

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

## SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION • COVER SHEET

In accordance with the requirements of the City of Cambridge Zoning Ordinance, the undersigned hereby petitions the Planning Board for one or more Special Permits for the premises indicated below.

Location of Premises: 57 JFK ST, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

Zoning District: BUS-B BASE AND HARVARD SQUARE OVERLAY

Applicant Name: CAMSON GALLERIA LP

Applicant Address: 1299 BEACON ST, BROOKLINE, MA 02446

Contact Information: 617-312-6660 raj9634@gmail.com 617-232-1700  
Telephone # Email Address Fax #

List all requested special permit(s) (with reference to zoning section numbers) below. *Note that the Applicant is responsible for seeking all necessary special permits for the project. A special permit cannot be granted if it is not specifically requested in the Application.*

PARKING RELIEF PER § 20.54.4.2

List all submitted materials (include document titles and volume numbers where applicable) below.

ZONING TABLE,  
EXISTING CONDITION PLOT PLAN  
ZONING COMPLIANCE DRAWINGS  
ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

Signature of Applicant: 

For the Planning Board, this application has been received by the Community Development Department (CDD) on the date specified below:

Date

Signature of CDD Staff

**OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATE**

**Project Address:**

**Application Date:**

This form is to be completed by the property owner, signed, and submitted with the Special Permit Application:

I hereby authorize the following Applicant: CRIMSON GALERIA LP  
at the following address: 57 JFK ST, CAMBRIDGE, MA  
to apply for a special permit for: PARKING RELIEF  
on premises located at: 57 JFK ST, CAMBRIDGE, MA  
for which the record title stands in the name of: CRIMSON GALERIA LP  
whose address is: 1299 BEACON ST, BROOKLINE, MA 02446

by a deed duly recorded in the:

Registry of Deeds of County: MIDDLESEX Book: 28804 Page: 484

OR Registry District of the Land Court, Certificate No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Book: \_\_\_\_\_ Page: \_\_\_\_\_



Signature of Land Owner (If authorized Trustee, Officer or Agent, so identify)

To be completed by Notary Public:

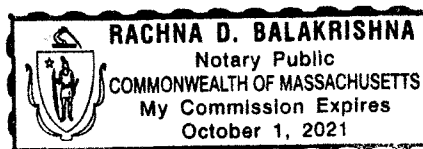
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, County of Norfolk

The above named Raj Dhanda personally appeared before me,

on the month, day and year December 22, 2014 and made oath that the above statement is true.

Notary: Rachna D. Balakrishna

My Commission expires: October 1, 2021



**FEE SCHEDULE**

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**Project Address:** 57 JFK ST

**Application Date:** 22 Dec 2014

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The Applicant must provide the full fee (by check or money order) with the Special Permit Application. Depending on the nature of the proposed project and the types of Special Permit being sought, the required fee is the larger of the following amounts:

- If the proposed project includes the creation of new or substantially rehabilitated floor area, or a change of use subject to Section 19.20, the fee is ten cents (\$0.10) per square foot of total proposed Gross Floor Area.
- If a Flood Plain Special Permit is being sought as part of the Application, the fee is one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00), unless the amount determined above is greater.
- In any case, the minimum fee is one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00).

**Fee Calculation**

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New or Substantially Rehabilitated Gross Floor Area (SF): 18,596 × \$0.10 = \$1,859.60

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Flood Plain Special Permit Enter \$1,000.00 if applicable:

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Other Special Permit Enter \$150.00 if no other fee is applicable: \$150.00

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**TOTAL SPECIAL PERMIT FEE** Enter Larger of the Above Amounts: \$2,009.60

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**3 Feb 2015**

### Zoning Compliance Table – 57 JFK St Office Addition to Existing Commercial Bus B Base District, Harvard Sq Overlay District, Harvard Sq Historic District

