

Joint CRA Board and Cambridge Planning Board Meeting

Tuesday, July 31, 2018 6:30pm
City Hall Annex – Second Floor, 344 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

APPROVED Meeting Minutes

Call

Theodore Cohen, Chair of the City of Cambridge Planning Board (PB) called the meeting at 6:39 p.m. PB business was discussed. Mr. Cohen explained that tonight's meeting was a pre-application discussion of a proposal to amend the MXD Infill Development Concept Plan, which is done as a joint meeting of the PB and the CRA. At 6:44 p.m., CRA Chair Kathleen Born called this CRA Special Board meeting to order. She stated that the CRA is recording the meeting. Other CRA Board members present were Vice Chair Margaret Drury, Treasurer Christopher Bator, Assistant Treasurer Conrad Crawford, and Assistant Secretary Barry Zevin. Executive Director Tom Evans, Project Director Jason Zogg, and the other three CRA staff members were present.

In addition to Mr. T. Cohen, other PB members in attendance were Vice Chair Catherine Preston Connolly, Tom Sieniewicz, Steven A. Cohen, Louis J. Bacci, Hugh Russell, Mary T. Flynn, Nikolas Bowie, and Corinne Espinoza.

Mr. Zogg explained the permit being considered. He said that Section 504 of the Kendall Square Urban Renewal Plan (KSURP) requires that an Infill Development Concept Plan (IDCP) be prepared and that all new development must be in conformance with the IDCP. The concept plan for the urban renewal area has had a long history and has had many revisions. It is the framework with which all development occurs; it regulates phasing, open space, infrastructure, building design guidelines, and much more. The most recent IDCP was approved in February/March of 2017. Phase I, the 145 Broadway building and improvements to the Sixth Street Walkway, are currently under construction. The IDCP was informed by the City's 2013 K2 (Kendall) plan and an extensive public engagement process which included dozens of public meetings and hearings in 2016. Some elements of the IDCP are driven by the numerical limitations of the MXD zoning which was last updated in 2015. The state-mandated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) published in October 2015 for the KSURP was actually written assuming a larger mixed-use building at the 325 Main Street site being discussed today. However, in 2016, Boston Properties (BXP) requested to move that gross floor area (GFA) to Binney Street and BXP is now requesting to move it back to Main Street.

BXP will be proposing what is considered a major amendment to the IDCP, as market demands for office space have changed in the past year. Mr. Zogg emphasized that this is a pre-application meeting, not a hearing. He suggested that the CRA Board initially consider the GFA being moved within the MXD district - how much is moved, where and when, what the massing is for each site, the relationship to the public realm which includes associated adjacent streets and open spaces, as well as necessary infrastructure changes and operational improvements to the block. Once all those options are explored and an IDCP amendment is finalized by the CRA Board, there will need to be a schematic design approval by the CRA Board for a commercial office building as well as the associated residential buildings. In the past year, CRA and Cambridge Community Development Department (CDD) staff have worked together to develop a coordinated review and approval process between the PB and CRA Board; this begins tonight with the introduction to the IDCP amendment. This process will continue with at least one joint hearing after the proponent files an official submission document. BXP's official submission document will come to the Boards in the form of a fully revised IDCP book, similar to that received over a year ago. The CRA will then begin Design Review Committee meetings, and inviting CDD staff members Jeff Roberts and Suzannah Bigolin to participate in these more informal hands-on sessions with a smaller subset of the CRA Board.

