



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT COMPANY
One Broadway, 9th Floor, Suite 200
Cambridge, MA 02142

P: 617-253-4900
www.mitimco.org

March 16, 2021

Via Email

City of Cambridge Planning Board
City Hall Annex
344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: Modifications to Volpe Site Plan / Special Permit Application (PB #368)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

After the submission of the Volpe Exchange Parcel Special Permit Application (PB #368) on February 4, 2021, MIT met with staff from several City departments, including Community Development (CDD), Traffic, Parking & Transportation (TP&T), and the Department of Public Works (DPW). During these meetings, staff provided additional feedback pertaining to the Site Plan as presented in the Special Permit.



Based on that feedback, and in response to a few specific questions and concerns, MIT has made a few noteworthy changes to the Site Plan as originally submitted (See Figure 1). These changes, including an overview of the benefits these changes provide, are outlined below.

Relocated Left-Turn into Site from Broadway

The original Site Plan proposed a left turn from Broadway directly into the garage of C2. The City was concerned about removing a section of the Broadway median, which would have required removal of four to five mature trees, and the queuing this would create. The City was also concerned about creating a potential conflict point for bikes/pedestrians along the northern sidewalk. The modified plan now shifts the left-turn into the Site to Fifth Street and relocates the C2 garage ramp to Fifth Street. This change saves the referenced mature trees and reduces the potential bike/pedestrian conflict points by removing the C2 garage ramp from Broadway. See Figure 2.

Added Kendall Way Connection to Broadway

The original proposal included a pocket park at the south end of Kendall Way, thereby limiting access from Broadway to Kendall Way to only bikes and pedestrians. The City was concerned that the original plan only allowed truck access to the C2 and C3 loading docks from Potter Street, and that this would create conflicts with bikes and pedestrians both along Kendall Way and when crossing Broad Canal Way. In response, MIT has removed the Kendall Way pocket park and has introduced limited access for service vehicles by allowing right-turn to and from Broadway onto Kendall Way. This revision allows for truck activity to be dispersed, and

importantly, by providing limited access to the Site at Kendall Way, reduces the number of trucks that will travel across Broad Canal Way en route to Potter Street. This will improve the viability of Broad Canal Way as a vibrant, active shared street where people feel comfortable roaming freely, from side to side and from one retailer to another, without worrying about conflicts with service vehicles. See Figure 3.

Improved Alignment at Potter Street/Fifth Street Intersection

In the original Site Plan, the northern leg of Fifth Street intersected Potter Street at an angle that caused an awkward alignment through the Potter Street intersection. The City expressed concern over this alignment, particularly as it pertained to sight lines and pedestrian/bicycle visibility and safety when moving through the intersection. MIT has since revised the plan to arc the intersection at the southbound side of Fifth Street, thereby improving the awkward alignment. MIT continues to work with TP&T to identify other treatments (e.g., raised intersections or all-way stop control) that would slow vehicle speeds and improve this intersection further. These changes will greatly improve bicycle and pedestrian safety at this intersection. See Figure 4.

Addition of Two-Way Cycle Tracks at Potter Street

The baseline plan as submitted contemplated a shared lane for vehicle/bicycle use along Potter Street. Based on feedback from City Staff, and in response to specific concerns from the City's Bicycle Committee and Pedestrian Committee, MIT has revised the plan to include a two-way cycle track on Potter Street. This is a significant improvement and will make Potter Street a safer and highly desirable route for those traveling east-west, from Third Street to the Kittie Knox Bike Path and beyond. This change also eliminates potential conflicts between bikes and trucks, as Potter Street will be used by service vehicles entering the new Volpe Transportation Center (the GSA site). This change aligns with the 2015 Cambridge Bicycle Plan that shows Potter as a secondary route. See Figure 5.

