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**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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Community Development

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Community Development

To: Planning Board  
From: Jeff Roberts, Land Use and Zoning Planner  
Suzannah Bigolin, Urban Design Planner  
Date: January 13, 2015  
Re: **1-25 East Street (Avalon Bay) Major Amendment – Second Hearing**

**Background**

On Tuesday, the Board will hold its second public hearing on a proposed Major Amendment to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Special Permit for sites on East Street, Glassworks Avenue, Leighton Street and Monsignor O'Brien Highway, in the North Point Area (see map). Zoning requires two public hearings to be held on a Major Amendment to a PUD special permit before the Planning Board reaches a final decision.

The current PUD special permit authorizes development according to a phased master plan, summarized below:

- "Phase 1" – New residential building at One Leighton Street with 426 units and some ground-floor retail, completed in 2008.
- "Maple Leaf" – Adaptive reuse of an existing industrial building, originally envisioned as office but later amended to 104 residential units, completed in 2014.
- "Phase 2" – New residential building at 1-5 East Street with 341 units, some ground-floor retail and publicly beneficial open space, not yet in construction.

The proposed Major Amendment would authorize a reduction in the size of the approved Phase 2 development to include about 300 residential units, and a change to the approved massing of the building from a single building with varying heights to two buildings with a reduced uniform height of about 70 feet.

In October, the Planning Board voted a favorable Preliminary Determination on the Major Amendment (see attached), allowing the proposal to move to a second hearing. Since the last hearing, staff has met with the Proponent on several occasions to continue to refine the project. More detail regarding building elevations has now been provided and further refinements are still being considered by the architect.

**Planning Board Actions**

The following page summarizes the special permits being requested and the findings the Planning Board must make to grant the requested permits. That is followed by some comments from CDD staff. Also attached are a copy of the Planning Board's Preliminary Determination and excerpts of zoning text applicable to the special permits and findings.

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<b>Requested Special Permits</b>	<b>Summarized Findings</b> (see appendix for zoning text excerpts)
Major Amendment to PUD Special Permit (Section 12.37)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proposal conforms to general and specific development controls in the zoning ordinance; conforms to policy plans and guidelines for the area; has benefits to City that outweigh adverse effects. (See <a href="#">Section 12.35.3</a>)</li><li>• Proposal contains revisions to the Development Proposal required by the Planning Board. (See <a href="#">Preliminary Determination</a>)</li></ul>
Major Amendment to Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proposed amendment will not have substantial adverse impacts on traffic. (See <a href="#">Section 19.25.1</a>)</li><li>• Proposed amendment remains consistent with Citywide Urban Design Objectives. (See <a href="#">Section 19.30</a>)</li></ul>

### **CDD Staff Comments**

#### Overall Planning and Zoning

As explained in the CDD commentary submitted at the first public hearing and discussed in the Planning Board’s Preliminary Determination, the proposed development plan remains broadly in conformance with the planning objectives for the North Point area. The PUD as a whole still meets the citywide and district-wide objectives of increasing housing supply, locating development near transit, and incorporating ground floor retail and open space to improve and activate the public realm. Although the number of housing units would be less than what is currently approved, it is still more than the number originally approved in the PUD, which was increased by the prior amendment converting the Maple Leaf Building from commercial to residential. The proposed changes will not impact the anticipated traffic generated by the project.

The proposal remains in conformance with the development controls for the district, as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance. As discussed in the previous CDD memo, the original PUD authorized an increase in height above the 85-foot limit for a portion of the building, pursuant to a special waiver included in the zoning. Reducing the height means that such a waiver would no longer be necessary, and the project would be brought into greater conformance with the 85-foot zoning height limit.

The key issue for the Board’s consideration is the urban design impact of the proposed changes to the overall site design and building massing. Some significant factors to consider include visual impacts of the changes in massing, circulation patterns, and spatial relationships among the proposed residential uses, retail, open space and abutting uses such as nearby residential buildings and the planned MBTA Lechmere Station headhouse. These issues are discussed further below, and the applicable Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines are attached.

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Because the special permit authorizes development according to a conceptual master plan, the Major Amendment would approve the changes to the conceptual massing and site design proposed for the Phase 2 project. As is typical of PUD projects, detailed building design would be subject to ongoing design review by staff after the special permit is granted but before a building permit is issued. Design review by the Planning Board could also be required prior to issuance of a building permit. If mutually agreeable to the Planning Board and the developer, that requirement could be incorporated into the Conditions of the Major Amendment.

### Site Planning and Open Space

At the urban scale, breaking the building into two forms is clearly a major positive move. The separation of the building into two volumes, a rectangular form and a courtyard form, creates greater clarity and simplicity in the design composition. The result is the establishment of two urban blocks that are much more closely tied to the historic development patterns of East Cambridge and a thoughtful mid-block connection aligned with Amelia Earhart Finger Park.

