



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: October 19, 2022

Re: Special Permit **PB-257 Amendment 1, 75 Ames Street**

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

KHALIL MOGASSABI
Deputy Director
Chief of Planning

Overview

Submission Type:	Special Permit Application
Applicant:	The Broad Institute, Inc. 415 Main Street, Cambridge, MA 02142
Zoning District(s):	Mixed Use Development District: Cambridge Center (MXD); Ames Street District
Proposal Summary:	Amend PB-257 for the purpose of adding an additional 14,000 GFA for offices and meeting spaces on Floor M1 to the existing 250,000 GFA for a total of 264,000 GFA (5.6% increase), and approving the fit out of the M1 space, which includes new matching windows (replacing louvers and metal panels) on three facades (South, East, and North) on M1.
Special Permits Requested:	Amendment to a previously approved Project Review Special Permit (19.20)
Other City Permits Needed:	n/a
Planning Board Action:	Grant or deny requested special permits.
Memo Contents:	CDD Zoning Report & Urban Design Report
Other Staff Reports:	n/a

Zoning Section	Required Planning Board Findings <i>(Summary - see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20) – Excluding Section 19.21.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the City as set forth in Section 19.30. • Excludes Traffic Impact Review.
General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	<p>Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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.

Zoning & Development Staff Report

Area Planning and Zoning

Site Context

Neighborhood/Area: Kendall Square

Development Patterns: Development in the Kendall Square area is characterized by large-scale commercial and laboratory buildings focused along Broadway; mid- and high-rise residential development to the north, south and east; institutional development to the south and a transition to smaller, more compact residential development to the north.

Nearby Features: The site is approximately one block west of the Kendall Square MBTA station, approximately two blocks west of the Broad Canal, one block east of the Grand Junction railroad, and half a block south of Kittie Knox Bike Path.

