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Crimson Galeria LP to transform building from office to apartments in Harvard Square

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Cambridge, MA Nauset Construction has begun implementing significant building support measures and structural steel upgrades to the Crimson Galeria building in Harvard Sq. as the owners, Crimson Galeria LP, pivot from office uses to apartments for the planned three-story vertical addition. The owners originally permitted the building to construct office space on top of the Crimson Galeria, but during the COVID-19 pandemic decided to pursue a residential addition to the building instead, for which they received a special permit.

“There is an obvious need for both market-rate and affordable units in this market – certainly more than there is currently for office – and this addition will deliver both,” said Crimson Galeria LP principal Rachna Balakrishna. “We own and operate another mixed-use property with apartments and ground-floor retail in Harvard Sq. that is always oversubscribed and continues to perform well

for us, and we fully anticipate that the Crimson Galeria apartments will also do well.”

Designed by NELSON Worldwide, the new residential addition will be home to 38 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments, with approximately 20% designated as affordable. The initial phases of the project began before the pandemic and are now complete. These phases focused on interior upgrades to the existing retail space within the Crimson Galeria, as well as the construction of an Eversource vault to provide increased power for the new addition. To provide additional support for the multifamily units, Nauset is now orchestrating the installation of 42 micropiles, four super columns, and significant additional structural steel building upgrades.

During the entire construction process, the retail portion of the property, which includes Shake Shack, Maharaja, Veggie Grill, Menya Jiro, and Core Power Yoga, has remained open. The Galeria is adding two new tenants, Cookies and Achilito’s Taqueria, and longtime tenant Bonchon will soon re-open, bringing the Galeria to full occupancy.

“It’s a very heavily trafficked retail area, with lots of tourists and visitors, and Nauset superintendent Kevin Randall has done a great job working with the Harvard Square Business Association, the building tenants, and other neighbors to minimize the impact on the local businesses,” said Balakrishna.

“This project involves working on a tight, occupied, urban infill site – something that we consider to be one of our strengths as a construction manager,” said Nauset president Anthony Papantonis. “Safety is paramount when working in highly-trafficked areas, as well as ensuring that our construction efforts are minimally disruptive to the retailers and their customers.”

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