By creating two separate buildings, a sense of enclosure and definition of open space is achieved, and the courtyard building enables potential programming of areas such as residential amenity spaces. In this regard, what was lacking in the original proposal is addressed through the creation of a place where public and private spaces are more clearly distinguished. Staff has some concerns as to whether or not the courtyard building is as welcoming as earlier proposals due to its siting closer to the MBTA viaduct and use of a 4' retaining wall to create a grade change between private and public open space. The quality of the transition and retaining wall requires further consideration with these issues in mind.

What was previously a formal urban plaza associated with the retail node and headhouse now incorporates more landscaping and a greater setback from the viaduct. Additional landscaping is supported as a means to soften the extensive hardscape associated with the headhouse. However, staff would like to ensure sufficient space is provided for outdoor seating (potentially associated with a café), the multi-use path, bicycle parking and other streetscape furniture.

The conceptual landscape plans propose to activate the space underneath the viaduct through development of a fitness zone and programmed activities area. This represents a tremendous opportunity for the project, and more broadly the city, to demonstrate the possibilities for the viaduct. Staff welcomes further investigation of this approach, with an emphasis of integrating play and activity into permanent landscape elements rather than relying on temporary features.

Circulation patterns propose to lead pedestrians and bicyclists through the site to the Amelia Earhart Finger Park and the new MBTA headhouse. These paths require some revision in terms of ease of travel, comfort and safety. Notably, the multi-use path should have a more seamless flow, instead of requiring cyclists to make 90 degree turns. Connections to adjacent sidewalks also need to be made more direct. Because of its relationship to other public circulation and transportation routes, the exact design of the spaces under and around the viaduct, including the alignment and width of the multi-use path, will need to be examined in more detail by City staff and possibly the MBTA. For instance, if the previously envisioned sidewalk along the edge of Monsignor O'Brien Highway is to be eliminated, the multi-use path may need to be widened to safely accommodate both pedestrian and bicycle activity.

While the courtyard building evokes a traditional built form model, it does interrupt connections and sightlines to the Amelia Earhart Finger Park, particularly for pedestrians heading west on Monsignor O'Brien Highway. Initially, staff felt that there should be some gesture towards recognizing this connection and making the open space more inviting and attractive. Some suggestions included shortening the western wing of the courtyard building, aligning the building in parallel to the Finger Park, or introducing cutouts and passages through the building and courtyard. In response, the design team proposed a wood-clad cutout to open this perspective up to pedestrians at the ground level. Whether or not this creates the direct sightlines and sense of openness desired would be best shown in additional perspective views.

### Building Height, Scale and Massing

The visual impacts of the proposed massing are evident in the presentation materials, which compare the proposed design to the original proposal. The simple yet elegant solution of two discrete buildings creates a more modest scale of built form that is easily understood and embedded within the site context, including adjacent North Point Buildings "S" and "T", and the historic fabric of East Cambridge.

While there have been some questions about the effect of the reduced height on long range views, particularly looking south on Monsignor O'Brien Highway, the lower building actually facilitates greater interest in the skyline. Rather than a taller slab building blocking the towers behind, the 70' height creates a layered skyline effect. Notches cut out along the roofline create more interest at the pedestrian level. Furthermore, the six-story height has a more human scale along Glassworks Avenue and Leighton Street, and a more comfortable height also frames the open space areas without being overbearing.

### Streetwall and Edge Treatments

It is important to ensure that both buildings are well articulated and modulated so that they are interesting and welcoming when viewed from close range at the human scale and more broadly. Since the last hearing, further work has been integrated into the design including creation of notches along the roofline for roof decks, as well balconies on the southern facades. These architectural elements, combined with the series of glassy bay windows, create a strong vertical rhythm, which is consistent with the *Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines*. Staff would like to see further advancement of these ideas in the next phase of the design review process, with particular emphasis on celebration and announcement of building entries, and the architectural character of the ground floor.

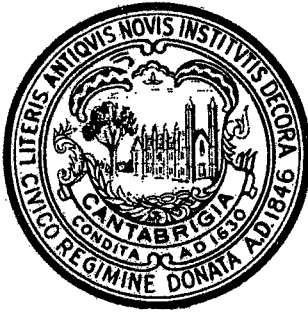
While the *Design Guidelines* suggest residential stoops and porches on neighborhood streets, these will only be provided internal to the courtyard. As an alternative, the architect is proposing two shared lobby entries on Glassworks Avenue and a series of seating nooks along the sidewalk that intend to create the presence of a stoop. It is anticipated that through further detailed design these streetscape features can support the level of street activity advanced by the *Design Guidelines* and have a corresponding relationship to the residential stoops at Buildings S and T. As per the *Design Guidelines*, lobbies should generally be spaced no more than 75 feet apart, thus additional building entries should be given further

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consideration. Some further work may also be necessary to ensure that entries relate as directly as possible to crosswalks and expected pedestrian desire lines through the site.