Completed Cycle Tracks Along Fifth Street

The baseline plan contemplated two, one-way cycle tracks on Fifth Street between Broadway and Potter. The remainder of the street, between Potter Street and Binney Street, was presented with only sharrows (shared lanes between vehicles and cyclists). Both the City and the Bike/Pedestrian Committee expressed concerns over this design, and in response, MIT has created a revised plan that shifts the sidewalks along the westerly line of Fifth Street to create the space necessary to provide a two-way cycle track along the entire stretch of Fifth Street from Binney to Broadway. This shift also eliminates on-street parking currently situated along the easterly sideline of Fifth Street. This creates a safe north-south connection for cyclists coming to and moving through the site. Moreover, this change creates a seamless route for those looking to safely get to and from the Kendall Square MBTA station and further promotes Volpe as a multi-modal destination. We understand that this portion of Fifth Street is subject to the rights of other private parties, and we note that implementing the revised plan may be subject to the approval of such other parties, as necessary. See Figure 6.

Reduction of On-Street Parking

The City and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committees expressed concern over the amount and location of on-street parking originally proposed, particularly along Broad Canal Way. MIT has since revised the site plan to reduce the amount of on-street parking. Importantly, the new plan identifies these spaces as “active curb” and “short-term loading” spaces – not simply “parking” spaces. These spaces are anticipated to be utilized by many different user groups, including those needing handicap-accessible parking, ride hailing services, delivery drivers such as “Uber Eats” vehicles, and others in need of short-term parking for other purposes. These spaces will create an “active zone” as opposed to traditional on-street parking, and will provide more inclusive access to the site for all users. See Figure 7.

MIT appreciates the feedback from City staff and the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Committees, and believes that cumulatively, these changes make for a better, more highly connected site plan that prioritizes the safety, comfort and enjoyment of bicyclists and pedestrians coming to and through the site. A site plan showing all of these changes is included herewith. See Figure 8.

MIT continues to have ongoing conversations with City staff and others on other issues, including the accommodation of bus and shuttle stops along Fifth Street and the final configuration of the two-way cycle tracks on Potter Street and Fifth Street. Any potential changes to the site plan as a result of these conversations will be included in the Final Development Plan.

