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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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To: Planning Board  
From: Jeff Roberts, Land Use and Zoning Planner  
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Date: August 31, 2017  
Re: Special Permit **PB #330, 55 Wheeler Street**

This memo contains an overview of the proposed project at 55 Wheeler Street, the special permits being requested, and related comments.

### Summary of Proposal

The applicant is proposing to replace the existing office building with a multifamily residential development consisting of three buildings with 526 units. The project also includes 448 off-street parking spaces accommodated at the basement and ground levels and in a small surface lot, 562 long-term bicycle spaces, 54 short term bicycle spaces, and landscaped areas accessible to the building residents and the public. In addition, both Fawcett Street and Wheeler Street are proposed to be extended to form a connected street grid around the proposed development, and a publicly beneficial open space will be created on the north side of the site.

### Requested Special Permits

The project is within an Alewife Overlay District (AOD) and requires Special Permits for increasing the FAR (Section 20.95.1), the height (Section 20.95.2), and the dwelling unit density (Section 20.95.4), and reducing required yard setbacks (Section 20.95.34.1). A small portion of the site is located within the Flood Plain Overlay District and requires a Special Permit (Section 20.70), though the proposal for that portion of the site is to create publicly beneficial open space. In addition, the project is seeking a Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20) and Multifamily Special Permit (Section 4.26.1).

The project is also seeking relief from the requirement for a front yard to be entirely Green Area or Permeable Open Space (Section 20.96.3), since that area will be more than 25% hard surface to accommodate residential entrances. In addition, the project is seeking a special permit for reduction of required parking (Section 6.35.1) and a special permit to exceed allowed curb cut width (Section 6.43.5(b)). The project requires review by the Conservation Commission for compliance with Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, and the proposed office building demolition has been reviewed by the Cambridge Historical Commission staff, which has sent a response to the Board.

The applicable special permit findings, goals of the *Concord-Alewife Plan*, and the *Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines* are summarized on the following pages. Applicable sections of the zoning and *Concord-Alewife Planning Study* are provided in an appendix.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area, upon review of the traffic impact indicators analyzed in the Transportation Impact Study and mitigation efforts proposed.</li> <li>• The project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the City as set forth in Section 19.30 (see following page).</li> </ul>
Increase FAR, Increase Building Height, Reduce Lot Area per Dwelling Unit, waive yard requirements, and reduce required open space in Alewife Overlay Districts (Sections 20.95.1, 20.95.2, 20.95.4, 20.95.34, 20.96.3)	<p>The project promotes the general interests of the larger commercial and residential neighborhood noted in Section 20.92 and is consistent with the goals, objectives and guidelines established in the Concord-Alewife Plan (see following page).</p> <p>For waiver of yard requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The objectives of the Concord-Alewife Plan continue to be met.</li> <li>• The stormwater management objectives for the area continue to be met both on the site and as the site may be a part of a larger system for managing stormwater runoff.</li> <li>• The reduction or waiver of yard requirements provides for more efficient development of land; encourages or facilitates a more logical pattern of buildings, streets, parks and open space; or enhances the urban, pedestrian character of the area as envisioned in the Concord- Alewife Plan.</li> </ul> <p>For reduction of required open space: The urban design and stormwater management objectives as set forth in the Concord-Alewife Plan continue to be met.</p>
Construction in Flood Plain Overlay District (Section 20.70)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No encroachment of the floodway or displacement of water retention capacity is allowed unless fully offset.</li> <li>• Flood water systems shall not cause nuisance, hazard or detriment to site or abutters.</li> <li>• Development is consistent with zoning, area plans and guidelines, and applicable laws including Wetlands Protection Act.</li> <li>• Review by the City Engineer and Conservation Commission are required.</li> </ul>

<b>Requested Special Permits</b>	<b>Summarized Findings</b> <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Construction of Multifamily Dwelling in Office-1 District (Section 4.26.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key features of natural landscape are preserved.</li> <li>• New buildings relate sensitively to existing built environment.</li> <li>• Open space provides visual benefits to abutters and passersby and functional benefits to occupants.</li> <li>• Parking, access and egress are safe and convenient.</li> <li>• Intrusion of onsite parking is minimized.</li> <li>• Services such as trash collection and utility boxes are convenient yet unobtrusive.</li> </ul>
Reduction in required parking (Section 6.35.1)	Lesser amount of parking will not cause excessive congestion, endanger public safety, substantially reduce parking availability for other uses or otherwise adversely impact the neighborhood; or will provide positive environmental or other benefits to the users of the lot and the neighborhood, including assisting in provision of affordable housing units.
Exceedance of allowed curb cut width (Section 6.43.5)	Increased curb cut width will facilitate traffic and safety.
General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	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 (see appendix).

**Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]**

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

**Concord-Alewife Plan Goals for Quadrangle (intended to provide general guidance)**

- Encourage creation of housing along Concord Avenue.
- Introduce neighborhood-focused retail to form a mixed-use core near the Alewife Brook Parkway edge of the Quadrangle.
- Continue to allow light industrial uses closer to the railroad tracks.
- Create appropriate transitions between the Highlands and nonresidential uses in the Quadrangle by introducing a green buffer and allowing lower densities and heights near the Highlands.
- Create a public space that serves a stormwater function as well as being an open space resource.
- Increase the amount of permeable surface in the Quadrangle as the area redevelops.
- Encourage future development to respond to stormwater goals for the area.
- Create a hierarchy of boulevards, avenues, streets, and pathways.
- Enhance the character of Concord Avenue by improving its streetscape.
- Design new public spaces and places that support a range of community-focused activities.
- Improve traffic circulation within the Quadrangle by enhancing existing roads and adding new ones—without creating a direct vehicular connection to the Highlands.
- Improve the streetscape within the Quadrangle to enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment. Strengthen pedestrian/bicycle access to Alewife Station to improve connections to transit and to the Minuteman Path and Linear Park.
- Improve the pedestrian environment along Concord Avenue and provide safe crossings.
- Continue to encourage residential use along Concord Avenue.
- Encourage housing development within the Quadrangle, particularly close to the Highlands.

**Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines – Areawide (intended to provide general guidance)**

- Break up large blocks into smaller blocks, of sizes similar to those in surrounding Cambridge neighborhoods.
- Vary the design of individual buildings to create an architecturally diverse district.
- Street level facades should include active uses such as frequent residential entrances; neighborhood-serving retail; services for the public or for commercial offices; and community spaces.
- Encourage awnings/ canopies to provide shelter and enliven ground-floor façades.
- Design residential buildings with individual units and front doors facing street.
- Utilize low impact development principles in building and site design
- Use site design that preserves future rights-of-way identified in the Circulation Concept Plan.
- Improve existing streets to meet City standards, including streetscape improvements.
- Strengthen bicycle and pedestrian links to adjacent areas.
- Screen service areas from major streets.
- Parking below-grade is preferred. If above-grade parking is to be provided, design it so it is not visible from public streets, or pathways; line above-ground structured parking with active uses.
- Design and locate lighting and signage in support of the district’s pedestrian-friendly quality.
- Use site design to minimize shadows on other buildings or on public streets, open spaces, parks, and plazas.
- Design residential development to include a range of units of various sizes and bedrooms.

**Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines – Quadrangle (intended to provide general guidance)**

- Use streetscape and other improvements to define Wilson Road as part of a major east-west connection through the Quadrangle.
- Create an open-space system characterized by parks and green spaces of varying scales and uses.
- Use pooled resources to create a new central public open space in the Quadrangle that incorporates stormwater management.
- Locate active uses around the future open space to create a safe and active environment throughout the day and evening.
- Provide pedestrian links to strengthen physical connections to the shopping center.
- Create building height/façade setbacks between 85’ and 105’.
- Provide pedestrian links to strengthen connections to Fresh Pond Reservation, consistent with the Fresh Pond Master Plan.
- Strengthen the streetscape and other improvements to define Concord Avenue.
- Locate new development to allow for a future above-grade crossing between the Triangle and the Quadrangle.

