula A. Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate Members*

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8/2/21

To:

Tanya L. Ford-Crump, Executive Director

Election Commission

From:

Charles M. Sullivan, Executive Director

Cambridge Historical Commission

Re:

Request for Verification of Registered Voters

As required by Chapter 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, the Historical Commission requests that the names on the attached petition be verified as being registered voters of the City of Cambridge. ONLY TEN NAMES NEED TO BE VERIFIED TO VALIDATE THE PETITION.

Please sign and return to the Historical Commission via interoffice mail.

Signatures checked by

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Petition for Designation of Landmarks

CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

We, the undersigned registered voters of the City of Cambridge, request the Cambridge Historical Commission to initiate the process of designating the buildings named below as Landmarks under Chapter 2.78, Article III of the Code of the City of Cambridge.

Addresses:

719 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge Gas-Light Co. Building

689 Massachusetts Ave., Savings Bank Building

Significance of the proposed landmarks:

The Cambridge Gas-Light Co. Building at 719 Massachusetts Ave. was built in 1912. The exterior of the building is monumental in character and the building is an excellent example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style of architecture. The material is limestone and the architects were <u>Shepley</u>, Rutan & Coolidge.

The Cambridge Gas-Light Company <u>was created</u> by the legislature in 1852 to satisfy growing demand for gas service, and at one point it was even the city's largest taxpayer. The structure at 719 Mass Ave <u>had multiple showrooms</u> where gas appliances could be purchased, and it was also home to the company's administrative and executive offices. The building is part of the Cambridge City Hall National Historic District, and is noted as contributing to the historic nature of the district.

The <u>Savings Bank Building</u> at 689 Massachusetts Ave. was built in 1904. The exterior of the building is monumental in character and the building is an excellent example of the Beaux Arts style of architecture. The material is marble and the architects were W. E. Chamberlin and Clarence H. Blackall.

The Savings Bank Building was originally home to Cambridgeport Savings Bank and the Harvard Trust Company. Cambridgeport Savings Bank was one of the first savings banks in the area, offering residents a new opportunity to safely store and earn interest on their money. This building features what were the first safety deposit vaults in the area. The structure was built to accommodate the rapid growth of the savings bank at the turn of the 20th century. Both the Gas-Light Building and the Savings Bank Building are part of the larger Central Square Historic District.

Both buildings are highly suitable for landmark designation based on their architectural significance, their association with iconic architects, and the critical roles that they played in the economic and cultural history of the city. Gas and banking were innovative services that completely changed the lives of Cantabrigians in ways that propelled a period of tremendous growth and economic development for the city.

The structures themselves enhance each other and are therefore preferably preserved as a pair. The way these structures anchor opposite corners of Temple Street and feature distinctive styles built to similar heights creates a striking visual effect. These are two very beautiful examples of pre-depression era architectural opulence, and they are both among the most significant and precious buildings in Central Square.

The current owner of 719 Mass Ave, Gas Light Building LLC, has proposed a substantial addition with additional floors which is incongruent with the monumental character of the building and which would

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bank at the turn of the 20th century.

Both buildings are highly suitable for landmark designation based on their architectural significance, their

association with iconic architects, and the critical roles that they played in the economic and cultural history

of the city. Gas and banking were innovative services that completely changed the lives of Cantabrigians in

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these structures anchor opposite corners of Temple Street and feature distinctive styles built to similar heights creates a striking visual effect. These are two very beautiful examples of pre-depression era architectural opulence, and they are both among the most significant and precious buildings in Central Square.

The current owner of 719 Mass Ave, Gas Light Building LLC, has proposed a substantial addition with additional floors which is incongruent with the monumental character of the building and which would significantly diminish the striking and beautiful ways in which these two buildings enhance each other anthe Central Square neighborhood. Though the project received a Special Permit from the Planning Board in

a split decision, there has not yet been any formal review and consideration from a historical and architectural lens.

It is the role of the Historical Commission, guided by a report that emerges from a Landmark Designation Study, to make a recommendation as to whether these iconic buildings are worthy of Landmark Designation

status. Therefore, we the undersigned request that the Historical Commission initiate a Landmark Designation Study for the purposes of considering whether these two structures should receive Landmark

Designation, either as a pair or individually.

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