

MEMORANDUM

To: CRA Board
From: Alexandra Levering
Date: November 20, 2019
Re: Affordable Housing Open Space Connectivity Plan – Rindge Avenue

OVERVIEW

Just A Start (JAS), a Cambridge based community development corporation has proposed a new mixed-use development at their Rindge Tower Apartments property, located at 402 Rindge Avenue. The Rindge Tower Apartments site contains a single building tower, with 273-units of affordable housing and is surrounded by surface parking. The new mix-use project proposal, called Rindge Commons, would be completed in two phases, and includes two new buildings to be sited on the Rindge Tower Apartments' parking lot. The additional development will provide new affordable apartments, including family-sized units, retail space, and a new center for JAS's education and training programs.

A few months ago, JAS staff reached out to the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) to ask for open space and connectivity design assistance for their Rindge Commons project. This request is similar to the open space and site amenity improvements the CRA recently funded for JAS's Squirrelwood Project.

CONTEXT

As illustrated in the image to the right, Rindge Commons is located in North Cambridge, and is a largely affordable residential community positioned between Rindge Avenue, Alewife Brook Parkway, the North Cambridge Cemetery and the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Road. While proximate to important community resources, (including the Alewife MBTA-Station, Russell Field and Pool, the Fresh Pond Shopping Center and Danehy Park) JAS's

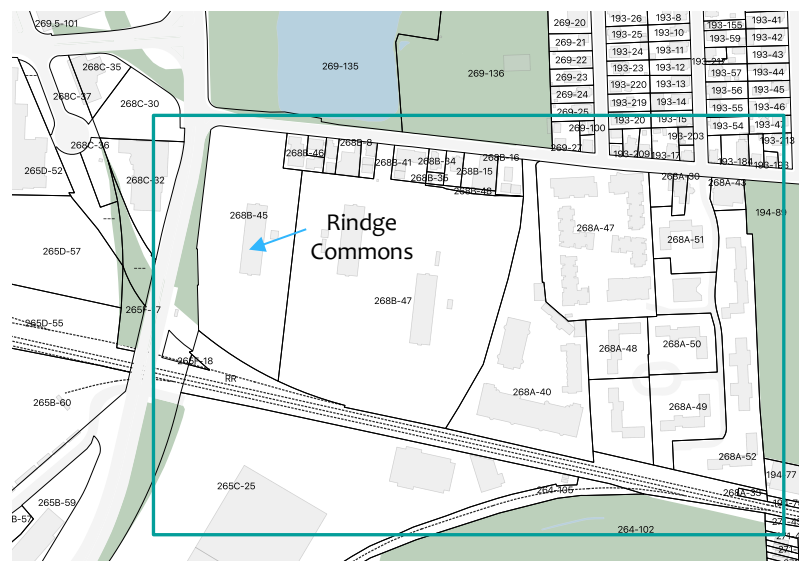


Figure 1 - Rindge Avenue Neighborhood

residents and other residents in the Rindge Avenue Neighborhood lack convenient access to many of those nearby amenities.

In discussion with JAS and City of Cambridge Community Development Department (CDD) staff, it was agreed that to create an open space and connectivity vision, Rindge Commons and other affordable housing developments in the area would be best served if the project site was broadened. Thus, CRA staff have expanded the planning projects geographic scope to include connectivity planning for the larger Rindge Avenue Neighborhood, illustrated by the blue box in Figure 1. This boundary includes Rindge Commons, as well as affordable housing developments owned by the Cambridge Housing Association and a private developer.

PROJECT SCOPE – PHASE ONE

To initiate the project, CRA staff drafted a project scope. Tasks include site walkthroughs, stakeholder engagement, including potential meetings with residents, private and non-profit developers, community groups and staff from CDD and state agencies, analysis of existing conditions, and the creation of a district connectivity concept. The project scope also included links to important City of Cambridge Planning Documents for the area, including the Priority Bicycle Network, and the Envision Alewife Plan released in October of 2019. The CRA assigned on-call urban design consultant, Gamble Associates the project who returned a project proposal. Staff are now working to finalize a Notice to Proceed with Gamble Associates to begin work. As the project progresses, future next steps will need to be determined.

ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit A: Rindge Neighborhood Open Space Vision for Improved Connectivity
Exhibit B: Gamble Associates Project Proposal

Scope

Rindge Neighborhood Open Space Vision for Improved Connectivity

Project Goals

Rindge neighborhood, located in North Cambridge is a largely affordable residential community positioned between Rindge Avenue, Alewife Brook Parkway, the North Cambridge Cemetery and the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Road. While nearby to important community resources, including the Alewife T-Station, Russell Field and Pool, the Fresh Pond Shopping Center

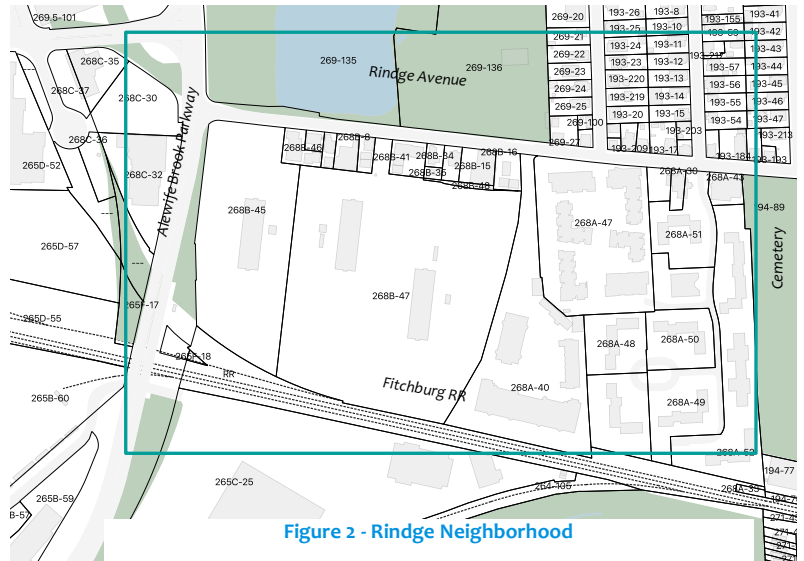


Figure 2 - Rindge Neighborhood

and Danehy Park, the community lacks convenient access to these amenities. The goal of this project is to establish an open space plan that improves the pedestrian and bicycle path connectivity of the Rindge neighborhood.

Scope

The scope as it is written here is a working version. The design team should suggest additions or changes to the scope tasks, deliverables, timeframes etc., if it would improve or benefit the project.

Task 1 - Site Walkthrough & Scope Finalization

The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) will coordinate a site walkthrough with Just a Start and other interested parties to explore the Rindge Neighborhood. After the walk, the CRA and design team should discuss next steps and finalize the scope of work. **Meetings:** One (1) Kick-off Meetng. **Deliverable:** Finalize a Notice to Proceed.

Task 2 –Engagement

The CRA will coordinate and schedule discussions with the stakeholders listed below.

STAKEHOLDERS:

- Just a Start (JAS) & Landscape Architects Copley Wolff Design Group
- Department of Conservation (DCR)
City of Cambridge Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TPT)
- City of Cambridge CDD – Housing + Transportation & Environmental Planning Division
- Department of Public Works (DPW)
- Fresh Pond Apartments – The Schochet Companies
- Alewife Condo Trust
- Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA)
- Brickworks Condo Association
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)

As the number of stakeholder engagement meetings is currently unknown, when estimating the project, the consultant should price out the cost to attend meetings requiring participation in the following three categories:

- 1) Technical listening meeting – the consultant participates but no preparation or published deliverables are needed.
- 2) Collaborative meeting – the consultant participates and takes feedback but no preparation is needed.
- 3) Public meeting – the consultant organizes and facilitates the meeting.

Task 3 –Utility and Easement Plans

Included in this appendix is a folder of documents that includes easement plans, relevant deeds, condo association agreements and city maps and plans for the Rindge Neighborhood. If additional documentation is needed for a regional connectivity conceptual design, the consultant should inform staff, and staff will either work to find the necessary documentation or ask the consultant to assist in collecting it.

Task 4 – District Connectivity Concept Design

Conceptual designs should begin once the CRA and design team understand community interests and stakeholder needs. The design team should establish concepts to improve open space and connectivity in the Rindge Neighborhood area identified in the map on the first page. The concept should consider connectivity improvement for pedestrians and cyclists, and consider desire lines between amenities such as Alewife Station and Danehy Park. **Meetings:** *Three (3) meetings / presentations to the CRA and/or stakeholders.* **Deliverable:** *The design team should put together two (2) connectivity plan options along with a presentation to help illustrate the conceptual designs.*

Part 2 - Potential Future Tasks

Schematic Design & Cost Estimate & Phasing Plan

Following approval of a Concept Design Plan and formal Notice to Proceed for Part 2, the design team will move forward with schematic designs for open space and pathway connections. Following solidification on the project scope and approval on design direction, the consultant will engage a full team of project sub-consultants to complete the design work. After schematic designs are complete, the design team should help develop a cost estimate and implementation phasing plan. The design team should produce estimated costs for the design, broken out by proposed phasing scenarios.