Mr. Roberts explained the PB's role in the process. He said that the area being discussed has many names – the Kendall Square Urban Renewal Area under the CRA's jurisdiction, the MXD (mixed-use development) District with regards to zoning, Cambridge Center, and now Kendall Center. The zoning was established in 1981 to implement the KSURP which included a buildout of approximately three million square feet of mostly commercial, high-tech office and lab uses. Unlike other zoning districts that use PUD procedures, most of the KSURP development was not subject to PB review, but was reviewed by the CRA under a different set of procedures. Starting in 2001, some buildings were reviewed by the PB under Project Review Special Permit procedures. In 2015, the MXD zoning was amended, as was the KSURP, to allow an additional one million square feet of infill development, in addition to what was already completed or in process. This was to be divided into 60% commercial and 40% residential. That zoning amendment also established a procedure to review the development, called the Infill Development Concept Plan (IDCP), a quasi-PUD that applies only to the million square feet of additional development authorized by the zoning amendment. A phased development plan for all of that new development must be approved by the PB and the CRA, which must hold at least one joint meeting to review the proposal. Each individual building is then subject to design review. In 2017, an IDCP was approved by the PB and the CRA Board that contains four new buildings, two commercial and two residential. Of those four buildings, one commercial building is under construction at 145 Broadway. Like a PUD, the zoning for this IDCP allows for major or minor amendments to the IDCP. In addition, like a PUD, it allows for a pre-application conference for the developer to discuss the intent of the proposal and for the PB to instruct the developer on issues that should be considered in preparing a formal application. No statements made by the developer or the PB at the pre-application conference are considered binding. This is an informational and informal discussion.

Michael Tilford, from BXP, explained that there will be two presentations – one of the Master Plan amendment and the other of the proposed Commercial Building B at 325 Main Street. A slide showed the previously approved massing orientation of the three phases. Phase I, in blue, included the 88 Ames Street residential building (Proto), the 145 Broadway building (for Akamai), and the Sixth Street Walkway improvements. Phase II, in magenta, included Commercial Building B at 250 Binney Street and the first residential building on the south side of the Blue parking garage. Phase III, in yellow, included the northern-most residential building.

Highlights of Phase II include commercial building B, the South Residential Tower (355 units, 84 of which are income-restricted), Broadway Park, East-West pedestrian connectors, a cycle track at sidewalk level, and opportunities to connect the Kendall Square plaza with the roof garden. He showed a map of the raised cycle track as part of the extensive Binney/Galileo Galilei Way/Broadway streetscape project to create pedestrian and bike friendly circulation. The portion labeled MXD 2020 is part of Phase II. He noted that this and other public benefits are under design and will be presented with the residential project. Mr. Tilford said that the project has been informed by a series of public meetings as well as meetings with City and CRA staff. There is an open house on August 1st at 80 Broadway to get additional feedback. Mr. Tilford clarified that nothing changes in Phase I of the amendment. The Phase II amendment moves the GFA of 255 Binney Street commercial massing to 325 Main Street. The plan currently envisions two floors of retail, with the MIT Coop having a smaller footprint.

Mr. Tilford said that BXP was pleased with the results of a new shadow study done with regards to the roof garden. He said that there are some new shadows in March, but not much in June. There is a full shadowing in December. This study will be included in the final submission. Mr. Tilford introduced Sean Manning of VHB to talk about the traffic and parking impacts. Mr. Manning spoke about vehicle trip generation during the full day, the morning peak hour, and the evening peak hour. He noted that the development envelope is identical to what was approved previously. There is a slight shift in the mix - less retail and more office space which is why the third column on the slide showed modest changes over the course of the day. Work is being done with the City's Traffic, Parking and Transportation department to understand the impacts and better quantify them in the forthcoming submission. He referenced a slide that showed the quantities for proposed vehicle and bike parking. The building at 250 Binney was to have a below grade parking facility. The proposed building has no parking. Parking trends in the district show that the need for parking is less than what was anticipated two years ago. VHB believes that managed parking techniques could be used in the 145 Broadway building to meet demand during the peak times. Bike parking will increase. A map was shown depicting the garage locations and the number of parking spaces in each.

Mr. Tilford said that much of the retail plan and pedestrian circulation is staying the same. With the proposed amendment, there is the ability to make Pioneer Way, between Ames Street and the plaza, more engaging. There

can also be a vertical connection between the roof garden and the plaza. The retail plan adds potential future retail in the northern parcel on Broadway as well as more opportunity for the 325 Main Street building to interact with the plaza. He confirmed that there will be a full resubmission of the plan. The meeting was opened to all Board members for comments and questions before moving to the presentation of the 325 Main Street building.

