

MEMO

Date: 9/24/2021

To: CRA Board

From: Alex Levering and Tom Evans

Project Title: Infill Development Concept Plan Amendment II

Applicant: Boston Properties

Submission Prepared by: Sasaki / Pickard Chilton / Stantec / VHB / NBBJ / Lemon Brooke

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum provides a summary of key issues for consideration by the CRA Board in the review of the proposed Second Amendment to the MXD Infill Development Concept Plan (IDCP Amendment II). The IDCP functions as the planning document for the placement of Infill Gross Floor Area (GFA) and Utility Project GFA as defined in the Kendall Square Urban Redevelopment Plan (KSURP) and Article 14 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (MXD Zoning).

The amendment to the IDCP establishes a revised master plan that accommodates the construction of an Eversource substation within Parcel 2 of the MXD district. To accommodate open space and site connectivity, the substation will be buried underground in the location of the current Blue Parking Garage, creating a large public open space at the heart of the parcel and new cross-block connections. Two new commercial buildings will be constructed at 290 and 250 Binney Street, producing 800,000 SF of new GFA. The residential building, consisting of 420,000 SF will also be consolidated into a single building and completed in a single phase, while preserving the 25% below-market-rate commitment.

CRA Staff have focused its review of the documents on the planning elements related to the proposed change as they effect the requirements and objectives of the KSURP. Attached to this memo for the Board's reference is a document review memo from David Gamble, the CRA's urban design consultant. Review memos from City staff will also be provided to the CRA Board for review alongside this memo.

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN & MXD ZONING CONTEXT

Section 504 of the Kendall Square Urban Redevelopment Plan (KSURP) requires the creation of an IDCP:

"The CRA will cause an Infill Development Concept Plan (Concept Plan) to be prepared providing for the distribution of any GFA associated with new development within the MXD District above and beyond 3,333,000 square feet ("Infill GFA") to supplement the original Redevelopment Concept Plan. This Concept Plan shall contain the required elements described in Article 14.32.2.1 of the Zoning

Ordinance. All new development utilizing Infill GFA shall be consistent with the Concept Plan (as the same may be modified in accordance with Section 506 below.) An individual building proposal utilizing Infill GFA may be submitted concurrently with the preparation and approval of the Concept Plan.”

The MXD Zoning in Article 14.32.2 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance adds:

“The Concept Plan shall be approved by CRA and by a special permit granted by the Planning Board in order to authorize the development of infill GFA. The purpose of the Concept Plan is to provide a context and a conceptual governance structure for existing and potential future development that allows development to proceed in a flexible manner without requiring additional special permit for each building. The Concept Plan is expected to evolve over time, and with each subsequent development proposal, updates to the Concept Plan shall be submitted. Amendments to the special permit may be granted as set forth below, but revisions to a Concept Plan shall not necessarily require amending the special permit so long as the revisions remain in conformance with the conditions of the special permit.”

Section 506 of the KSURP provides guidance on inter-agency review:

“For any development requiring the approval of both the CRA and the Planning Board in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance, the CRA shall conduct its design review in close coordination with the City and the Planning Board. In connection therewith, the CRA may make such modifications to the Concept Plan as may be necessary to reflect development proposals. Review and approval of the Concept Plan, detailed in Article 14.32.2 of the Zoning Ordinance, as well as subsequent building design review, shall be performed jointly by the CRA and the Planning Board. The CRA Board and the Planning Board shall hold joint meetings to consider the Concept Plan and as necessary to review subsequent building designs.”

The MXD Zoning Article 14.73 adds: *“The Planning Board and CRA, shall hold at least one joint public meeting to consider the Infill Development Concept Plan.”*

CRA & PLANNING BOARD PROCESS TO DATE

IDCP First Approved by CRA/Planning Board:	01/17/2017
IDCP Amendment I Approved:	12/04/2018
IDCP Amendment II Joint CRA/Planning Board Pre-Hearing	05/18/2021
IDCP Amendment II Submitted to CRA	07/01/2021
IDCP Amendment II Joint CRA/Planning Board Hearing	09/28/2021

IDCP AMENDMENT DISCUSSION TOPICS

Massing

The CRA recognizes that the massing of the respective buildings in the IDCP Amendment II establishes a framework and vision for Special Permit review, that will allow for further refinement of each of the proposed buildings during the future Design Review processes. The comments herein are intended to inform the overall site plan as well as set the stage for specific architectural review discussions with Schematic Design submissions.