Sincerely,



Michael K. Owu
Managing Director, Real Estate
MIT Investment Management Company



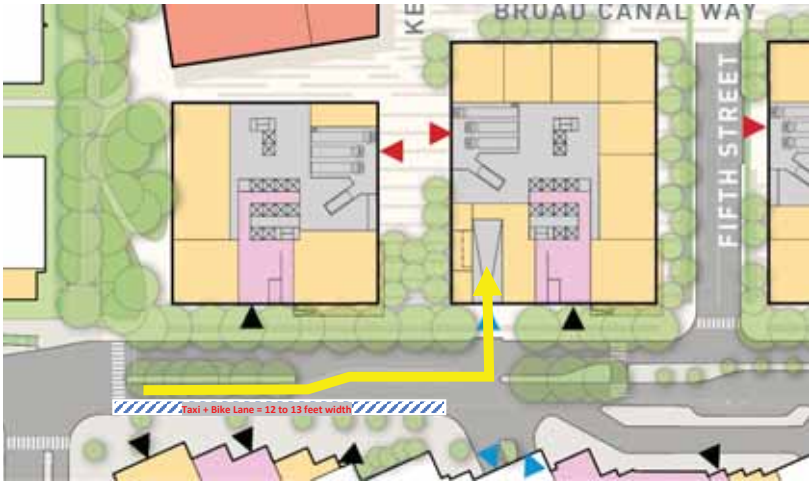
Figure 1

Baseline

Site Plan per Special Permit Application

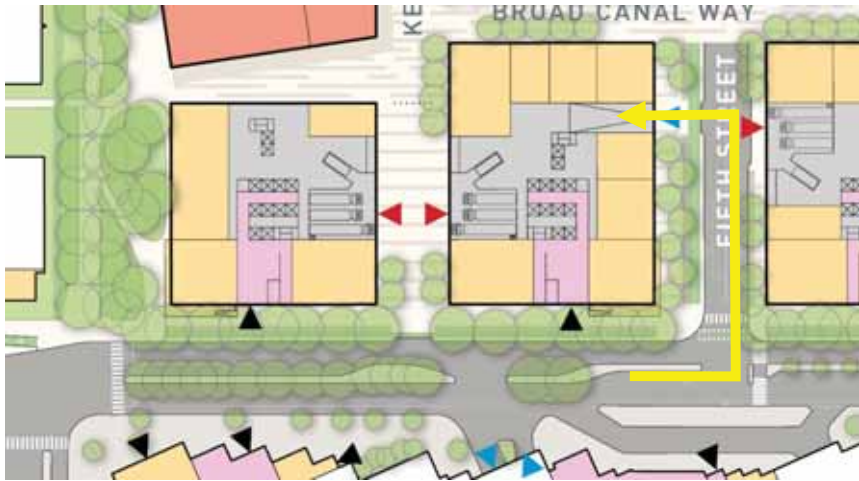
Figure 2

Topic: Left-Turn into C2



1 – Baseline

EB exclusive left-turn lane into C2 garage ramp, aligned with Green Garage driveway; Median island reduced.

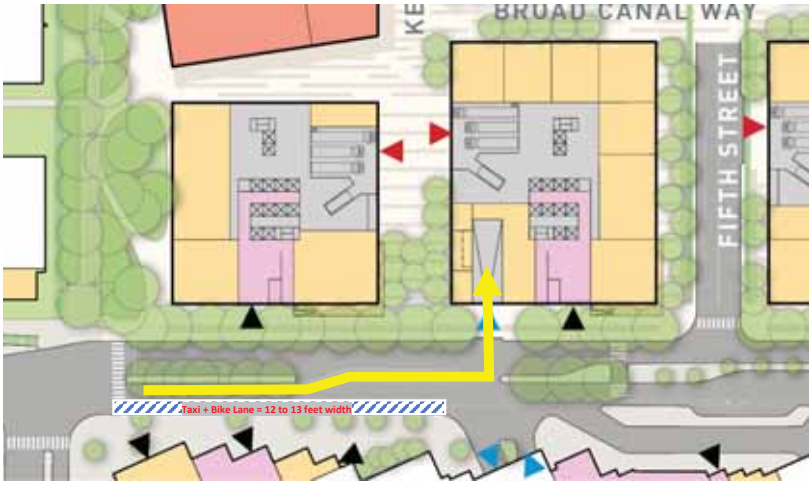


2 – Proposed: Left-Turn at Fifth Street

Eastbound left-turn lane at Fifth Street intersection; New break in median island, crosswalk relocation.

Figure 3

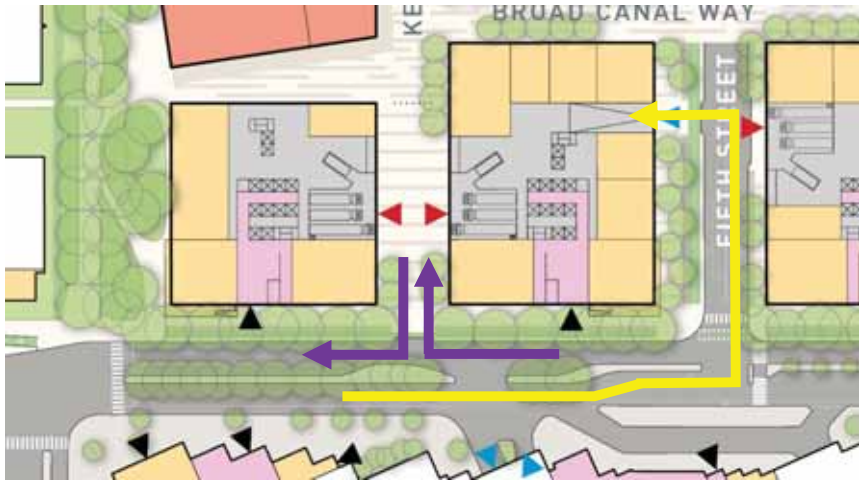
Topic: Kendall Way Connection to Broadway



1 – Baseline (Ped/Bike only)

Kendall Way connection to Broadway for peds and bikes only.

Parking ramp on Broadway.