In response to Mr. Russel, Mr. Tilford said that BXP is making these changes because of a demand for space and an opportunity to improve assets. Mr. Mike Cantalupa of BXP added that in the last submission, tenant A was Akamai and tenant B was Biogen. Over time, Biogen's business fortunes have changed. The building that was sited at 250 Binney Street was not going to be built for them and they have subsequently subleased the space so it is not available for about ten years. Another tenant came up and BPX is trying to accommodate their needs on the 325 Main Street site, which is currently occupied by the Coop and Google.

Mr. Crawford noted that this should be an opportunity to demonstrate unique, creative, and dynamic features for the Kendall Square neighborhood with the building but also with the public realm and the open spaces. Mr. Tilford said that the building presentation will show this.

Mr. Sieniewicz didn't have an issue with the internal shifting of the GFA but stated that the PB's approval for a building is based on usage as well as GFA. This building is no longer for mixed-use. Mr. Tilford said that the higher height limits on the south side of the garage gave BXP the ability to put a majority of the housing in the larger residential building for an earlier delivery.

Mr. Zevin said that the shadows on the roof garden are not trivial. He would like to see an October shadow study as that is the month when it is still warm, provided there is sun. He is concerned about the negative effect on the area with even more construction staging. He sees issues with light, air, and views as this building is packed in so tightly. He doesn't understand how this improves Pioneer Way unless access to the Kendall Plaza is available for extended hours. Losing the building at 250 Binney Street removes the possibility for retail and street life at the north end of the Sixth Street walkway. The pedestrian experience is already fine on Main Street, whereas there is a need for improvement along Binney Street.

In response to Mr. Bacci, Mr. Cantalupa said that the building will employ about 2000 people.

Mr. Russell spoke about his recent first experience sitting in roof garden and said that a full shade garden is not an improvement.

Ms. Drury would like an explained interpretation of the shadow diagrams.

Mr. Bowie said that losing 400 parking spots is significant. Mr. Tilford said that there is a diminished demand for BXP's current parking assets since their 2016 submission. He said that future technologies will decrease the need. He said that the number of additional spaces planned in 2016 now appears excessive and it is now being reduced to realistic numbers. Mr. Bowie agreed with Mr. Sieniewicz's opinion that mixed-use should be implemented in the building. Residents living close to the subway would reduce the need for parking. Mr. Tilford emphasized that parking is not being reduced but rather less parking than initially proposed is being added.

In response to Ms. Espinoza, Mr. Tilford said that changes to open space related to the plaza and the roof garden would be explained more fully in the presentation of the building.

Mr. T. Cohen echoed the same concerns as Mr. Zevin regarding the shadowing on the roof garden which is already under-utilized. This building will also create a cavernous feel against the large future MIT buildings. Putting this building on a wider street, like Binney, would be less concerning.

Ms. Born restated Mr. Crawford's opinion that rebuilding presents an opportunity if the developer rises to the occasion. She shares the concerns about the roof garden and said there must be a way to design this building or redesign the roof garden that could improve the situation. She was also confused by the shadow study. She suggested a more detailed and perhaps animated shadow study showing any given day of the year. She mentioned the Photographers Ephemeris application. She would like an independent landscape architect with a good background in horticulture to provide an opinion about any redesign that would be necessary to

accommodate less sunlight. The CRA Board was pleased when Akamai offered, without being asked, to have major portions of their lobby and ground floor be open to the public. This is not the plan from the proposed tenant. She emphasized that this is a very public space, the heart of Kendall Square, and the design of public spaces needs an extra level of attention. She thanked all members of each Board for their thoughtful comments.

In response to Mr. Bacci, Mr. Manning said that the traffic study does not include a direct accounting for the effects of ride-share companies. The space needed for their drop-offs and pickups are, however, included in the design of the buildings. Mr. Bacci said that the traffic study should show the perimeters of the study. Mr. Manning added that the study is extensive.