**Area Planning and Zoning**

The base zoning for the site is Office-1 (O-1), which allows office and residential uses by right. The base zoning is modified by the Alewife Overlay District (AOD) zoning, which augments the base district zoning regulations in a way that allows greater density and more flexible dimensional requirements by special permit while imposing additional requirements and standards to respond to the unique issues identified in the Alewife area. This zoning regime of a more restrictive by-right zoning, which can be more permissive by special permit, was one of the results of the Concord-Alewife Rezoning that was recommended in the 2006 *Concord-Alewife Planning Study* (see below). The “Envision Alewife” process is currently undertaking a new study of the area, with a vision for Alewife to be a sustainable, resilient, mixed-used district with convenient and safe connections within the neighborhood and to the rest of the city, along with amenities that support interaction and social ties among its residents. This process is ongoing.

A small portion of the site is partially located within the Flood Plain Overlay District, which encompasses areas designated as Flood Hazard Zones A and AE on the Middlesex County Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Projects within this district require a Planning Board special permit following technical review by the City Engineer and the Cambridge Conservation Commission to ensure that the development will not diminish the site’s ability to accommodate the retention and flow of flood water. Approval is also conditioned on compliance with the Wetlands Protection Act, which potentially could include an Order of Conditions imposed by the Conservation Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. These requirements dovetail with city standards for stormwater management, which are included as requirements in the AOD zoning. While the criteria for granting the special permit are fairly technical, they also align with many of the environmental goals of the Concord-Alewife plan.

### *Concord-Alewife Plan*

The planning goals that guide development in the area were established in the *Concord-Alewife Planning Study*, completed in 2006. In deciding special permits pursuant to the Alewife Overlay District (AOD) zoning, the key consideration for the Board will be the degree to which the proposal conforms to the Concord-Alewife plan. Attached to this memo is a selected set of materials from the Concord-Alewife report that are most relevant to consideration of a proposal in this area.

The Concord-Alewife study divided the Alewife area into four sub-areas. The project site is located in the “Quadrangle” area south of the Fitchburg rail line and north of Concord Avenue/Fresh Pond, which is still largely industrial in character, with some more recent additions of housing and office use and some remaining automobile-oriented retail.

The Quadrangle sub-area is further subcategorized into Quadrangle Northeast, Quadrangle Northwest, Quadrangle Southeast, and Quadrangle Southwest. The 55 Wheeler Street site lies within the interior of the Quadrangle Southeast (classified on the Zoning Map as the “AOD-4” subdistrict). This sub-area is currently transitioning to contain a number of newer multifamily residential developments along with existing offices and other commercial uses.

### *Future Development Goals*

Some Concord-Alewife goals related to development include to promote a mix of housing and commercial uses throughout the area, to manage traffic demand by supporting walking, bicycling and public transportation as alternative modes of transportation, and to promote stormwater management through increased landscape and permeable area, as well as engineered interventions.

In the Quadrangle in particular, the planning goals encourage the addition of housing, with a transition from lower-density development near the Cambridge Highlands neighborhood to medium-density development further to the east. The Quadrangle goals also support neighborhood-focused retail near Alewife Brook Parkway, while allowing the retention of light industrial uses in areas near the active railroad line. Some recent residential projects proximate to 55 Wheeler Street include the two-building, 429-unit residential complex at 70 Fawcett Street, known as the “Atmark” development (PB-255) which has the same underlying zoning as the 55 Wheeler Street site, and the 61-unit development at the corner of Concord Avenue and Wheeler Street (PB-269). The Board has also approved a 44-unit residential project at 95 Fawcett Street (PB-309) and a 49-unit second phase of the Concord/Wheeler project (PB-319).

### *Infrastructure*

Another key component of the Concord-Alewife plan is desired infrastructure improvements to serve public goals. One major piece of infrastructure is a potential pedestrian/bicycle connection from the Quadrangle to the Alewife MBTA station. Other desired infrastructure improvements particular to the Quadrangle include roadway connections to allow more flexible east-west travel without relying on Concord Avenue, and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout the area. In addition, the plan identifies public open space as a goal, to serve community-gathering functions in addition to stormwater management. The AOD zoning provides mechanisms by which development rights and

requirements can be shifted, pooled and transferred flexibly across sites to enable these public improvements. For example, in the Atmark project, the site was split to provide a roadway connection that would form part of a future east-west internal roadway system, which resulted in a development bonus.

