



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Board of Zoning Appeal
From: Harvard Square Advisory Committee
Date: February 15, 2023
Re: **1380 Massachusetts Avenue**

IRAM FAROOQ
*Assistant City Manager for
Community Development*

SANDRA CLARKE
*Deputy Director
Chief of Administration*

KHALIL MOGASSABI
*Deputy Director
Chief of Planning*

Overview

The Harvard Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on Wednesday, February 15, 2023 to discuss a special permit application by Blank Street Coffee at 1380 Massachusetts Avenue. The meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions of Section 20.50 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in advance of the applicant’s request for a special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA). Committee members present were Allison Crosbie, Lauren Curry, Jemel Derbali, John DiGiovanni, Frank Kramer, Kari Kuelzer, Sara Li, Steven Ng, Alexandra Offiong, Matt Simitis, and Nicola Williams. After discussion, the Committee decided to forward a report to the BZA with a positive recommendation, with 10 members present voting in favor and one abstaining.

Proposal Description

The applicant proposes to operate a coffee shop. This use is considered both a Formula Business and a Fast Order/Quick-Service Food Establishment. While Fast Order/Quick-Service Food Establishments are allowed as-of-right in the base zone (Business B), the use requires a special permit from the BZA because it qualifies as a Formula Business and is located in the Overlay District.

Recommendations

Members of the Committee were supportive of the applicant’s proposal, noting that the business will be filling a need in the neighborhood. Committee members asked questions related to queuing, product offering, façade design and signage details, ADA accessibility, and ownership model. The Committee strongly encouraged the applicant to consider extending their planned hours of operation later into the day and evening to encourage activity and a more vibrant public realm. Committee members also encouraged the applicant to consider incorporating outdoor seating so long as it does not interfere with pedestrian flow, given space constraints between the business and the MBTA headhouse. Committee members also expressed concern about trash control and encouraged the applicant to coordinate with the landlord and other building occupants to more effectively manage service needs for the business.

344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139
Voice: 617 349-4600
Fax: 617 349-4669
TTY: 617 349-4621
www.cambridgema.gov

Respectfully submitted for the Committee,

Daniel Messplay
Community Development Department