

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

2018 FEB 22 AM 10:12
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case Number:	332
Address:	121-169 Vassar Street
Zoning:	Special District 6 / MIT Institutional Overlay District
Applicant:	Massachusetts Institute of Technology 77 Massachusetts Avenue, NW23-100, Cambridge, MA 02139
Owner:	Massachusetts Institute of Technology 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139
Application Date:	November 13, 2017
Date of Planning Board Public Hearing:	December 5, 2017
Date of Planning Board Decision:	December 5, 2017
Date of Filing Planning Board Decision:	February 22, 2018
Application:	Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20) and Special Permit to exceed allowed curb cut width (Section 6.43.5) to construct an undergraduate student dormitory building of 155,978 square feet area containing 450 undergraduate beds and 16 apartments for graduate resident tutors, faculty and others, 243 long-term bicycle spaces, 34 short term bicycle spaces, and landscaped areas accessible to the building residents and general public. With the new building, the total gross floor area of the parcels will be 1,167,655 square feet.
Decision:	GRANTED, with Conditions

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board: Swaathi Joseph

For further information concerning this decision, please contact Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, or lpaden@cambridgema.gov.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Application Documents and Supporting Material

1. Special Permit Application Volume I dated 11/08/2017, containing, *inter alia*, the Special Permit Cover Sheet, Dimensional Form, Ownership Certificate, Community Outreach Summary, Project Narrative, Noise Mitigation Narrative, Transportation Access and Circulation Study Summary, and Tree Study with Plan Set
2. Special Permit Application Volume II, Plan Set, dated 11/08/2017.
3. Presentation slides shown to Planning Board on 12/5/2017.

City of Cambridge Documents

4. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Department of Public Works (DPW) staff, dated 11/28/2017.
5. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TP&T) staff, dated 11/30/2017.
6. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Community Development Department (CDD) staff, dated 11/30/2017.

Other Documents

7. Email communication from John Sanzone to the Planning Board, dated 11/04/2017.

APPLICATION SUMMARY

The Applicant proposes to replace the existing parking garage and surface lot with an undergraduate student dormitory consisting of a single building with a total of 450 dormitory beds, 12 graduate resident tutor apartments, and 4 other apartments and includes 243 long-term bicycle spaces, 34 short-term bicycle spaces, and landscaped areas accessible to the building residents and the public. The site is located in the Special District 6 (SD-6) as modified by MIT Institutional Use Overlay District. The required 38 off-street parking spaces will be provided within the pooled parking facilities that exist to serve the entire MIT campus.

FINDINGS

After review of the Application Documents and other documents submitted to the Planning Board, testimony given at the public hearing, and review and consideration of the applicable requirements and criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance with regard to the relief being sought, the Planning Board makes the following Findings:

1. Project Review Special Permit (19.20)

(19.25.1) Traffic Impact Findings. Where a Traffic Study is required as set forth in Section 19.24 (2) the Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area as analyzed in the Traffic Study. Substantial adverse impact on city traffic shall be measured by reference to the traffic impact indicators set forth in Section 19.25.11 below.

While the Project requires a Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20), it is below the threshold that requires a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) for a College or University, which is the creation of 150 new parking spaces or the relocation of 250 existing parking spaces or any combination thereof. The existing parking spaces that will be removed from the site will not be relocated, and campus parking needs will be served by modifying existing campus parking operations and by completing new facilities that have been previously permitted for other locations.

Though not required, the Applicant provided a summary of a Transportation Access and Circulation Study prepared by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. to analyze transportation related impacts of the project. The report concluded that the project will not have a significant adverse impact on traffic operations. In its memorandum to the Planning Board dated November 30, 2017, the TP&T supported the findings that the project will not generate new vehicle trips and does not need new parking spaces.

(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. 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.

The Board finds that the proposed project is consistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30, as described below.

(19.31) New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.

The project fits well within the existing pattern of development on the MIT campus, as

well as within the context of nearby building heights and existing streetscape. The architectural and urban design concept provides an excellent response to the site and context, including other nearby MIT dorms, and represents an inventive approach to mid-rise housing. The project is also designed to maintain the physical and visual connections aligned with Pacific Street across the railroad right of way. The project's use of color, texture and varying fenestration are positive additions to the neighborhood.

(19.32) Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings. . .

As planned, the primary pedestrian and bicycle improvements are oriented toward the connection across the railroad tracks to Pacific Street and the planned Grand Junction Path. The proposed pedestrian/bicycle crossings of Vassar Street do not conflict with the vehicular access into the site, improving access for cyclists and pedestrians. The public forecourt and visual access into the private courtyard on Vassar Street create a more welcoming and safe feeling along Vassar Street for people traveling to and from the main campus. The ground floor façade is highly transparent and active student spaces are provided to activate the public realm and enhance pedestrian safety in the area.

(19.33) The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors. . .