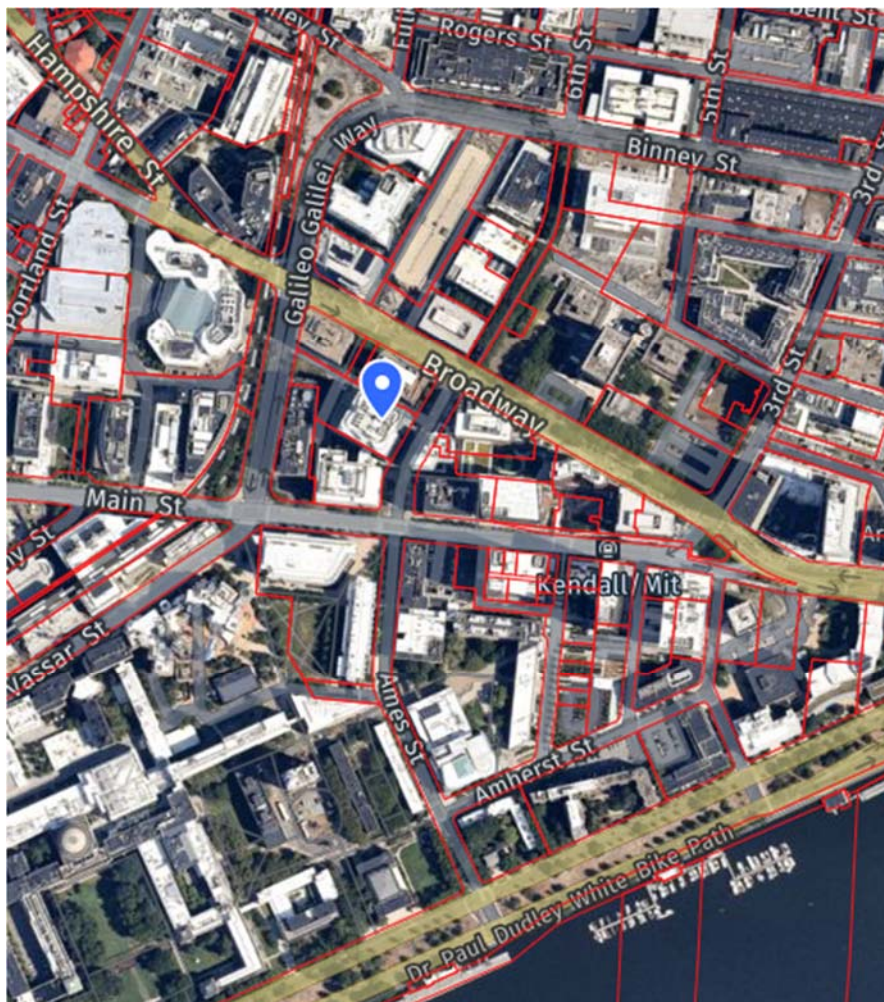


Figure 1: Aerial photograph of the area surrounding 75 Ames Street dated August 3, 2022 (source: Nearmap, 2022)

Site Zoning

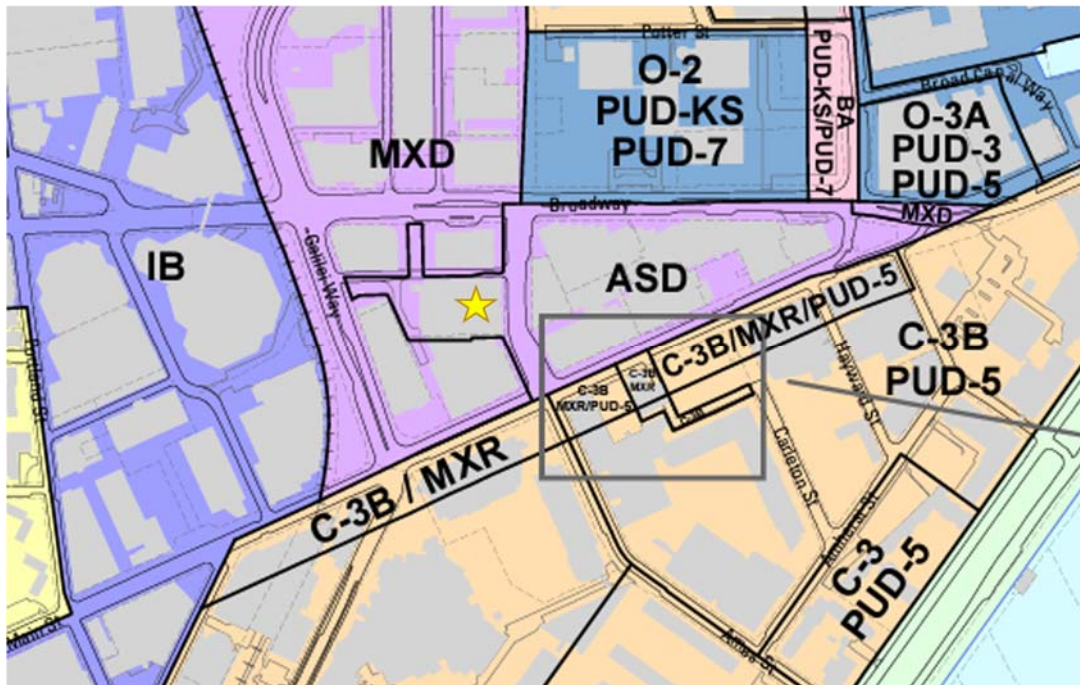


Figure 2: Starred is 75 Ames Street. Excerpt from Cambridge Base Zoning Map last updated January 26, 2021.

General description: The base Mixed Use Development District: Cambridge Center allows a mix of light industry, office, biotechnology manufacturing, retail, residential, hotel, entertainment, and institutional uses. The entire district has a limit on aggregate gross floor area and a minimum open space requirement. The MXD zoning district is set forth in Article 14.000 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. According to Section 19.22, the Project Review Special Permit is not generally applicable in the MXD district; however, in the “Ames Street District” (ASD) projects using additional GFA for non-residential uses noted under Section 14.32 are subject to the provisions of the Project Review Special Permit, excluding 19.21.1.