It is also important to give attention to the streetscape impacts of the closed-off nature of the courtyard building along Monsignor O'Brien Highway and the lack of activating elements, such as public entries and /or foyer spaces. In this regard, and as a way to further activate the fitness zone, more thought should be given to creating an active street presence here, and breaking down the physical and visual barriers created by the retaining wall and landscaping. In ongoing design review, staff would like to see continued detailed design of the ground floor, including the courtyard building, and how this can be softened and activated so that it does not appear as a barrier and is more welcoming to pedestrians.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

## NOTICE OF PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION FOR PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Case Number:	175 Amendment #4 (Major)
Location of Premises:	1-5, 7-13, 23 East Street; 1 Leighton Street
Zoning:	North Point Residence District / PUD-6
Applicant:	Archstone North Point II LLC 51 Sleeper Street, Suite 750, Boston, MA 02110
Owner:	Same as Applicant
Original PUD Special Permit Filed:	September 23, 2002
Prior Amendments Filed:	December 26, 2007 (Minor); May 4, 2010 (Major); December 7, 2011 (Major)
Application Date:	September 4, 2014
Date of Planning Board Public Hearing:	September 16, 2014 continued to October 28, 2014
Date of Planning Board Determination:	October 28, 2014
Summary of Proposal:	Major Amendment to Planned Unit Development Special Permit (Sections 13.70 and 12.35) and Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20) to reduce Gross Floor Area, dwelling units and height for development on a component parcel.
Determination:	<b>APPROVED, with conditions and requests for modification.</b>

Copies of this Preliminary Determination and plans, if applicable, are on file with the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board: Jeffrey C. Roberts JCR 11/20/2014

For further information concerning this Preliminary Determination, please contact Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, or lpaden@cambridgema.gov.

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS  
NOV 13 2014  
PM 3 31

## **DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED**

### Application Documents and Supporting Material

1. Letter to the Planning Board from Kevin J. Renna, Goulston & Storrs, dated 7/15/14 with attached drawings by Cube3 Studio dated 7/15/14
2. Letter to the Planning Board from Steven L. Gorning, Development Manager, AvalonBay Communities, Inc., dated 9/4/14 with Special Permit submission dated 9/4/14
3. Letter to the Planning Board from Michael J. Roberts, Senior Vice President – Development, AvalonBay Communities, Inc. dated 10/14/14, containing letter to the Planning Board from Kyu Sung Woo, AIA, no date, with photographs of models and site plan revision.
4. Northpoint II plans dated 10/28/14, submitted at the Planning Board meeting of 10/28/14

### City of Cambridge Documents

5. Memo to the Planning Board from CDD staff, dated 9/10/14
6. Memo to the Planning Board from CDD staff, dated 10/21/14
7. Extension of time for Preliminary Determination to October 28, 2014

### Other Documents

8. Letter to the Planning Board from Barbara Broussard, East Cambridge Planning Team, dated 9/12/14

## **APPLICATION SUMMARY**

The Planned Unit Development (PUD) Special Permit PB #175, granted in 2002, authorized mixed-use development on three sites pursuant to the PUD-6 Zoning District regulations. A total of 932,815 square feet of development was permitted in a combination of new construction and rehabilitation and adaptive use of an existing structure. A Major Amendment granted in 2010 authorized a reduction in required parking and use of a shared parking facility for multiple sites. A subsequent Major Amendment granted in 2011 authorized a change in the program of uses to convert space originally permitted for office use to residential use.

The approved PUD has been developed in phases. The construction of a residential building (known as “Phase I” or “One Leighton Street”) with 426 dwelling units, 434 parking spaces, and ground-floor retail was completed in 2006. The conversion of an existing commercial building (known as the “Maple Leaf Building” or “Avalon Lofts”) to residential use with 104 dwelling units was completed in 2014.

The final phase of development (known as “Phase II”) is authorized under prior permits to be developed as a residential building containing 341 dwelling units and ground-floor retail with a general height of 85 feet and a portion of the building authorized to reach 143 feet on the eastern end. The application proposes to reduce the size of the residential building to a maximum height of 70 feet and up to 300 dwelling units, with ground floor retail still included. At a pre-application meeting on July 22, 2014, as a matter of general business, the Planning Board made a determination that such a change to the Final Development Plan should be reviewed as a Major Amendment to the PUD Special Permit.

The Applicant has shown different design alternatives for 70-foot residential structures on the “Phase II” site. The Board acknowledges that the Major Amendment Application requires the Board to make a preliminary determination, and that after making such a determination, the Applicant will prepare a more detailed Final Development Plan Amendment for review at a subsequent public hearing prior to making a final decision.

## **FINDINGS**

Based on a review of submitted Application materials and testimony given at the public hearing, the Board makes the following findings with reference to the criteria for preliminary approval of a Planned Unit Development Proposal as set forth in Article 12.000 of the Zoning Ordinance.

