

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

City Hall Annex - Inman & Broadway - Cambridge, Mass. 02139

498-9034

To: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

From: Michael H. Rosenberg *MHR*
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

Subject: Council Order #2, dated May 22, 1989.
Re: Harvard Square Post Office Site

Date: July 31, 1989

The site of the Harvard Square Post Office consists of two lots totaling 12,432 square feet. With an existing building well below the permitted gross floor area it has always been assumed that the site would be subject to redevelopment at some time in the future. Under current Business B regulations the site would be permitted a total of 51,692 square feet of retail and office uses; at that intensity of use approximately 52 parking spaces would be required. Abutting sites have been developed to similar densities, consistent with the limitations of the Business B district; both buildings are on the order of 60 feet in height and occupied by offices and retail uses. No parking is provided on either adjacent site. One Mifflin Place has provided a small loading bay to serve that building.

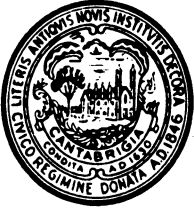
It is generally expected, and appropriate, that when the site is redeveloped a structure similar in scale and height to these adjacent buildings will be proposed. Should all the parking and loading facilities be provided and the height kept to 60 feet or less such a building could proceed as-of-right with only an advisory review by the Harvard Square Advisory Committee. If as has occurred in most recent new building in Harvard Square a discretionary permit is sought from the Planning Board or the Board of Zoning Appeal, there is the opportunity to influence the development program. In those circumstances the following considerations would come to the fore:

- (1) Enhancement and elaboration of the pedestrian walkway recently completed from Brattle Street to Mt. Auburn Street. The final segment of the walkway, completed as part of the recent development of One Mifflin Place, was designed in anticipation of a similar element in any new building constructed on the Post Office Site.

(2) The relationship of the building to Story Street. Story Street marks the boundary between commercial Harvard Square and the less intensively developed residential and office areas to the west. The street itself marks the western limit of the Business B zoning district. Uses on that street, appropriate setbacks if any, and height are particularly important issues at that edge of the site.

(3) The appropriate amount of parking and service facilities, if any, to be provided on the site. Most recent development in Harvard Square has sought relief from the provision of some or all of the required parking and service generated by the new development; the multiple tradeoffs of traffic congestion, on-street parking competition, and building design are among the many interrelated considerations raised should such a discretionary permit be sought.

In general, some reduction in permitted floor area ratio, long advocated by the Planning Board (from 4.0 to 3.0), would facilitate the design and construction of a new building on the site which would better respond to the above site considerations.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

August 7, 1989

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report No. 40 regarding the development potential of the Harvard Square Post Office site, I submit the attached report from the Community Development Department.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

Re: response to Awaiting Report Item 40 on
the development potential of the Harvard
Square Post Office site.

In City Council,

August 7, 1989

Placed on file