



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

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Re: **PB-315, MXD Infill Development Concept Plan (IDCP) Design Update**

Background

The Mixed-Use Development: Kendall Center (“MXD”) zoning district is an area of land in Kendall Square that is owned and managed by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) and governed by Article 14 of the Zoning Ordinance. New development is permitted through a document called an Infill Development Concept Plan (IDCP), which functions similarly to a Planned Unit Development (PUD), where the approved buildings and open space areas are subject to continuing design review in accordance with a process set forth in the special permit conditions.

The current IDCP was first granted a special permit ([PB-315](#)) by the Planning Board in [2017](#) and authorizes the development of approximately 5 million square feet of floor area as well as new streets and open spaces within the MXD district. The IDCP has been amended twice, in [2019](#) and [2022](#).

Design Update

The Planning Board reviewed and approved the design of the building at 290 Binney Street and associated service drives in April 2022, subject to continuing review of design details by staff. As the design has progressed, we are bringing two elements of the detailed design to the Planning Board to get feedback to better guide the continuing staff review before the design is finalized:

- 1) The proposed circulation of a portion of the West Plaza Service Drive; and
- 2) The proposed gas tank storage enclosure for the approved 290 Binney Street development.

West Plaza Service Drive Change

At the time of the last Major Amendment to the IDCP, the Planning Board offered comments related to the proposed East and West Plaza Service Drives that flank either side of the 135 Broadway residential building at the 290 Binney Street commercial building and create a north-south connection from Binney Street to Broadway. These drives were originally proposed as one-way “woonerf” style shared streets, with the West Service Drive going from Broadway to Binney, and the East Service Drive going from Binney to Broadway. As part of the Planning Board’s discussion, both Planning Board members and Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) Board members encouraged staff and the Permittee to continue to explore opportunities to reduce vehicle speeds and minimize pedestrian and vehicle conflicts on these two drives. A specific recommendation of the Boards was to explore whether portions of the drives

Could be changed from one-way traffic to two-way traffic. The Permittee has worked with staff and identified such an opportunity, and before the drives are improved, wanted to hear feedback from Planning Board staff to inform the design as it moves to the construction phase.

290 Binney Gas Storage Tank Enclosure

As part of the 290 Binney Street design review, an area was identified on the east side of the building for a gas storage tank enclosure. At the time, the specific tenant requirements for gas storage were not identified, and thus the design for the enclosure remained somewhat unclear. Now that a tenant has been identified and the building is under construction, the storage tank requirements for the future tenant are better defined and a design of the area has been proposed. Urban Design staff seeks feedback on this area from the Planning Board to better guide administrative review prior to this portion of the site design being completed.

Urban Design Comments

The proposed amendment modifies the circulation pattern of the East Service Drive and includes a developed design for the 290 Binney’s external bulk gas tank farm on the west side of the East Drive.

East Drive Comments:

As depicted in the IDCP, the East Drive was one way from north to south for its full length. The amendment proposes that its northern portion—from 290 Binney’s parking garage exit to Binney Street—be changed to two-way. This will give cars exiting the parking garages of both 290 and 250 Binney the option to head north to Binney Street instead of requiring that they proceed south to Broadway.

The proposed two-way traffic movement in the northern portion of the East Drive is preferable. It will remove unnecessary traffic from Broadway and reduce vehicular interference with pedestrian and bicycle movement on the north side of Broadway.

East Drive Continuing Review:

Curb locations and configurations, paving materials, crosswalks, lighting, locations and species of plantings, directional signage, and sight lines.

Note that the submission drawings show changes to 250 Binney’s full-build site plan on the east side of the East Drive, including its landscape design and a potential tank farm. These changes should be reviewed separately.

290 Binney Tank Farm Comments:

The updated tank farm design responds to staff’s preference for the lower height option of the two that were presented to staff, and to staff’s suggestion that the screen wall’s materials and design relate to the building’s ground floor facade. Suggestions to reduce the enclosure’s east/west width and compensate by increasing its north/south length were deemed to be impractical given requirements affecting the layout of the tanks and other equipment inside the enclosure and the location of the door to 290 Binney’s fire control room.

290 Binney Tank Farm Continuing Review:

Materials of the screen wall, construction details including at doorways and supports, associated vegetation and planters, lighting (if any), clearance between the screen wall and the East Drive’s west curb.