



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Community Development Department

BRIAN P. MURPHY

*Assistant City Manager for
Community Development*

To: Planning Board
From: CDD Staff
Date: October 14, 2014
Re: **PB #198 – Discovery Park Continued Review**

Update

The Applicant has submitted revised materials for the Board's review. This memo and the attached memo from the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TPT) comment on the changes that have been proposed. A memo from the Department of Public Works (DPW) is also attached and responds to infrastructure and flooding issues.

In general, we believe that the proposal has undergone improvement since the first hearing in September. The changes proposed in the latest submission address comments, particularly those concerning the hotel design, that were made by Board members at the September 2 hearing. Those comments are summarized on the following pages.

As a reminder, this is a project originally permitted by the Planning Board in 2004 that is now seeking modifications. A "layered" set of approvals is being sought from the Planning Board, summarized below:

Major Amendment to Development Plan

The Applicant is seeking to amend the permitted program of uses by constructing some hotel use in place of office, which the Planning Board determined in October of 2013 constituted a Major Amendment to the development plan. ***Requires special permits pursuant to Section 19.20, 17.42 and 20.90 (as described in previous staff memo).***

Parkway Overlay District Modification

This modification, which applies to the proposed hotel site, would allow the main entrance to be located internal to the site rather than along Concord Turnpike (Route 2) and would waive the requirement for building articulation that limits sections of unbroken wall plane to a maximum of 35 linear feet along a parkway. ***Requires a special permit pursuant to Section 20.63.7.***

Modifications to Site Plan

The Applicant is proposing changes to the exact footprints of buildings on the remaining unbuilt portions of the site. In the past, similar proposals have been approved as Minor

Amendments. ***Requires a determination by the Planning Board that the change constitutes a Minor Amendment – no special permit required.***

Design Review for Buildings 400, 500, 600 (Hotel) and Garage B

A condition of the original special permit requires design review by the Planning Board prior to issuance of a building permit for any individual building. The Applicant has requested review and approval for all remaining buildings in the development plan. However, there are also Traffic Mitigation and Monitoring requirements in the original special permit that must be met in advance of design review for the final phase of development. These are described in the attached TPT memo. ***Requires approval by the Planning Board – no special permit required.***

Specific Comments from Previous Hearing

The following summarizes some of the key comments made by the Planning Board on September 2.

Change of Use

- Hotel use makes sense, contributes to mix of uses in area.

Site Layout

- Decoupling of buildings 400, 500 seems reasonable.
- Consider hotel on site closer to reservation, why it might or might not work and potential impacts on the “urban wild” – could be a unique hotel site adjacent to “urban wild”
- Would taller buildings be better along the highway, smaller building near reservation?

Sense of Place

- Developer has done an amazing thing restoring natural areas ahead of schedule, which is the unique sense of place to this area.
- What is the ongoing process to make sure balance between environmental goals and access goals continues to be achieved after development is completed? Whose jurisdiction?
- Good place for carefully considered landscape and architecture.
- Need to define edge of urban wild, even use as branding
- “Extraordinary attitude” about sustainable architecture seems inherent given the area

Circulation

- See more about pedestrian circulation on west side of garage, shortcut between bowling alley and parking garage – is the entrance to the city.

- Hear more about pedestrian connection to other side of Little River.
- Where does the pedestrian bridge over Route 2 go?
- Where is the pedestrian connection to planned housing in Belmont?
- Flood plain requirements make accessibility problematic, consider people with disabilities and obtain better sense of equality for ramped access.
- New auto entry to hotel has degraded the pedestrian environment and is a major step backwards from the previously approved master plan.
- Two pedestrian crossings in front of hotel do not seem well related to desire lines.
- Loading dock for Building 500 is in an awkward place for visibility and pedestrians, different location than on 600 submission - suggest raised curbs to favor pedestrians at loading docks.

Landscape Design

- A lot of work is needed on landscape drawings; need to establish general character of plantings.
- Good to think about getting people to use courtyard in front of hotel.
- Meadow grasses at hotel edge do not make sense.