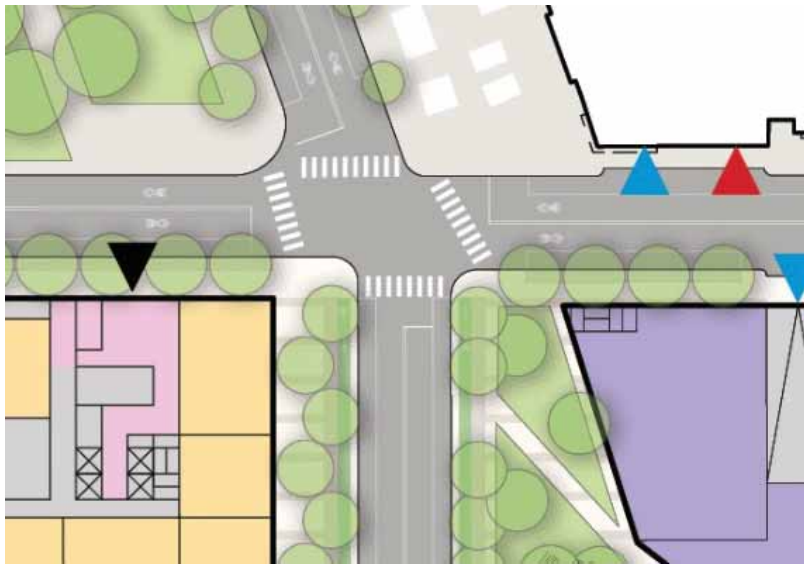
2 – Proposed: Limited Access

Right-in/Right-out for trucks only at Broadway/Kendall Way Intersection.

Parking ramp on Fifth Street.

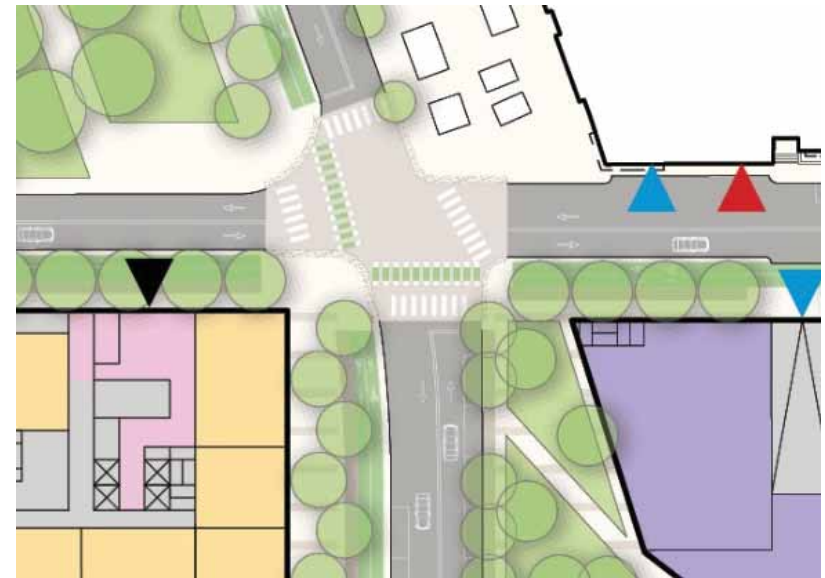
Figure 4

Topic: Potter Street at Fifth Street Intersection Alignment



1 – Baseline

Fifth Street misalignment. Pedestrian/Bicycle crossings not visible at the intersection.