- (1) The Development Proposal conforms with the General Development Controls set forth in Section 12.50, and the development controls set forth in the specific PUD district in which the project is located.*

The Board finds that, on the whole, the proposed Amendment remains consistent with the General Development Controls set forth in Section 12.50 and the development controls of the PUD-6 zoning district. The proposed modifications to the “Phase II” residential building will not cause any violation of the district zoning requirements.

- (2) The Development Proposal conforms with adopted policy plans or development guidelines for the portion of the city in which the PUD district is located.*

With the proposed Amendment, the Final Development Plan will remain broadly consistent with the Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines and the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study, subject to further review of the detailed site and building design as set forth in the Conditions of this Determination.

- (3) The Development Proposal provides benefits to the city that outweigh its adverse effects.*

The Board finds that, on the whole, the proposed Amendment will continue to provide the benefits envisioned in the original approved Final Development Plan and subsequent approved amendments and will not cause additional adverse effects. However, as set forth in



the Conditions of this Determination, additional examination of the detailed site and building design will be required to ensure that the amended design continues to achieve the urban design objectives of the City in a manner that is comparable or superior to the original proposal.

*In making this determination the Planning Board shall consider the following:*

- (a) *The quality of the site design, including integration of a variety of land uses, building types, and densities; preservation of natural features; compatibility with adjacent land uses; provision and type of open space; provision of other amenities designed to benefit the general public*

The basic parameters of the Development Proposal remain largely unchanged by the proposed amendment; however, detailed site and building design will be reviewed in greater detail prior to approving an amended Final Development Plan.

- (b) *Traffic flow and safety*

The proposed change in the residential building design and massing will not cause any change in traffic flow nor will cause any safety hazard.

- (c) *Adequacy of utilities and other public works*

The proposed Amendment will not cause any additional strain on utilities, and all conditions for such infrastructure currently applicable to the Final Development Plan will continue to apply.

- (d) *Impact on existing public facilities within the city*

The proposed Amendment will not cause any additional impact on public facilities, and all conditions for such infrastructure currently applicable to the Final Development Plan will continue to apply.

- (e) *Potential fiscal impacts*

The proposed modifications are not expected to result in fiscal impacts on the City.

## DETERMINATION

Section 12.35.2 of the Zoning Ordinance requires that the Planning Board make a preliminary determination with regard to a Major Amendment to a PUD application. The Planning Board may make a preliminary approval, potentially with conditions and subject to additional review and final approval of a special permit at a subsequent public hearing, or deny the application for a Major Amendment.

It is the Planning Board's Determination to **APPROVE** the Development Proposal for the requested Major Amendment, subject to the following conditions and requests to be addressed in the preparation of a Final Development Plan.

1. In further developing the design of the residential site and building, particular attention should be given to the impact of reducing the structure or structures to a uniform 70-foot building height. The Board will need to review how the proposed height and scale will correspond to adjacent buildings and contribute to the visual composition of residential buildings in the North Point district when viewed from many vantage points, especially in the case of the adjacent One Leighton Street building that will be of a significantly larger scale than the "Phase II" building as currently proposed.
2. Additional detail should be provided on the design of ground-floor residential unit entries.

Voting in the affirmative to approve the Development Proposal were Planning Board Members H. Theodore Cohen, Steven Cohen, Hugh Russell, Tom Sieniewicz, Steven Winter, and Associate Member Catherine Preston Connolly, appointed by the Chair to act on the case, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board.

For the Planning Board,



Hugh Russell, Chair.

A copy of this Preliminary Determination #175 – Amendment #4 (Major) shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk.

## Approval of a PUD Final Development Plan

**12.35.3** Approval of the Development Proposal shall be granted only upon determination by the Planning Board that the Development Proposal:

- (1) conforms with the General Development Controls set forth in Section 12.50, and the development controls set forth for the specific PUD district in which the project is located;
- (2) conforms with adopted policy plans or development guidelines for the portion of the city in which the PUD district is located;
- (3) provides benefits to the city which outweigh its adverse effects; in making this determination the Planning Board shall consider the following:
  - (a) quality of site design, including integration of a variety of land uses, building types, and densities; preservation of natural features; compatibility with adjacent land uses; provision and type of open space; provision of other amenities designed to benefit the general public;
  - (b) traffic flow and safety;
  - (c) adequacy of utilities and other public works;
  - (d) impact on existing public facilities within the city; and
  - (e) potential fiscal impact.

**12.36.4** ... Approval of the Final Development Plan shall be granted only upon determination by the Planning Board that the Final Development Plan meets the evaluation criteria set forth in Section 12.35.3 and contains any revisions to the Development Proposal required by the Planning Board.

