

MEMORANDUM

To: CRA Board
From: Tom Evans
Date: March 16, 2022
Re: Rindge Commons Easement Proposal

INTRODUCTION

Over two years ago, CRA staff and design consultants began working on a Rindge Neighborhood Connectivity Plan (www.cambridgeredevelopment.org/rindgeconnectivity). This planning effort built off a number of general City planning efforts in the area. After completing the neighborhood plan, staff continued to work on a few key implementation ideas, particularly improved circulation around and through the Rindge Tower properties, owned and operated by Just-A -Start (JAS) and The Schochet Companies. Last year on behalf of the CRA, Gamble Associates completed a conceptual plan for a set of internal circulation facilities that could in the future connect to broader district pathways in the neighborhood. (Exhibit A)

Just-A-Start has simultaneously been working on finalizing the designs and financing for the Rindge Commons project, which is a two-phase mixed-use program focused on affordable housing utilizing the surface parking lot area of their 402 Rindge Avenue property. The project received a Comprehensive Permit in 2019 for both phases of the project.

EASEMENT PROPOSAL

As the Rindge Neighborhood Connectivity Plan was being finalized, staff began to consider how the CRA might help in the implementation of the recommended public circulation improvements. While developments in the Rindge neighborhood area have reached different stages of implementation, staff were concerned that without a plan, connectivity goals might not be realized if each project site moved forward without making commitments to a larger vision of circulation improvements.

As the Rindge Commons project was advancing ahead of other projects in the area, CRA staff approached JAS with the concept of reserving space for pathway connections through the project site to facilitate future improvements to resident and public access. These connections include a north/south pathway between the JAS and Schochet Companies parking lots, an east/west path along the southern boundary parallel to the MBTA right-of-way, and a connection to the DCR/MassDOT owned pedestrian stairway alongside Route 16. Staff and the Gamble Associates design team met multiple times with the JAS project team to discuss the circulation plans in detail.

In the last few weeks, as JAS’s Rindge Commons deal has approached its closing, a small financial gap for the project has emerged. Due to the CRA’s previous collaboration with JAS, and interest in improving connectivity in the Rindge neighborhood area, JAS approached the CRA for financial assistance. CRA staff have suggested that the CRA could consider contributing to the Rindge Commons project by investing in an easement interest in order to reserve future connections across the JAS property. While the exact easement alignments and legal mechanism of such a concept have not been worked out, the broader idea would be that the CRA would establish an agreement to purchase easement rights over a small section of parking lot areas to preserve future development of multi-use pathways.

EXHIBIT

Exhibit A: Rindge Towers Draft Circulation Concept Plan



1 SITE PLAN
1" = 50'

PROJECT

RINDGE NEIGHBORHOOD
CONNECTIVITY PLAN

Location
Alewife
Cambridge, MA

CLIENT

Cambridge
Redevelopment
Authority

255 Main St.
Cambridge, MA 02142

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ARCHITECT

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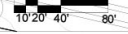
LEGEND

- JUST-A-START LOOP
- INDEPENDENT LOOPS
- INTERIOR PATHS
- FUTURE PATHS

TITLE

Proposed Plan
Phase II

PROJECT NO.	xxxx
DRAWN BY	xxxx
CHECKED BY	DEG
SCALE	1" = 50'
DATE	12/01/21
FIRST ISSUED	-/-
REV. 1	-/-
REV. 2	-/-
DRAWING NO.	REV



A-3.0