



---

# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

---

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: January 25, 2023

Re: **PB-231A Amendment 7 (Major), 75 First Street**

---

**IRAM FAROOQ**  
Assistant City Manager for  
Community Development

**SANDRA CLARKE**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Administration

**KHALIL MOGASSABI**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Planning

## Overview

---

Submission Type: Special Permit Application

---

Applicant: First Street – US Parcel E, LLC

---

Zoning District(s): Business A / PUD-4B

---

Proposal Summary: Construct a new residential building with 90 units and 3,600 square feet of ground floor commercial space at 75 First Street with the new building extending over the existing building and surface parking spaces at 85 First Street.

---

Special Permits Requested: Major Amendment to Final Development Plan (12.37); PUD 4B Development Controls (13.50); Project Review (19.20)

---

Other City Permits Needed: None

---

Planning Board Action: Preliminary Determination approving the Development Proposal (authorizing the submission of a Final Development Plan to be reviewed at a second public hearing), or denying the special permit application.

---

Memo Contents: CDD Zoning Report & Urban Design Report

---

Other Staff Reports: Parking and Transportation Dept. (TP+T), Department of Public Works (DPW), in separate documents.

---

<b>Zoning Section</b>	<b>Required Planning Board Findings</b> <i>(Summary - see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Preliminary Approval of a PUD Development Proposal (Section 12.35.3)	<p>The PUD Development Proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conforms with general PUD development controls and district development controls</li> <li>• Conforms with adopted policy plans or development guidelines for that portion of the city</li> <li>• Provides benefits to the city which outweigh its adverse effects, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ quality of site design</li> <li>○ traffic flow and safety</li> <li>○ adequacy of utilities and other public works</li> <li>○ impact on existing public facilities</li> <li>○ potential fiscal impact</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)	The project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the City as set forth in Section 19.30.
General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	<p>Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or</li> <li>(b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or</li> <li>(c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or</li> <li>(d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or</li> <li>(e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and</li> <li>(f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.</li> </ul>

## Zoning & Development Staff Report

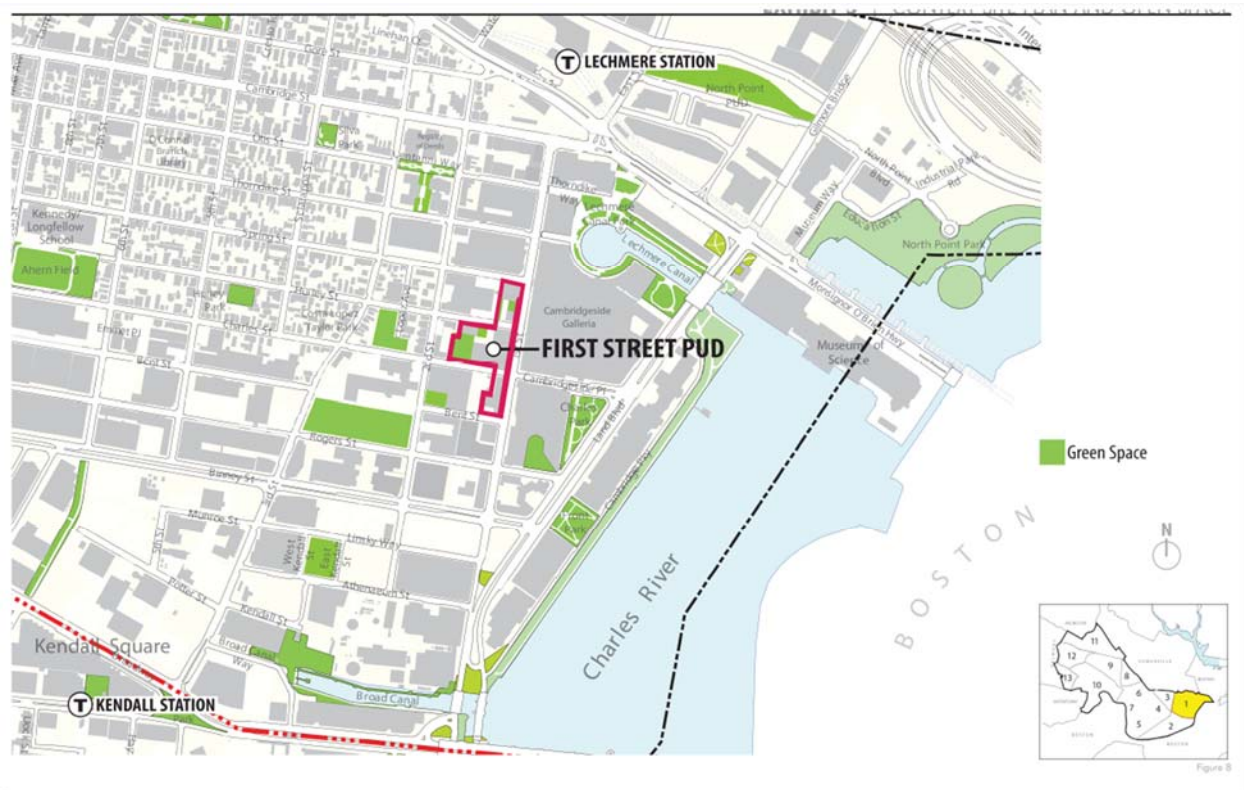
### Area Planning and Zoning

#### Site Context

Neighborhood/Area: East Cambridge Riverfront

Development Patterns: The 75 First Street site is located near the northeastern corner of East Cambridge. The large mixed-use Cambridge Crossing redevelopment area is to the north, and redeveloping Kendall Square is to the south. This area is characterized by newly-constructed residential and office buildings as well as hotels, the CambridgeSide shopping mall, smaller-scale neighborhood-serving retail, and former industrial buildings converted to residential, office and lab uses. Across First Street is the CambridgeSide PUD first approved by the Planning Board in 1987 and most recently updated in 2020 to allow the construction of new commercial and residential development at the mall site.