Residential: The CRA recognizes that the design of 135 Broadway must navigate a number of constraints, including the proximity of 145 Broadway and working around the infrastructure required for the Eversource Electrical Substation including transmission lines running below grade. As the building develops, the design should pursue a configuration that is responsive and set back from Broadway and the 145 Broadway building. This is important to better preserve the celebrated architectural characteristics and views of 145 Broadway, and to accommodate more comfortable living spaces for residents within 135 Broadway.

As one of the tallest buildings planned in Cambridge, the residential building should achieve a massing that emphasizes and celebrates the building's height and verticality. At the same time the view of the building from the ground level, especially Broadway, should remain a central urban design concern. The residential building also acts as an entry-point into Center Plaza. The CRA staff supports a design that seeks to maintaining a strong pedestrian connection that helps to draw the public into Center Plaza, and to connect to Danny Lewin Park across the street.

Commercial: The two proposed buildings at 290 Binney and 250 Binney provide an opportunity to redevelop a parking garage and a low-scale manufacturing site, which can activate the Binney Street edge. They also will help to define and activate the northern edge of Center Plaza, the northern East / West Connector and the 6th Street Walkway. The massing and articulation of the buildings will have an important role at defining the connection from the East Cambridge neighborhood to Center Plaza from Binney Street.

As the massing of these buildings are refined, it is important that while the buildings should relate to each other, they be experienced as separate massing structures. This can be accomplished with different façade planes, stepbacks, and façade treatments to increase visual interest from the surrounding public streets. Additionally aligning the buildings such that their structures shift away from each other at certain levels could allow the buildings to take greater advantage of views in all directions.

As 290 Binney Street will be located on the northern edge of the underground substation, venting will need to occur at the base of the building. Designers should consider creative solutions to integrate the ventilation needs of the substation into the building's architectural design as that might be a more elegant solution than an artistic stand-alone element.

Open Space, Landscape & Pedestrian Circulation

Center Plaza: The IDCP Amendment II provides a unique opportunity to re-envision Parcel 2 and to better integrate the block's open space to the surrounding neighborhoods and development. Consolidating the open space in the center of the parcel forming Center Plaza will create a node of activity that will enliven the area, and promote inter-pedestrian connectivity. The CRA staff supports the design of Center Plaza to be active public space, that allows for flexibility of uses that can change based on season and over-time. Attention should be paid to materials and furniture that reflect the palette of nearby parks and streetscape. Additionally, some recreational amenities that do not require active management should be put into place.

Staff recognize that the open space needs to accommodate access for maintenance and operational needs by Eversource. As the open space is designed, BXP should provide an access plan that clarifies how the plaza will be managed or adapted during larger-scale maintenance work by Eversource.

Today, a pedestrian easement exists through the Blue Parking Garage connecting the East and West Service Drives. While the easement's location might need to be shifted pending future open space designs, the easement should be maintained to ensure public access across the plaza.

As the park is designed, careful attention will need to be placed on ensuring the park, and the roof garden structure over the substation is designed to handle extreme weather events. As a result, the Center Plaza may be required to be raised to accommodate the necessary resiliency standards. Should that occur, BXP should consider creative solutions that ensures Center Plaza is designed in a way makes it feel publicly accessible and integrated into the surrounding infrastructure.

Danny Lewin Park: Danny Lewin Park is located on the southern side of Broadway, across from the future 135 Broadway building. To enhance open space connections in the area, and to provide access to open space for 135 Broadway residents while Center Park is under-construction, the CRA would like to see Danny Lewin Park's design refined in a way that makes the open space feel more welcoming and publicly accessible. The CRA's sees this being achieved through design interventions such as removing the brick barriers on the north and south sides of the park. Consideration of this should be included in future IDCP supplementary materials.

