

Staff Report to the Board: March 20, 2024

Personnel and Hiring Updates

The CRA is currently in the process of hiring a Senior Project Manager to join the Planning and Development Team and lead complex development projects on behalf of the organization. Staff plan to complete the hiring process in April with the intention that the hired candidate will be able to join the CRA by early May.

The CRA is also re-launching our summer internship program this year and planning to hire two interns to join us for 10-12 weeks this summer. The posting for the summer internship program has generated a robust response from candidates, with the application deadline is set for March 21st.

Five CRA staff members are currently participating in the Kendall Square Association's (KSA) *Belonging In Kendall* course, which is the KSA's successor DEI program to *Inclusion Drives Innovation*. The five-week course kicked off with on February 28th and will run through the end of March. The five topical sessions included in the course are: Understanding Social Identity, the Intersection of Identities, Understanding Implicit Bias, Responding to Microaggressions, and Leading for Equity.

Forward Calendar

- Annual Investment Report
- MXD Open Space Programming Report
- Cambridge Savings Signage Proposal

Project Updates

Just-A-Start's Financial Empowerment Collaborative Opening The CRA is excited to announce that Just-A-Start's (JAS) Financial Empowerment Collaborative space, located at 55 Norfolk Street, will open on March 27. The project was the recipient of a 2019 CRA Forward Fund Capital Grant for \$100,000. The project was delayed as a result of the pandemic, but construction resumed in the fall. The space will provide a home for JAS's Financial Opportunity Program, which has been operating since 2016 and serves nearly 400 residents each year. The program provides residents with financial coaching, financial literacy classes, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, and other network referrals.



The 55 Norfolk space will allow the program to offer walk-in tax preparation services, have a designated one-on-one coaching space, and benefit from a central neighborhood location to host public financial seminars and other educational events.

Rindge Connectivity Project

CRA staff, in collaboration with landscape architect consultant Copley Wolff, continue to work on designs for improved connectivity within the 402, 364, and 362 Rindge Avenue properties. In early March, Nitsch Engineering, having received an MBTA license agreement, completed the remaining on-site survey work. With this data, designs can progress on the southern portions of the project's limits. CRA staff continue to collaborate with the Community Development Department to understand their feasibility study work for a potential bridge connection across the Fitchburg rail corridor and their grant application process for design funds. CRA Staff will also continue to work with property owners Just-A-Start and Schochet Properties. Below is a context plan that illustrates the CRA's path scope, within a neighborhood context of other existing and proposed path and infrastructure connections.

Overall Site Plan



RINDGE MULTI-USE PATH
CAMBRIDGE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY | MARCH 2024



Central Square City Lots Study

The City of Cambridge has released the Central Square City Lots Study, which charts a vision and implementation steps for how the City can leverage City-owned parking lots and buildings to fulfill community goals. CRA staff served on the project's Interdepartmental Working Group over the past several months. The Study identifies 84 and 96 Bishop Allen as potential sites for near-term coordinated development to maximize community benefits. The CRA is working with the City to design a disposition process for the parcels that will yield a mix of affordable housing, affordable ground floor commercial space, cultural and open space space, and public parking. As a first step, CRA staff are working with City staff to develop a Request for Information (RFI) to gauge valuable insight from the development community on the approach to a public private partnership and maximizing various community benefits.

Foundry Office Construction

The CRA's construction project to subdivide Suite 3B at the Foundry is on schedule with an expected completion date of April 1. At this stage, drywall is installed, doors and glazing are complete, and finish electrical, plumbing, and millwork are ongoing. Upon completion, Lemelson-MIT will become the tenant of Suite 3C, filling the final vacancy within the commercial office space at the Foundry.



Potter Street Walkway Connection

The CRA is working with the new Volpe site owner, MITIMCo, on a temporary connection from the Sixth Street Walkway to Potter Street, enabling pedestrian access through a previously fenced-off location. This temporary connection is anticipated to be completed in the coming month and will remain in place until planning on the permanent connection can take place. The permanent connection will include more robust access for both pedestrians and cyclists, and be integrated into the new overall Volpe site plan being produced by MITIMCo.



Eversource Project Permitting Update

In April 2023, BXP submitted building permit applications for both the 121 Broadway residential tower and the 290 Binney lab building. The City of Cambridge had previously granted a demolition permit for the North Garage, as well as an Enabling Permit that authorized utility work, excavation and the installation of foundation systems for 121 Broadway, 290 Binney, and the Substation Project. In accordance with the KSURP and the MXD Zoning, building review processes and permit applications for the residential project and the substation were progressed simultaneously with the process for the commercial project. It is anticipated that vertical construction for both buildings will begin in the upcoming months.



Walden Square II Development

On March 12, WinnDevelopment Company presented its latest proposal for the Walden Square II development to the Planning Board, focusing on the creation of new housing under the provisions of the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO). The CRA's existing open space easement will need to be modified or released to enable this project to move forward. The Planning Board expressed support for adding approximately 100 affordable units at the site, but requested careful consideration when examining the relationship of Building A with Walden Square Road (a private road). The CRA open space easement would be directly impacted by the construction of Building B, which seemed to raise less concern from the Planning Board. Taking into account the input from both the public and the Planning Board, CRA staff will work with CDD staff and WinnDevelopment Company to discuss next steps regarding the existing CRA open space easement.