Nearby Features: Just north of the parcel is the major intersection of Cambridge Street and Route 28, as well as the newly renovated Lechmere Station serving the Green Line and Bus routes.



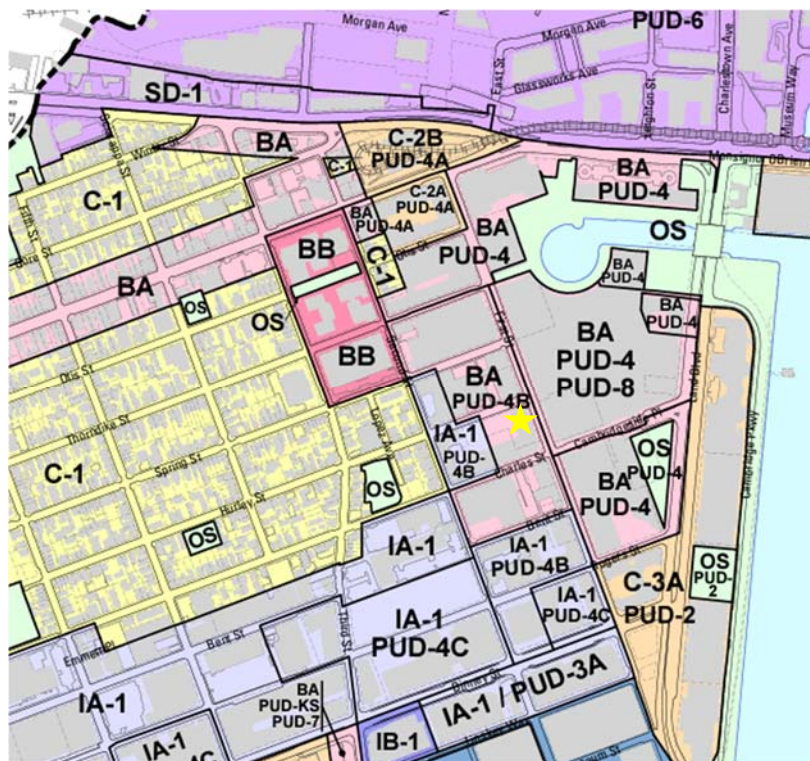
**Site Zoning**

General description: The site is located in the Business A (BA) base zoning district and the PUD-4B overlay zoning district. BA allows a wide range of typical neighborhood business uses as well as institutional uses, multifamily dwellings, and hotels as-of-right.

PUD-4B modifies the development standards of the base zoning. The PUD-4B overlay district is the basis for the PB-231A PUD and some other development in the surrounding area. PUD overlay districts provide flexible zoning for multi-site phased development with a variety of land uses and densities. A developer may choose to conform to PUD controls in lieu of the base district requirements by special permit from the Planning Board.

The PUD-4B district encourages highly active, medium density commercial and residential area with a mix of retail, office, and residential uses. It is intended to encourage a mix of uses with a substantial component of housing, with the housing, where possible, located within the development parcel adjacent to the existing residential neighborhood. It is also the intent to encourage an active urban setting along public and private streets both during and after customary business hours. Ground floor building spaces oriented toward public streets should primarily contain retail or consumer service office uses to the extent possible.

This zoning is in support of planning objectives set forth in the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study dated October 2001 and the guidance provided in the Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines dated October 15, 2001, and with the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan dated October 15, 2001. There have been no recent modifications to the PUD-4B zoning district.



***Overview of the PUD Amendment Review and Approval Process***

The applicant has submitted a proposal for a Major Amendment to the PB-231A PUD. Major Amendments, as specified in Section 12.37.3 of the zoning ordinance, shall be considered as an original application for a Special Permit to construct a PUD and shall be subject to procedures specified in Section 12.34 through 12.36.

At the first public hearing on a PUD proposal, the Planning Board’s action is to make a Preliminary Determination based on whether the Development Proposal generally conforms with the zoning and the City’s policies and plans for the area.

- A positive Preliminary Determination means that the Applicant may proceed with the submission of a Final Development Plan. The Preliminary Determination should include any requested additional information, further refinements, or changes to be incorporated into the Final Development Plan.
- A negative Preliminary Determination constitutes denial of the PUD special permit.

Should a positive Preliminary Determination be made and a Final Development Plan submitted, the Planning Board will hold a second public hearing and can make a final decision to grant or deny the PUD special permit along with any other requested special permits.

Note that phased PUDs with multiple building sites often involve a review process in which the Final Development Plan is approved at a site plan level, with a future design review process for individual building sites and open spaces. However, in cases where the Final Development Plan contains only a single building site, the Planning Board’s approval of the Final Development Plan will often include approval of the building design as well.

Therefore, the Board may find it helpful to focus on design comments that can be considered by the Applicant for incorporation into the Final Development Plan submission, in addition to any higher-level questions about proposed change to the Development Plan that need to be addressed.