	Existing Conditions		Proposed Conditions	Ordinance Requirements/Allowed	
Total Gross Floor Area	42,996-SF		<b>61,347-SF</b> <b>All Non-Residential</b>	69,428-SF	<b>Complies</b>
Lot Area	17,357-SF		<b>17,357-SF</b> <b>No Change</b>	N/A per Bus B	<b>Complies</b>
Gross Floor Area to Lot Area Ratio (FAR)	2.48		<b>3.5</b>	4.0 for non-residential Per HSOD	<b>Complies</b>
Lot Area for Each Dwelling Unit	N/A		<b>N/A</b>	N/A	<b>Complies</b>
Size of Lot	Width	111.96'	<b>111.96'</b> <b>No Change</b>	None per Bus B	<b>Complies</b>
	Depth	137.39'	<b>137.39'</b> <b>No Change</b>	N/A	<b>Complies</b>
Setbacks in Feet (See Plot Plan)	Front (JFK)	0.1 over'	<b>0.1' over Extg</b> <b>5.5' Add'n</b>	None per Bus B	<b>Complies</b>
	Front (Winthrop)	4.3'	<b>4.3' Extg</b> <b>9.6' Add'n</b>	None per Bus B	<b>Complies</b>
	Side (JFK)	0'	<b>0' Extg</b> <b>0.2' Add'n</b>	None per Bus B	<b>Complies</b>
	Side (Winthrop)	2.5'	<b>2.5' Extg</b> <b>3.7' Add'n</b>	None per Bus B	<b>Complies</b>
Size of Building	Height	26.0'±	<b>60.0'</b>	60' By-Right per HSOD	<b>Complies</b>
Dwelling Units	0		<b>0</b>	57 @ 1 per 300-SF per Bus B	<b>Complies</b>
Car Parking Spaces	0		<b>0</b>	Exempt from §6 if qualify under §20.54.4 per HSOD	<b>Requires Special Permit</b>
Bicycle Parking Spaces	0		<b>6 Long Term</b> <b>2 Short Term</b>	per §6.103	<b>Complies</b>
Private Open Space over Lot Area	0%	Total	<b>3,664-SF (21%)</b>	None per Bus B	<b>Complies</b>



**57 JFK ST - PROPOSED OFFICE ADDITION TO EXISTING COMMERCIAL BUILDING –  
EXPANDED NARRATIVE FOR SP APPLICATION (2/3/15)**

*(Please note – This expanded narrative is intended to supersede the previous version dated 12/21/14)*

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**A. General Narrative**

The project envisions a three-story vertical addition to an existing two-story commercial building in Harvard Square. The existing building addition is located at the southwest corner of JFK Street and Winthrop Street. It is known presently as The Crimson Galleria, 57 JFK Street. The existing building is entirely occupied with commercial uses. The addition would provide office space or similar commercial use.

The 57 JFK site is part of a larger parcel that extends to include a separate building to its west, namely 96 Winthrop St, formally as the *Hyde-Taylor House*, now the home of The Hasty Pudding Institute of 1770. This structure is a Designated Landmark in the City Registry of Landmarked Properties. No work is planned for 96 Winthrop St; all the proposed work is at 57 JFK St building.

The other abutters to the 57 JFK lot include:

1. The multi-level parking contemporary garage structure to the south;
2. A two story contemporary commercial building to the southwest (18 Eliot);
3. Multiple three- to four-story commercial and residential properties across JFK St to the east;
4. Winthrop Park to the north across Winthrop St, which is a core element of the Historic District.
5. Winthrop Street between the 57 JFK building and the Park is significant as a pedestrian street with limited vehicular access. The street has been developed with street pavers, historical street lights and bollards, and granite and rail fencing.
6. Flanking the Park is a redevelopment site that includes the seven-story WEB DuBois Institute along Winthrop St and the smaller three-story commercial building containing Grendel’s Den.

The site is located in a base Zoning District of BB. The site also falls within The Harvard Square Overlay District (HSOD) and The Harvard Square Historic District. All of this site’s immediate abutters fall under the same districts.

The current use of the site is exclusively Commercial Use, which is an allowed use in the BB District. The use extends to a finished basement level with commercial uses at both 57 JFK Street and 96 Winthrop Street.

**B. Building Description**

**Existing and Proposed Uses and Areas**

As noted, there are no changes proposed to the 96 Winthrop St building. All proposed work is for 57 JFK St. Nevertheless, the following area figures include GFA for both buildings on the parcel, which is required for zoning purposes. The existing plus proposed buildings consist of approximately 61,347 SF of Gross Floor Area per the Zoning Bylaw definition.

