CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No:	PB #181
Address:	43 Vassar Street
Zoning:	Residence C-3B/MXR Overlay/Institutional Overlay District
Owner/Applicant:	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139
Application Date:	August 9, 2002
Public Hearing Date:	October 1, 2002
Planning Board decision:	November 12, 2002
Date of Filing Decision:	December 30, 2002

Application: Project Review Special Permit, Section 19.20, for a 362,000 square feet research laboratory building for the Brain and Cognitive Sciences Center.

Decision: Granted with conditions.

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Office of the Community Development Department.

Authorized Representative to the Planning Board: Elizabeth M. Paden

For further information concerning this decision please call Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, TTY: 617-349-4621, email lpaden@ci.cambridge.ma.us.

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Address:	43 Vassar Street
Zoning:	Residence C-3B/MXR Overlay
Owner/Applicant:	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139
Application Date:	August 19, 2002
Public Hearing Date:	October 1, 2002
Planning Board decision:	November 12, 2002
Date of Filing Decision:	December 30, 2002

Documents Submitted:

1. Special Permit Application certified complete on 8/19/02 and filed with the City Clerk containing the project description, dimensional table, and plans and drawings, dated 8/9/02.

2. Revisions outlined in a document entitled "Brain and Cognitive Sciences Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, November 12, 2002, Presentation to the Cambridge Planning Board".

Other Documents Submitted:

1. Copy of letter to Kelley Brown of MIT from Susan E. Clippinger, dated 9/3/02.

2. Letter to the Planning Board from John F. Burckardt, PE, dated 9/27/02, from the Cambridge Bicycle Advisory Committee.

3. Letter to the Planning Board from Peter C. Calcaterra, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, dated 10/1/02.

4. Memo to the Planning Board from the Cambridge Bicycle and Pedestrian Committees, dated 10/1/02.

5. Letter to the Planning Board from Susan Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, dated 10/1/02.

6. Letter to the Planning Board from John F. Burckardt, PE, dated 10/2/02

Findings

After review of the application documents and other documents submitted to the Board, testimony taken at the public hearing and review and consideration of the Project Review Special Permit and the general special permit criteria, the Board makes the following findings:

1. ***Conformance with the Cambridge Use and Dimensional Requirements of the Zoning Ordinance***

   a. The Brain and Cognitive Sciences Center will be used for institutional educational purposes, Section 4.33.b.1, which is permitted as of right in the Residence C-3B zoning district.

   b. The Center has a Gross Floor Area of 362,000 square feet, which will be added to a lot containing 87,384 square feet of GFA in existing buildings. The total gross floor area on the lot (of 388,991 square feet) will be 449,384 square feet, resulting in a Floor Area Ratio of 0.40, when 3.0 is permitted.

   c. The maximum height will be 105.5 feet in a district with a 120-foot height limit.

   d. The yard requirements will all be met.

   e. The parking requirement of one parking space per 1,800 square feet of gross floor area will be provided for in existing MIT parking lots and garages.

   f. Four loading bays with off street maneuvering space will be provided on the site.

2. ***Conformance with Article 19.000 – Project Review Special Permit, Section 19.30 - Urban Design Objectives***

   <u>19.31 – Responsive to existing and anticipated pattern of development.</u>

   a. The heights and setbacks are consistent with abutting and nearby properties that have been built-out to the upper limits of their zoning envelope. The Stata Center, approved by the Planning Board as an IPOP Special Permit, is 120 feet in height with setbacks ranging from 25 to 70 feet. The buildings at Tech Square, also approved by the Planning Board as an IPOP Special Permit, have heights ranging between 95 and 120 feet and setbacks of 25 to 74 feet. The Whitehead Institute, in the MXD District, is 96 feet tall and has setbacks between 0 and 80 feet. The adjacent Albany Street Garage is built to the sidewalk and is 44 feet tall.