***Development Plans and Guidelines***

The **East Cambridge Riverfront Plan (1978)** was the catalyst for redevelopment along the Charles River in the formerly industrial eastern part of the city and established the pattern for the area's redevelopment, integrating the project, the neighborhood, and the river. The "Triangle" east of First Street was envisioned as a regional shopping center surrounded by additional retail and hotels, with housing and offices nearby. Its open space network includes the Lechmere Canal, the mall's north/south atrium connecting the Canal's round basin to Charles Park, architectural streetwalls along First Street, CambridgeSide Place, and Land Boulevard, and passages or courtyards on First Street aligned with Spring and Hurley Streets.

The **East Cambridge Review Process and Development Guidelines (1985)** reiterate the importance of creating meaningful and useful public open spaces, and of designing buildings to strengthen the pattern of East Cambridge's streets and other open spaces. They recommend that the uses, scales, setbacks, bulk, height, landscaping, and screening of new structures complement and harmonize with adjoining streets, spaces, and buildings.

The **Eastern Cambridge Planning Study (ECaPS, 2001)** outlines a vision for future development in parts of Kendall Square, the North Point area near Lechmere, the East Cambridge residential neighborhood, and parts of the Wellington-Harrington and Port neighborhoods. The site of this proposed development is in the ECaPS study area. ECaPS envisioned making the area more active by increasing residential development and attracting neighborhood-serving uses such as restaurants, convenience retail, and entertainment. Some ECaPS goals that are relevant for the area along First Street include pedestrian and bicycle connections to the open space along the Charles River, more residential development, and supporting active commercial districts with ground floor retail. The "Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines" created during this process provide more detail on architectural scale and massing, architectural character, streets and sidewalks, connections, and street activating uses at ground floors, all directed toward creating a walkable urban environment.

The **Cambridge Riverfront Plan (2011)** noted that the area around CambridgeSide provides the potential for the most direct connections between the residential neighborhood of East Cambridge and the waterfront. It envisioned First Street as a walkable retail corridor and acknowledged that a growing residential population and growth in business uses would increase the viability of that vision. The Cambridge Riverfront Plan also identified Charles Street and Thorndike Street as prominent east-west streets that serve as a conduit to the river, and promoted the idea of a new promenade along the face of the Museum of Science and its garage.

The **Envision Cambridge (2019)** comprehensive plan established city-wide planning goals and recommendations, designating this area as an "Evolving Mixed-Use District." Envision Cambridge called for a balanced mix of development types that are sensitive to their context while still advancing the City's goals in providing affordable housing, environmental resilience, cohesive urban form, and community wellbeing. It advocated for providing both commercial and residential development, as well as preserving and expanding the city's open space network. In general, Envision Cambridge noted that the transformation of Evolving Mixed-Use Districts offers the potential not only to create great new neighborhoods, but also to preserve existing and thriving neighborhoods like East Cambridge.

## **Current Proposal**

### ***Background***

The Planning Board first approved Planned Unit Development Special Permit PB-231A in 2010. It is located on various sites along First Street within the PUD-4B District. The applicant is now seeking a Major Amendment to the PUD. This would be the 7<sup>th</sup> amendment to PB-231A, which was last reviewed by the Planning Board in December of 2022. The full list of previous amendments is below:

- Original Development Plan (granted August 3, 2010) – Develop a multifamily residential building at 159 First Street, commercial building at 65 Bent Street (150 Second Street), and townhouses at 29 Charles Street (later not developed).
- Amendment 1 – Minor (granted June 5, 2012) – Modify the dwelling unit mix layout, location of bicycle parking, quantity of vehicular parking, and designation of open space for the permitted residential building at 159 First Street.
- Amendment 2 – Major (granted October 1, 2013) – Increase the number of accessory parking spaces for office use by 22 spaces and correspondingly decrease the number of accessory parking spaces for residential use.
- Amendment 3 – Major (granted December 15, 2015) – Allow the expansion of the PUD to include additional parcels (A-D) which changed the development plan for 29 Charles Street. The Planning Board approved the design of these additional buildings at that time, subject to continuing staff review. This enlarged the Development Parcel and increased the number of building sites from three to six, to include a total of 243,125 square feet of residential gross floor area and 191,641 square feet of commercial gross floor area. It also reduced the number of required parking spaces and bicycle parking spaces. Prior to this amendment, 159 First Street and 65 Bent Street were completed.
- Amendment 4 – Minor (granted August 1, 2017) – Increase the permitted gross floor area and decrease the permitted number of parking spaces for Parcel D.
- Amendment 5 – Minor (granted July 31, 2018) – Modify the parking garage design under 107-119 First Street and 18 Hurley Street (Parcel B) and 29 Charles Street (Parcel C) and convert 3,151 square feet of approved retail use to office use in the ground level of 121-139 First Street (Parcel A).
- Amendment 6 – Minor (granted December 13, 2022) – Modify the use configuration for the ground floor of Parcel A to convert approximately 3,788 square feet of retail use at the ground floor corner of First Street and Charles Street to a bank use.

### ***Overview***

Urban Spaces, LLC now seeks a Major Amendment to expand the Development Parcel to include one additional parcel (E) abutting Parcel D. The revised development plan includes the construction of a six-story mixed use retail and residential building across Parcels D and E, retaining the existing one-story retail on Parcel D but demolishing an existing 1 story brick retail building that is currently home to David's Shoes. This proposal will include approximately 3,500-3,600 square feet of "commercial/residential /flex" space and 90 residential units (some inconsistencies are found between the dimensional forms and schematic designs and will require revision). The applicant is characterizing

the proposed development on parcel E as an addition to the existing 1 story ground floor retail building on parcel D. The newly proposed 6 story building will include an L shaped portion that overhangs 10 existing surface parking spaces on Parcel D that will remain. The applicant additionally proposes a publicly accessible green open space on the existing roof structure for Parcel D. This green space would be accessible from the newly proposed building.

