

CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Telephone: 617 349 4683 Fax: 617 349 3116 TTY: 617 349 6112

E-mail: histcomm@cambridgema.gov URL: <http://www.cambridgema.gov/Historic>

William B. King, *Chair*, Bruce A. Irving, *Vice Chair*, Charles M. Sullivan, *Executive Director*
 William Barry, Shary Page Berg, Robert G. Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*
 Joseph V. Ferrara, Susannah Barton Tobin, *Alternates*

June 30, 2015

To: Members of the Cambridge Historical Commission

From: Charles Sullivan, Executive Director
 Cambridge Historical Commission

Re: L-100-102, Kendall Square Landmark Group
 Kendall Square Building, 236 Main Street (1917-1925)
 J.L. Hammett Co. building, 264 Main Street (1915)
 Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Co. building, 292 Main Street (1920)

The Cambridge Historical Commission initiated a landmark designation study for the buildings at 236, 264, and 292 Main Street on September 8, 2011. By this action the Commission protected the Kendall Square Landmark Group from unauthorized alterations for one year, or until September 7, 2012, while it formulated a recommendation to the City Council. CHC staff submitted a draft landmark designation report on July 10, 2012, and on July 12 the Commission voted to confirm the eligibility of the three properties for designation. The Commission also voted to accept MIT's offer to extend the interim protections for 60 days. The Commission subsequently extended the protection period on numerous occasions down to the present. The latest extension expires at the end of July.

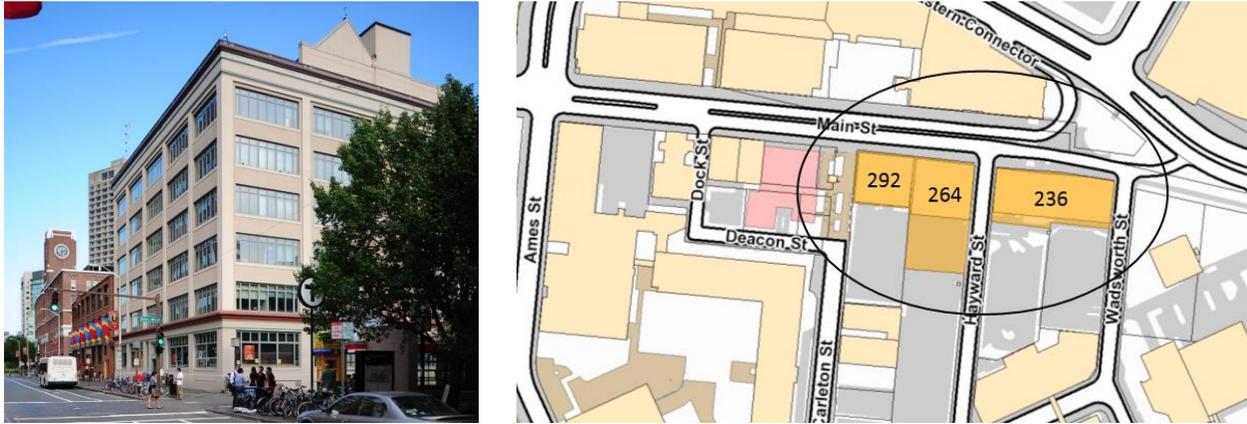
The purpose of the repeated extensions of the designation study was to allow for resolution of the community planning process that MIT initiated in 2009. The Institute's initial proposal for their Kendall Square real estate had envisioned razing the Suffolk building in its entirety and razing most if not all of the Hammett building. Commission staff held that this would destroy not only two buildings significant in Cambridge's industrial history, but also the last remaining traditional streetscape in Kendall Square. After five years of discussions with the city and the community and passage of a zoning package by the City Council in 2013, MIT announced earlier in 2015 that its current plans envisioned retaining all three buildings in conjunction with construction of six new residential and laboratory buildings in the vicinity.

