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Sydney Associates plan \$7 million, 19,400 s/f retail renovation project

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The former Fresh Pond Seafood site, overlooking Fresh Pond, will soon be a community retail center offering panoramic frontage for retail shops and an inviting experience for pedestrians, commuters and cyclists along Fresh Pond Pkwy.

"Our goal is to create a distinctive building that will embrace the community, become a successful retail destination and reflect well on the city of Cambridge," said Hans Strauch, president of HDS Architecture, project architect.

The new 19,400 s/f, two-story, \$7 million brick building with architectural accents and metal and glass storefronts will replace a dilapidated one-story retail strip, which has been empty for more than a year. Separating the site from the National Guard Armory in the back is a strip of overgrown weeds and trees and a corroded, rusty six-foot high chain link fence topped with barbed wire. On the north and south sides are filling stations.

Sydney Associates, Inc. of Brookline is the owner and developer of the property. "This program reflects our commitment as developers to creating first class retail projects that are appealing to the community as well as to our retail tenants and their customers," said Roberta Sydney, president of Sydney Associates.

The plan was approved unanimously by the City of Cambridge Planning Board and has already attracted significant interest from potential retail and commercial tenants. A groundbreaking is planned for this spring.

Three or four retailers are expected on the ground level, with additional commercial space on the second level. The building has almost 100% frontage because of its unique shape with multiple entrances, storefronts and signage. The site accommodates 45 parking spaces with intensive landscaping, benches, bicycle racks and a pedestrian plaza.

"When we embarked on this design opportunity, we wanted to find a way to engage the street with a lively and inviting building that would showcase its tenants. We did not want the prototypical freestanding, blank facaded fortress surrounded by parking," Strauch said.

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