The proposed uses and areas are as follows:

Level	57 JFK EXTG	EXTG SF	57 JFK PROPOSED	PROP SF	TOT SF
Basement	Commercial (Retail & Restaurant)	12,310		0	12,310
First	Commercial (Retail & Restaurant)	12,310	Commercial (Office)	502	12,812
Second	Commercial (Restaurant)	11,989	Commercial (Office)	0	11,989
Third		NA	Commercial (Office)	9,295	9,295
Fourth		NA	Commercial (Office)	6,390	6,390
Fifth		NA	Commercial (Office)	2,409	2,409
SUBTOTAL		36,609		18,596	55,205
98 Winthrop	Commercial (Restaurant) All Levels				6,142
<b>TOTAL SF ON PARCEL</b>					<b>61,347</b>

**Building Design Concept and Materials**

The existing building is a two-story commercial structure. Its unremarkable exterior consists of a limited brick base, storefront glazing with signage panel, and stucco finished paneling. Overall it presents an unorganized image with minimal benefit to the street. There are significant inconsistencies to the glazing and window treatments, further diminishing the aesthetics of the façade.

The proposed addition addresses these shortcomings by recladding most of the glazing with a more scaled glazing and mullion system and introduces a rhythm of column expressions on the façade. The stucco panels are replaced with a stone-like cladding material (high-density cementitious boards) that serves to correlate with the glazing system, presenting a visually

organized and better scaled urban façade. A wider signage channel is provided between first and second floor to provide a clean frame for typical retail and restaurant signage.

The addition builds from this reformed base. Its massing stems from the primary intention to minimize shadow impact on the park. This particular aspect was studied in detail by the design team in conjunction with the Historic Commission approval process. Following from this massing, the form is articulated to create a major presence on JFK Street, extending from the adjacent garage mass. Along Winthrop St, the massing is intentionally stepped back with long facades addressed to the Park. The areas in front of these steps are rooftop landscape areas or decks, acting as an extension of the visual landscape.

The addition has its own entry off Winthrop St, using some of the space between the two buildings on the parcel. This serves to shield the utility area of the commercial uses from Winthrop St.

The primary materials of the addition are the stone-like paneling, extended from below; glazing in patterns and detail complementary to the building base; and zinc metal cladding.

In sum, the addition is carefully grafted onto a reformed and redesigned base. Together they form a single compositional whole which positively adds to the urbanity of the area while preserving the integrity of the Park.

### **C. Planning Board Requested Relief**

The proposed development requires one Planning Board Special Permit. No other Special Permits, Waivers or Variances are believed to be required. The addition is dimensionally conforming. A certificate of Appropriateness from the Cambridge Historical Commission is required and has already been obtained at the time of this Application.

The requested Planning Board Special Permit is outlined in *§20.54.4.2 Parking and Loading Requirements*. This allows the Planning Board to grant relief on parking and loading requirements specifically in the Harvard Square Historic District, provided that multiple criteria are met.

The Applicant requests this Special Permit in the belief that the requirements for the granting of this Special Permit have been met, as iterated herein.

### **D. Harvard Square Overlay and Historic District Approval**

Both lots comprising the parcel are in the Harvard Square Historic District and as such any changes to the exterior of the building(s) falling within the Cambridge Historical Commission's guidelines for overview must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the CHC. The proposed addition requires that approval.



The 57 JFK building and its addition was rigorously reviewed by the Cambridge Historical Commission over the course of 12 months. Multiple formal and informal presentations to the Commission were made and numerous meetings were held to review the design as it evolved with Commission staff and with neighborhood constituents. The applicant received a Certificate of Appropriateness in Dec 2014 and that design is now before the Planning Board for required approvals as noted.

The major concerns of the Commission were 1) scale and massing of the proposed addition; 2) as related to “1”, the building’s shadow effect on the historic Winthrop Park; and 3) the quality of materials of the existing and proposed parts of the building. All of these issues were extensively presented, discussed, and resolved through the Commissions process.

As noted in the Certificate, the Commission’s findings were:

Findings–

1. The design for the addition has improved and been favorably impacted by public comment.
2. The proposed building will be appropriate to its setting and the Harvard Square Conservation District.
3. The project will add to the vitality and diversity of the District.
4. The design mitigates adverse shadow effects on Winthrop Park and will not adversely affect the use or vitality of the park.