The hearing on July 3 is intended to address a number of overlapping issues, including

- Expectations for alterations to the landmark properties
- Expected demolition of E33, E34, and E55
- Conditions attached to prior demolition of 18-46 Hayward Street and 28 Carleton Street
- Conditions for resolution of the landmark designation study, such as MIT commitment to continued staff review or a continuation of CHC jurisdiction for the duration of the project

Preservation objectives for the Kendall Square Landmark Group

The circumstances surrounding the proposed landmark designation, including descriptions of the buildings and a discussion of their significance, are contained in the July 10, 2012 “Draft Landmark Designation Study Report for the Kendall Square Landmark Group.” A copy of this report is attached. It would require only minor updating to reflect recent history and current conditions.



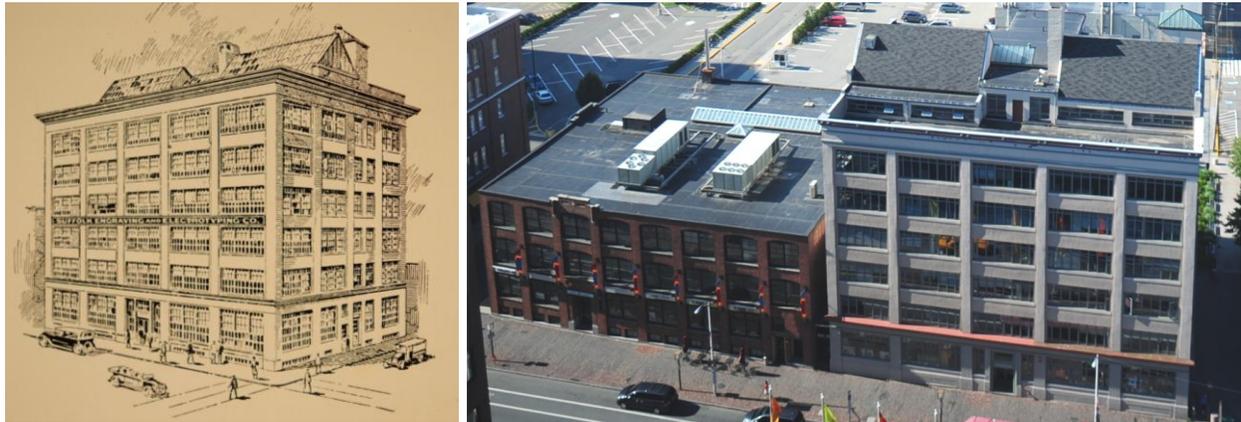
Foreground: Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Co. building, 292 Main Street (1920); J.L. Hammett Co. building, 264 Main Street (1915); Kendall Square Building, 236 Main Street (1917-1925)



Suffolk, Hammett, and Kendall Square buildings, rear elevations. CHC photo, July 2012

The Kendall Square Landmark Group consists of three buildings:

1. Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Co. building, 292 Main Street (1920). The Suffolk (MIT Press) building is a six-story reinforced concrete industrial building with its first floor about 4' above sidewalk grade. It originally featured steel factory sash and an exterior of unpainted concrete. The windows are modern replacements and the concrete has been repaired and painted; its original condition is unknown. The two one story penthouse/skylight structures remain intact but roofed over.



Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Building, 292 Main Street. Left image: Architect's rendering. *Technique* 1923, p. 564. Right: CHC photo, 2012

Preservation objectives for the Suffolk building include replication of the original small-light factory sash; restoration of original exterior concrete finish, if practicable; and retention of rooftop structures. If done appropriately, alteration of the ground floor by lowering the first floor slab and eliminating the spandrels between columns would contribute to the widely-held objective of enhancing street life and commercial activity on Main Street.

2. J.L Hammett Building, 264 Main Street (1915). The Hammett building is a three story brick industrial building with a slow-burning timber frame; the first floor is about 3' above grade. It originally featured 8+8 double-hung wood sash. The exterior masonry is in a good state of repair, but the windows have been replaced with 4+1 aluminum windows with applied muntins. Conversion of the first floor to retail use has been accomplished with little disruption to the structure and without marked inconvenience to customers.



J. L. Hammett Co., 264 Main Street. Left image: R.E. Smith collection, CHC. Photo 1953. Right: CHC photo, 2012

Preservation of the Hammett building should include careful maintenance of the brick masonry in its present state. Eventual installation of replica 8+8 sash would be desirable. MIT's plans for this site involve penetrating through or cantilevering a new building over

the Hammett building, which could be incompatible with preservation of the exposed timber frame. Careful positioning of the tower above should allow the Hammett building primacy from the pedestrians’ perspective. Preservation of the façade only (a ‘facadectomy’) should be avoided; perhaps the 1999 restoration and reconstruction of the façade and a significant depth of the original structure of the Read Block in Harvard Square offers a precedent.