Building Design

- Pursue comments in CDD memo.
- Renderings, site plans and building plans have discrepancies, which need to be resolved.
- Buildings 400 and 500 have less design detail than hotel.
- Concerns about northern hotel façade, articulation – some improvement, still not really comfortable.
- If there is a change in materials there should be a change in plane, question whether top gray stripe is appropriate.
- The hotel meeting space entrance is a primary building entrance and needs to have direct accessibility.
- Ends of building and “knuckle” have opportunities to provide natural light, would want to look out from elevator lobby, would make connection more interesting than metal panels.
- West elevation (hotel): First floor is blank with an indecipherable treatment and there is a missed opportunity to provide natural light in corridor at joint between wings.
- Building 600 from Whim Way: shows that the ground plane is given to cars with left over space for pedestrians.

- Design has to achieve the same standard as existing buildings, does not need to go beyond – try to give each building different character, using good materials in clever ways. We can also view Building 600 as part of the gateway to Cambridge and it should be of higher quality.
- Scrim on garage – good, but the design of the garage could be more elegant.
- Sign on hotel – is it allowed? If so, Board should review. Would like to know what as-of-right ground-mounted sign would look like, if possible.

Transportation

- Commitment to mitigate traffic important.

Engineering

- Need to hear from DPW regarding flood plain issue and need an explanation of difference in FEMA datum.
- Consider impacts of a hotel with bathroom in every unit on water use.

Comments on Revised Materials

Hotel

Much of the Proponent's recent design work has focused on the hotel as this building received the greatest attention at the Planning Board meeting. More information regarding the likely tenant's requirements has also become available enabling greater refinement of plans. Staff believes these changes have brought the design more or less in line with the quality of other buildings on campus.

At the last Planning Board meeting, public comment, which was then taken up by the Planning board, suggested siting the hotel at the Building 500 location, immediately adjacent to the "urban wild". The proponent has given further consideration to this suggestion and prepared a written response. While this might be a more attractive and interesting location for a hotel, from a conservation perspective the siting closer to Route 2 would limit nighttime light spill and noise impacts affecting the reservation. The Route 2 location also provides for a more public, 24-hour activity, which will assist in making this current unfriendly pedestrian environment more attractive and safe. A lower form, such as the four story hotel, also has the potential to fit snugly behind the existing trees and may therefore be less prominent than an office building.

There was much discussion concerning the architectural treatment and character of the hotel at the last hearing. The Planning Board gave the applicant direction to address a range of detailed design matters, which have been summarized above. The hotel has now taken on a more dynamic form in response to Planning Board and staff comments. The massing of the hotel has tightened up, which enables a greater setback from Garage

B and a more inviting walkway connection to Route 2. More attention has been given to creating an interesting massing concept and varied roof plane with a subtle play of volumes. This is particularly so on the Route 2 elevation where volumes at either end are pronounced to celebrate the gateway location, and more thought has been given to providing natural light to the stairwell. Ground level transparency has also increased on the north elevation and the location of windows has been resolved. The accent spandrel panels, connecting the second and third floor windows, help to create a vertical rhythm on the long façades of the hotel and the charcoal metal panel is now used to frame vertical elements such as the stairwell and the double bay to the entry foyer. This helps visually break up the building and reduces some of its flat horizontality. There is still a long expanse of unbroken wall plane facing Route 2, which may present further design opportunities and potential to achieve a softer park-like setting. In addition, while hotel operators prefer visible locations for commercial reasons, the signage being located on the tallest element is quite prominent and should be reviewed.

The west elevation has been markedly improved with windows now on the ground floor. However, opportunities to create a safer walking environment through differentiating some of the window treatments should be considered. The metal panel corner element wraps around the façade and the accent corner window, combined with the projecting brow, creates more interest and dynamism. Color treatment of the stone also seems to be a better contrast with the charcoal gray. There appears to be further scope to address some of the Planning Board's suggestions, particularly those associated with providing natural light to the circulation corridors and the elevator lobbies. In addition, the quality of the pedestrian experience on the south elevation, where it abuts the sidewalk, and where views of the hotel from Whim Way are directed, could be improved to create more interest.

