



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: March 8, 2022

Re: **PB-179, Cambridge Crossing (North Point) PUD Amendment 9 (Minor)**

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Background

The North Point Planned Unit Development (PUD) is an approved 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 since that time has been modified several times through the PUD amendment process. The most recent minor amendment (proposed by the current developer, DivcoWest) was granted by the Planning Board on October 15, 2019.

DivcoWest is currently seeking Design Review and Minor Amendment approval to construct two pedestrian bridges between the Parcel H building (450 Water Street) and Parcel G building (350 Water Street), which will increase the Gross floor Area (GFA) associated with Parcels G and H. Both buildings received design approval in 2019, with revisions approved in 2020, and are currently under construction. The proposed amendments to Appendix I of the PUD Special Permit (summarizing the approved Development Program) show that the increase in commercial GFA on Parcels G and H will be offset by a reduction in commercial GFA on Parcel U.

The Board discussed this amendment request on September 21, 2021 and suggested some design revisions. This memo summarizes the key areas of focus associated with the revisions proposed for the requested minor amendment.

Criteria for Granting Minor Amendments

Per the general PUD provisions in Section 12.37 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Board determines whether changes to the Final Development Plan may be approved as minor amendments. The following guidance is provided in zoning:

(12.37.2) Minor amendments are changes which do not alter the concept of the PUD in terms of density, floor area ratio, land usage, height, provision of open space, or the physical relationship of elements of the development. Minor amendments shall include, but not be limited to, small changes in the location of buildings, open space, or parking; or realignment of minor streets.

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If the Board determines that the changes are minor, then the Board may approve the minor amendment on the affirmative vote of five Planning Board members.

Comments on Proposed Amendment

Planning and Zoning

GFA Changes

The addition of the proposed pedestrian bridges would add 1,903 square feet of GFA to Parcel G and 1,210 square feet of GFA to Parcel H. To compensate for this increase without changing the overall GFA allotment of the PUD, the GFA of Parcel U is proposed to be reduced by 4,238 square feet.

Condition 12.c.i of the PB-179 Decision states that a modification of up to 10% of approved GFA for a building is permitted as part of Design Review, but a modification exceeding 10% requires an amendment by the Planning Board. This provision is to allow for flexibility in the design of individual buildings. While the current request only adds a small amount of additional square footage to what was approved for Parcel G during Design Review, the GFA approved during design review had already increased from what was approved in 2016 as part of the most recent PUD Major Amendment Special Permit. The additional GFA now moves the total square footage for Parcel G above the 10% threshold established in the Special Permit, and thus requires an amendment from the Planning Board. The change in GFA on Parcel H is still less than 10% of the initial approval.

Parcel History	Special Permit GFA (2016)	Design Review GFA (2019)	Current Proposal	% Change from Special Permit GFA
Parcel G	410,000 SF	450,895 SF	452,798 SF	+10.4%
Parcel H	345,000 SF	365,110 SF	366,321 SF	+6.2%

Overall, this results in very little change from the previously approved Development Program. Because the increase is being offset by reductions in the commercial GFA of other sites, the project will remain within the total permitted non-residential GFA, but there is little remaining commercial GFA for the remainder of Phase 1 of the development. In order for the Project to meet the condition that at least 50% of the overall development at the end of Phase 1 be residential, significant residential development will need to move forward before the end of Phase 1.

Urban Design

Pedestrian Bridges

At the first hearing, Board members were supportive of the concept of the bridges and connecting the two building, but raised concerns about the following design issues:

- The bridges not being distinctive enough and needing to be extraordinary in this location.
- The bridges appearing clunky and utilitarian.
- Refining the details of the connection between the bridges and the curtainwall.
- Exploring use of interior lighting at the floor level and use of motion sensors.

- Wind impacts at building entrances and the Parcel H Plaza, including possibly working in some wind mitigation into the Level 3 bridge.

In response to the Board's comments, the bridge designs have been substantially altered. The bridges have been given splayed forms, which better relates to the shapes of the Parcel G and H buildings and adds dynamism to the proposal. The splayed forms are accompanied by a more elegant truss system, which adds further visual interest. The spandrels and structure are thinner, and the color change to gray and darker mullions has a significant visual impact. Such moves provide better integration with the two adjoining buildings and more seamless connections with the facades. The design changes are not expected to affect the results and conclusions of the most recent (July 2021) wind study. Annual pedestrian wind conditions are expected to be better than those anticipated at the time the buildings were approved; some uncomfortable conditions remain around the Building G entry plaza. Overall, the bridge designs are much improved. Staff are very pleased with the changes and appreciate the Board's design guidance.

Continuing Review

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends as conditions for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the amendment:

- All materials, specifications, and details.