Trees: The 6th Street Walkway's mature oak trees are an important amenity to Kendall Square. The established trees help to reduce the heat-island effect in the area and create a pedestrian and bicycle oasis connecting the East Cambridge neighborhood and Kendall Square. As the commercial buildings are further designed and developed, careful attention should be given to ensure the trees will continue to have environmental conditions that allow them to thrive.

Open Space Balconies and Roof Decks: CRA staff supported the zoning amendment language that incentivized the creation of outdoor balconies and roof decks, as a way to provide outdoor amenities to residential tenants, to activate and humanize the building facades, and to increase opportunities for growth of vegetation. The CRA recognizes lab buildings require significant equipment needs, but encourages BXP to provide planted occupiable terraces and roof decks where possible.

Public Space Programming: As was approved for the publicly accessible space in Parcel 4 of the KSURP, the CRA staff looks forward to reviewing a similarly robust open space programming, operations, and maintenance plan for the open spaces in Parcel 2. CRA staff further sees broader four-

season programming and cultural events in all of the KSURP's open spaces as an important way to foster inclusivity.

Privately Owned Public Space Signage: In an effort to create comfortable and welcoming open spaces in Kendall Square and to identify spaces that are privately owned public spaces (POPS), the CRA and the City of Cambridge developed 'Open to All' signage. Adding the signage to all privately owned but publicly accessible open spaces under development in the IDCP will allow Kendall residents, businesses, employees, and visitors to know the spaces are open and accessible to them.

East and West Service Drives: The CRA recognizes that BXP is improving the East and West Service Drives and to reconceptualize the access ways to better connect with and frame the Center Plaza, and to accommodate multi-modal uses and loading. To ensure safe and inviting pedestrian circulation, the CRA will look to BXP to develop a strong pedestrian experience on the West Service Drive, and to consider features such as flush curbs or sidewalk expansions to promote shared use space where appropriate. Sidewalk pedestrian easements run the length of the East and West Service Drives connecting Binney Street to Broadway. These should be accommodated in the final designs of the project, but realigned if needed to match the block's improvements.

Stronger Broadway Connection through Parcel 4: As was committed to in the previous IDCP Amendment, BXP agreed to construct a new passageway through Parcel 4 to facilitate a stronger pedestrian connection through the block. The CRA expects that this commitment be maintained in the IDCP Amendment II. The purpose is to create a more publicly visible connection from Broadway to the MBTA head house and improve the broader circulation system from Kendall Plaza and the retail at 325 Main Street. This connection could potentially involve improvements to the connection through the hotel, or a more visible and direct connection through the block in an alternative location. The CRA is supportive of redesigning this connection if it will allow commuters from the Red Line to have a more direct route to destinations to the north in alignment with the Volpe redevelopment.

East/West Connectors through Parcel 2: The demolition of the Blue Parking Garage, proposed in this amendment, presents an opportunity to re-evaluate circulation patterns on the entire Parcel 2 block. Enhancing the East/West connectors will promote connections to the Volpe parcel MITIMCO development and provide better pedestrian links to the 6th Street Walkway. CRA appreciates the work BXP has begun to explore ways to enliven the southern East/West Connector with potential play structures and furnishings.

Open Space Phasing: The required open space calculations under the KSURP have not been included in the IDCP Amendment as they were in the previous IDCP documents. These are different project based open space provisions or enhancement calculations that go beyond the MXD zoning ordinance. CRA staff are working with Boston Properties in verifying this spatial data and it should be included in any revised submission.

The construction of open space on Parcel 2, including the Center Plaza and the East / West connectors are identified to be completed in Phase IV of the IDCP. The CRA would like to see BXP commit to earlier completion of the southern East / West Connector, in line with the completion of the Residential Building. Additionally, as the building and open space designs are refined, BXP should strive to establish interim areas or facilitate early completion of open spaces where and when possible.

