



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust
From: Christopher Cotter, Housing Director
Cassie Arnaud, Senior Manager for Housing Development
Date: January 25, 2024
**Re: Planning Board Design Consultation Report for 4 Mellen Street /
1627 Mass. Ave**

Homeowners Rehab Inc. (HRI) has been working on plans to renovate the existing historical building at 4 Mellen Street (formerly known as 1627 Massachusetts Avenue) and to build a new building at the rear of the site. CDD staff have worked with HRI as the team developed its plan, held several community meetings, and recently completed the advisory design review process with the Planning Board under the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO).

The Planning Board held its second advisory design consultation meeting on December 5, 2023 to review and comment on the revised designs for HRI's proposed development. The Board provided initial comments on the project in July 2023.

The proposed design was favorably received by the Board, which noted in its report that HRI had addressed most of the concerns raised at the initial review. Additionally, the Board commended the project for advancing the goals of creating affordable housing and preserving a historic structure. The Planning Board advised additional consultation with CDD, which is outlined in the attached report, and is primarily directed at additional design elements, further refinement of the transformer area, and consideration of outdoor furniture.

The AHO requires that the results of the design review process be shared with the Affordable Housing Trust. The Planning Board report is attached and includes:

- Planning Board Final Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Design Consultation (12/20/2023), including:
 - CDD Staff Memo (11/29/2023);
- Planning Board Initial Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Design Consultation (8/7/2023), including:
 - CDD Staff Memo (7/13/2023)
 - Department of Public Works memo (7/6/2023).

Project Overview:

The property consists of the Charles Saunders House, deemed historically significant by the Cambridge Historical Commission, and has a large parking lot at the rear. The current development proposal involves creating a total of 29 units: ten one-bedrooms, twelve two-bedrooms, and seven three bedrooms. HRI also plans on preserving and converting the existing house into two one-bedrooms and two three-bedrooms units. The additional building will hold the remaining 25 units. The project is being permitted under the Affordable Housing Overlay.

Under their AHO submission, all 29 units will be affordable to households earning up to 80% of area median income (AMI), though actual AMIs at the site will be lower as initial occupancy will be limited to households earning at or below 60% AMI, as all units will also be subject to tax credit requirements.

Staff have been working with HRI on their request for additional funding from the Trust, which is being forwarded to the Trust under separate cover today.

More information on HRI's proposed redevelopment, including material HRI submitted to the Planning Board and presentation materials, can be seen on CDD's 4 Mellen/1627 Mass Ave project page at:

[4 Mellen Street / 1627 Mass Ave - CDD - City of Cambridge, Massachusetts \(cambridgema.gov\)](https://www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/4-Mellen-Street-1627-Mass-Ave-Project)