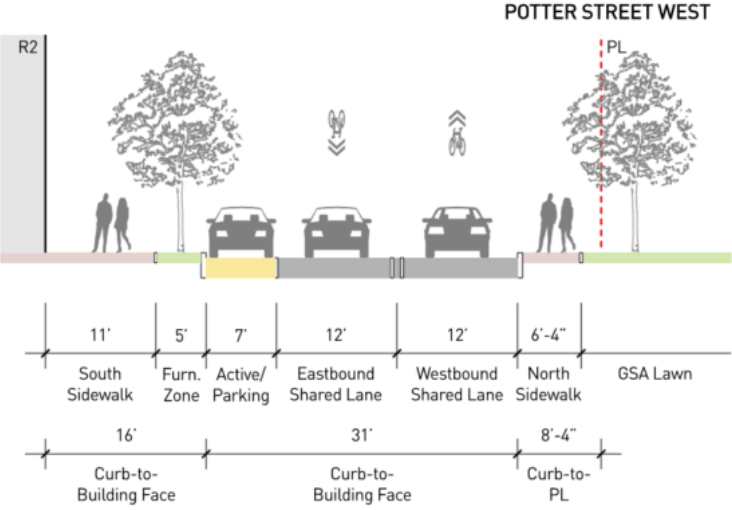


2 – Proposed

Introducing an arc / curve to Fifth Street south leg. Raised intersection treatment and all-way stop control for higher visibility of pedestrians and bicyclists and to slow down vehicles.

