

August 20, 2018

Liza Paden

Cambridge Community Development Department
344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139

Reference: Termeer Plaza - Special Permit #141, Planning Board Design Review Process on behalf of the owner, Kendall Square Corporation

Dear Liza:

On behalf of the owner, Kendall Square Corporation, attached please find revised design drawings for the Special Permit #141, redesign of Henri A. Termeer Square in East Cambridge. These revisions are based on comments received from the Cambridge Planning Board on August 7, 2018. We have summarized the comments from the Board as we understand them as follows:

- **Staff – Ms. Bogolin:** Additional details needed on materiality and layout of new Zamboni storage structure. Additional details needed on plant species, location, and inclusion of larger tree canopy. Additional details needed on granite color, texture, height.
- **Mr. Sienewicz:** The Skybowl is an important placemaking feature unique to the site and should be maintained.
- **Ms Flynn:** Design feels cold, relocation of Zamboni structure is positive, opens up opportunity to utilize Skybowl feature more comprehensively, likes Skybowl being enclosed, feels more of a contemplative space for a sculpture honoring Henri Termeer. Likes planting palette, materials, giving tree in reflecting pool, but Skybowl should be maintained.
- **Mr. Cohen:** In support of the site improvements. Design retains the essence of original design but opens up the site to a larger, more textured interesting space. The idea of the Skybowl is nice but in practice it's not utilized. Appreciates the generosity of the Termeer Family in improving the park in honor of Henri Termeer.
- **Mr. Bowie:** In support of the site improvements. Not a fan of the park in the winter except for ice skating rink.
- **Staff – Ms. Paden:** Development Consultation and Certificate of Compliance issued in 2000 stated that there was a discussion about the safety of having an enclosed space on the site and that it acted as more of a barrier than a contemplative space.
- **Mr. Russell:** Appreciated the boldness of the design with specific features not found elsewhere (Kayak, canal, skating rink, etc.) Skybowl feels disconnected. At the time of the original design, the activity to the north of the site was industrial and unappealing. The original intent was to have a strong feature that blocks the view of the north and focused the community activity to the south.
 - In support of the concept's refined material palette. Appropriate use for honoring a man who is a visionary, responsible, courageous in his leadership and impact.
 - Has issues with the retaining wall. It seems forbidding. Likes to retain more of the Skybowl enclosure. Doesn't think it makes sense to cut into the mound and put up a retaining wall. The mound should either be kept as is with existing trees or take it out completely. Likes

August 20, 2018

Liza Paden

Page 2 of 4

Reference: Special Permit #141 – Planning Board Design Review Process

- trees adding on the side of lawn area, doesn't add to tree canopy but has nice structure. Regret the loss of the skybowl but feel that the site would work better.
- Likes water feature for sound and different use.
- Work with MVVA to incorporate a special feature, something more exciting and creative.
- **Mr. Cohen:** Is there community input on this project?
- **Mr. Corning (Stantec):** Yes, East Cambridge Planning Team was approached and are mostly in support of the improvements, including some local residents.
- **Mr. Eduardo (Artist):** Met with security guards during initial search for sculpture location. Guards mentioned having to check the area every hour or so because Skybowl is enclosed and can compromise a person's safety. We maintained the spirit of the Skybowl and original design and thoughtfully opened up the site to make it feel more welcoming and providing access to the whole park year-round. Original design worked at the time but after interviewing people who live and work there today, we thought the improvements provided a great benefit to the community.
- **Mr. Sienewicz:** Suggests meeting with MVVA to get their opinion on the improvements. Likes the material and plant palette but design feels like another park and not as special as it should be.
- **Mr. Carlone (City Council Member):** When design was originally discussed, he was not in support of the Skybowl, feels that it was insular, and no one will use it. Worked in the area and have not seen many use of the Skybowl. Appreciates improvements to the site and opening up the site. Skybowl feels as though it was dropped from the sky rather than growing from the Earth. Improvements takes the spirit of the Skybowl, opens it up and makes the site one place. Plaza always felt as if it was two worlds.
- **Ms. Flynn:** Reiterates meeting with MVVA. Dislikes the lawn area, feels plain. Addition of the pathway is positive, can trees be added instead of lawn? There's already enough lawn space in Cambridge.
- **Staff – Ms. Paden:** This is a revision to the approved design and a Certificate of Compliance is needed for project to move forward. Planning Board does not seem ready to vote on a decision tonight. There was an approved design when the PUD was granted, and there were design guidelines with it, when the planning board approves the improvements for a Certificate of Compliance, it means the site improvements complies with original design intention outlined in the PUD/guidelines.
- **Mr. Russell:** Another meeting will need to be scheduled to review revised design improvements and a decision will be made.
- **Mr. Cohen:** Appreciates the Skybowl as an art feature but it is not getting enough utility and enjoyment from the community. This shouldn't be about abstract art but should instead be about community benefit. There will be more community use and benefit with improvements.
- **Mr. Russell:** One of the original intent of the design is to create a space for office workers in the area to go and have a different experience, to have an opportunity to lie in the grass and look up at the sky. Recommends contacting MVVA to discuss improvements and how to make it better.