**Comments on Development Proposal**

In general, the Development Proposal responds positively to several of the area planning goals:

- Creation of new residential housing units, including affordable units.
- Retention of an active retail use fronting First Street (pending additional clarifications on the proposed ground floor use).

City zoning and policy is broadly supportive of mixed-use retail and residential development along First Street. Additional details for the PUD proposal submitted to the Planning Board for a Preliminary Determination are requested below.

**General Conformance with PUD-4B Zoning Requirements**

The following table provides an overview of PUD-4B zoning requirements alongside the proposed Project. Further below is a discussion of particular aspects of the Development Proposal that are relevant to the planning and zoning for the site.

Zoning Element	PUD-4B Requirement	Proposed	Compliant? (Y/N)
<b>Permitted Uses</b>	All retail, office, and residential uses allowed. Purpose of district is to promote highly active, medium density commercial and residential area with a mix of retail and residential uses.	Mixed use retail and residential.	<b>Y</b>
<b>Total GFA</b>	532,760 SF max.	522,549 SF	<b>Y</b>
<b>Total FAR</b>	2.76	2.72	<b>Y</b>
<b>Maximum Building Height</b>	65'	65'	<b>Y</b>
<b>Total Open Space</b>	20% min.	23%	<b>Y</b>
<b>Total Off-street Parking</b>	No minimum; Maximum of 1.5 spaces/unit per zoning section 13.57.	No new spaces proposed; 342 total off street parking spaces.	<b>Y</b>
<b>Off-street Loading Bays</b>	3 minimum per Article 6; waivers by PB approval	3	<b>Y</b>
<b>Total Bicycle Parking</b>	Per Article 6.100; 293 long-term and 40 short-term required	360 long-term and 62 short-term	<b>Y</b>



***Proposed Uses***

*Retail*

The applicant is proposing a mixed-use commercial and residential building with publicly accessible rooftop open space. The submitted first floor plans note the corner of First Street and Spring Street as a “commercial/residential/flex space.” The applicant has noted that a large amount of commercial GFA was just completed on parcels B and C. They have expressed concerns in committing to additional retail GFA in the present economic climate and would like to leave the proposed ground floor corner space flexible for a broad range of uses. The application also notes that the new building is replacing three existing commercial spaces. The PUD-4B zoning strongly encourages active retail uses along First Street.

Additional clarity is requested from the applicant on the specific proposed uses in this space, both in the short, medium, and long term. It will be helpful for the Planning Board to understand and approve the full range of retail and other uses that might be anticipated in this space, to avoid the need for the Planning Board to make case-by-case determinations when different uses are proposed.

*Residential*

The application shows 90 total units with 15 designated for affordable units, which are sized on average larger than the market-rate units in order to meet the standard of 20% of net unit floor area. There are proposed a total of 8 studio, 70 1-bedroom, 10 2-bedroom, and 2 3-bedroom units. The applicant is particularly encouraged to further discuss the program for the 15 proposed inclusionary units with Housing staff. Housing is generally supportive of a larger percentage of larger family-sized residential units. The proportion of each unit size is also important in TP+T’s consideration of anticipated transportation demand.

Additional information is requested from the applicant on the mix of unit sizes.

*Public Space*

The Development Proposal includes a publicly accessible green open space to be built over the roof structure on the existing Parcel D building. This space is shown as accessible from the proposed residential building. The total square footage, programming plan, and means of public access are unclear from the submitted materials. In further considering this space, the Board could request additional information.

- What additional public amenities (e.g., public restrooms, free public wi-fi) will be included in the public space that can help to support a welcoming public atmosphere.
- Will there be any limitations or stipulations on the public’s access and use of the space, and will public access be guaranteed through a legal mechanism (and if so, what will be the process)? How will any rules on public access and use be made clear to the public?
- Information related to planned frequency of events and/or programming of the public space, and what other activities might be utilized to help draw visitors.

### *Traffic & Transportation*

Cambridge's zoning was recently amended to eliminate all off-street parking minimums. PUD-4B continues to include a parking maximum of 1.5 spaces per residential unit throughout a PUD development plan. The Dimensional Form shows no new off-street parking for the Project, which would meet the PUD-4B zoning requirements and align with the City's overall commitment to reducing personal automobile use. However, the project narrative later notes the inclusion of parking for the project in underground parking garages located on Parcels B and C.

Additional clarification from the applicant should be provided on how parking spaces will be assigned and managed. While 342 off street parking spaces for the entire PUD is compliant with zoning, additional details on the allocation of these spaces to each building within the PUD is requested.

The Applicant submitted a Transportation Impact Study (TIS) which was certified complete on October 26, 2022. The Applicant is continuing to work with TP+T staff on a recommended set of transportation mitigation measures to offset transportation-related impacts created by the Development Plan.

Additional comments and requests for clarification on the transportation aspects of the proposal are provided in an included January 23, 2023 memo from TP+T.

### *Sustainability*

The proposed building must comply with the Green Building Requirements set forth in Section 22.20 of the Zoning Ordinance. Staff provided an initial response to materials submitted by the applicant in November of 2022 with requests for additional information. These included 12 specific recommendations for the applicant, such as:

- Pursuing formal LEED certification.
- Using LEED preferred products and materials.
- Conducting a basic life-cycle assessment of products and responding to supply chain GHG emissions impacts of proposed materials.
- Identifying additional strategies for the interior fit out to improve tenant wellbeing, including a preoccupancy flush and air testing program post-construction.