## **Project Review Special Permit – Traffic Impact Findings**

**19.25.1** Traffic Impact Findings. Where a Traffic Study is required as set forth in Section 19.24 (3) above the Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area as analyzed in the Traffic Study. Substantial adverse impact on city traffic shall be measured by reference to the traffic impact indicators set forth in Section 19.25.11 below.

In areas where the Planning Board determines that area-specific traffic guidelines have been established in the Ordinance, the Board recognizes written agreements between project proponents and the City dealing with transportation mitigation strategies.

**19.25.11** Traffic Impact Indicators. In determining whether a proposal has substantial adverse impacts on city traffic the Planning Board shall apply the following indicators. When one or more of the indicators is exceeded, it will be indicative of potentially substantial adverse impact on city traffic. In making its findings, however, the Planning Board shall consider the mitigation efforts proposed, their anticipated effectiveness, and other supplemental information that identifies circumstances or actions that will result in a reduction in adverse traffic impacts. Such efforts and actions may include, but are not limited to, transportation demand management plans; roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities improvements; measures to reduce traffic on residential streets; and measures undertaken to improve safety for pedestrians and vehicles, particularly at intersections identified in the Traffic Study as having a history of high crash rates.

The indicators are: (1) Project vehicle trip generation weekdays and weekends for a twenty-four hour period and A. M. and P.M. peak vehicle trips generated; (2) Change in level of service at identified signalized intersections; (3) Increased volume of trips on residential streets; (4) Increase of length of vehicle queues at identified signalized intersections; and (5) Lack of sufficient pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The precise numerical values that will be deemed to indicate potentially substantial adverse impact for each of these indicators shall be adopted from time to time by the Planning Board in consultation with the TPTD, published and made available to all applicants.

## Project Review Special Permit – Urban Design Findings

**19.25.2 Urban Design Findings.** The Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the city as set forth in Section 19.30. In making that determination the Board may be guided by or make reference to urban design guidelines or planning reports that may have been developed for specific areas of the city and shall apply the standards herein contained in a reasonable manner to nonprofit religious and educational organizations in light of the special circumstances applicable to nonprofit religious and educational activities.

### **19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives**

The following urban design objectives are intended to provide guidance to property owners and the general public as to the city's policies with regard to the form and character desirable for new development in the city. It is understood that application of these principles can vary with the context of specific building proposals in ways that, nevertheless, fully respect the policies' intent. It is intended that proponents of projects, and city staff, the Planning Board and the general public, where public review or approval is required, should be open to creative variations from the detailed provisions presented in this Section as long as the core values expressed are being served. A project need not meet all the objectives of this Section 19.30 where this Section serves as the basis for issuance of a special permit. Rather the permit granting authority shall find that on balance the objectives of the city are being served. Nor shall a project subject to special permit review be required to conform to the Required Building and Site Plan Requirements set forth in Section 19.50.

Further indicators of conformance with these policy objectives shall be found in planning documents and plans developed for specific areas of the city or the city as a whole, to the extent that they are not inconsistent with the objectives set forth in this Section 19.30. These documents include the *Harvard Square Development Guidelines*, the *Central Square Action Plan*, the *Central Square Development Guidelines*, the *North Massachusetts Avenue Urban Design Guidelines Handbook*, the *University Park at MIT Urban Design Guidelines*, the *North Point Policy Plan and Design Guidelines*, the *Cambridge Institutional Growth Management Plan*, the *East Cambridge Riverfront Plan*, the *Eastern Cambridge Plan*, the *Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines*, the *Alewife Revitalization*, *Alewife Urban Design Study Phase II* and its Draft update of 1991, and *Toward a Sustainable Future: Cambridge Growth Policy Document*.

**19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods</li> <li>• Consistency with established streetscape</li> <li>• Compatibility with adjacent uses</li> <li>• Consideration of nearby historic buildings</li> </ul>
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inhabited ground floor spaces</li> <li>• Discouraged ground-floor parking</li> <li>• Windows on ground floor</li> <li>• Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways</li> <li>• Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access</li> </ul>
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location/impact of mechanical equipment</li> <li>• Location/impact of loading and trash handling</li> <li>• Stormwater management</li> <li>• Shadow impacts</li> <li>• Retaining walls, if provided</li> <li>• Building scale and wall treatment</li> <li>• Outdoor lighting</li> <li>• Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)</li> </ul>
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management</li> <li>• Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service</li> <li>• Efficient design (LEED standards)</li> </ul>
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional use focused on existing campuses</li> <li>• Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed</li> <li>• Preservation of historic structures and environment</li> <li>• Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities</li> </ul>
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing as a component of large, multi-building development</li> <li>• Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families</li> </ul>
Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development</li> <li>• Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks</li> <li>• Provide wider range of activities</li> </ul>

*Also refer to Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines (attached).*

## General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit

**10.43** *Criteria.* Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:

- (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or
- (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or
- (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or
- (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or
- (e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and
- (f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

# PART VII - EASTERN CAMBRIDGE DESIGN GUIDELINES

## A. GOALS

This section lists the goals that guided the development of these guidelines.