Transportation

Streetscape Improvements: The CRA has appreciated Boston Properties commitment to making improvements on all sides of Parcel Two as part of the original Special Permit obligation. It makes sense that some of those permanent improvements may need to be delayed due to Eversource's transmission design efforts, and it is recognized that interim treatments that have been installed help fill the gap of the full streetscape execution. The CRA is ready to work with Boston Properties in facilitating the continuation of the 'ALTA' improvements beyond the MXD boundary.

Broadway Mid-Block Crossing: The mid-block crossing, located on Broadway between the existing South Park and Danny Lewin Park, has been installed to accommodate construction of 145 Broadway, and the Broadway streetscape design for a number of years. It acts as an important connection linking the two open spaces, and retail. The CRA recognizes the inclusion of the mid-block crossing of Broadway as a mitigation within the recent MEPA filing. Permanent installation of the Broadway mid-block crossing should be included in future IDCP supplemental material.

Loading and Access Information: The CRA finds the Applicant's commitment to provide a service/loading management plan for the residential and commercial buildings prior to issuance of a construction permit for each building to be adequate and consistent with prior practices. The CRA expects to see a service/loading management plan accompany the Construction Documents submission for each building. The goal is to make as safe and pleasant of a pedestrian environment as possible while meeting the functional needs of the buildings and the other users of the private ways.

Annual Transportation Data Report: BXP has assisted in the preparation of the CRA's annual KSURP Transportation Data Report by providing aggregated parking garage data across all BXP owned garages. The CRA expects this to continue for BXP's new parking garage on Parcel 2, and requests data on the planned campus wide valet system to include in the annual report.

Bike Parking:

- 325 Main Street: The CRA supports the reorganization of bike parking for Parcel 4 as part of a campus plan. As was noted in the IDCP Amendment I approval letter, further consideration should be given to relocate the bike parking from the below grade level of 325 Main Street to a location that provides easier and more convenient access to bike parking.
- Parcel 2: The CRA supports the premise of a campus wide solution to bike parking, and a bike valet parking system, and sees it as a creative and accessible approach that could promote bicycle ridership. Understanding that operations of the bicycle parking plan and valet system will need to be worked out in later design review processes, the CRA staff agrees that establishing operational performance standards will allow for design flexibility, while ensuring the parking system achieves its goals. Establishing performance standards to which BXP must achieve, further allows for the operations and design of the system to adapt, and evolve overtime to improve functions.

Retail Plan

Retail Viability: In light of the pandemic, the economic viability and needs of retail have changed significantly in Kendall Square. The CRA acknowledges that retail spaces should be designed with as much flexibility as possible to adapt to future retail needs. The CRA also strongly supports BXP's commitment to incentivize local retail and small business owners found on page 172 of the IDCP.

Coordination with MIT Volpe: The Applicant's retail plan for the site should be informed by MIT's retail planning for the SoMa/NoMa and Volpe Exchange Parcel projects.

Annual Retail Reporting: BXP has committed in previous IDCP plans to annually report to the CRA on retail performance. While this was waived for 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, the CRA expects for this reporting requirement to continue in the future and to include retail spaces in Amendment II.

Innovation Space Plan: The amendment provides details on the development of the market rate and below market rate innovation space program provided in 255 Main Street and through operations of The Link. BXP should provide an updated innovation space operations plan to the CRA, with details on how they intend to fulfil the innovation space requirement for 75 Ames, and utilize the below market retail space at 325 Main Street.

Sustainability & Environmental Impacts

Wind Analysis: CRA staff are satisfied with the wind analysis efforts to date for the IDCP Amendment II, and expects wind tunnel analysis to be performed during Design Review of each building.

All Electric Residential Building: The CRA appreciates BXP's commitment to an all-electric building design for 135 Broadway, and to design for flexibility to connect to and use the rejected heat from the underground substation once that infrastructure is complete. The CRA looks forward to having that information incorporated in supplemental information for the IDCP Amendment II.