- 3. Kendall Square Building, 238 Main Street (1917-25). The Kendall Square Building is a five-story reinforced concrete structure with brick cladding. The exterior masonry is in good condition, but the original 8+8 double-hung sash have been replaced with inappropriate aluminum windows. Some storefronts, although reworked with aluminum, have traditional recessed entrances and retain their original marble trim and replicated Luxfer prism transom lights. One vitrine by the entrance retains its original bronze surround. The masonry of the main entrance, although painted, is in good and original condition.



Manufacturer’s National Bank building, 222 Main Street, 1917. Letterhead cut, 1919. Ellis & Andrews collection, CHC

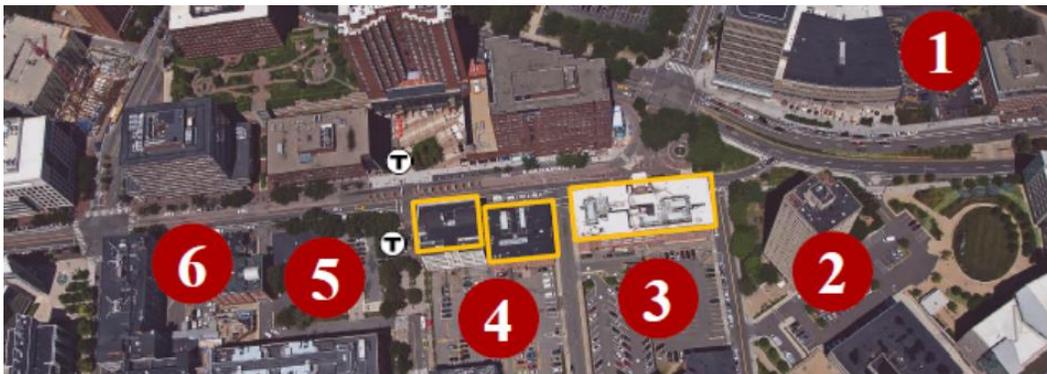


Kendall Square Building as extended, 1925. CHC photo, 2012

Preservation objectives for the Kendall Square Building should include maintaining the brick masonry, storefronts, and main entrance in their current state. The clock should continue to operate. When windows reach the end of their useful life, more appropriate replacements should be considered.

MIT’s Kendall Square Initiative

The Kendall Square Initiative has involves six related building projects, which are outlined in schematic fashion in MIT’s submission. Several have preservation-related issues. Two directly involve the Kendall Square Landmark Group, and one poses a question about future demolition of a significant building.



1. Residences on Main. This high-rise residential tower directly abuts the Broad Canal and the E.R. Luke (American Red Cross) building, both of which are on the National Register. The impact of this project on these historic resources is being resolved through the Massachusetts environmental review process.



Residences on Main, seen from Third Street

2. Replacement of Eastgate (E55). Eastgate, a 30-story building with 204 apartments for married graduate students, was designed by Eduardo Catalano and constructed in 1967. MIT proposes to remove Eastgate once a new residential building is built behind the Suffolk and Hammett buildings. A high-rise commercial laboratory/office building would then occupy this site.

Redevelopment of the Eastgate site is probably at least five years in the future. While Eastgate is not yet fifty years old, it will become so in 2017. It is likely that CHC staff will find the building ‘significant’ under the city’s demolition review ordinance. MIT maintains that commercial development of this site will be necessary to fund restoration of the Landmark Group. Current CHC staff considers this to be an acceptable tradeoff, but of course cannot bind future actions of the Commission.



3. “A high-rise commercial office/lab facility designed to provide space for science and technology companies seeking to locate or expand in the innovation cluster around MIT” will rise behind the Kendall Square Building (Kendall Square Initiative website). This building, to be designed by Perkins & Will, will rise behind and adjoin the Kendall Square Building.

This project should have a minimal impact on the Kendall Square Building, but a proposal to rework the historic entrance needs further study.