### North Point

- Create a lively new mixed-use district with strong visual and pedestrian connections to East Cambridge. The new district should be a place to live, work, and enjoy a variety of parks and public spaces.
- Create a new east-west main street through the center of North Point, connecting East Cambridge with the future MDC Park
- Extend First Street into North Point to connect existing and new neighborhoods.
- Create a major new public park easily accessible from the relocated Lechmere T station, First Street, and O'Brien Highway.
- Create a new retail edge at the relocated Lechmere T station and at the intersection of First Street, Cambridge Street, and O'Brien Highway that will complement, not compete with, existing retail on Cambridge Street.

### Volpe Center

- Create new housing south of Binney Street to link existing neighborhoods and Kendall Square.
- Create a major new public park facing Binney Street, surrounded by residential and retail uses.
- Strongly encourage retail uses on Third Street and Broadway to create active street life in Kendall Square and to create a lively connection between the neighborhoods and Kendall Square.
- Create a mix of housing and commercial uses along Broadway.
- Create a transition in land uses and heights from Broadway to the residential neighborhoods.

### Transition Areas

- Encourage new residential development and conversions of existing buildings to residential use but allow existing commercial uses to remain.
- Use finely graduated heights to create transitions in scale from Kendall Square to residential neighborhoods.
- Create better pedestrian and bicycle connections between residential neighborhoods, Kendall Square, Central Square, and the Charles River.



## Neighborhoods

- Preserve and enhance neighborhood character.
- Maintain the walkable scale and character of residential blocks.
- Support and strengthen businesses on Cambridge Street, Broadway, and Main Street.

## B. BUILT FORM

### 1. Street-level Uses and Design

The following guidelines apply primarily to large-scale development sites. For these larger sites, developers should clearly identify the intended use and size for each block. For infill development, new buildings should contribute to the character of the existing street.

- a. **Residential blocks** are blocks that are primarily lined with housing. Corner retail is allowed and even encouraged in some of these blocks, depending on the zoning.

New development on residential blocks should be consistent with the following principles:

- i. Create a consistent residential edge, with small setbacks for stoops, porches, and front gardens.
- ii. Buildings should be designed with individual units and front doors facing the street, including row house units on the lower levels of multi-family buildings. Where residential lobbies face the street, doors should generally be spaced no more than 75 feet apart.
- iii. Blank walls should be avoided along all streets and pedestrian walkways.

- b. **Mixed-use blocks** are blocks that include housing and/or commercial uses, with a mix of active uses strongly encouraged on the ground floor.

New development on mixed-use blocks should be consistent with the following principles:

- i. Street-level facades should include active uses such as:
  - Residential entrances

- Shops, restaurants, and cafes
  - Services for the public or for commercial offices such as fitness centers, cafeterias, daycare centers, etc.
  - Community spaces, such as exhibition or meeting space
  - Art exhibition space/display windows
  - Commercial lobbies and front doors
- ii. Office/ R&D uses are discouraged from occupying extensive ground-floor frontage. Where these uses do occur, they should occupy no more than 200 to 250 feet of continuous frontage along public streets.
  - iii. Major entrances should be located on public streets, and at or near corners wherever possible. Entrances should relate well to crosswalks and pathways that lead to bus stops and transit stations.
  - iv. Transparent materials and interior lighting should be used to maximize visibility of street level uses. Ground floor facades should be at least 30 to 50 percent transparent surface to permit a clear view from the sidewalk to the interior space of the building.
  - v. Blank walls should be avoided along all streets and pedestrian walkways.
- c. **Retail blocks** are blocks that include both commercial and residential uses on upper floors, with retail strongly encouraged on the ground floor. Retail blocks are intended to have a high volume of pedestrian traffic, and to support public activity throughout the day and evening.

New development on retail blocks should be consistent with the following principles:

- i. At least 75 percent of the street frontage should be occupied by retail uses, including cafes and restaurants.
- ii. Major entrances should be located on public streets, and on corners wherever possible. Entrances should relate to crosswalks and pathways that lead to bus stops and transit stations.
- iii. Transparent materials and interior lighting should be used to maximize visibility of street level uses. Ground floor facades should be at least 50 to 75 percent transparent surface to permit

a clear view from the sidewalk to the interior space of the building.

- iv. Blank walls should be avoided along all streets and pedestrian walkways.

## **2. Building Height and Orientation**

### **a. Major public streets**

These include a new main street at North Point; Msgr. O'Brien Highway; Cambridge Street; Broadway; Binney Street; Third Street between Broadway and Binney; First Street (including the extension into North Point), and Main Street.

