
Fwd: 250 290 Binney Street

1 message

Tom Evans <tevans@cambridgeredevelopment.org>

Wed, Apr 20, 2022 at 6:50 AM

To: Alexandra Levering <alexvering@cambridgeredevelopment.org>, Ellen Shore <eshore@cambridgeredevelopment.org>

Tom Evans
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Begin forwarded message:

From: Francesca Gordini <francesca.gordini@gmail.com>
Date: April 19, 2022 at 9:12:42 PM EDT
To: Kathleen Born <kathyborn@gmail.com>, Hugh Russell <hughadamsrussell@gmail.com>, barryzevin@alum.mit.edu, Tom Evans <tevans@cambridgeredevelopment.org>
Cc: Ovadia R Simha <simha@mit.edu>, Heather Hoffman <heather.m.hoffman.1957@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: 250 290 Binney Street

Good Evening,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening, however I am afraid I wasn't able to fully convey my thoughts on this project.

Somehow this project, much like many of the newer developments, seems to be fully disregarding the human scale. Starting from the bare massing, the two buildings that may read smaller in an orthogonal elevation, do seem to read almost as tall as the residential tower, therefore flattening the skyline and simply making it as busy as possible in a competition of glass samples that is becoming another "Fort Point" 2.0. I understand, there's a large square footage to be accommodated but I don't think this design will really add anything positive to the city's landscape and I am longing to see a project that will set the right tone for future ones.

In a nutshell, this project is boring and looms on Binney street taking away any possibility to maintain a fabulous green corridor which must be preserved at all costs! Digging 8+ stories underground is going to do a whole lot of damage to the surroundings of this site.

Lighting pollution is a huge concern in this case and unfortunately I am afraid we're missing an occasion to start promoting something that can work and set a good example for future projects.

I went ahead and roughly, brutally jotted my idea in photoshop (not my favorite medium at all) By suggesting to put the two buildings in a T-shape (as vocalized during my two minutes of space). The two masses wouldn't need to have the same height and in fact if the one by the corridor could remain lower by allowing the other one to grow taller, then I think we could achieve a better result, friendlier to the environment.

On a side note and not strictly related to this project:

If I understand things correctly, the new trend for all new high rise construction in the Kendall area is to have deep foundations that are of course dictated by the soil conditions. Now, I happen to know very well the subcontractor (Trevi Icos) that works on all these jobs (funny enough the company and technology used is from my hometown). I did have quite a technical conversation with their VPO & Production Manager and some other engineers.

All these sites pretty much sit on water (there used to be a canal over there) and the soil requires them to work with slurry walls, not piles. Now, I think we could think of that area as an underground pond or simply a container connected to the river. The more we fill this container, the more we tell water that it needs to find new paths which, I am afraid, is going to cause a whole lot of pressure on existing foundations. More specifically, what about the entire residential area in the lower part of East Cambridge? Many of those homes already faced settlement because of the nature of the soil underneath.

We keep filling that underground basin and what happens when the Charles is full and its level rises? Are we going to see a disaster much like the one that happened in London in the last couple of years? All those double basements have caused major issues.

I would also wonder about the capacity of the sewage system. Is it really capable of sustaining such pressure?

Cordially and respectfully,
Francesca
[122 Otis Street.](#)

PS: I appreciated Hugh Russell and Louis Bacci's comments. Thank you.

Francesca Gordini | Boston
cell: +1 617 230 3914

On Wed, Feb 23, 2022 at 1:11 PM Ovadia R Simha <simha@mit.edu> wrote:

I Would like to share with you some observations, concerns and suggestions for your consideration as you review the Boston Properties proposal for [250-290 Binney](#).

It is clear that the proposed buildings will overwhelm the site. Their size and juxtaposition together with all of the demands of the Eversource Sub Station make a welcoming and comfortable development unlikely. But it is clear that this project will go forward in the form and density that has been agreed to. There are however, some opportunities to mitigate the heavyness of this development and the awkward ground level designs as presented.

The major observations that I hope you share is that the ground level edges of the development are still hard and unwelcoming. The edges of the buildings are, at least from the materials presented, not terribly friendly. It appears they will be hard surfaces without relief. Not only around the perimeter of the plaza but along the connecting road between Broadway and Binney. It is noteworthy that no elevation and discussion of the treatment has been presented for the north side (Binney Street side) of the building's ground floor and entrance ways. Will this be another of the cold elevations that like most of the length of Binney Street offers little pleasure or comfort for the pedestrian moving across the boundary streets. The location and design of the landing docks under this plan will make the transit from Binney to Broadway a utilitarian event and will probably dissuade most pedestrian flows from the East Cambridge neighborhood along Fulkerson Street and beyond who would be seeking a pleasant way to get to Kendall Square and MIT.

Another concern is how the siting of the buildings will be affected by wind conditions. In particular the treatment of the current facades of these buildings will interact with the prevailing winds in a way which will accelerate ground level wind conditions. Surely someone has learned from both MIT's experience and the Hancock Building in Boston that smooth building surfaces help to increase wind conditions at the ground level.

Given the reality that these buildings will be built in much the way they are being presented there are some things that you may want to consider to help guide this development along a friendlier path.

Request the development of retail space along the Binney street side of the 250 and 290. At a minimum the child care demands from both the residence and commercial buildings will require more space for the existing child care operations.

