

Staff Report to the Board: *December 15, 2021*

Administration

Hendrik Karriem van Leesten has been hired as the CRA's new Project Manager. Hendrick brings a depth of experience in private and public real estate analysis, acquisition, project management, and construction management, as well as skills in community engagement and relationship building. He also brings an understanding of Cambridge, having spent some of his childhood years as a resident of the City. His first day is December 30th. We are excited to welcome him to the office.

The 2020 CRA Audit Report, which was presented to the CRA Board at the October 21st meeting, was mailed to the City Manager and to the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Through solicitations of written bids under Chapter 30B, three proposals were reviewed for an Insurance Risk Advisor. After an internal review, the decision was made to select the firm KFDA, who was founded 50 years ago in Boston. They have extensive experience with public and nonprofit entities and real estate development. Their recent experience in Cambridge was assisting the Broad Institute with the construction of their buildings.

The CRA currently has an RFP open seeking Land for Purchase. The goal of this RFP is to receive proposals from property owners to purchase land for development, in order to meet the CRA's commitment to build 20,000 SF of below-market rate homeownership housing. Additionally, the CRA has issued an RFP for landscape maintenance services, to care for the Grand Junction Park, Parcel 6, and miscellaneous services in the Kendall area.

Project Updates

KSTEP

The CRA hosted a KSTEP Working Group Committee meeting on December 1st, and welcomed a new MBTA representative to the group, Sunayana Thomas, the Deputy Director of Real Estate for the MBTA. The committee discussed the completion and budget modifications needed for the KSTEP Bus Shelter Project at 500 Main Street, the KSTEP funded Transit Study, which was completed as part of the Sasaki/HDR contract work, and a new project proposal to implement the bus priority infrastructure recommended in that study. Bus priority infrastructure funding proposal would include money to study and fund the implementation of transit signal priority at Broadway and Galileo Way, Broadway and Ames, and Broadway and Third Street, as well as the implementation of lane modifications at Broadway and Ames Street, and Broadway and Third Street.

Sixth Street Walkway

The Loughrey Walkway, also referred to as the Sixth Street Walkway, continues to have limited access to pedestrians while ongoing drainage infrastructure work moves forward. While the Broadway end of the walkway will remain closed until May 2022, Boston Properties has negotiated an easement agreement with the GSA to provide a pedestrian detour route through Volpe's open space. The walkway detour is currently being designed. It is expected to be open in mid-January 2022 so that pedestrians can connect directly between Broadway and Binney Street. Bicycles will still need to follow the established detour routes.

Recently, CRA Staff provided an access agreement to Boston Properties to complete exploratory work to create construction documents for development related to the proposed underground Eversource vault. The work will consist of test pits along the Kittie Knox Path. The agreement requires the path to be restored in Spring 2022 with permeable material that will replace the existing Flexipave bike-path surface.

325 Main

Internal work at 325 Main Street continues, including work on the elevators and bathrooms, as well as exterior work on the second level terrace, tenant balconies, and exterior staircases. Entry canopy and soffit work is underway. Brick paver installation on the Main Street sidewalk is nearing completion. Roof garden work also continues, include the start of the installation of the Ipe wood decking. The public lobby off of Main is nearly complete while final exterior treatments are being installed along the retail storefront.



Over the last few months, the CRA has worked closely with Boston Properties and the City to finalize a modified Main Street layout in front of 325 Main Street in order to decrease the amount of street furniture on the northern portion of the sidewalk. In addition, one of the two bus shelters located in front of Kendall Plaza and 255 Main Street will be relocated to 325 Main Street for shuttle pick-up and drop-off. Relocating the shelter will help make Kendall Plaza more open and accessible from the street edge.

Forward Fund

To close out the 2021 Forward Fund grant program, the Selection committee, composed of CRA and City Staff, reviewed two Capital Infrastructure proposals. The evaluated proposals were submitted by the Brattle Film Foundation and the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, both located in Harvard Square.

Brattle Film Foundation's project consists of updating the equipment required for film presentation and accessibility. The goal is to install surround-sound and add a robust closed-captioning service available to anyone who visits the location. The project will improve the quality and increase the access of the film-going experience significantly while also improving accessibility to all visitors that may have issues with hearing and/or language barriers.

Cambridge Center for Adult Education (CCAIE) proposed a project to renovate the Blacksmith House historic courtyard. The first phase of the project would include restoring the flagstones that have been dislodged by the last 40 years of use, and more recently, by an active rodent population, making the paths dangerous to navigate. The second phase would include restoring and reviving the plantings in the garden areas that line the street and the courtyard. This improvement will enhance the scenery of lower Brattle Street. In addition to the improvements to the courtyard, Staff has been in discussion with CCAIE to utilize the new POPS (Privately Owned Public Space) logo within the space to inform the public that the space is open for all to enjoy.

The two projects were unanimously selected by the Committee to be approved for funding. With the approval of these two grants, the total funds awarded in the 2021 funding year total \$245,575. Staff has begun internal discussions regarding updates to the Forward Fund program that will be shared with the Board in the new year.

Workforce Development

CRA staff continue to collaborate with staff from Cambridge's Department of Human Service Programs to actualize recommendations from the workforce development study that the CRA and City jointly commissioned by the UMass Donahue Institute. Work has started to convene nonprofit and government program providers as well as different employment sectors in Cambridge in order to collect feedback on the existing recommendations, understand the needs of stakeholders, agree on a set of recommendations to advance, and create a network of entities who are each addressing the recommendations in a way that is appropriate for their organization.

COVID Small Business Relief Loans

With targeted outreach, an additional \$16,875 was collected in amortizations. To date, there has been a total of \$188,978 in payments and full repayment. There are currently 17 delinquent borrowers who have made no payments.

Foundry

The construction project remains on schedule to see a certificate of occupancy by May 31, 2022. CRA Brokerage firm, Newmark, has conducted over a dozen tours of the Foundry with prospective office tenants for the three market-rate suites. Two signed Letters of Interest for two of the market rate spaces are in hand and additional interest continues for the remaining approximately 8,000 square foot space. Rent figures are very strong and will support the Foundry's financial model. Two responses were received by the December 10th deadline for the one below-market space. The lottery to select that tenant will be held on December 17th by TSNE, the CRA's property management consultant for the Foundry.

The Foundry Consortium has finalized a property management plan and is in the process of finalizing policies and procedures for the site, including the Community Use Space reservation process.

There are four new members of the Foundry Advisory Committee (FAC), who have all had an orientation and will be attending the FAC's next meeting in January (the date is yet to be finalized to ensure all FAC members can attend). The new members collectively bring knowledge in the arts, nonprofit administration, building operations and management, human resources, the sciences, maker spaces, and the interests and needs of seniors, those with disabilities, and low-income tenants.