Appendix

- Easement Plan Map
- Ownership Map
- Easements/Deed Documents (delivered in a zip file)
- City of Cambridge Planning Documents (delivered in a zip file)
 - o Priority Bicycle Network – May 2019
 - o Envision Alewife Plan – Oct 2019
 - o Rindge Neighborhood Parcel Map

November 13, 2019

Cambridge Redevelopment Authority
Attn: Alexandra Levering
255 Main St
Cambridge, MA 02142

RE: RINDGE NEIGHBORHOOD
OPEN SPACE VISION FOR IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY

Dear Ms. Levering,

Towns and cities across the country are capitalizing on their unique characteristics. Access to public transit (especially rail), proximity to open space and recreation and leveraging existing residential neighborhoods make Cambridge an attractive location to live, work and play. The Rindge Neighborhood is no exception. It has many enviable amenities in close proximity: The MBTA Red line with direct connections to Harvard, Kendall Square, and Downtown Boston, the newly renovated Russel Field, Danehy Park, and a vast network of multimodal trails, including the Somerville Community Path, the Minuteman Bikeway, and the Fitchburg Cutoff Bikepath.

Unfortunately, access to this vital network is compromised. The Fitchburg Commuter Rail tracks divide the neighborhood and cuts off access to retail along Alewife Brook Parkway and Denehy Park. Alewife Brook Parkway serves as the backbone of North Cambridge and Cambridge Highlands, but it is in need of infrastructure enhancements - including bike lanes, appropriately dimensioned sidewalks, and safe crossings. The timing is right to increase connectivity from the Rindge Neighborhood to its surroundings assets and forge a Vision for how these amenities can grow into the future.

Gamble Associates is pleased to submit this proposal for an **Open Space Vision for Improved Connectivity**. As both architects and urban planners we understand how cities, networks, and buildings work and are designed, and what is needed to run an effective planning process to channel community aspirations towards an effective outcome. While we have undertaken this work in other contexts, we know that each municipality has its own dynamics and requires their own strategies and approaches that are place specific. We are excited to work with the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority and learn more about the specific needs expressed by the residents of the Rindge Neighborhood and the many stakeholders that need to be involved to arrive at a Vision. We are excited to design a process and a product that exhibits the best physical characteristics of Cambridge and adequately serves the needs of its residents.

Sincerely,



David Gamble, AIA, AICP, LEED AP
Principal, Gamble Associates
Lecturer, Harvard Graduate School of Design



Philipp Maué
Urban Designer/Urban Planner

SCOPE

Deliverables

In order to maximize public buy-in and accessibility, we propose that the final deliverable take the form of a poster or brochure that is succinct, graphically rich, and easily understandable. In this way, the work can be easily distributed to the public and can be disseminated to anyone looking to understand the potential of a compelling Open Space Vision for the Rindge Neighborhood. Through meetings with the residents, stakeholders, and the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, we can arrive at the ideal form and structure the final document should take. (Examples can be provided upon request).

Meetings

Given the list of potential stakeholders involved in the planning process, we anticipate three (3) Technical Listening meetings, (3) three collaborative meetings, and (3) three public meetings.

Schedule

We envision the planning process unfolding over sixteen (16) weeks, beginning after the New Year due to the challenges associated with the holidays. In our experience an accelerated schedule reduces planning fatigue and keeps people engaged in the process.

URBAN DESIGN AND PLANNING FEE

While the ultimate cost of the work will vary based on further discussions with the CRA, we are confident based off our prior experiences with similar projects that our total fee of **\$34,900** will be sufficient to cover the six tasks identified in the project scope. Any additional services for supplemental analyses, additional meetings, implementation services or other work not entailed in the above scope would be provided on the basis of either a fixed fee to be agreed upon at a later date or on a time and expense basis at an hourly rate identified below.

Principal	\$225/hour
Designer/Project Manager	\$175/hour
Administrative	\$75/hour

Fee Breakdown

Task 1 – Site Walkthrough, Scope Finalization		\$1,400
Task 2 – Engagement		
Technical listening meeting	\$400	\$1,200 (3 meetings)
Collaborative meeting	\$400	\$1,200 (3 meetings)
Public meeting	\$3,250	\$9,750 (3 meetings)
Task 3 – Analysis of Existing Conditions		\$2,800
Task 4 - Utility and Easement Plans		\$350
Task 5 - District Connectivity Concept		\$15,400
Task 6 - Final deliverable / poster / production		<u>\$2,800</u>
	Total Projected Cost	\$34,900

End of Proposal.