### *Urban Design*

One of the main urban design objectives for development in the Quadrangle is to transition from its current automobile-oriented character to a streetscape that enhances the bicycle and pedestrian environment. Key urban design considerations include fostering a pedestrian-friendly environment, residential character, and a vibrant public realm by creating active streets and outdoor gathering spaces, and reinforcing connections to nearby open spaces. Relevant design guidelines are summarized above and discussed further in this memo.

## **Comments on Proposal**

### ***Consistency with Planning and Zoning***

In general, the proposal to develop housing on this site supports the citywide planning goal of adding to the housing supply as well as the area-specific goals of transitioning from auto-oriented uses and sites dominated by paved parking into more compact, pedestrian/bicycle-oriented development with improved open space and infrastructure to better manage stormwater and other environmental impacts.

The proposal also addresses some of the major goals of the Concord-Alewife plan by completing an important connection in the east-west roadway network, and providing new public open space adjacent to the railroad line, where it might be able to help facilitate a future connection over the railroad line to Alewife station. The project itself is also shaped to fit within a more traditional urban street grid, rather than the current “dead end” condition.

The scale and density of the residential project is consistent with the AOD zoning requirements, and the project is exceeding the Article 6.000 requirements for bicycle parking. The completed project will be approximately 563,609 square feet in Gross Floor Area (GFA), with a base FAR of 2.0 for residential uses as allowed by special permit in this AOD, and additional GFA allowed for residential uses as the project will be subject to the inclusionary housing requirements (as most recently amended). Planning Board approval is required for FAR exceeding 0.75, height exceeding 35 feet, and reduction in lot area per dwelling unit below 1,200 square feet per dwelling unit.

Like some other residential developments in the AOD, the project is designed with some parking partially above-grade. This approach is not preferred in the Concord-Alewife guidelines, but has become necessary in response to the City’s ongoing assessment of climate change impacts and anticipated flood levels. The floor area of 42 parking spaces proposed in the ground floor level of Building 1 should be included in the total Gross Floor Area as it is located above-grade.

The Project Review Special Permit requires a tree study to verify compliance with the city Tree Ordinance, which has been provided but is yet to be certified by the City Arborist. Sewer service infrastructure and water service infrastructure narratives are also included in the application, as required, and have been reviewed (along with the required flood plain assessment described below) by DPW in consultation with the Conservation Commission staff. A report from DPW indicates that the project is expected to be able to meet applicable requirements, which will be verified prior to issuance of a building permit.

#### *Open Space*

The project is proposing Open Space area to be more than the required minimum of 15% of the lot area under the Alewife Overlay District requirements. However, the front yard along Wheeler Street does not consist entirely of Green Area or Permeable Open Space (Section 20.95.32) as the non-vegetated and impermeable area occupies more than 25% of the open space area. While this variation is intended to enable residential entrances in the front yards along Wheeler Street, which is an important urban design achievement, is recommended that permeable paving or other measures be considered for the walkways proposed in the front yard to mitigate the environmental impact of the added hardscape.

The AOD regulations also require a minimum Permeable Area of 25% of the lot area, which may be waived as-of-right if the DPW water management standards are met (Section 20.96.1). The Application indicates that those requirements are being considered and DPW has provided comments in its report.

#### *Transportation*

The project is subject to the transportation impact requirements of Article 19.000. The applicant has performed a Transportation Impact Study, which is helpful in understanding how the project's transportation characteristics align with the goals in the Concord-Alewife plan of discouraging additional automobile trips and encouraging a more walkable, bikeable, and transit-oriented neighborhood. Specific comments on the project and recommendations for transportation enhancements are provided in an accompanying letter from the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TP&T), which also addresses the request for a reduction in required parking and the request for an increase in allowed curb cut width.

#### *Flood Plain Requirements*

The Applicant has provided flood plain certification and discussed the project with the City Engineer, who has provided a letter commenting on the project (see attached). The Conservation Commission staff was included in the City Engineer's review and the Conservation Commission will schedule a hearing on the application. Because there is no building proposed in the flood plain, only open space, the project is not expected to result in any negative impact on flood storage.

