

## East Cambridge



## Planning Team

*A Neighborhood Organization for the Betterment of East Cambridge*

September 28, 2021

Cambridge Redevelopment Authority  
255 Main Street, 8th Floor  
Cambridge, MA 02142

City of Cambridge Planning Board  
City Hall Annex  
344 Broadway  
Cambridge, MA 02139

**RE: 135 Broadway**

Dear CRA Board Chair Born; Vice Chair Crawford; and Board Members Bator, Zevin, and Drury;  
And; Planning Board Chair Connolly and Vice Chair Flynn; Planning Board Members Bacci,  
HT Cohen, S Cohen, Russell, and Sieniewicz; and Associate Planning Board Members  
Price and Tan:

The East Cambridge Planning Team Board (ECPT) Board writes to share with you our observations and concerns regarding the proposed Amendment to the MXD Infill Development Plan and the design for 135 Broadway and the site plan in which it is located.

We are pleased that the developer, Boston Properties, has seen fit to address a number of suggestions that have been made by members of the ECPT at prior presentations and we are pleased that an alternative to the earlier design of the residential building at 135 Broadway is being considered. The new proposal shows a friendlier face to the street and the adjacent Akamai headquarters. The rounded shape will add much needed interest on the street and offer a more comfortable transition to the pathways to the interior courtyard plaza and to Binney Street leading to and from our East Cambridge Neighborhood.

We do however have a number of concerns and suggestions with elements of the proposed overall development plan. We hope you will take these into consideration as you move forward to approve the permits that would allow this project to move forward:

- We suggest that you encourage the design of the building facades of the three proposed buildings surrounding the plaza to create a unified design environment that would give the plaza a special sense of a unique place when people arrive in and pass through it. Creating a place with a unified design would make it infinitely more interesting and welcoming.
- We are enthusiastic about the recommendation to eliminate the large sculpture vent that would dominate the plaza and have the venting integrated into the surrounding buildings elements.
- We were surprised about the possibility that the plaza / court could be raised to accommodate weather related issues involving the Eversource facility. It would be

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helpful to understand how that might affect the public's access and enjoyment of the space under those conditions.

- We were delighted at the recommendation that a more sensitive relationship with Danny Lewin Park and the suggested modifications that would allow for a comfortable transition across Broadway.
- We are pleased that the staff critique of the project is encouraging the development of more convenient access alternatives to the MBTA station. We hope that you will engage with the surrounding neighborhoods to support better access to the MBTA station
- We hope the bike valet system can be developed in a manner that does not conflict with the ideals of having a pleasant and safe ground level pathway plan. We are familiar with underground cycle storage systems that are both convenient and protect the open spaces above them. We hope more details of the plan proposed will be available for review as they develop.
- We continue to be concerned about the results of wind studies that suggest that the building arrangements will not create an uncomfortable set of ground level open spaces. We hope that the site plan can engage this problem creatively so that both the center plaza and the forecourt on Broadway do not become unpleasant particularly during the winter months.

In addition to our thoughts about the development plan, we would like to share some comments on the residential building proposal at 135 Broadway:

- The large number of new residents is likely to be in the range of 600 to 700, based on similar projects in the Kendall area. The limited amount of open space that is anticipated would suggest that the building design could be improved by the including balconies that would allow some opportunities for tenants to have plants, flower boxes and perhaps a bit of space for a chair to enjoy sunshine and fresh Air.
- We ask that you consider requiring a change in the ground level of the building to make it more hospitable for both tenants and visitors . We would ask that you ascertain where and how cycle parking stands will be located. Will they be screened or covered ? . We also have not been able to determine where the access to the parking garage will be and whether there will be another building entrance to the garage that will take up surface space.
- It is also not clear ,from the illustrations we have seen , where the drop off and building access will be for tenants and the now very common delivery services that drop off mail and packages almost continuously at the lobby of similar residential projects in the neighborhood.

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- The south side of the building appears to be hardscape without any relief or amenities. We would hope that you would encourage the development of a greensward between the building and Broadway to compliment the Danny Lewin Memorial Park .
- Another major concern is the wind conditions that will occur from the set back of the lobby and the building overhang. More thought needs to be given to the “Venturi “ wind conditions that this part of the design will invite.
- On the north side of the residence building we note that the court yard is still primarily hardscape. We would welcome more green space that can offer a pleasant prospect year round. It should also seek to serve the many young children who will be living in the residential tower and nearby. While some paved area will be needed we urge that the court be as green as possible. We also urge that trees should be used to screen the wind that will be coming from between the Biogen and Akamai buildings. We would hope that the residential building will include a cafe/restaurant on the North court side to help humanize the open space. This will become even more important when the commercial buildings are completed, when several thousand employees will be seeking some of these services during the day. In addition, the many neighborhood residents who will walk through this area each day would also appreciate these amenities and help to fulfill the developer’s aspiration for making this an attractive destination for the entire district

These observations and suggestions are made in the spirit of improving this development. We who must live with the outcome of your decisions appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process of improving the project and we hope you will take our concerns into consideration.

Very truly yours,



Charles T. Hinds  
President, ECPT

Cc: Cambridge City Councilor  
Kendall Residents Association  
Linden Park