We believe that the Applicant, in submitting to the rigorous approval process held by the Commission and in receiving the Certificate of Appropriateness, has substantially complied with the major requirements for Special Permit Approval and Urban Design Guidelines, as noted below.

#### **E. Compliance with General Special Permit Criteria**

With regard to the Large Project Review criteria, according to Article 19.45, “where a special permit issued by the Planning Board is required for a proposed development, no separate [Small or] Large Project Review Procedure shall be required under the provisions of this Section 19.40.” Therefore, the Applicant understands that the Special Permit process shall serve as the Large Project Review Procedure.

With regard to the Special Permit criteria listed in Article 10.43 wherein a Special Permit will normally be granted except where “granting of such permit [is determined] to be to the detriment of the public interest because:”

*(a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met...*

Response – A Special Permit approval process is required for any project seeking the relief from the Parking and Loading Requirements, as indicated in §20.54.4.2. A by-right project is



not feasible, nor is a fully compliant parking and loading scenario. In the latter case, it is not technically feasible to comply given the constraint of the existing buildings and uses.

*(b) Traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character...*

Response – The Applicant’s Traffic, Parking and Loading Impact Report indicates that the impact of the addition’s commercial use does not represent a substantial change in neighborhood patterns. The intended office-type use will attract users who will want to use the City’s mass transit facilities, bicycle, and pedestrian amenities due to its central location. These and related matters are discussed further in the Report.

*(c) The continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use...*

Response – The adjacent uses are fully developed commercial uses, limited residential and Winthrop Park. All of these uses have worked compatibly as the area has been developed. The proposed office-type use is a relatively low-impact use with a low density of occupant. Therefore, we expect the impact of the use to be both minimal and generally compatible.

*(d) Nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City...*

Response – The proposed development is intended to comply with all of the City’s regulations with regard to noise, health and safety. Trash will be contained on site at the designated trash area to the rear of the building. The interior layout of the building is intended to comply with the latest addition of the MA Building Code and other applicable building codes and regulations, thereby providing for the health and safety of the residents. The roof mounted mechanical equipment is intended to comply with the City’s Noise Ordinance with the use of screen enclosures and, if necessary, soundproofing material suitable for exterior use.

*(e) For other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance*

Response – The proposed development is compatible with the district and overlay in which it is located. The proposed uses are allowed as of right in the district and overlay and most of the nearby buildings have similar uses on the ground floor and compatible uses on upper levels. There are no immediate residential abutters, the nearest being the condominium building on the west side of Winthrop Park. The Applicant believes that given the distance and buffer provided by the adjacent lot, the proposed development will have minimal impact on the adjoining residential use.

*(f) The new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.*

See below for expanded discussion

**F. Compliance with Citywide Urban Design Goals (Article 19.30)**

All projects requiring Special Permit approval or Project Review shall indicate compliance with the Citywide Urban Design Goals (Article 19.30) General criteria are set forth in the Article.

Response –The proposed project was reviewed by Cambridge Historical Commission and given a Certificate of Appropriateness. The project was found to be in general conformity with the goals and objectives of the Harvard Square Historical District Guidelines, which include a review of urban design aspects of the design.

With regard to the criteria set forth in Article 19.30, the proposed project complies with those goals, namely:

1. The proposed project will rehabilitate the exterior of the existing two-story commercial building by adding a new detailed storefront system, new horizontal metal channel for retail signs, new solid color high-density panels, column panels with vertical pole banners at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. These items taken together will serve to enrich the pedestrian experience while provide an integrated façade concept. The vitality of the commercial environment is enhanced by these measures taken on the façade.
2. An entry for vertical circulation for the commercial addition, further providing a major pedestrian element on the Winthrop St façade.
3. The proposed design is more consistent and enhances the established streetscape. The proposed design will provide roof decks and roof plantings on the Winthrop elevation along with a rhythm of façade elements at the lower levels will relate the building more to Winthrop Park.
4. Retail will continue to face the street and will be enhanced by better signage and a more unified façade.
5. All existing and new mechanical equipment will be reorganized, set back and screened to minimize their impact from street level.
6. Trash and loading area will be reorganized and to the extent possible hidden from view at the rear alley between the two buildings.