Request consideration of having the loading docks go underground to the level of the garage to enhance the passage between Binney and Broadway

Request that the elevation and fenestration of the buildings have a more textured surface that would mitigate the wind flows

Request that the developer provide a more explicit description of just how the retail space/ cafe etc, facing the plaza, will be developed and how the exhaust from the sub station will be handled to insure

that the exhaust does not negate the possibility of a pleasant and hospitable environment for over a thousand people who will populate this development .

Thank you for the opportunity to comment

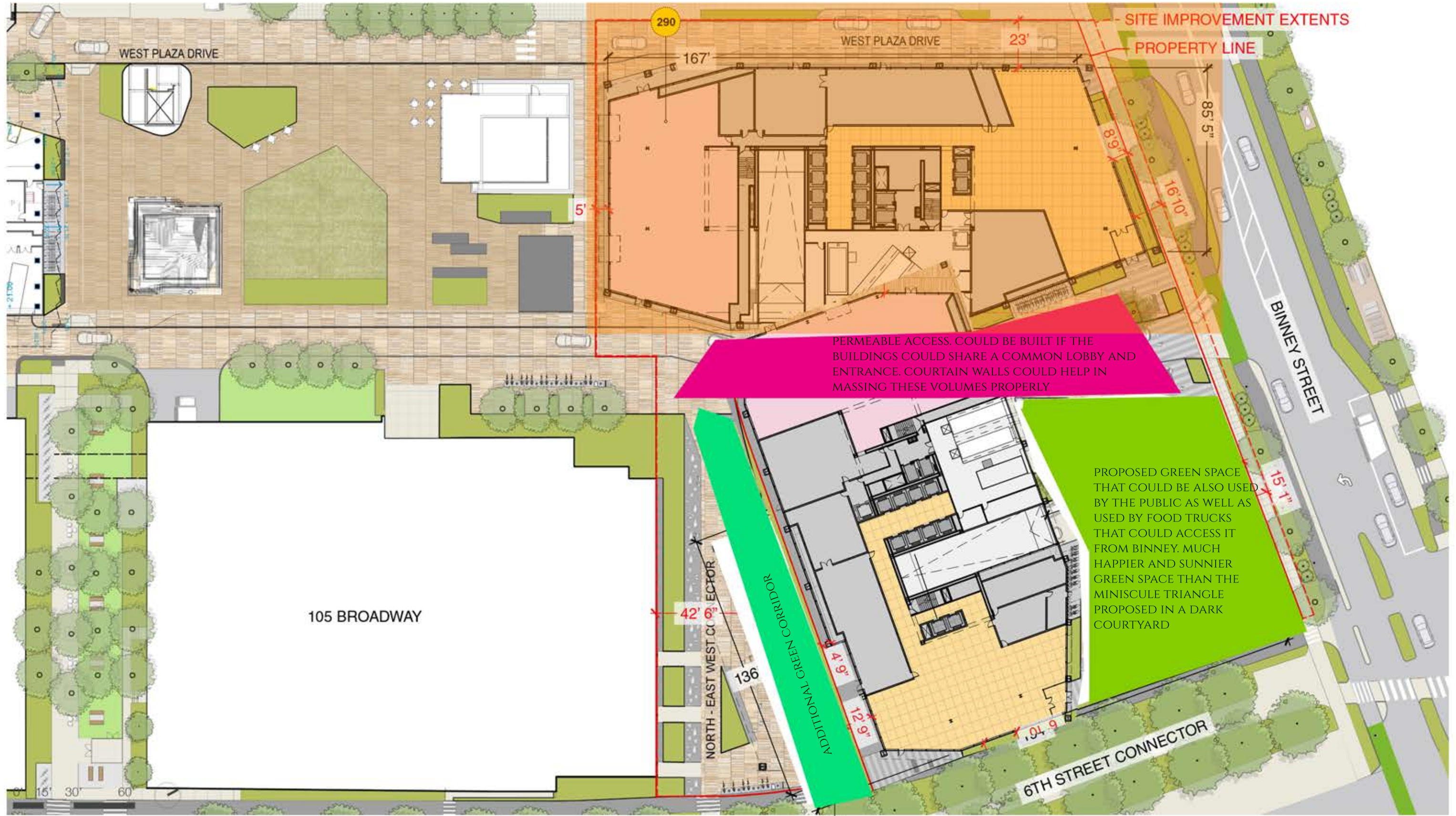
O. R. Simha

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1.3.1 SITE PLANS

GROUND FLOOR

COULD THE ORANGE SHADED BUILDING MAYBE BE TALLER THAN THE LOWER ONE SO THAT ONE READS OF A SMALLER, FRIENDLIER SCALE NEXT TO THE GREEN AREA? PERHAPS TERRACING THE TOP TO AVOID MAKING IT A MASSIVE, FAT TOWER?



PERMEABLE ACCESS. COULD BE BUILT IF THE BUILDINGS COULD SHARE A COMMON LOBBY AND ENTRANCE. COURTAIN WALLS COULD HELP IN MASSING THESE VOLUMES PROPERLY

PROPOSED GREEN SPACE THAT COULD BE ALSO USED BY THE PUBLIC AS WELL AS USED BY FOOD TRUCKS THAT COULD ACCESS IT FROM BINNEY. MUCH HAPPIER AND SUNNIER GREEN SPACE THAN THE MINISCULE TRIANGLE PROPOSED IN A DARK COURTYARD