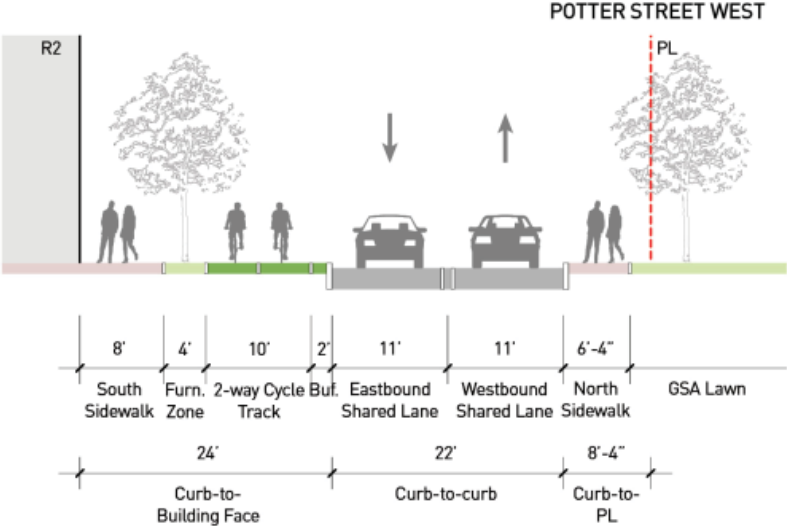
Figure 5

Topic: Potter Street Bicycle Accommodations



1 – Baseline

Potter Street with sharrows

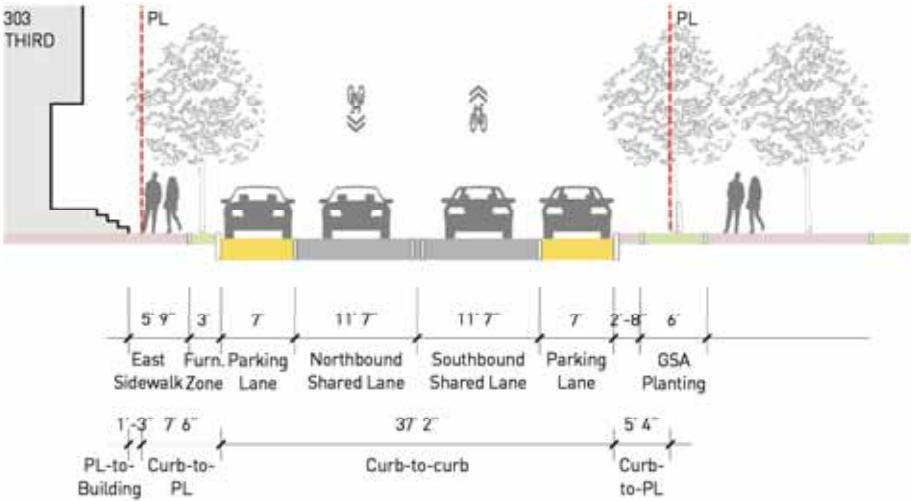


2 – Proposed

Potter Street with two-way cycle track

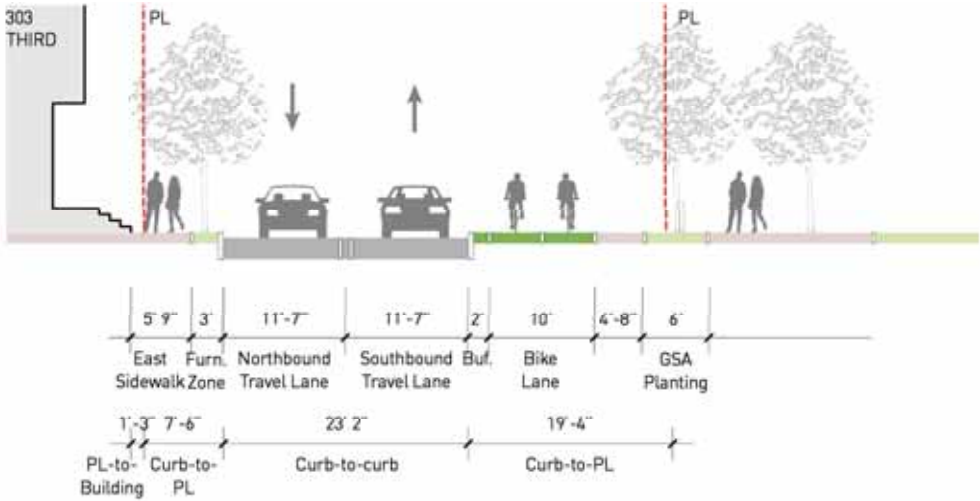
Figure 6

Topic: Fifth Street Bicycle Accommodations



1 – Baseline

Fifth Street with sharrows



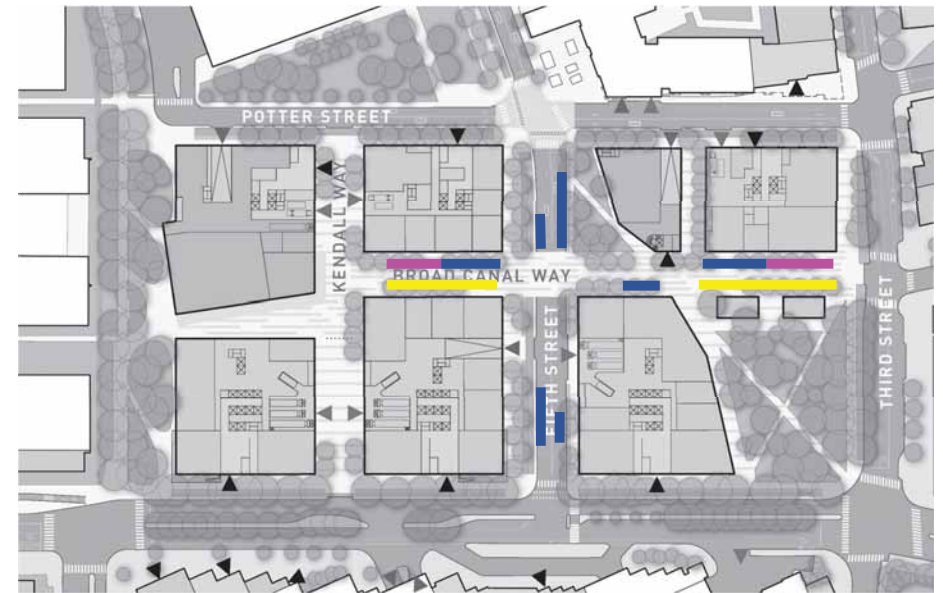
2 – Proposed

Fifth Street with two-way cycle track

Figure 7

Topic: Curb Use Plan

- Legend:**
- On-Street Parking
 - Short-Term Loading
 - Active Curb



1 – Baseline

55 spaces for on-street parking
27 spaces for active curb
= 82 total street spaces

2 – Proposed

6 spaces for on-street parking
22 spaces for short term loading
13 spaces for active curb
= 41 total street spaces



Figure 8

Updated Site
Plan