



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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To: Planning Board
From: CDD Staff
Date: January 27, 2017
Re: **PB #303, MIT "SoMa" PUD Building 4 Design Review**

This memo and the attached materials are a supplement to the Design Review meeting held on November 29, 2016 regarding the MIT "SoMa" Building 4. The Applicant's recent submission provides additional information about the project in graphic form. This memo comments on the additional information.

Planning Board Action

As a reminder, the Special Permit for the "SoMa" Planned Unit Development (PUD) was granted by the Planning Board on May 17, 2016. The first building in that PUD, "Building 4" (the graduate student dormitory) has been submitted for review along with the proposed open space on the SoMa development parcel. While the Special Permit requires that Building 4 and the SoMa open space design be presented at the same time, the Applicant has requested that the continued building review proceed first while further refinements are considered for the landscape design. However, the open space design must still be approved prior to the issuance of building permits for new buildings.

The Planning Board's review of the building is guided by the conditions of the special permit, which references the design standards specified in the *Kendall Square PUD-5 Design Guidelines, 2016*, the *Sustainability Strategies* described in Appendix D of the Final Development Plan, and the *Kendall Square Design Guidelines, 2013*, which were presented to the Board as a consolidated file at the prior review session.

Planning Board Comments from November 29, 2016

Generally, the Planning Board was supportive of the building design at the November 29 meeting. Board members recognized the building's verticality, slender north and south façades, modulated color gradient and treatment of the historic building as very positive features. Some of the key issues raised by Board members included:

- Concerns about the streetscape between the T station and Main Street that depends on furniture and other activities.
- The housing entry, as it has a large area of paving that could include seating and some kind of scaling to make it less harsh.
- Concerns about the dark brown metal panel being too dark.
- Lack of information about the design concept for the cantilever and its relationship to the landscape.
- Design details relating to mechanicals, windows and exterior lighting.

Staff Comments on New Materials

In response to the Planning Board’s comment, the applicant has provided a set of supplemental materials dated December 20, 2016. These new materials provide further clarification about various issues, including the ground floor design, residential entrance, materials, lighting and treatment of the cantilever, and some design details. While further clarifying information has been provided, no design changes appear to have been made at this time.

- Staff is generally satisfied with the color range shown for the tower panels, and suggests that this be further studied as part of the mockup panel review process.
- Currently, there is no specific art proposal being considered for the cantilever as this requires an extensive MIT process. Staff suggest that once a proposal has been selected the conceptual design be presented to the Board for comment prior to finalization.

Some comments raised by staff at the last meeting are either being studied as part of the landscape design, or remain unresolved, including:

- The opportunity to provide more interest or variation along the long relatively blank stretch of the Hayward Street ground floor.
- The main entrance, and the location of trees in the plaza, which might create a pedestrian pinch point with the future T headhouse.

Continuing review

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends should be subject to continuing design review by staff if the Board approves the building design:

- Review of all exterior materials, colors, and details, including a materials mock-up of all wall assemblies on the site.
- Further study and review of wind mitigation measures.
- Approval of construction details and windows, and field review and approval of masonry restoration by the Cambridge Historical Commission.