



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: March 1, 2022

Re: **PB-364, Cambridgeside PUD Amendment 1 (Minor)**

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Background

The Special Permit for the CambridgeSide Planned Unit Development (PB-364) was granted by the Planning Board on December 22, 2020. This plan involves retaining the core part of the mall building and constructing four new buildings around its perimeter, attached to the mall and fronting First Street, Cambridgeside Place, and Land Boulevard. It also involves improvements to Lechmere Canal Park (which is owned by the City, but maintained by private abutters) and the creation of new open spaces along First Street. Each building, along with surrounding site improvements, are subject to design review and approval by the Planning Board (see Urban Design Report).

The Special Permit authorized development in two phases:

1. The Initial Phase Buildings are 20 Cambridgeside Place and 60 First Street, containing all office/laboratory development. These buildings were approved by the Planning Board and are currently under construction. Improvements to Lechmere Canal Park (which is owned by the City, but maintained by abutting property owners) are also part of the Initial Phase, to be completed concurrently with the buildings, but have not yet been reviewed by the Planning Board. The Permittee is working with a community advisory committee and will submit plans for review at a later time.
2. The Subsequent Phase Buildings are 80 First Street and 150 Cambridgeside Place, which include office/laboratory development along with mixed-income housing. The Permittee, New England Development, has submitted plans for these two buildings for the Board's design review and approval.

Requested Amendment

Along with the design review package, New England Development is currently seeking a Minor Amendment to approve a reconfiguration of the two Subsequent Phase building sites and the allocation of Gross Floor Area (GFA) and uses across those two sites in accordance with Condition 2.c.ii of the PB-364 special permit. The proposed amendment would reverse the building footprints so that the commercial building would be located in the middle of the block, next to the commercial building at 60 First Street, and the new residential building would be located at the corner of First Street and Cambridgeside Place.

Criteria for Granting Minor Amendments

Per the general PUD provisions in Section 12.37 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Board determines whether changes to the Final Development Plan may be approved as minor amendments. The following guidance is provided in zoning:

(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.

Condition 2 of Special Permit PB-364 (Approved Development Program) also provides the following guidance:

Any change to the configuration of the two Subsequent Phase building sites, or to the allocation of GFA and uses across those two sites, may be approved during the design review process as a Minor Amendment pursuant to Condition #15 of this Decision if the Board finds that such change will not negatively impact the residential component of the Project.

If the Board determines that the changes are minor, then the Board may approve the minor amendment on the affirmative vote of five Planning Board members.

Comments on Proposed Amendment

As noted above, the reconfiguration of uses within the Subsequent Phase of development was anticipated in the Special Permit Decision. It was also discussed by the Planning Board during the special permit hearings, at which some Board members suggested that the residential building might be more successful if located at the corner of the site instead of being located between two commercial buildings. From a housing perspective, the corner appears to be a more appropriate location for residential use because it allows for more separation and a clearer distinction between residential and commercial buildings. This will also result in more light and better views for the units. The design implications of this change are discussed further in the Urban Design Report.

The heights of the buildings, in their respective locations, would be unchanged, so the residential building would have the taller height previously permitted for the commercial building, and vice versa. No changes to the aggregate development program are proposed, except it appears the Publicly Beneficial Open Space will increase by about 1,000 square feet due to the reconfiguration of spaces along First Street.

Dept. of Public Works (DPW) has reviewed the Minor Amendment application and has no additional comments on the proposal than those provided to the Board for the original PUD special permit. DPW staff will work with the Applicant as the designs progress to Building Permit review to ensure that all comments and standards are addressed.

Conditions

If the Planning Board approves the change as a Minor Amendment, no conditions of the special permit would be affected, except that the Site Development Program would be revised to reflect the shifting of GFA and uses across the two development sites, and the amended Site Development Plan would reflect the altered building footprints and open space.