On January 23, 2023, the applicant submitted a revised Net Zero Narrative and Green Building database information. Staff are now reviewing the revised materials for completeness and clarification. If the materials are determined to adequately comply with the Green Building Requirements, the issuance of the staff certification memo would be anticipated shortly following the January 31, 2023 Planning Board meeting.

### *Resiliency to Flooding*

In response to comments from DPW, the applicant submitted an updated resiliency memo on January 24, 2023. While DPW staff will need additional time to review materials and to continue working with the applicant, they have noted two specific items requiring additional information and clarification. Staff recommends resolving these issues in the Final Development Plan submission:

- Project still does not sufficiently demonstrate that it is built to be protected from flooding in the 2070-10 year event.
- Other resiliency measures outlined in the memo are inconsistent with what is shown in the plans and will require clarification.

*Community Engagement*

The applicant conducted early community engagement during the spring of 2022. This included an appearance at a regularly scheduled meeting of the East Cambridge Planning Team (ECPT) on April 13, 2022 and a virtual zoom meeting hosted on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. Invitations to the May 11<sup>th</sup> virtual meeting were sent to nearby abutters. The applicant previously stated that there were no attendees at the May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Additional information on the number of attendees, comments received, and applicant responses are not included in the materials and may be requested by the Planning Board.

## Appendix - Zoning Text Excerpts

---

### PUD Special Permit Criteria

**12.35.2** Within twenty-one (21) days after the public hearing, the Planning Board shall make a determination concerning the Development Proposal. If the Planning Board approves the Development Proposal or conditionally approves the Development Proposal with recommendations for modifications, then the developer must submit a Final Development Plan as specified in Section 12.36. If the Planning Board disapproves the Development Proposal then the application for a Special Permit to construct a PUD shall be denied. If the Planning Board makes no decision within the specified time limit, then the Development Proposal shall be considered approved and the developer shall prepare a Final Development Plan

**12.35.3** Approval of the Development Proposal shall be granted only upon determination by the Planning Board that the Development Proposal:

(1) conforms with the General Development Controls set forth in Section 12.50, and the development controls set forth for the specific PUD district in which the project is located;

(2) conforms with adopted policy plans or development guidelines for the portion of the city in which the PUD district is located;

(3) provides benefits to the city which outweigh its adverse effects; in making this determination the Planning Board shall consider the following:

- (a) quality of site design, including integration of a variety of land uses, building types, and densities; preservation of natural features; compatibility with adjacent land uses; provision and type of open space; provision of other amenities designed to benefit the general public;
- (b) traffic flow and safety;
- (c) adequacy of utilities and other public works;
- (d) impact on existing public facilities within the city; and
- (e) potential fiscal impact.

**12.36.4** The Planning Board shall make the decision to approve or disapprove the application for a Special Permit to construct a Planned Unit Development no later than ninety (90) days after the public hearing concerning the Development Proposal Approval of the Final Development Plan shall be granted only upon determination by the Planning Board that the Final Development Plan meets the evaluation criteria set forth in Section 12.35.3 and contains any revisions to the Development Proposal required by the Planning Board. If the Planning Board grants the Special Permit with conditions, the conditions must be agreed to in writing by the developer before the Special Permit is granted. The Planning Board shall make its final decision in writing and shall specify its reason for not granting a Special Permit to construct a PUD. If the Planning Board makes no decision within the specified time limit, then the Final Development Plan shall be considered approved and the Special Permit to construct a PUD shall be deemed granted.

**12.37** *Amendments to Final Development Plan.* After approval of the Final Development Plan by the Planning Board, the developer may seek amendments to the Final Development Plan, only if he encounters difficulties in constructing the PUD which could not have reasonably been foreseen, such as with terrain or soil conditions or other complications.

**12.37.1** Amendments to the Final Development Plan shall be considered major or minor. Minor amendments, as specified in Section 12.37.2 shall be authorized by written approval of the Planning Board. Major amendments, as specified in Section 12.37.3, shall be considered as an original application for a Special Permit to construct a PUD and shall be subject to procedures specified in Section 12.34 through 12.36. The Planning Board shall decide whether proposed changes are major or minor.

**12.37.2** Minor amendments are changes which do not alter the concept of the PUD in terms of density, floor area ratio, land usage, height, provision of open space, or the physical relationship of elements of the development. Minor amendments shall include, but not be limited to, small changes in the location of buildings, open space, or parking; or realignment of minor streets.

**12.37.3** Major amendments represent substantial deviations from the PUD concept approved by the Planning Board. Major amendments shall include, but not be limited to, large changes in floor space, mix of uses, density, lot coverage, height, setbacks, lot sizes, open space; changes in the location of buildings, open space, or parking; or changes in the circulation system.

**General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit**

**10.43** *Criteria.* Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:

- (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or
- (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or
- (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or
- (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or
- (g) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and
- (h) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.



---

# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

---

## Urban Design Staff Report

Date: January 25, 2023

Case: PB-231

Location: 75 First Street

---

## Urban Design Comments

### Summary of relevant design objectives and guidelines

While the *Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines (2001)* document was produced more than two decades ago, its urban design intentions remain relevant today. These guidelines encourage building massing compatible with the multiple scales of the immediate and surrounding contexts, the creation of a rich and enjoyable pedestrian realm, and development that contributes to the character and vitality of the surrounding community. Specific design guidance includes:

- Provision of varied architecture; a clearly expressed base, middle, and top, differentiated by changes in material, fenestration, architectural detailing, stepbacks, or other elements.
- Strong streetwalls that frame streets.
- Reduction of the perceived heights of buildings and their mechanical penthouses.
- Articulation of long or tall buildings to avoid a monolithic appearance.
- Varied rooflines to express the tops of buildings.
- Ground floor active uses to enhance the pedestrian realm.
- Streetscape elements including ground floor facades, trees, benches, signage, and lighting s designed to support active pedestrian uses and to reinforce district's character and identity.

