



February 15, 2018

Cambridge Planning Board
City of Cambridge
344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: *Soffit Material Selection for 145 Broadway Entry*

On 7/10/2017, the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority issued a CD-phase approval for the 145 Broadway building which is to become the headquarters for Akamai. A condition of this approval was the continued review of the Visual Mock Up (VMU) per the Design Review and Document Approval Procedures under the development agreement between the CRA and Boston Properties. CRA and CDD staff have collaboratively reviewed each element of the VMU since June 2017, with the soffit of the lowest entry canopy being the last material under discussion.

While the original design approval included a metal soffit treatment, other alternatives were to be explored. Boston Properties proposed utilizing a simulated wood on the exterior soffit to function as a visual extension of the wood veneer in the Akamai lobby. Because the interior real wood product cannot be used in an outdoor setting, the exterior needed to be a resin panel that simulated a wood surface. The first darker, simulated wood material was unsatisfactory to both CRA and CDD staff, and was proposed to be changed to match the new lighter wood material selected for the updated lobby design by the interior architect. Boston Properties provided samples of the products, placed them on the VMU and provided renderings.

It was determined that the two 'wood' products would never be perfectly matched, and would likely age differently over time. In discussions with the design team, it was noted that there are some materials on the columns adjacent to the entryway that go from exterior to interior, instead of interior to exterior, like the proposed wood soffit. Additionally, the concept of a transition between the exterior and interior could be achieved by extending the angled blade lights designed for the lobby and staircase. Finally, by changing the soffit material back to the metal panel, the entryway will be more consistent with the interplay between materials throughout the building facade.

In addition to the light blades at angles, the outside edge channel of the soffit will be lit with a thin light to match the other cantilevered elements on the building, which we believe is appropriate for visual consistency. The terra cotta used throughout the exterior, especially the bright orange terra cotta at the ground level feature wall, will provide sufficient warmth on the exterior façade and compensate for the elimination of the wood on the entry soffit.

The CRA supports the soffit update proposed by Boston Properties and Akamai.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Thomas L. Evans'.

Thomas L. Evans
Executive Director
Cambridge Redevelopment Authority

Cc: Michael Tilford, Boston Properties