More has been done to reduce the size of the hotel plaza space. The hotel terrace has been reconfigured to serve the meeting room and hotel entry, as well as an outdoor seating area associated with the lounge/bar. In response to comments, the number of car spaces is reduced and a grove of trees is now proposed at the eastern end. The plaza does remain a heavily paved area with the combined drop off zone, parking spaces and terrace. Ramp access to the hotel is still unfavorably located at the far end of the plaza and does not take into account the access needs of those using Garage B. Consideration should be given to integrating the ramp into the terrace.

Buildings 400 and 500

Clearer building elevations and details regarding materials for Buildings 400 and 500 have been provided in the supplementary information. In response to staff comment, additional glazing has been added on the ground floor Building 400 elevation facing Whim Way, which was previously blank.

The main change to Building 500 is the addition of a chamfered corner to the southeast, as well as an entry point, including stair and ramp, to activate this corner, which is a key pedestrian route from Alewife Station. This corner space may be used for outdoor dining, which better achieves some of the aims of the *Discovery Park Master Plan Design Guidelines*. No other modifications are proposed to soften the building edges, or make them more engaging and responsive to the “urban wild” and sustainable design, which was suggested by the Planning Board as a possible way to celebrate this unique setting.

Garage

No further material has been submitted regarding Garage B. Options for screening treatments would need to be further considered in any ongoing design review process. The move of the hotel further from the garage also means that greater consideration of the east elevation is necessary as a more exposed view is created.

Site planning and circulation

The supplementary filing provides a narrative response to the questions raised by the Planning Board regarding pedestrian access to and from Discovery Park. A map of the site plan is provided and several improvements to pedestrian circulation are shown, including a more generous path between Garage B and the hotel site connecting Route 2 to the interior of the complex. It is helpful to refer to the Pedestrian Circulation Plan (see Major Amendment Application, Volume 3, Page 19) because it shows the larger context around the site; however, it would be helpful for the Applicant to update this plan to include the revised circulation proposal and label key features including the Alewife T, the O’Neill Properties site in Belmont, and the pathway connections on the opposite side of the Route 2 pedestrian overpass.

Regarding the responses in the narrative, it is reasonable that the pedestrian overpass crossing of Route 2 is not well used, especially because the Minuteman Path provides a less direct but more attractive grade-level connection from Arlington to Alewife, and thence to Discovery Park, that is usable by pedestrians and bicyclists. Also, as noted, the most direct connection from the O’Neill Properties development site in Belmont to the Alewife T seems to be along Acorn Park Drive. It is true that a pedestrian crossing of the Little River would face significant environmental permitting challenges and that, in the

past, concerns have been raised about how the construction and operation of such a bridge could disrupt the natural environment within the reservation. However, it is not clear whether such a bridge would actually require legislative action pursuant to Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution, since protected parklands routinely include pedestrian connections to adjacent developed areas.

A revised landscape plan has been submitted. Paving at the hotel forecourt is to match the existing drop-off zone at Building 200/300, which will help to create a more recognizable pedestrian space. Flush curbing is also proposed as suggested by the Planning Board. No further details about landscape species or materials have been provided in the revised material. Landscaping on the Route 2 side of the hotel and garage has not been addressed. Retention of existing trees and a low metal fence is shown; however staff would like to see more detail on how this interface will be softened with an emphasis on achieving a layered landscape effect and improvements to the sidewalk.

There are still inconsistencies with the submitted materials and a full set of amended plans should be provided prior to final design review approval.