Redevelopment of the site with a mixed-use project will serve many of the guidelines related to the vitality of the neighborhood and the positive impacts of infill residential development.

### Massing and Siting

At the master planning level, the simple massing complements the site context and responds to the peculiarities of the L-shaped site. The building reinforces First Street and Spring Street with streetwalls that are approximately 65' feet tall, which is compatible with the heights of existing and proposed nearby buildings. The first floor is set back from the property line on First Street by approximately 5-feet and 6-feet on Spring Street to create wider sidewalks than currently exists on both streets. Above that level, the building extends out to the property line creating a recessed, ground floor condition. The location of the residential entrance on Spring Street is logical, and the proposed commercial/residential amenity space at the corner will provide some level of ground floor animation.

---

On Hurley Street, due to the existing transformer, at-grade parking and the new stair, the building does not achieve the level of streetwall engagement or ground floor activation that the other facades do. As such, further development of the following elements of the building's massing should be studied:

- The massing and siting proposed for the Hurley Street façade results in a less than ideal urban design outcome. The blank stairwell, combined with the exposed transformer, and gaping, open parking area under the building create a poor pedestrian environment. Consideration should be given to either enclosing the transformer within the footprint of the building, or moving the transformer to a less obtrusive location. The floating stair element on Floors 2 through 6 should also be reviewed. It would be preferable if it aligned with the other portions of the façade or was somehow accommodated under the roofline. Improvements to the below-building experience for residents accessing the rear door should also be considered.
- While the ground floor sidewalk setbacks and relatively tall ground floor are positive urban design moves, the upper sections of the building overhang these zones. Given the narrow sidewalks, staff seek further clarification about how this impacts the pedestrian experience and the ability to accommodate new street trees. The overhang seems unnecessary on Hurley Street, when the project could further overhang the parking lot and Parcel D building. Additionally, the adjacent Cambridgeside redevelopment incorporates 10-foot setbacks for the whole building to help create a more generous pedestrian environment.

#### Continuing review items/further study

Since this is a PUD Major Amendment that requires two hearings, detailed design review of the site and building will occur at the second hearing. As such, the following is a list of building design issues that should be addressed as the project advances:

- There are discrepancies between the elevations and renderings, which should be addressed. Staff prefer the more subtle expression depicted in the elevations.
- For the façade, the expressed frames seem good in concept; however, they are poorly executed in the design renderings. While the frames provide vertical articulation, their pattern is not always consistent, and the contrasting material draws further attention to their irregular rhythm. The pillar/chimney element at the corner of First and Spring Streets, and the small 2 over 2 windows, are the most notable irregularities. Some simplification would improve the project's façade composition.
- Staff also have concerns about the use of fiber cement for the frames in terms of its sustainability performance, durability, and workmanship issues associated with achieving crisp details.
- While the balconies help enliven the façades, in the renderings the coloring of the railings seems to visually cut off the window openings. Matching the railing color to the window frames as shown on the elevations is preferred.
- Consider use of brick details such as soldier courses, lintels/sills, etc., and fenestration details to provide visual enrichment and depth compatible with the masonry and fenestration details of older buildings in the area.



- The brick appears paper thin where it turns the corner at the party wall (west elevation), which is cementitious panel. Consider extending its depth to provide some dimension.
- The grey and black color palette is a little drab and appears quite dull in the renderings and elevations. The desire to match the existing Parcel D retail building is not considered necessary by staff.
- The entire ground floor treatment/pedestrian experience from Hurley Street should be reviewed in detail, including making the residential entry a more attractive/more prominent site feature. Consider adding visual interest at the pedestrian scale - changes in materials, more glazing, a canopy, plantings, subtle lighting, a trellis around the stairwell, etc.
- The lower canopy at the residential entrance (see Sheet A1.12) seems heavy and should be further refined.

The following public realm/landscaping improvements should be studied:

- On all streets, additional street trees should be considered to achieve a spacing of between 20 and 25-feet.
- The overhead wires on Spring Street are unsightly and should be undergrounded, if possible.
- If the transformer on Hurley Street is to remain in its currently location, additional plantings, or creative screening approaches should be studied.
- As mentioned in the Zoning memo, further clarification regarding the proposal to make the rooftop garden publicly accessible should be provided, including wayfinding and signage concepts.

### Application Materials

The application appears to lack some details that are pertinent to the more detailed design review process that typically occurs with PUDs. The following should be addressed:

- It is difficult to see how the project fits within the existing context and future context provided by the Cambridgeside development. Elevations and perspectives should include more context.
- Fix the discrepancies between the renderings and elevations. The color of the bays and railings is shown differently.
- Add graphic scales to all elevation and section drawings.
- Revise the site layout plan to show the upper story setback of the adjacent City parking garage.
- Submit a landscaping plan for the site, including expanded sidewalk areas and the Parcel D rooftop. This should include new plantings and street trees details, street furniture, and hardscape materials.
- Provide zoomed-in/focused elevations of all ground floor facades – showing storefront windows, mullion details, sill/water table details, materials, and colors.
- Provide upper façade details with dimensions that show the depth created by the bays, windows (reveals), balconies, etc.
- Provide information regarding the visual light transparency and reflectance of all glazing. Low iron glazing should be utilized for all ground floor facades.
- Provide additional perspective views showing the building in context, including zoomed-in views to show the pedestrian experience on Hurley Street.

