

## **Staff Report to the Board** *May 20, 2019*

### ***Administration***

The position for a Planner was opened on March 16. Notifications and/or postings went to CRA's website, Facebook and LinkedIn pages, Twitter and Instagram accounts, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, KSA, Tufts, BU, MIT, Harvard, Northeastern, Roxbury College, Bunker Hill CC, MACDC, American Planning Association, Mass Municipal Association, Planetizen, and the CRA staff network. Sixty applications were received by the April 24th deadline. Staff will be conducting phone interviews in the next few weeks.

The Nonprofit Center Link office space is still working on its plan to reopen as the State's restrictions are eased under thoughtful requirements and recommendations informed by various sources on public health and commercial environments. CRA Staff have begun discussions about when and how to reopen the office. Most staff feel that productivity has remained high working remotely, and are in little-to-no rush to return to the office at this time. Occasional visits to the office will be necessary to collect mail and process paperwork.

### ***Forward Calendar***

1. Revised Internal Controls and Personnel Policy
2. City / CRA Workforce Development Report
3. Broad M-1 Development Agreement
4. Sweetgreens Signage Proposal

### ***CRA COVID-19 East Cambridge / Kendall Square Grant Program***

On April 27th, the CRA Small Business COVID-19 Relief Grant Program starting accepting applications from interested applicants from East Cambridge and Kendall Square. As of Friday, May 15th, Staff has received 42 applications and has approved the first batch of 14 relief grants. The 14 approved applicants were a portion of the applications submitted during the first week of the grant program.

The small businesses applying to the program have been a majority of dine-in style establishments, but many other businesses are hair and nail salons, gym or physical therapy, pet care, and flower shops. Of the 42 applications, 26 establishments have been located in Kendall Square, 10 applicants from East Cambridge, and the remaining 6 were located outside of the program area. Staff has been directing the business owners with establishments outside of the CRA program boundaries to the Cambridge Community Development Department in addition to informing the business owners about the new CRA loan program.

### ***City / CRA Small Business Grant and Loan Program***

Over the past month, a unified application for the Mayor's Disaster Relief Fund Grant and CRA's Zero Interest Loan Program was finalized and launched on the City of Cambridge's website. The application intake period will end May 30, 2020. The CRA loan program will be \$1,500,000. The CRA loan program will allow an eligible business access up to \$15,000. The CRA Loan Program will provide interest free loans that will be repaid in five years with nothing owed for the first year and semi-annual installments paid over the remaining four years. If the loan payments are made on time, the final semi-annual payment will be forgiven.

Outreach has begun to business leaders and the broader community through meetings, press announcements, social media, and the City and CRA website and partners. The next steps will be for the CRA to meet with representatives of Cambridge Savings Bank to set up bank accounts, develop a process for the loan processing and monitoring. Hema Kailasam will be the CRA representative on the committee reviewing and scoring the applications. The application review process will begin in the first week of June.

### ***Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House***

CRA staff and consultants put together a series of development options to consider for the redevelopment of the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House (MFNH) property. At its April meeting, the MFNH board discussed the project scope options, reaching agreement to support further exploration of a project scope for more extensive restoration work on the historic building. This direction was also identified as the best option by CRA staff. This work would be supported by a mixed income for-sale housing program on the parking lot site. MFNH board members are eager for additional data regarding project financing and MFNH's potential risk or obligations.

The current CRA-MFNH MOU expires in June, at which time the parties were required to come to agreement on a general project scope and budget. The CRA-MFNH project committee is now drafting an amendment to the current MOU to meet this requirement, outlining the intention of both parties to continue studying the desired scope, related sources and uses; to create and start to implement a community outreach plan; and to develop a project agreement that would include, among other measures, an outline of milestones and decision points to ensure that the project scope aligns with financing. It is expected that the MFNH and CRA Boards will be asked to approve the MOU amendment no later than their June board meetings.

Studio G's conceptual design work deeply informed the progress to date. Studio G will be providing a simple final report summarizing the conceptual plans in late May. CRA and MFNH staff are now having conversations with Cambridge Community Development and Cambridge Historical Commission staff to get initial feedback on the project's general direction.

MFNH has recently hired a new Director of Finance and Operations as well as a new Development and Communications Manager, both of whom will be involved in some aspect of a joint project with the CRA.

## Ames Place Open Space

Staff continues their work with consultants, landscape architects Mikyoung Kim Associates and sub-consultants Nitsch Engineering to established conceptual designs for Ames Place Open Space (the interstitial area on Parcel 3). Over the past few months, the conceptual design has been refined through staff review and Stakeholder Design charrettes involving the landowners and tenant representatives of Parcel 3. Staff are now collaborating with the City to review the concept and would like to bring the initial design to the CRA's next Design Review Committee meeting in June.