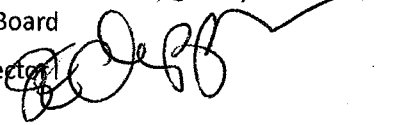
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MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Planning Board
From: Susan Clippinger, Director 
Date: October 15, 2014
Re: Discovery Park Special Permit Major and Minor Amendments Application

Discovery Park submitted a memo as required by special Permit #198 regarding Cambridge Discovery Park Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Adequacy, dated October 7, 2014 by Vanasse & Associates, Inc. (VAI). The Special Permit condition requires that when the build-out exceeds 526,000 g.f.a., they must evaluate whether TDM programs have reduced the maximum daily parking demand enough to have all parking accommodated on-site. The Cambridge Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TPT) reviewed the October 7, 2014 memo and Discovery Park's 2014 Transportation Monitoring Report and has the following comments:

The VAI October 7, 2014 memo assumed a total Discovery Park build-out of 716,927 s.f. The build-out included the existing Buildings 100 and 200/300, the proposed Hotel at Building 600, the future Buildings 400 and 500, and potential expansions to Buildings 100 and 200/300. With an expected build-out of 716,927 s.f. and other assumptions in the October 7, 2014 memo, we believe Discovery Park can meet its parking demands on site, with the following recommended mitigation:

1. The VAI memo is based on the currently proposed build-out of 716,927 sf, not the permitted total of 819,916 sf. We propose that the current Special Permit condition relating to returning to the Planning Board for any new building that would make total buildings over 526,000 s.f. be changed to over 716,927 s.f.

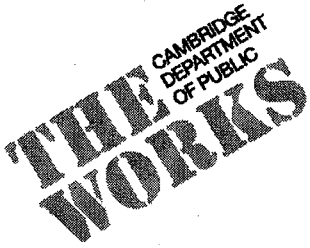
We recommend, in advance of any construction of new building that would make aggregate building gross floor area exceed 716,927 square feet, *the Proponent shall prepare a report for City staff based on the trip monitoring program that demonstrates whether the TDM programs reduced the maximum daily parking demand enough to have all the parking needs accommodated on-site. If these goals are not being met, before construction of such new building begins the Proponent must submit a detailed plan to the Board for its approval, which plan shall be scoped and reviewed by City staff, for how employee trips generated by the new building can be accommodated. If the Board determines that the Proponents' plan is inadequate, the Board may require additional TDM or infrastructure measures as condition to its approval of the new buildings.*

2. The proposed hotel parking needs being lower than the previously proposed office building (peak demand was estimated to be 51 spaces although the lease commitment will be 86), is critical to the ability of the project to live within the allowed parking supply. The proposed Hotel TDM measures for hotel visitors

submitted by the Proponent on September 22, 2014, need to be supplemented with the following additional TDM measures.

Additional TDM for Hotel guests

- Make available a pre-loaded MBTA Charlie Card (with varied values based on number of rides from a minimum of two rides up to several rides) to guests who use the T. The pre-loaded passes should be on hand at the hotel for resale to hotel guests at the cost of the passes.
 - Make available at the hotel Hubway day pass for resale to guests to ride bicycles at the cost of the day pass.
 - Hotel packages should not include free parking.
 - Offer van service between Alewife MBTA Station and Hotel.
 - Mount a real-time transportation information screen in lobby, such as Transit Screen.
 - Train hotel staff to show patrons how quick and easy it is to walk to Alewife MBTA station.
 - Train reservation staff to provide transit connection information from Logan Airport or South Station.
 - Place a Getting Around Cambridge Map in each guest room (available from CDD at cost of printing).
 - Send hotel confirmation email and mailings including information on reaching the hotel by non-SOV modes.
 - Provide an electric vehicle Level 2 plug-in station in the garage, if not already offered
3. TDM for employees in buildings 400, 500 and 600 (the Hotel).
- The TDM measures described in the Special Permit are required for these buildings.
 - Require Hubway corporate membership (minimum Gold Level) paid by employer for employees who choose to become Hubway members.
 - Require corporate membership paid by the employer at a local carshare company to allow employees to use a carshare vehicle for work-related trips during the day instead of needing to drive private vehicles to work.
4. The Proponent has agreed to aggressively promote non-SOV modes to Cambridge Discovery Park and to fund a large Hubway station to be located on Discovery Park at a specific location approved by the city staff. The Proponent has also committed to join the Alewife TMA. These are significant commitments.
5. The Discovery Park permit allows the flexibility to park employees and visitors in either garage. However, lease commitments to Building's 100 and 200/300 could use at maximum all available spaces in Garage A. The parking needs of the hotel and Building's 400 and 500 need to be able to fit in Garage B or on site. To guarantee this can be done, lease commitments for Building's 400 and 500 tenants should not exceed 1.25 spaces/1,000 sf.
- If it is necessary to make the lease commitments exceed 1.25 spaces/1,000 sf. for a tenant, proponent must notify CDD and TP&T and determine if additional TDM measures are required to make sure parking will be accommodated on site.
6. The Special Permit requires Discovery Park to continue their transportation monitor program through the completion of full build-out of the Project with mode split surveys and driveway counts. We recommend that the monitoring be continued biannually for 6 years after full build-out.
7. TPT and DPW will review the building permit plans and make sure any missing sidewalk segments that connect the path to the MBTA to the DCR parking lot and the ADL informational signage are installed pending DCR approval.