Mr. Tilford then introduced Mr. Markese, Design Principal from Pickard Chilton. Adrienne Nelson, also from Pickard Chilton, was also introduced. Mr. Markese was the design principal of the 145 Broadway project and was pleased to be back. He thanked the Boards for their collaborative spirit that made that project a success. He asked for comments and feedback to enhance the end product. The slides he showed were meant to explain the thought process in designing this building. He showed various pictures of the existing building from the street and from the plaza and noted that a goal of the proposed building is to provide a better connection to the plaza and to the roof garden. The map also showed the existing buildings in Kendall Square, the proposed BXP building outlined in purple, the adjacent future MIT buildings outlined in black, and the open spaces in the surrounding areas. A diagram of pedestrian circulation indicated a new connection up to the garden from the ground level. He said that a significant amount of retail space will exist on the first and second floors of the building along Main Street and the plaza. The retail will also front the side of the building facing 355 Main Street. The access between 355 Main Street and the proposed building will be upgraded. Retail will be located on both sides of the proposed building. Mr. Markese brought a 3D model of the area to help envision the massing of the proposed building and its setting. The model included the known massing of the MIT site and conjectural massing of the Volpe site. From an urban setting standpoint, he said that it makes sense to build higher in an already dense area, especially one having such proximity to transit. He added that the amount of density will provide space for more people than a multi-family building of a similar size.

Mr. Markese spoke about the ideas that informed the massing from a pure monolithic extrusion into the current version shown in the master plan. The current design incorporates the tenant's use of the building but also projects what's happening within the building. Weaving the building vertically and horizontally with reveals and bays conveys the spirit of innovation and collaboration of Kendall Square. The building should enhance the overall image of Kendall Square. He noted the steps down to the park on the eastern side of the building and the terraced base of the building cascading to the plaza. In addition, all four corners of the building are clipped to provide more light and views around the building. Work continues to incorporate a user-friendly but compact connection from the roof garden to the plaza which is five stories below. He explained that the building has a distinctive top, middle and base. The top gently dips and rises back which gives the building motion towards the plaza. The south facing façade, the more interesting piece of the composition, is broken into three parts. The center part is about 100 feet wide and holds the street edge; there are two flanking parts on either end. One end has a series of bays which step down to engage with the 355 Main Street building. The other end has a triangular form and sloping edge which allows light and views into the plaza and reduces the overall scale of the east facing façade as it faces the plaza. The horizontal bays map to connective elements within the building that tie to the 355 building. The building has the three vertical elements which tie to the Marriott's verticality. The massing is still evolving. He showed a collection of images that have been used in developing the building. He then showed pictures of how the building would look from various streetscape views. A ground floor plan showed retail on the entire first floor, as well as the existing connector that carries through to Pioneer Way. It also showed a hint of a stair on the plaza that goes to a second level terrace which would also contain retail. The design conforms to a 75% active use within the ground plane. The eastern face is pulled back, removing the glass canopy, to create a second level terrace that is public and looks down into the plaza and held away from the head house. The head house remains. There is an upper level access via a stair and an elevator location is being sought for access to the roof garden. The connector space remains a two-story space. He said that the K2 plan also had a diagrammatic sketch which talked about a vertical piece at the same corner juncture and also recommended more active uses at the perimeter. This plan will make the western edge of the plaza more active. He noted that the form covering the MBTA head house shed just sits on top and could be easily removed while keeping the head house intact. A diagrammatic view showed the building terracing down towards the plaza, the stairs, the

public access to the second level, and an idea for bringing the triangular facade to the ground, flowing into the head house and using sculptural columns.

Ms. Born said the presentation was very good.

Mr. Russell thought that the building is too short for the location. The building should be skinnier and taller to provide wider gaps and to celebrate the center. The sculpting was interesting. Mr. Cantalupa said that BXP is working to the specified height limit. Mr. Russell said that height limits can change if it's the right thing to do.

Ms. Drury said that the creative modifications shown in the latest version did alleviate her concerns of the building being a blob. In response to Ms. Drury, Mr. Markese said that a couple of stories would help the proportions but had no idea what that would mean to the project. Ms. Born noted that the CRA Board also thought that a taller skinnier building would provide more light, sun and air onto the roof garden. Mr. Markese said that given a constant density, adding height would force smaller footplates and disrupt the balance of the core. Mr. Cantalupa said that tenants want to lease spaces with larger floorplates. Mr. Zevin noted that the larger floor plates in the Google connector were broken up by fire doors. The network of 60-to-80-foot-wide MIT buildings allows for large connected floorplates but also lets the inhabitants see outside. Going higher gives a decent space between the 355 building and the proposed building. Mr. Zevin suggested bridging well above the top of the smaller Google connector and east wing of 355 Main St., allowing the roof garden to extend to Main Street. He also said that the MIT buildings will already shadow the plaza so slicing off the corners of the proposed building is not helpful in providing light into the plaza. He added that the context of the place is also more crystalline, with sharp-edged stepping bays rather than lopped off corners.