Planning Board recommends meeting with MVVA to review design. Design improvements need to comply with PUD/Design Guidelines to be approved for Certificate of Compliance.

August 20, 2018

Liza Paden

Page 3 of 4

Reference: Special Permit #141 – Planning Board Design Review Process

Following is additional information related to the proposed design and a summary of the proposed design changes since the August 7 Planning Board hearing.

Skybowl – We understand that the sky bowl is a unique landscape element in the City, and our modifications to the skybowl were not taken lightly. However, the feature does suffer from a severe lack of use, it is isolated from the rest of the park space, is difficult to maintain and is very tough to monitor for security. The proposed design removes the southern third of the skybowl and preserves the northern two-thirds. The skybowl area becomes physically and visually connected to the rest of the park. Sculptural lawn panels replace the removed portion of the skybowl, increasing green space in the park by 10% and creating usable green space which currently does not exist in the Park. The proposed design modifications, materials and new fountain/reflecting pool will provide for a more connected and inviting area to be used year-round.

Michael Van Valkenburg Associates (MVVA) – Bill Kane, BioMed Realty, met with MVVA on August 8, 2018 to review the design and discuss opportunities to collaborate on a revised design for the Park. Mr. Kane was informed that MVVA believes that no changes should be made at all, with the exception of the addition of the sculpture, and wished him luck with the project.

Community Input – The project team has reached out to all Stakeholders for the project, including the Ownership group, Operations (programming, maintenance, and security), residents and users, all of whom are supportive of the changes and view the proposed design as an important upgrade to the Park. We have also reviewed the project with the East Cambridge Planning Team, who was very supportive of the changes.

Proposed Design Changes since the August 7, 2018 Planning Board Hearing:

- The larger retaining wall that was proposed to be cut into the berm on the northern portion of the skybowl has been eliminated.
- The seat wall at the perimeter of the fountain area has been modified to include a sloping back that responds to the side slope of the Skybowl.
- Fountain has been simplified to a single fountain in the center, with a single channel to the proposed reflecting pool.
- Granite banding has been added in the pathways to reflect the former footprint of the Skybowl
- The design has incorporated 'wave' landforms into the lawn that reflect the former footprint of the Skybowl and 'dissipates' as it moves south. The wave profile will be reflected in the granite seat wall along the paths, providing a sculptural element to the lawn spaces.
- Tree enclosure along the south side of the fountain area – An important part of the original design intent was to provide a sense of enclosure for the fountain area. The design is proposing a row of trees in the new lawn area to achieve this. They would have fine textured foliage and be limbed up to provide a line of sight to the fountain area and sculpture.

August 20, 2018

Liza Paden

Page 4 of 4

Reference: Special Permit #141 – Planning Board Design Review Process

We look forward to presenting the proposed changes and continuing our discussion with the Planning Board on August 28, 2018.

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments or require any additional information.

Regards,

Stantec Consulting Services, Inc

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Corning". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert Corning

Senior Principal

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Attachment: Design Package – 12 copies

Cc: Pablo Eduardo
Bill Kane – BioMed Realty
Belinda Termeer - Henri A Termeer Tribute Committee