   b. The BCSC complex has been designed and oriented to be consistent

with the existing and future development on Vassar, Main and Albany Streets. The Main Street edge has perforated openings that create plazas behind the building line of the principal façade; the Vassar Street plaza is the major entry to the complex, facing the MIT campus. It has been designed to permit public passage through the building and around it from Vassar Street to Main Street. Modifications have been made to the Albany and Main Streets façades of the building to make it more visually accessible through additional windows. Landscaping and additional patterning of the surface of the sidewalk has been added to increase the amenities appealing to pedestrians.

c. This is not a mixed-use complex; it is a single-use laboratory building in the Institutional Use Overlay District in an area where the MIT campus can be expected to expand in the future.

d. There are no historic buildings in the area; the applicant has consulted with the Cambridge Historical Commission on the historical resources in the area.

e. The Urban Ring, a multi-use transportation route, may follow the railroad right of way across this site and under the building. The revised plans accommodate all anticipated alternatives for the Urban Ring as well as a segment of the metropolitan bike network. The character of that enclosed transportation corridor under the building is of particular concern to the Board. *The applicant has been requested to work with the Community Development staff as the design of the building advances. The staff has been requested to present a more detailed plan of the space to the Planning Board.*

19.32 – Pedestrian and bicycle friendly development

a. The ground floor will be used as a teaching laboratory along Vassar Street as well as the main offices of all three of the research institutes which comprise the BCSC. There are windows and doors to these uses facing the open space and the sidewalks. Revisions to the original plans have expanded the amount of glass at the ground floor along Main and Albany Streets. The project has three distinct streetscapes and treats them distinctively. The façade on Main Street attempts to unify that urban corridor. The courtyard on Vassar Street mirrors the one under construction at the Stata Center.

b. All of the building's lobbies are oriented to the surrounding streets with significant architectural statements to announce their presence and invite the public in. As this is not a mixed-use commercial building, the ground floor uses are those institutional activities proposed for the building. Nevertheless the building is reaching out to integrate the larger city into an expanding and consolidating campus at this location.

c. The ordinance requires ground floor transparency to be 25-50%. The aggregate street edge of this project is 37%: Vassar Street is 62%, Main Street is 20% and Albany Street is 15%. The ground floor, with the revisions presented, is sufficiently transparent.

d. The building entries are located to encourage walking and ensure safe pedestrian movement. Those entries are celebrated as important features of the building connecting to the larger environment. The Vassar Street entrance off of the plaza adjoins a new crosswalk on Vassar Street connecting with the Stata Center opposite. The Main Street entrance is on a wide plaza opposite the new roadway internal to Technology Square. There is a pedestrian pathway that allows diagonal site crossing between Vassar and Main Streets and a covered pedestrian crossing over the railroad through the building.

e. Extended bike lanes planned for either side of Vassar Street can access the site directly. Bicycle storage for 100 bikes is provided on the Main and Vassar Street sides of the building. The 100 spaces are expected to accommodate 50% of the graduate students working at the building. Half of the bike parking will be covered and half will be at grade outdoors. Covered bicycle parking has been accommodated in the revised Urban Ring potential route under the building.

f. The ground floor of the BCSC building has a large amount of open and landscaped space for pedestrian movement and sitting. There is a safe railroad crossing as well.

<u>19.33 - Building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.</u>

a. Rooftop mechanicals will be partially enclosed and shielded from view at street level. Screening has been integrated into the design of the building and accommodated by an enclosed penthouse structure set back from the building's facades.

b. Refuse and trash will be stored within the building and accessed from a service drive on Albany Street between the building and the Albany Street garage.

c. Loading docks will be minimally visible from Albany Street and open only to the Albany Street parking garage.

d. Stormwater management measures for this site have been designed to meet critical discharge and freeboard values established for Vassar Street by the City of Cambridge during the Massachusetts Avenue Storm Drain design. It will represent a substantial improvement over the existing stormwater collection methods, utilizing rooftop stormwater detention, removal of suspended sediments from the driveways and loading areas

and routing runoff across vegetative strips wherever possible.