### ***Urban Design***

Like some other recent residential projects in the area, this is a large-scale project on a large-scale site, with some less than positive surrounding interfaces and a lack of a traditional scale neighborhood that might otherwise provide a contextual pattern that could guide the design of new projects. As a result, some of the design issues that have previously been of concern to the Planning Board, such as the potential for large parking plinths and “unrelenting” building length, are challenges that have been raised with the design team. The proposal addresses these issues by breaking the project into three 7-story buildings, with Building 1 being a standalone structure, and Buildings 2 and 3 having L-shaped curved volumes that are interconnected.

### ***Site planning and landscape design***

At the site planning level, breaking the project into three volumes creates site permeability, including an east-west “mews” connection, extension of Fawcett Street through the site, and the creation of a well-landscaped, publicly accessible open space area immediately off Wheeler Street. The location of the proposed buildings on the site seems generally appropriate. However, the Building 3 setback from the extension of Fawcett Street could better align with the Atmark Building to create a more consistent streetscape and additional landscaping. Also, while the mews connection is a positive outcome, it is slightly out of alignment with the connection through the abutting buildings to the west, which could be rectified.

The gently raised entrance courtyard will be accessible to the public, as will the internal mews, the landscaped front setback areas, and the streetscape improvements on Wheeler Street. A proposed public open space area will be located next to the railway line, and will incorporate naturalistic design features. Further consideration should be given to providing more amenities for users, including families with children, throughout the site’s open space areas.

Parking is generally well designed and the majority of parking spaces are provided below grade. The ground-floor parking in Building 1 is lined with residential units facing Wheeler Street and the mews, which is the preferred urban design outcome. As mentioned above, a surface parking lot is proposed adjacent to the new open space area. While the need for visitor parking is understood, provision of surface parking lots that are visible from the public way and proposed park is contrary to citywide and area-specific urban design objectives.

Staff is very supportive of the Service Road being treated as an integral component of the site design with landscaping, attractive paving and lighting. Further details are needed to confirm that the façade design creates an attractive and comfortable setting for pedestrians and bicyclists.

### ***Building scale and massing***

The proposed scale and massing generally reflects the architectural approach that has become characteristic of new mid-rise residential buildings in Alewife. In this case, rather than an arbitrary set of massing moves, the architectural composition of each building is relatively simple and presents a coherent concept. Building 1 has a narrower frontage to Wheeler Street and provides an appropriate stepped transition to the abutting condominium building. The upper floor of this building is also

modestly set back from Wheeler Street, which helps to mitigate scale issues.

For Buildings 2 and 3, each façade is articulated with a series of recessed balconies and an associated break in the roofline, which add visual interest, more animated façades and a sense of domesticity. The positioning of the recessed balconies and the regular fenestration patterns work to create a good vertical composition, and break down the massing while maintaining a strong streetwall. A two-story, articulated base is provided, which also assists to diminish the perceived scale of the buildings. While the curved facades are subtractive massing devices that create open view lines into the site, in some perspectives this does seem to exaggerate the repetitive nature of the street facades and continuous massing. At the pre-application stage, staff had questioned whether an upper level setback, projecting bays, or other architectural elements might help to create additional variety and enhance the building's pedestrian scale.

#### *Building facades and architectural character*

The architectural language of the building includes a more contemporary architectural form than other recent projects, which often reference traditional housing styles. The project utilizes several design techniques to establish a residential character, creating a separate identity for each building and distinct internal and street-facing facades. The mix of materials, including brick, fiber cement siding and metal panels, as well as the color selection, vary across the buildings, and each appears purposely applied. In some of the renderings, the gray metal panel above the podium appears a little heavy and accentuates the massing. More detailed elevations should be provided to clarify material transitions and fenestration details.

#### *Ground floor design*

Much attention has been given to successfully activating the ground floor and creating a pedestrian-friendly environment with individual unit entrances wrapping the Wheeler Street frontage and the mews connection. The design of the ground floor presents a strong residential character with a fine vertical grain. Importantly, by providing a secondary pathway above the sidewalk, the architect has skillfully mitigated issues associated with grade changes required to meet anticipated flood levels and access regulations. The height difference between the sidewalk and pathway also provides enough of a transition and threshold between public and private realms to enable the provision of outdoor patios. The concept of the secondary raised sidewalk is currently being discussed as part of the "Envision Alewife" planning process.