## **Appendix: Relevant Design Guidelines**

*Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines, 2001*

### 1. Street-level Uses and Design

Mixed-use blocks are blocks that include housing and/or commercial uses, with a mix of active uses strongly encouraged on the ground floor.

- a. Street-level facades should include active uses such as:
  - Residential entrances
  - Shops, restaurants, and cafes
  - Services for the public or for commercial offices such as fitness centers, cafeterias, daycare centers, etc.
  - Community spaces, such as exhibition or meeting space
  - Art exhibition space/display windows
  - Commercial lobbies and front doors.
- a. Transparent materials and interior lighting should be used to maximize visibility of street level uses.
- b. Ground floor facades should be at least 30 to 50 percent transparent surface to permit a clear view from the sidewalk to the interior space of the building.
- c. Blank walls should be avoided along all streets and pedestrian walkways.

Retail blocks are intended to have a high volume of pedestrian traffic, and to support public activity throughout the day and evening.

- a. At least 75 percent of the street frontage should be occupied by retail uses, including cafes and restaurants.
- b. Major entrances should be located on public streets, and on corners wherever possible. Entrances should relate to crosswalks and pathways that lead to bus stops and transit stations.
- c. Transparent materials and interior lighting should be used to maximize visibility of street level uses. Ground floor facades should be at least 50 to 75 percent transparent surface to permit a clear view from the sidewalk to the interior space of the building.
- d. Blank walls should be avoided along all streets and pedestrian walkways.

### 2. Building Height and Orientation

Major Public Streets

- a. Set back any portion of the building above 65 feet by at least 10 feet from the principal facade.
- b. For retail and office uses, build to the lot line or provide small setbacks (5 to 15 feet) from the right-of-way for café seating, benches, or small open spaces. Setbacks used exclusively for ornamental landscaping are not permitted but may be allowed to accommodate street furniture, street trees, or generous sidewalks. Awnings and canopies are encouraged to provide shelter and enliven the ground floor facade.
- c. For residential uses, provide small setbacks (5 to 10 feet) for stoops, porches, and front gardens.
- d. Driveway turnaround and vehicle drop-off facilities are strongly discouraged along public streets.
- e. Locate loading docks on side streets or service alleys, and away from residential areas.
- f. In use, design, and entry, orient buildings towards corners.

#### Neighborhood Streets

- a. Set back buildings above 45 feet by at least 10 feet from the principal facade.
- b. Where appropriate, design these setbacks to include balconies and rooftop terraces.
- c. For residential uses, provide small setbacks (5 to 15 feet) for stoops, porches, and front gardens.
- d. Provide individual entrances to ground floor units along the street.
- e. Locate courtyards and open spaces to maximize sun exposure.

#### 3. Scale and Massing

- a. Buildings should avoid continuous massing longer than 200 feet facing mixed-use and retail streets. If massing extends beyond this length, it should be made permeable and visibly articulated as several smaller masses using different materials or colors, vertical breaks, bays, or other architectural elements.
- b. Buildings should reflect a rhythm and variation appropriate to the urban context. E.g., this can be achieved by expressing bay widths of 25 to 50 feet along mixed-use and retail streets
- c. Buildings should have a clearly expressed base, middle, and top. This may be achieved through changes in material, fenestration, architectural detailing, or other elements.
- d. Use variations in height and architectural elements such as parapets, cornices and other details to create interesting and varied rooflines and to clearly express the tops of buildings.
- e. Emphasize corners using taller elements such as towers, turrets, and bays
- f. Taller buildings should be articulated to avoid a monolithic appearance: Taller buildings should be point towers instead of slabs, and should have smaller floor plates instead of larger floor plates.

#### 4. Architectural Character - Residential

- a. Create varied architecture and avoid flat facades by using bays, balconies, porches, stoops, and other projecting elements.
- b. Maximize the number of windows facing public streets to increase safety.
- c. Vary the architecture of individual buildings to create architecturally diverse districts.
- d. Where buildings are set back at upper stories, lower roofs may be used as balconies, balustrades, and gardens.

#### 5. Parking

- a. While underground parking is preferable everywhere, if above ground parking is to be built it should be designed so as not to be visible from public streets or pathways. Above ground structured parking should be lined with active uses (shops, cafes, etc.) along major public streets, or with housing units along residential streets.
- b. Locate vehicular parking entrances on side streets and alleys and provide safe pedestrian access from public streets.
- c. Design and locate lighting fixtures in surface parking lots and garages to enhance safety while minimizing light spillover onto adjacent properties.

#### 6. Open Space

- a. The provision of open space of diverse sizes and use is encouraged to enhance the public environment in the study area.
- b. The provision of interconnected series of open spaces is encouraged to provide connections to neighborhoods and to encourage pedestrian movement.

- c. For residential development, create semi-private open spaces (e.g. front and rear yards, porches, stoops, and patios) that create a transition from public sidewalks and courts to private interior spaces.
- d. Design residential courtyards to be visually accessible from streets to enhance safety and activity along the street.