Landscape areas will be used to aid in peak runoff rate mitigation with special attention paid to designing the site grading and placement of landscaping to route runoff to vegetated areas.

e. The BCSC building minimizes the adverse shadows on neighboring lots. The majority of the shadows impacts Main Street.

f. There will be no significant changes in grade. The abutting sites are owned by MIT and used institutionally.

g. There are no residential uses adjacent to this site; therefore window placement need not respond to that unique concern.

19.34 - Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services.

a. The building and site design will incorporate low flow water fixtures, and a greywater system to re-use laboratory purified water for 100% of the urinals and water closets.

b. The capacity and condition of the drinking water and wastewater infrastructure are adequate. The new sewer line incorporated into Vassar Street improvements will be used.

c. The sustainable design goal of the BCSC building is to receive a silver rating from the LEED rating system.

19.35 - New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has been developed historically.

a. The BCSC building has been designed to connect to the existing MIT campus, to foster pedestrian and bicycle links to the main campus and to complement the institutional scale of the existing campus.

b. In the BCSC building, a research science laboratory facility, the uses with the highest demand for public access, such are lobbies are located on the ground floor and fully accessible.

c. This is an institutional building with no other uses; the public will be able to cross through the building via the central atrium that will add to the daily activity level.

d. There are no buildings of historical value on the site. Building 45, which is to be demolished, was built as a temporary building in 1977.

e. There are no start-up companies or manufacturing facilities being displaced.

19.36 - Expansion of the inventory of housing in the City is encouraged.

There is no housing proposed in this area or on this site.

19.37 - Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.

a. Publicly beneficial open space is created on the site at the Vassar Street plaza. There will be widened sidewalks and plazas on the streets.

b. All of the open space on the site will be accessible from the adjoining and nearby bikeways.

c. Four types of open space will be provided: The Vassar Street plaza, the widened Main Street sidewalk, the McGovern entry plaza, and the walkway that traverses the site.

3. *Special Permit Requirements (Section 10.43)*

a. The building has been designed to meet all the use and dimensional regulations and off street parking and loading requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

b. The traffic impact of the BCSC on the surrounding neighborhoods will be negligible; fewer than 45 new trips per peak hour are expected. There will be no degradation of service at the surrounding intersections.

c. The development of the BCSC is consistent with the abutting institutional uses. There will not be an adverse impact on abutting uses.

d. There will be no nuisance or hazard created to the health, safety or welfare of the occupants of the proposed use or the citizens of Cambridge.

e. The proposal is consistent with the use permitted in the Residence C-3B district and the MXR overlay district.

f. The building has been designed to be consistent with the Urban Design Objectives of Section 19.30 as outlined above.

Decision

Based on a review of the application documents, comments made at the public hearing, and based on the above findings, the Planning Board **GRANTS** requested Project Review Special Permit, subject to the following conditions and limitations. The following conditions are to be met:

1. All use, building construction and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the application documents submitted, as modified in the November 12, 2002 submittal. Appendix 1 summarizes the dimensional features of the projects as approved.

2. The Community Development Department shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the final building plans submitted to secure a Building Permit are consistent with and meet all conditions of the Decision.

3. The building shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department. Particular attention shall be paid to the design details of the transportation corridor under the building to ensure that it is both a safe and pleasant space for the bicyclists and pedestrians to be in and traverse. The final design of this space shall be reviewed by the Community Development staff. The staff shall present the final plan to the Planning Board before issuance of the building permit and the required Community Development Department certification.

Voting to grant the special permit were W. Tibbs, K. Benjamin, Associate member appointed by the Chair, B. Shaw, P. Winters and H. Russell.

For the Planning Board,

Barbara Shaw EMP

Barbara Shaw, Vice Chair

A copy of this decision #181 shall be filed with the Office of the City clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on December 30, 2002, by Elizabeth M. Paden, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date or as part of the original application.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of the decision.
No appeal has been filed.

DATE:
City Clerk
City of Cambridge