Main entrances to Buildings 1 and 2 are located on Wheeler Street, at the corner, with recessed entries and highly transparent facades. From a pedestrian's perspective, the entrance to Building 2 seems distant and staff would suggest that the provision of an additional entrance closer to Building 1 should be studied. This would help to break down the perceived distance and would have the added benefit of adding some variety to what is a relatively long and repetitive facade. While there is a separate elevator/ stair core for Building 3, which faces the extension of Fawcett Street, there does not appear to be a main entrance for Building 3. Providing such would help give that building its own sense of identity and would also activate Fawcett Street. The provision of windows to building entrances and lobbies,

including stair and elevator areas, would also create a more welcoming pedestrian environment and may mitigate some of the negative aspects of the long, double-loaded corridors. Some of the stairs could face Wheeler Street to create specific points of interest along the street.

While the parking and servicing access is consolidated, the parking entrance facing Fawcett Street as well as the treatment of the electrical rooms deserves some further work to enhance this section of the façade.

#### *Mechanicals and Services*

Mechanical and service functions are arranged on the site in a logical way that reduces their impact on abutting properties and the public realm. Rooftop mechanical equipment appears to be well organized and sufficiently set back from building facades; however, further detailed information regarding the height of the parapet, size and location of equipment should be provided to verify the equipment is adequately screened.

Trash is handled internally in a space located off the internal service road for ease of pickup. Gas meters will similarly be well located with access provided from the Service Road. Transformers are assumed to be accommodated within electrical rooms inside the buildings; however, this should be clarified by the Applicant.

#### *Sustainable Design*

This project is subject to the City's Green Building Requirements (Section 22.20 of the Zoning Ordinance), which requires projects over 50,000 GFA be designed to LEED Silver, at minimum, under the version of LEED currently in effect, LEED v4. The Project Team has committed to exceed this minimum requirement and is designing the project to LEED Gold. CDD staff has reviewed the submitted green building materials with the Applicant's consultant, and has found that the project complies with LEED v4 and is on track to fulfill the requirements. The project will be subject to continuing Green Building Review by CDD staff prior to receiving a Building Permit and Certificate of Occupancy.

In 2015, the City adopted the Net Zero Action Plan, a commitment to achieve citywide net-zero emissions by 2050. As proposals continue to develop that will increase the sustainable design standards for new and existing buildings, City staff strongly encourages projects be built "net-zero ready" or to provide a technical framework for transitioning to net zero in the future by detailing possible pathways for switching to non-fossil fuel sources. While this is not currently required by zoning, the Applicant has submitted such a narrative. Technically feasible options include: converting the planned unit HVAC systems to refrigerant based heat pumps for heating and cooling; purchasing green power (RECs) or carbon offsets to cover remainder of load emissions not covered by on-site solar PVs; and engaging residents in a group purchase of green power or carbon offsets.

The Net Zero Action Plan also recommends that new buildings be "solar ready," where new buildings would provide rooftop spaces with maximum solar access (i.e., located to the south of any equipment that might cast a shadow) and designed to accommodate the future installation of solar energy equipment. While this is not required, CDD staff highly recommends pursuing this objective, and it is

included in this project's proposed design. 55 Wheeler Street will be a "solar ready" project, designed to accommodate future solar thermal or solar PV systems.

### **Continuing Design Review**

The following is a list of some key issues that staff recommends should be addressed further as the building and site designs advance. Additional comments from the Planning Board are welcome.

- Additional study of whether the building setbacks and proposed pedestrian "mews" can be better aligned with the adjacent Atmark buildings.
- Additional detail on features and amenities that will be provided within open spaces on the site, particularly for families with children.
- Details of façade design along the proposed service road.
- Additional study of architectural elements that might help to create further variety along the Building 2 Wheeler Street elevation.
- Additional study of a possible secondary entrance to Building 2 and provision of windows to building common areas, including entrances, lobbies, stair and elevator areas.
- Improved plans and graphics, including floor plans clearly identifying all window and door openings, and more detailed elevations showing material transitions and fenestration details, as well as all rooftop appurtenances, equipment, and screening materials.
- Details of the parking entrance façade facing Fawcett Street and electrical room façade.
- Details of transformer locations and screening.
- Clarification of discrepancies between the plans and renderings (e.g balconies, patios, Building 1 upper floor setback etc.)