In response to Mr. Sieniewicz, Mr. Markese said that the garden is about five stories or 52 feet above grade. To alleviate going through a privately controlled elevator to get to a public space, he suggested that Google should be able to create a memorable stairway to the garden, similar to the Spanish Steps. He also agreed that the building should be higher. He liked the balconies, cuts and the shaping, but would prefer that the building didn't loom over the public space. Mr. Markese said that the plan area to get to the top of the Spanish Steps is large.

Mr. S. Cohen said that the City has the luxury to create great public spaces because Cambridge is healthy and secure. Although the building has a good design, the proposed building does not create or enhance public spaces-- which should be a goal. He would like to see a smaller footprint and less crowding at the street level. He understands the need of the applicant but ultimately, the public benefits need to be better addressed. He is concerned about the density of all the development in the entire area in the long-term. Mr. Markese said that the elevated garden has a sense of discovery that should not be lost by over-connecting it. Mr. Bator echoed the comments that the public benefits are paramount. He is not concerned with a growing attendance of the garden and actually welcomes that. It needs to be clear that the garden is not only for Google employees.

Mr. Crawford said that since most people at the site engage with the Red Line, creating a more dynamic space should be addressed as part of this project. Ecological issues should be explored when creating blocks of buildings. He added that this project is going to be disruptive and pedestrian routes need to be examined. Improved circulation should be a goal of this project. He added that programming and getting the right balance and character of retail are important for the neighborhood.

Mr. Bacci said that moving the building mass to the current location of the garden and relocating the garden to the lower building would create less issues with shading and connecting to the plaza. Mr. Markese said that snaking the building's center core and the perimeter columns through the garage would render the garage useless. Mr. Markese said that no additional vehicle parking below the building is planned for this project.

Ms. Flynn restated that the conversation regarding the master plan should evaluate whether a mixed-use building with housing is more appropriate for this location. Since smaller floor plates can work in residential buildings, the height could be higher without exceeding the density. She advised taking the time now to get a better building and a better plan for the long term. She is also concerned about open space.

In response to Ms. Espinoza, Mr. Markese said that there are two spaces that are impacted by the proposal. There is a net improvement to the plaza with an increase to the amount of usable open space and eliminating the

glass shed. Work is being done to add a third access point to the roof garden, which already has two, either by a staircase and/or elevator. Her focus is on the benefits to all members of the community – ecological sustainability, accessible lobbies, affordable cafes, public restrooms, jobs, etc.

Mr. Bowie agreed with a mixed-use building since Cambridge, especially Kendall Square, needs housing. Higher floors with a smaller floor plate could be used for residential.

Mr. Cantalupa said that BXP will address the insightful feedback when the proposal is officially heard by both Boards. He emphasized the public benefit with the housing project as part of the master plan which will have the largest affordable percentage in Cambridge. Another aspect to be completed with this plan is the Innovation Space which includes a 25% below market offering to match the Kendall Square innovation economy and underrepresented residents. BXP will have a more comprehensive view of all the aspects of the entire project.

Ms. Born restated the need to demonstrate a measurable net gain in the quality of public space. There needs to be more than roof garden stairs and an overhang. She suggested adding a public program space that overlooks the plaza. In addition, improving the circulation of pedestrians from the plaza through the Marriott to the soon-to-be-developed Volpe site would improve the public space.

Mr. Cohen appreciated the excellent comments from both Boards. The building might not be the right building for that location. He agreed with Ms. Born regarding the need for the building to increase the public benefit.

A motion to adjourn the CRA Board meeting at 8:49 p.m. unanimously carried. The Planning Board continued their meeting.