7. To minimize shadows on abutters and the park, the proposed addition's massing is designed in such a way that it produces minimal shadow based on shadow calculations.
8. Building height complies with height limit allowed by-right in HSOD. The height is significantly adjusted per massing and shadow goals developed during the design review with the Historic Commission.
9. The project's context is highly varied between historic and otherwise older buildings and modern construction. In that way the proposed addition is consistent and the proposed rehabilitation and addition is representative of the area's vitality. The site is situated off the existing pedestrian street and will be enhanced as such with the proposed commercial entry off this lane.
10. The proposed commercial addition will have a contemporary appearance that complements the enhanced appearance of the existing structure. This helps to preserve the distinct visual character of the district in terms of existing architectural style and figure-ground relationship thereby preserving the vitality and character of the street.

#### **H. Grounds for Granting Special**

Per Article 20.54.5.2, the Parking and Loading Requirements found in Article 6.36 for the base zoning district may be exempt under the regulation of this Article upon the granting of a Special Permit from the Planning Board.

***20.54.4 Parking and Loading Requirements. Uses in the Harvard Square Overlay District which meet the following requirements shall be exempt from the parking and loading requirements as specified in Section 6.36 - Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements.***

1. *The use is contained within a structure or portion of a structure in existence on or before June 1, 1940 or if constructed later is identified as a National Register or contributing building; or*

Response – not applicable

*2. The use is contained in a new structure or new addition to a structure identified in (1.) above, after the issuance of a special permit by the Planning Board provided:*

- a. *The total development authorized on the site is reduced to eighty (80) percent of the maximum permitted on the lot; or a cash contribution is made to the Harvard Square Improvement Fund to be established by the City of Cambridge in an amount equal to fifty (50) percent of the cost of construction of the spaces not provided, said*

*contribution to be used by the City of Cambridge for one or more of the following capital improvements in the Harvard Square Overlay District:*

*(1) Provision of public parking, preferably for short term users;*

*(2) Improvements to public parks, or restoration of historic structures, monuments and other features owned by the City of Cambridge or other public agency or a nonprofit organization;*

*(3) Extension throughout the Harvard Square Overlay District of the surface improvements installed by the MBTA as part of the Red Line subway extension (brick sidewalks, light post, street furniture, etc.)*

Response – The total existing plus proposed FAR on the subject site exceeds 80% of the maximum permitted. Therefore the Applicant must either provide the required parking or meet the requirements for a Special Permit *and* make a contribution as outlined in the three options indicated above.

The parking requirement for the additional FAR as office-type commercial use is calculated at 19 spaces. Based on prior Special Permits granted by the Board under the same scenario, a proposed cash contribution would be calculated as follows:

19 spaces X \$21,000 [cost of structured parking space based on RS Means and adjusted for Boston] X 50% = \$199,500.

The Applicant would like to propose that this contribution be used for the restoration of the exterior of 98 Winthrop St, the historic building on the same lot. This is consistent with Option 2 above and would be similar to the agreement the Planning Board made in a recent Special Permit Decision granted under similar conditions (112-6 Mt Auburn – The Conductor’s Building). Likewise, some of the contribution could be available to make necessary repairs to Winthrop Park landscape structures.

*b. The subject lot is sufficiently small in size as to contribute to a development pattern of diverse, small scale, new structures and the retention of existing structures (for lots exceeding 10,000 square feet a specific finding shall be made that this objective has been met).*

Response – Not applicable

*c. The Planning Board shall specifically find that an exemption from parking and loading requirements will result in a building design that is more appropriate to its location and the fabric of its neighborhood and that it is in conformance with the objectives and criteria contained in Harvard Square Development Guidelines.*

Response – The Applicant’s Traffic, Parking and Loading Impact Report indicates that the typical patterns of loading and removals are consistent with the additional building area and would not be interrupted or made worse by its presence. The parking is likewise accommodated in existing short term and commercial garage parking, as noted.

*d. No National Register or contributing building is demolished or so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation as a National Register or contributing building;  
and*

Response – Not applicable

*e. No National Register or contributing building has been demolished or altered so as to terminate or preclude its designation within the five (5) years preceding the application.*

Response – Not applicable