	Base District
District(s):	Mixed Use Development District: Cambridge Center (MXD); Ames Street District
Allowed Uses:	Light industry, office, biotechnology manufacturing, retail, residential, hotel, entertainment, and institutional uses
Max. Building Height	250'
Max. FAR/GFA	8.00 FAR / Allowed GFA is determined cumulatively under the regulations of Section 14.30.
Required Open Space	12,557 sqft (Calculated for the lot as per the regulations of Section 14.40)

Current Proposal

Overview

The Planning Board granted a Project Review Special Permit in 2011 (decision attached). In 2015, the zoning was amended to explicitly permit the addition of 14,000 square feet of GFA as an internal modification at 75 Ames Street.

Broad Institute is now proposing to modify an existing mechanical space (M1) located one story above the 11th floor at this site. This space would include a new laboratory and office facility that increases the existing GFA by 14,000 sqft. The only anticipated modifications to the building’s exterior are the replacement of existing louvers with new windows on three facades. Additional comments on these design elements are provided in the attached Urban Design Memo. The applicant is additionally proposing the inclusion of 16 short-term bicycle parking spaces.

Proposed Uses

The Application proposes the following uses on the site:

Proposed Uses	Location/Size	Allowed/Special Permit?
4.34(f) – Technical office for research and development, laboratory & research facility subject to the restriction in Section 4.21(m)	14,000 GFA located at 75 Ames Street in an existing mechanical space (M1).	Allowed use

Proposed Dimensions

The Applicant proposes the following dimensions for development on the site. No other exterior dimensional revisions are proposed:

Dimension	Proposal	Relief Sought?
Gross Floor Area (GFA)	264,000 sqft (increase of 14,000 sqft)	None needed
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	3.96 (increase of 0.20)	None needed

Community Engagement

The applicant contacted immediate abutters and the East Cambridge Planning Team via email and received responses from MITIMCO, Boston Properties, Biogen, and the Whitehead Institute. No additional information or questions were fielded by the applicant.

Special Permit Conditions

If the Board decides to grant the special permit, the following list summarizes the general categories of conditions recommended for this development based on the requested special permit:

1. Existing Conditions: Recommend that the conditions of the existing special permit continue to apply.
2. Approved Development: Authorized development would need to conform with the submitted application materials. An Amended Dimensional Form would be attached as an Appendix.
3. Design Review: CDD staff would continue to review and approve design details at the construction documents phase, prior to issuance of a building permit, to certify that the plans conform to the Planning Board's approval. Board members may cite specific areas of focus for detailed review, based on the Urban Design Report and Board discussion.
4. Construction Management Program: Per Section 18.20, staff would recommend a Construction Management Program be provided and approved by TP+T, DPW, and other applicable City departments before issuance of a building permit.

Appendix - Zoning Text Excerpts

Project Review Special Permit (Excluding 19.21.1)

19.25 Review Criteria. In granting a special permit under this [Section 19.20](#) the Planning Board shall make the following 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 [SEE SUMMARY ON FOLLOWING PAGE]. 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.

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
- (g) 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
- (h) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]

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

Urban Design Staff Report

Urban Design Comments

From an urban design perspective, while the changes are relatively minor, they do have a positive impact on the public realm. Fewer mechanical louvers will be visible on the building façades, which improves the overall appearance of the project. The proposed new windows – glass, mullions, and metal panel - have been designed to match the existing fenestration and will fill the existing façade openings. On the north façade, the proposal does include a curtainwall window in an area of punched windows (See Exhibit 3). While not a highly visible elevation, a punched window would better align with the windows above and below within the precast concrete. However, staff do understand that infilling the precast on either side of the opening would add further complexity to the project. The Applicant has recently submitted material samples, which will be reviewed as part of the continuing review process.

Continuing Review

The following are additional recommendations for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- Construction details
- Materials samples