4. A new high-rise designed by NADAAA and Perkins & Will is intended to contain graduate student housing, a child-care facility, innovation space in the Suffolk building, and retail space on the ground floor. In contrast to the square footprint of the lab buildings, the 24-

story tower has a long and narrow footprint designed to accommodate a double-loaded corridor. The tower is oriented at right angles to Main Street to minimize shadows.

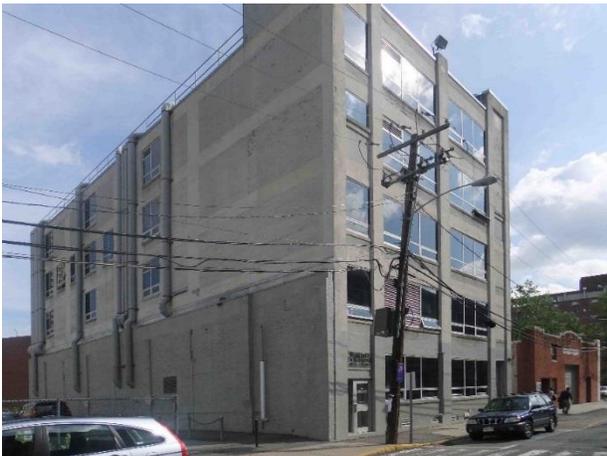
The siting of this tower above the Hammett building is not inherently objectionable, but requires further study to determine the appropriate proportions and massing, location of entrances, and possible structural changes to the older building. The proposal to lower the first floor of the Suffolk building to enable retail justifies the retention of the structure. Dedication of the upper floors to innovation space is entirely appropriate.



5. A commercial office building proposed for the corner of Carleton Street will include space for the MIT Museum on two of the lower floors, as well as ground floor retail. The existing one-story buildings at 326 and 336 Main Street were built in 1927 and 1919, respectively, and were converted to offices and a bank in 1968. I do not consider them significant in the context of the demolition review ordinance.

