

CAMBRIDGE DAY

Home | Business + Money | Development

Apartment building on track for East Cambridge, potentially bringing 90 homes and street retail

By [Luciano Cesta](#)

Thursday, February 2, 2023



A rendering of a proposed building on First Street in East Cambridge. (Image: Urban Spaces)

East Cambridge may see construction soon on 90 additional apartments. The Planning Board gave unanimous approval Tuesday for a preliminary plan at **75 First St.**, part of a larger development of the First Street corridor between Bent and Spring streets by the company Urban Spaces.

The developer is required to return to the board for final approval after addressing its comments and question

The building, as planned, would be six stories with commercial or residential use on the first floor and surround the retail building at 91-95 First St. housing a pet store, paint store and a post office. The building that houses David's Shoes will be demolished for the new building to be built. Of the 90 proposed residential units, eight will be studios, 70 will be one-bedrooms, 10 will be two-bedrooms and two will be three-bedrooms. Fifteen of the 90 total apartments will be deemed as affordable.

The façade of the building will be composed mainly of dark-colored brick, cement, aluminum and marble.

While there were some minor concerns from Planning Board members, they mostly liked the proposed amendment to the overall First Street project, called a planned unit development.

"This major amendment is consistent with, broadly speaking, the urban design goals of the city," said Tom Sieniewicz, a member of the board, noting the inclusion of affordable housing, mixed-use nature of the project and its transit orientation, being close to the Lechmere green line MBTA station.

Other board members agreed on the urban design goals but expressed minor concerns.

Hugh Russell commented on the aesthetics of some of materials and on access to a parking garage within the PUD. He estimated there could be 1,200 feet from an occupant's unit to their car, which could incentivize them to take an unsafe shortcut through loading docks for the commercial building. He suggested an alternate door to the garage that is 100 feet closer.

Russell was also concerned about building access in case of flood conditions.

Alan Green, an East Cambridge resident speaking during public comment, said he appreciates the size of the building and thinks more retail is needed in the area – especially grocery and hardware stores.

"We have a retail desert of sorts in East Cambridge, and it seems like everything is moving away," Green said.

After the building's final plans are approved by the Planning Board, the developer will need to pursue a building permit.