- i. Set back any portion of the building above 65 feet by at least 10 feet from the principal facade.
- ii. For retail and office uses, build to the lot line or provide small setbacks (5 to 15 feet) from the right-of-way for café seating, benches, or small open spaces. Setbacks used exclusively for ornamental landscaping are not permitted but may be allowed to accommodate street furniture, street trees, or generous sidewalks. Awnings and canopies are encouraged to provide shelter and enliven the ground floor facade.
- iii. For residential uses, provide small setbacks (5 to 10 feet) for stoops, porches, and front gardens.
- iv. Driveway turnaround and vehicle drop-off facilities are strongly discouraged along public streets.
- v. Locate loading docks on side streets or service alleys, and away from residential areas.
- vi. In use, design, and entry, orient buildings towards corners.

### **b. Neighborhood Streets**

These include existing residential streets in East Cambridge, Wellington/ Harrington, Area IV, and the Transition Area, as well as new residential streets at North Point and the Volpe Center.

- i. Set back any portion of the building above 45 feet by at least 10 feet from the principal facade. Where appropriate, design these setbacks to include balconies and rooftop terraces.
- ii. For residential uses, provide small setbacks (5 to 15 feet) for stoops, porches, and front gardens.
- iii. Provide individual entrances to ground floor units along the street.
- iv. Locate courtyards and open spaces to maximize sun exposure.

### **c. Park Edges**

These are streets facing a public park.

- i. The height of the principal façade of buildings surrounding a park should be no greater than 1/3 the width of the park. For additional height above this limit, buildings should be stepped back by at least ten feet from the principal facade. Greater height without setbacks may, however, be appropriate at corners or in specific locations to create architectural variety. The buildings must conform to overall district height limits in the zoning.
- ii. Locate buildings to minimize shadows on the park, especially in the afternoon.
- iii. Surround public parks with uses that create an active environment throughout the day and evening and increase safety for park users, such as:
  - Buildings should be designed with individual units and front doors facing the street, including row house units on the lower levels of multi-family buildings. Where residential lobbies face the street, doors should generally be spaced no more than 75 feet apart.
  - Shops, cafés and other public uses that enliven the street.

### **d. Other Streets**

- i. If the prevailing height of surrounding buildings is 65 feet or less, establish a cornice line that matches the prevailing height of surrounding buildings. For additional height above the cornice line, provide a setback of at least 10 feet from the principal façade.
- ii. For retail and office uses, build to the lot line or provide small setbacks (5 to 15 feet) from the right-of-way for café seating, benches, or small open spaces. Setbacks used exclusively for ornamental landscaping are not permitted.
- iii. For residential uses, provide small setbacks (5 to 10 feet) for stoops, porches, and front gardens.

- iv. Locate loading docks on side streets or service alleys, and away from residential areas.

### **3. Scale and Massing**

- a. For new development sites, the block size should be similar to the existing East Cambridge blocks. An attempt should be made to reduce the distance that pedestrians have to walk to a crosswalk in order to safely cross the street.
- b. Buildings should avoid continuous massing longer than 100 feet facing residential streets and 200 feet facing mixed-use and retail streets. If massing extends beyond this length, it should be made permeable and visibly articulated as several smaller masses using different materials or colors, vertical breaks, bays, or other architectural elements.
- c. In addition to the above limits, buildings should reflect a rhythm and variation appropriate to the urban context. For example, this can be achieved by expressing bay widths of 16 to 25 feet along residential streets and 25 to 50 feet along mixed-use and retail streets.
- d. Buildings should have a clearly expressed base, middle, and top. This may be achieved through changes in material, fenestration, architectural detailing, or other elements.
- e. Use variations in height and architectural elements such as parapets, cornices and other details to create interesting and varied rooflines and to clearly express the tops of buildings.
- f. Emphasize corners using taller elements such as towers, turrets, and bays
- g. Taller buildings should be articulated to avoid a monolithic appearance: Taller buildings should be point towers instead of slabs, and should have smaller floor plates instead of larger floor plates.

### **4. Architectural Character**

- a. Residential
  - i. Create varied architecture and avoid flat facades by using bays, balconies, porches, stoops, and other projecting elements.
  - ii. Maximize the number of windows facing public streets to increase safety.
- b. Commercial

- i. Create varied architecture and avoid flat facades by using recessed or projected entryways, bays, canopies, awnings, and other architectural elements.
- ii. Vary the architecture of individual buildings to create architecturally diverse districts.
- iii. Where buildings are set back at upper stories, lower roofs may be used as balconies, balustrades, and gardens.

## **5. Environmental Guidelines**

- a. Design buildings to use natural resources and energy resources efficiently in construction, maintenance, and long-term operation of the building. Buildings on a lot should be sited to allow construction on adjacent lots to do the same. Compliance with *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design* (LEED) certification standards and other evolving environmental efficiency standards is encouraged.
- b. Rooftop mechanical equipment should be sited and shielded to protect neighboring uses from noise impacts.