City of Cambridge
Department of Public Works

Owen O'Riordan, Commissioner

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October 14, 2014

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Katherine F. Watkins, PE
City Engineer

RE: PB 198 – Discovery Park Amendments, Buildings 400, 500, 600 & Garage B

The proposed project is within the Alewife Flood Plain Overlay District and is also within the Concord / Alewife zoning district. I have reviewed the Planning Board Major and Minor Amendments dated August 20, 2014, and the Conservation Commission Notice of Intent (NOI) application for an Amendment of Order of Conditions, dated August 21, 2014, and the Stormwater Report, dated August 21, 2014. Based on my review, the applicant has complied with the requirements of the ordinances and regulations.

Stormwater

The project provides adequate compensatory flood storage in an incremental fashion in conformance with the requirements. The storage requirement is primarily met through the construction of a stormwater storage space under the building. The design of the stormwater storage space is similar to the other systems previously constructed in Discovery Park.

The Department of Public Works, in conformance with the Concord / Alewife zoning requirements, further requires that the development provides additional storage so as to better the performance of the municipal drainage system in the area. To meet that standard, the development provides additional stormwater storage so that during the 25-year storm event, the maximum discharge from the site is less than or equal to the pre-construction 2-year discharge.

The effective maintenance of the stormwater systems is key to the successful management of the stormwater. The Stormwater Report outlines the inspection schedule and the proponent has confirmed that they are meeting this schedule.

- 4 times a year for catch basins.
- 4 times a year and after major storm events for the vegetative sediment forebay.
- Annually for the stormwater wetland.

Design Elevations

When the first building was being designed and permitted, FEMA's flood study consultant indicated that the 100-year flood elevation might increase to as high as 10.8 NGVD. The original building and subsequent buildings have been designed to 10.8 NGVD, over 3' higher than the actual 100-year flood elevation of 7.6 NGVD. I strongly support the continued use of this higher elevation for the ground floor for additional protection from large storm events, as included in the submitted design.

Sewer Use

The project is implementing the required sewer mitigation, which includes sewer storage during heavy rainfall and the elimination of inflow from the City sewer system at a rate of 4:1 over pre-construction volumes, in accordance with state standards. The proposed amendments and the change in use will increase the anticipated sewer flow over the 2004 Master Plan by approximately 9%, 75,204 gallons per day vs. 68,990 gallons per day. This increase is modest in terms of the overall system and will be mitigated by the proponent increasing the on-site sewer storage and inflow removal. The total inflow removal required for the project area will be 170,296 gallons (4 times the increase over the pre-construction sewer use).

Summary

DPW will be reviewing the Buildings 400, 500, 600 and Garage B again during the building permit review process. At that time, DPW will work with the proponent to finalize the details of the inflow removal and the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan.

Sincerely,



Katherine F. Watkins, P.E.
City Engineer