

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: November 19, 2020

Subject: Canal District Kendall (PUD-CDK) Zoning Petition

Recommendation: The Planning Board recommends **ADOPTION**, with modifications.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

The Planning Board (the “Board”) held public hearings on September 15 (original petition) and November 10 (refiled) on a Zoning Petition (the “Petition”) by BMR-Third LLC c/o BioMed Realty, L.P. (the “Petitioner”) to Amend the Zoning Map of the City of Cambridge by creating a new overlay district entitled “Planned Unit Development at Canal District Kendall” in the area between Third Street and Second Street and north of Broad Canal, and to amend Article 13.000 of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge by creating a new Section 13.200 “Planned Unit Development at Canal District Kendall” (PUD-CDK).

The PUD-CDK District would allow additional development on a vacant site identified as 585 Third Street and a site identified as 330 Third Street or “Gas Transfer Station Parcel” (GTS), subject to review and approval by the Planning Board pursuant to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) special permit. The Petition presents two development alternatives: one in which the GTS site is relocated and the development parcel encompasses both 585 Third Street and the GTS site, and one in which the GTS site is not relocated and a lesser amount of development is allowed only on 585 Third Street. In both scenarios, an arts and culture space must be provided in the new development, the required size of which is scaled depending on the amount of gross floor area permitted in the ultimate development plan.

At the September 15 hearing, following a presentation by representatives of the Petitioner and testimony from the public and City staff, several Planning Board members expressed general support for the Petition but also raised a number of questions and made suggestions to simplify the proposal and improve the zoning language. One of the main concerns expressed was that the Petitioner showed an appealing development proposal in the scenario with the GTS site included, but did not fully explain or illustrate development outcomes that did not include the GTS site. Some Board members asked for more explanation of how this proposal would benefit the whole community. The Planning Board voted to continue the hearing to a future date, and instructed City staff to work with the Petitioner on addressing these concerns in a new proposed draft.

At the November 10 hearing, representatives of the Petitioner provided a revised Petition text and made a presentation responding to the questions raised at the previous hearing. The Planning


Board heard testimony from City staff and the public on the new materials and discussed the merits of the revised Petition.

Overall, Board members indicated that the revised zoning language was an improvement over the original Petition. The Board moved to transmit a favorable recommendation on the Petition, with the majority of Board members agreeing that the proposed development scale and density would be appropriate for this location in Kendall Square, the redevelopment of this long-vacant site would be beneficial to the area, and the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Center with public space at the ground floor would be a benefit to the larger community. However, the Board's recommendation contains the following stipulations:

- The Board recommends substitution of the revised zoning text for the original Petition, but recommends that Community Development Department staff and the City Solicitor's office conduct a review of the revised text to provide additional improvements and clarifications to portions of the language.
- The Board does not recommend zoning that would authorize development solely at 585 Third Street without relocation of the GTS facility. While the Petitioner showed an appealing development outcome on both the 585 Third Street and GTS sites, a scenario excluding the GTS site does not appear to be equally desirable for the City.

On this motion, the Planning Board voted 7-1 to transmit a favorable recommendation to the City Council.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

  
Mary Flynn, Vice-Chair.