#### 7. Streets and Sidewalks

- a. Character: use streetscape elements such as trees, benches, signage, and lighting to support active pedestrian uses and to reinforce the character and identity of each district.
- b. Design streets to encourage pedestrian and cycle activity, and to control vehicle speed in residential areas.
- c. Where appropriate, establish, preserve, and highlight views from public streets and spaces to important landmarks such as the Charles River bridge and the Kendall Sq clock tower.
- d. In the design of new streets, provide sufficient pavement width to accommodate on-street parking where appropriate in order to provide short-term parking and to serve local retail.
- e. In the design of new streets, pathways, and parks, provide pedestrian scale lighting to enhance pedestrian safety.
- f. Refer to the Cambridge Pedestrian Plan and the Cambridge Bicycle Plan for additional guidance on creating a safe and pleasant environment for pedestrians and bicyclists.

#### 8. Connections

- a. Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to future regional pathways.
- b. Provide strong pedestrian, bicycle and visual connections to the Charles River and public parks through view corridors, signage, and/or art installations.
- c. Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to existing and new bus stops and to transit stations including Kendall Square, Lechmere, Community College and North Station MBTA stations. In particular, direct access from the residential neighborhood south of Msgr. O'Brien Highway and Cambridge Street to the new T station is desirable.

### *East Cambridge Development Review Process and Guidelines, 1985*

#### 1. Height

- a. Height and bulk of buildings should be configured to minimize visual dominance, shadows, and undesirable wind impacts.
- b. Limit building height around the canal, especially at the northern edges of the shopping crescent. The crescent must contain the Lechmere Canal spatially as well as sunlight.
- c. Building planes facing or generally oriented toward the riverfront open space must be stepped back to minimize the shadows that are cast on the open space system.
- d. A coordinated system of expressive building tops is encouraged and should become an integral part of the design concept.

#### 2. Scale

- a. Relate to human dimensions and provide a sense of intimacy in all aspects of design.

#### 3. Massing

- a. New development should extend the East Cambridge grid pattern.
- b. Break down typical building massing to relate to the historic character and mass of 19th century Cambridge; and to prevent a monolithic appearance.
- c. Maximize sunlight available to Lechmere Canal.

- d. Avoid the creation of alleyways along property lines visible from any public view.
4. Streetwalls and Setbacks
    - a. Maintain existing streetwalls. This may be accomplished by principal front wall plane setbacks and cornice lines, which are consistent with existing buildings on the same block or neighboring blocks.
  5. Silhouette
    - a. Tall buildings should be shaped to be increasingly slender and broken down in scale toward the top.
    - b. Buildings should be of a tripartite architectural configuration consisting of base/middle/expressive top.
    - c. Buildings must provide animated silhouettes that enliven views from the open space system, and surrounding areas.
  6. Details
    - a. Development bordering the public domain must be rich in architectural details, pay special attention to the ground plane and Silhouette, and incorporate appropriate imagery depending on location
    - b. Overall form and individual elevations must be designed to emphasize human scale and presence through the use of properly proportioned features.
  7. Materials
    - a. New buildings should be mainly faced with an authentic New England water-struck brick, with elegant highlights and subtle embellishments of granite and limestone.
    - b. A granite base treatment (to match that used at Lechmere Canal) is needed to relate to the public open space system and thoroughfares.
    - c. Use limestone or granite string courses, lintels, sills and trim to soften and refine the brick facades. Flemish bond or American bond with headers every 6 or 7 courses is recommended.
    - d. Use the highest quality of materials at the pedestrian level of all buildings.
  8. Awnings
    - a. Provide lateral-arm awnings, color coordinated with adjacent development.
  9. Transparency of Ground Floor Spaces
    - a. Maximize visibility and transparency through ground floor retail.
    - b. All tenant improvements visible from public open spaces and thoroughfares are subject to design review as part of the PUD process.
  10. Balconies
    - a. Provide human-scaled balconies at appropriate locations overlooking the public open space systems. Balconies must be detailed so that they are inviting, highly useable and relate directly to the character of the adjoining open space.
  11. Penthouse
    - a. All mechanical penthouse and other projections should be architecturally integrated within the overall form and individual elevations of the building.

12. Color

- a. Use warm and inviting color in all buildings.

13. Windows

- a. Use operable windows and traditional masonry openings and articulated fenestration.
- b. Avoid strip windows.

14. Art

- a. Individual works of art and their settings must work together in a harmonious, subtle way.
- b. Artists should work on basic architectural elements of the building instead of individual free-standing objects.

15. Signs

- a. Signs should be designed to fit well on the buildings, to be legible but not overpowering, and to complement other elements applied to buildings, such as awnings, canopies, or artwork.

**19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]**

Objective	Indicators
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods</li> <li>• Consistency with established streetscape</li> <li>• Compatibility with adjacent uses</li> <li>• Consideration of nearby historic buildings</li> </ul>
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inhabited ground floor spaces</li> <li>• Discouraged ground-floor parking</li> <li>• Windows on ground floor</li> <li>• Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways</li> <li>• Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access</li> </ul>
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location/impact of mechanical equipment</li> <li>• Location/impact of loading and trash handling</li> <li>• Stormwater management</li> <li>• Shadow impacts</li> <li>• Retaining walls, if provided</li> <li>• Building scale and wall treatment</li> <li>• Outdoor lighting</li> <li>• Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)</li> </ul>
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management</li> <li>• Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service</li> <li>• Efficient design (LEED standards)</li> </ul>
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional use focused on existing campuses</li> <li>• Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed</li> <li>• Preservation of historic structures and environment</li> <li>• Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities</li> </ul>
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing as a component of large, multi-building development</li> <li>• Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families</li> </ul>
Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development</li> <li>• Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks</li> <li>• Provide wider range of activities</li> </ul>