## **6. Parking**

- a. While underground parking is preferable everywhere, if above ground parking is to be built it should be designed so as not to be visible from public streets or pathways. Above ground structured parking should be lined with active uses (shops, cafes, etc.) along major public streets, or with housing units along residential streets.
- b. Locate vehicular parking entrances on side streets and alleys and provide safe pedestrian access from public streets.
- c. All parking garages must provide direct pedestrian access to the street.
- d. The primary pedestrian exit/access to all garages serving non-residential uses should be to the street or a public area.
- e. Design and locate lighting fixtures in surface parking lots and garages to enhance safety while minimizing light spillover onto adjacent properties.

**C. PUBLIC REALM**

**1. Open Space**

- a. Public open space
  - i. The provision of open space of diverse sizes and use is encouraged to enhance the public environment in the study area.
  - ii. The provision of interconnected series of open spaces is encouraged to provide connections to neighborhoods and to encourage pedestrian movement.
  - iii. Where major new parks are required by zoning, provide programmed, multi-use open space for both recreational and cultural activities.

Area-specific guidelines:

*North Point*

- The major new park required by the zoning code should be located convenient to the Lechmere T station in order to link East Cambridge and future neighborhoods at North Point.
- In addition to the required public open space, the creation of a series of smaller open spaces such as courtyards, parks, playgrounds and gardens located along the central main street is encouraged.

*Volpe Center*

- Use open space to create links between Kendall Square and the residential neighborhoods.

*Transition Areas and Neighborhoods*

- Locate new open spaces to create linkages and connect to existing parks and open spaces, where possible.

- c. Semi-private open space
  - i. For residential development, create semi-private open spaces (e.g. front and rear yards, porches, stoops, and patios) that create a transition from public sidewalks and courts to private interior spaces.  
Design residential courtyards to be visually accessible from streets to enhance safety and activity along the street.



## 2. Streets and Sidewalks

- a. Character
  - i. Use streetscape elements such as trees, benches, signage, and lighting to support active pedestrian uses and to reinforce the character and identity of each district.
  - ii. Design streets to encourage pedestrian and cycle activity, and to control vehicle speed in residential areas.
- b. Where appropriate, establish, preserve and highlight views from public streets and spaces to important civic landmarks such as the Charles River cable-stayed bridge and the clock tower in Kendall Square.
- c. In the design of new streets, provide sufficient pavement width to accommodate on-street parking where appropriate in order to provide short-term parking and to serve local retail.
- d. In the design of new streets, pathways, and parks, provide pedestrian-scale lighting to enhance pedestrian safety.
- e. Refer to the Cambridge Pedestrian Plan and the Cambridge Bicycle Plan for additional guidance on creating a safe and pleasant environment for pedestrians and bicyclists and for guidance on sidewalk width and street trees.

## 3. Connections

- a. Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to future regional pathways (Grand Junction railroad, North Point path).
- b. Provide strong pedestrian, bicycle and visual connections to the Charles River and public parks through view corridors, signage, and/or art installations.
- c. Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to existing and new bus stops and to transit stations including Kendall Square, Lechmere, Community College and North Station MBTA stations. In particular, direct access from the residential neighborhood south of Msgr. O'Brien Highway and Cambridge Street to the new T station, if relocated, is desirable.

### Area-specific guidelines:

#### *North Point*

- Provide continuous pedestrian and bicycle access through the area to the MDC New Charles River Basin Park.
- Provide new pedestrian crossings along Msgr. O'Brien Highway with strong visual connections from existing streets in East Cambridge to new streets at North Point. Ensure that new pedestrian crossings are coordinated with traffic operations on Msgr. O'Brien Highway.
- Provide an attractive landscaped edge between the future Somerville regional bicycle path and the adjacent rail yards.
- Provide landscaped pedestrian/cycle connections from North Point to the future regional bicycle path.
- Provide for improved pedestrian and bicycle connections to and from the Orange Line T station.

*Volpe Center*

- Provide green connections to Broadway and Third Street as extensions of the proposed public park.
- Provide strong pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Broad Canal and the Charles River from the site.

*Transition Areas*

- Provide safe pedestrian crossings at Binney Street.
- Design any new park on Fulkerson Street to maximize visual connections between neighborhoods on either side of the Grand Junction rail tracks.

*Neighborhoods*

- Improve pedestrian, and bicycle connections to the Charles River, particularly across First Street.
- Improve visual, pedestrian, and bicycle connections between the residential neighborhoods on either side of the Grand Junction rail tracks.

## **4. Transportation**

### a. Transit

- i. Preserve rights of way for future Urban Ring project.
- ii. Integrate retail and other public activities with any new transit stations.

- b. Pedestrian
  - i. Provide pedestrian crossings/phases at all major intersections.
- c. Bicycle/other non-motorized vehicles
  - i. Provide bicycle lanes on major streets.
  - ii. Provide sheltered bicycle racks in all new commercial and multi-family residential buildings and in transit stations.
  - iii. Provide bicycle racks along the street in retail areas.