CONCLUSION

CRA Staff are conceptually supportive of the IDCP Amendment II's revised master plan. The design, which is centered around relocating the Eversource substation out of the East Cambridge neighborhood and into the MXD district, provides a significant community benefit. Additionally, Amendment II provides a unique opportunity to redesign the Parcel 2 super-block, demolishing the large Blue Parking Garage, relocating that parking underground, and creating a substantial open space and improved site connectivity and cross-block connections.

Further attention should be given during building design reviews to refine the commercial and residential massing. The massing of the residential building remains a critical component to be considered, as the lot constraints and proximity to the 145 Broadway building provide challenges that requires creative solutions. The two proposed buildings at 290 Binney and 250 Binney, also provide opportunities to define the Center Plaza, the northern East / West Connector and Binney Street. The

CRA looks forward to continuing the discussion and seeing further refinement of these buildings in future design review conversations.

The CRA Board must await the final certificate from the State's MEPA office before making a final decision on the IDCP Amendment. We will continue to work with City staff and Boston Properties to refine the IDCP Amendment II in order to advance the vital infrastructure project that this development plan supports.

Attachment:

Memo from David Gamble – CRA Design Consultant

GAMBLE ASSOCIATES

678 Massachusetts Avenue Suite 502
Cambridge MA 02139

To: Alexandra Levering, Project Manager
Cambridge Redevelopment Authority
FR: David Gamble AIA AICP
Gamble Associates
DATE: September 22, 2021
RE: MXD Infill Development Concept Plan
Sent Via Email

EVERSOURCE SUBSTATION Cambridge Massachusetts Urban Design + Public Realm

GENERAL COMMENTS

New infill development surrounding the Eversource Substation will represent a remarkable transformation in area of the Cambridge that has generally lacked a strong, cohesive identity or a superlative public realm. There are many new buildings defining the street wall and the block, but new growth emerging will be informed as much by *the character of the spaces between buildings* than by the particularities of the architectural massing, fenestration pattern or cladding materials on individual buildings. In addition, navigating the tensions between vehicular access, service and pedestrian movement signals that the material treatment of the ground plane needs to be both durable for vehicles while at the same time preferencing the pedestrian. The family of streetscape elements in terms of lighting, color, patterns and signage/wayfinding have a large role to play in forging an identity that pulls the various buildings into a dialogue with one another.

RECOMMENDATIONS vs. REQUIREMENTS

The Design Guidelines are helpful in identifying the elements that direct the development and design teams. However, Guidelines are only as strong as the mechanism to enforce them. Is there a way to *require teams* to include a component or attribute of the palette that *ensures* implementation; the “must” versus the “shall”? Most people are not aware of the distinction between requirements (standards) and recommendations (guidelines).

PUBLIC REALM INTERFACE

The 3d views of the individual buildings are very helpful in the “Built Form and Massing” category. Efforts should be made to create a similar mode of representation for the “Public Realm”, without the buildings shown or only with the vertical surfaces of the buildings that define the spaces. A diagram such as this - similar to a Nolli Plan - could identify hard versus soft areas, material preferences for the Plaza Drives and Center Plaza and locations or patterns for landscape elements. An interstitial space drawing will also underscore that the construction of individual buildings will occur on different time frames but that an underlying framework will be applied across the sites to ensure consistency and reinforce connectivity.

COHESION

There will be a great deal of variation in the design aesthetics of the buildings that define the public realm. In the absence of tighter controls for the street furniture, lighting and material palette, a good deal of variation will occur due to cost considerations and variability in specific site constraints. This will likely be resolved as teams move forward from concept design to design development and beyond. However, consider *a more specific design imprint and/or greater level of detail* for the more than 30,000sf of open space such that the identity of the ground plane is consistently treated *across boundaries*. Either more specific materials can be selected in terms of their color, material or performative characteristics and/or a single team (if possible) should be responsible for the design of the interstitial spaces. There will be greater variation in implementation if different landscape/urban design firms are responsible for individual areas. In the likely event that there are multiple firms involved in the design of the public realm, more specificity is warranted. Another approach may be to establish general guidelines for the area as a whole and work more closely on the building interface between properties that blend characteristics.

Sincerely,



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

END OF MEMO