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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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IRAM FAROOQ  
Acting Assistant City  
Manager for Community  
Development

To: Planning Board  
From: Jeff Roberts, Land Use and Zoning Planner  
Date: July 21, 2015  
Re: **Minor Amendment Request (Phasing) – PB# 179, North Point**

**Background**

The North Point Planned Unit Development (PUD) is an approved 20-building, 45-acre, 5+ million square foot development project planned to be built out through 2030. The Final Development Plan was first approved by the Planning Board in 2003, and the Planning Board granted Major Amendments (proposed by the current developer, HYM Investment Group) in 2012 and 2014.

HYM is currently seeking Minor Amendment approval for relatively modest changes to the phasing of the development as it is currently permitted. The PUD special permit that governs the project contains the following language regarding changes in phasing:

[Condition 12-e.] The Phases of development approved in Condition #5 above may be modified as a Minor Amendment from the Planning Board. In requesting such a Minor Amendment the Permittee shall submit the following information:

- (i) A revised Appendix I reflecting the proposed reallocation of Gross Floor Area and uses.
- (ii) A revised Appendix II.
- (iii) A narrative description of the purpose of the requested change, its impact on other Conditions of this Decision, and an analysis of the implications of the change on traffic, on the rate at which residential Gross floor Area will be constructed, on the provision of parks, roadways and utilities, and on the viability of the resulting urban environment should subsequent phases not be built or delayed for a significant period of time.

In approving the revised Phasing Plan, the Planning Board shall find that the alternate arrangement of uses and Gross Floor Area continues to provide for a viable and coherent residential and commercial community at each stage of the Master Plan's development, continues to bring adequate park and other infrastructure on-line at appropriate times, including necessary traffic mitigation measures, and will otherwise continue to advance the intent and objectives of this Decision in approving the original Phasing plan.

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The Planning Board could approve this Minor Amendment with a simple vote as a matter of general business; it does not require a new hearing or special permit.

### **CDD Staff Comments**

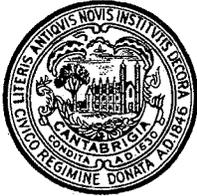
The proposed changes to the phasing are relatively minor. Overall, the changes would make the project phasing more consistent with the phasing that was approved in the original 2003 Final Development Plan. The proposed phasing still reflects the rationale that each phase should be self-supporting, promoting mixed-use clusters of buildings rather than scattered sites. The proposed plan also reflects the principle that transportation mitigation measures and other public improvements will advance in sequence with the phases of development based on their anticipated traffic impacts. The traffic analysis attached to the minor amendment request indicates that the relative impacts of each phase are not expected to change substantially. Comment from the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department is also provided.

One of the more significant changes is the advancing of Site “I,” which is envisioned to be the area’s main retail plaza. The rationale for advancing that site is that it better aligns with the planned construction of the new Lechmere MBTA station. The corresponding change is to move Site “H” back into Phase 2. Although that site is separated from the rest of the Phase 2 buildings, there is a practical issue in that it is encumbered by existing MWRA facilities that will need to be relocated, and the Applicant does not control the timeframe for that work.

Another more significant change requested is the ability to advance Phase 1B sites before all of Phase 1A is complete. It is reasonable to provide flexibility to allow development to proceed on Phase 1B sites, given that three of out of five Phase 1A sites are already built, the Lechmere MBTA station development is proceeding, and the project has already experienced significant delays. Moreover, as proposed, applicable transportation mitigation requirements would need to be completed prior to the completion of any Phase 1B building, even if Phase 1A is not complete.

Staff is also generally supportive of the proposed minor changes to the transportation mitigation requirements, but has the following comments for consideration by the Board:

- The added requirement for a Hubway station at the base of the newly created vertical connector (recently dedicated as the “Brian P. Murphy Memorial Staircase”) is positive, but staff believes that this should be installed as soon as is feasible, ideally before the next development site goes into construction.
- Moving back the requirement for pedestrian/bicycle improvements to the Gilmore Bridge is a concern, given that the new staircase connector will likely attract more pedestrian and bicycle activity. However, it is understood that those improvements are not entirely within the Applicant’s control and require state approval. The proposal to initiate a study of potential improvements is a favorable alternative, but it would be most helpful to initiate that study as soon as possible so that creative and inspiring ideas can be developed that might help to accelerate the process of seeking approval at the state level. This study could perhaps be done before issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the next new phase of development, regardless of whether it is in Phase 1A or 1B.



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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Cambridge Planning Board  
**From:** Joseph Barr, Director   
**Date:** July 21, 2015  
**Re:** NorthPoint Application for Minor Amendments to PUD Development Plan (PB#179)

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The Cambridge Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TP&T) reviewed NorthPoint's June 26, 2015 Application for a Minor Amendment to the Special Permit #179.

The Minor Amendment requests to change the order that specific parcels in the NorthPoint PUD are allowed to be constructed. The change will specify what residential and commercial buildings (including the retail square) may proceed in the next stage of Northpoint development. There will be no change to the approved uses, gross floor area, parking spaces, heights, or open space permitted for the PUD.

An analysis completed by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB), dated June 18, 2015 demonstrated that the Minor Amendment will have no substantial changes to the daily, morning or evening peak hour vehicle trip generation compared to NorthPoint's 2014 amended PUD Master Plan, and no changes in trip generation for the full PUD build-out. TP&T was comfortable with the level and quality of analysis completed by VHB and supports the requested Minor Amendment.

Regarding the PUD Special Permit condition for pedestrian/bicycle improvements to the Gilmore Bridge, TP&T is comfortable with the request to extend the timing for the improvements given it will need MassDOT review and approval, but we look forward to working with NorthPoint on initiating the feasibility study and making progress on this item as soon as possible.

Lastly, TP&T wants to thank Northpoint for their ongoing coordination and cooperation with us on this evolving and exciting Northpoint district.