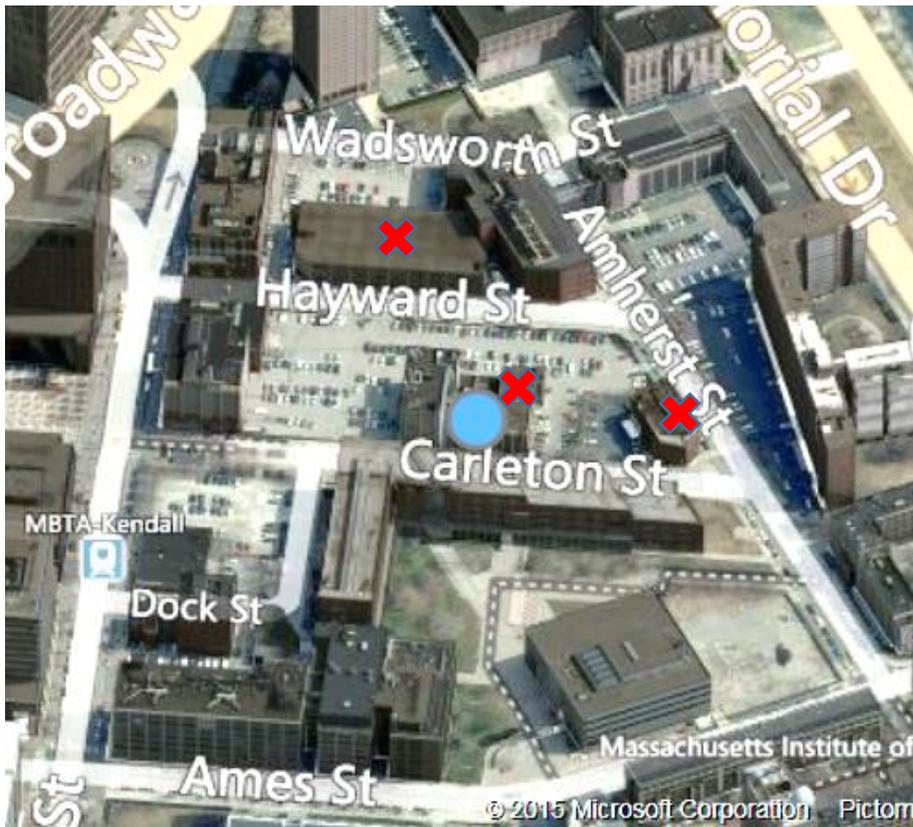


The large open space in the foreground of this view will require the demolition of two buildings on Carleton Street. The Rinaldi Tile Co. garage at 32-34 Carleton (E34) is a one-story concrete structure with steel roof trusses built in 1923. The five-story concrete structure next door at 38-42 Carleton (E35) was built by Rinaldi Tile in 1924. In different circumstances 38-42 Carleton Street might be considered significant, but as these buildings' industrial context has completely disappeared I find them not significant for the purposes of the demolition ordinance.



32-34 Carleton Street (above); 38-42 Carleton Street (right). Assessing Dept. photos

A related issue concerns certain design review conditions attached to MIT's demolition of 18-46 Hayward St. in 2005 and 28 Carleton Street in 2006. The demolition delay ordinance requires that no permit for demolition of a preferably-preserved significant building may be granted "until plans for use or development of the site have been filed with the Building Department and found to comply with all laws pertaining to the issuance of a building permit." Since MIT had no plans to develop these sites at the time, the Commission agreed to find the buildings not preferably preserved, and MIT agreed that it would return for a public hearing so the Commission could review and approve the permanent replacement design of the sites.



Pre-2005 aerial view showing 32-34 Carleton Street (blue dot) and 38-42 Carleton. 28 Carleton and 18-46 Hayward, demolished in 2006-06, are crossed out. Staff determined the Tailby-Nason building at 4 Carleton to be not significant in 2014. Prior to about 1960 the entire Ames-Amherst-Wadsworth-Main area was filled with manufacturing buildings; only three former candy factories at the corner of Main and Ames, remain. Bing Maps.

6. The plan for this site envisions a small office building with ground floor retail on a parking lot next to the Kendall Hotel. No CHC review is required.

All six projects are envisioned by MIT to be part of a single development plan, which is being intensively reviewed by city staff. MIT has begun the permitting process, starting with an environmental notification form for the Residences on Main. Traffic and utility impact studies are underway for Planning Board review later this year.

Conditions for resolution of the landmark designation study

Resolution of the landmark designation study can be accomplished by submitting a recommendation to City Council for designation, maintaining CHC jurisdiction for the duration of the project through extension of the landmark study protection period, or by ensuring MIT commitment to continued staff review.

MIT has requested that the Commission “close the landmark designation process and instead allow continued design review with the Commission staff as is MIT’s practice on all historically significant buildings. The broad resolution of preserving the buildings will provide a better foundation for the dialogue and discussion that will take place once MIT has filed ... Special Permit applications.”

MIT’s proposal resembles the 1986 protocol between Commission and Harvard University. That agreement resolved a long-running dispute between Harvard and the Cambridge and Massachusetts historical commissions over the nomination of university buildings to the National Register of Historic Places. In essence, Harvard consented to the nomination of over 200 buildings to the Register, and the Commission pledged not to use National Register status as a pretext for designation of Harvard buildings as landmarks or to place them in historic districts without the university’s consent. The university then agreed to review projects affecting its National Register buildings with the Commission staff. This cooperative, largely non-binding arrangement has continued to the present, and has involved staff review of hundreds of projects from the restoration of Memorial Hall and remodeling of the Fogg Museum to masonry repairs and installation of signs and handrails.

Recommendations

I recommend that the Commission discuss the preservation objectives described above with MIT at the hearing on July 3. If MIT is agreeable, then I will recommend that the Commission consent to MIT’s proposed resolution, subject to the condition that the Institute agree to a protocol similar to Harvard’s that would cover the Kendall Landmark Group as well as all National Register buildings owned by the Institute. Such an agreement should allow the staff to refer matters of disagreement to the Historical Commission for resolution. If MIT consents to such an arrangement the Commission would be justified in concluding the designation study for the landmark group.

This hearing should also be considered to satisfy the design review conditions relating to MIT’s demolition of 18-46 Hayward St. in 2005 and 28 Carleton Street in 2006.

Attachments:

Draft Landmark Designation Study Report, Kendall Square Landmark Group (July 2012)
Harvard–CHC protocol (1986)