The project is designed to minimize negative impacts on its surroundings and enhance the overall appearance of the existing streetscapes and open space. A rooftop mechanical penthouse will house the majority of building services and the massing of the penthouse enclosures have been integrated into the building massing approach and proposed façade materials. Trash and recycling will be contained within the first-floor level away from the street facade to avoid noise, odor and visual impacts, and will be picked up and removed via the loading dock area. The project will utilize an underground stormwater management system, proprietary water quality management structures, use of porous pavements and installation of green roofs. The project will increase the pervious area of the lot with vegetated areas as well as pervious pavements promoting increased infiltration. As indicated in the shadow studies included in the application materials, dated November 8, 2017, the building will not have a significant impact on the use or enjoyment of any adjacent public spaces. The mid-rise building will have no substantial impact on neighboring buildings, which are generally taller in height. The Tree Study shows that there are no significant trees on the parcel, and the proposed landscape design includes new trees in several locations.

(19.34) Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system. . .

The project will meet all applicable standards for provision of public infrastructure. The project will be subject to Green Building requirements pursuant to Section 22.20 of the Zoning Ordinance and the Applicant is seeking LEED Gold Certification of the project.

The project achieves a high number of energy points through a very efficient building envelope design. The Applicant has also consulted with the Cambridge Water Department and has proposed improvements to ensure that water service can be provided to the site without adverse impacts on the municipal water system. The project is designed to include water-conserving plumbing features. DPW has provided comment to the Planning Board in a memorandum dated November 28, 2017 indicating that the project is expected to meet all DPW standards and recommending additional measures to mitigate and manage flood risk, which have been agreed to by the Applicant. Open space permeability will increase as a result of the development, which will assist in minimizing stormwater run-off from the site. As described in the TP&T memorandum, the project will not have a significant impact on traffic operations as the service and delivery trips generated by the project can be accommodated by Vassar Street.

(19.35) New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically. . .

The project is consistent with City policies to encourage institutional expansion within existing campus areas, as the site is located in an institutional use overlay district. Retail uses are not permitted in the district, but active pedestrian uses, such as a dining hall, lobby spaces, social spaces and entries, are provided at the ground level of the project. The project further enhances the public realm with the entry forecourt at street level and provides a connection to the proposed Grand Junction Path and the residential/institutional neighborhood to the northwest.

(19.36) Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged. . .

The dormitory project will expand campus housing facilities for the institution with 450 undergraduate beds and 16 apartments for graduate resident tutors and others. The replacement of the existing garage with an additional student residence is also consistent with the City's objectives of housing university students on campus and reducing reliance on automobile trips.

(19.37) Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city. . .

Publicly beneficial open space will be provided at the building entrance courtyard, the Pacific Street corridor connection on the west side of the site, and landscaped areas along Vassar Street. The proposed pathway connecting to Pacific Street will be a significant amenity for the proposed Grand Junction path and will strengthen the campus' connections to the neighborhood. The landscaped courtyards help to break down the massing of the building, and provide animation and amenities for residents and the public. The extensive transparent ground floor frontage and provision of active student spaces along this edge will also engage the public and will have a positive impact on the pedestrian realm.

2. Special Permit to exceed allowed curb cut width (Section 6.43.5)

The proposed project seeks approval for a curb cut with a width of approximately 30 feet along Vassar Street to provide access for fire and commercial trucks into the off-street loading and building service area. The maximum allowed curb cut width in the district is 20 feet per zoning regulations. Such relief is allowed by special permit in Section 6.43.5 and Section 10.45 of the Zoning Ordinance.

6.43.5 The Board of Zoning Appeal may grant a special permit modifying the provisions of this subsections 6.43 in accordance with the following conditions: . . .

(b) The maximum curb cut width specified in paragraphs 6.43.3 (a) and 6.43.3 (b) may be modified if the Board determines that an increased curb cut width would facilitate traffic and safety.

In its memo dated November 30, 2017, TP&T noted that the location of the service driveway is reasonable and supported the approval for the special permit to exceed the curb cut width as it will allow better access for commercial trucks and fire trucks into the site. Therefore, the Board finds that the larger curb cut for this proposed development meets the applicable criteria.

3. General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit (10.43)

The Planning Board finds that the project meets the General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit, as set forth below.

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 ...

Upon granting of the requested special permits, it appears that the requirements of the Ordinance will be met. The project conforms to the use and dimensional requirements of the zoning district.

(b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or ...

As discussed earlier in these Findings, the traffic generated will not have any substantial impact on traffic patterns and thus will not create any new congestion, hazard, or change in neighborhood character. Systems of access and egress for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles have been designed in consultation with TP&T.

- (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 ...*

The proposed dormitory use conforms to the allowed uses in this district, and hence will not adversely affect adjacent uses that exist or are anticipated in the future. The proposed project will be compatible with the use and scale of surrounding lots and will improve the streetscape as well as connections to other parts of the campus.

- (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 ...*

The proposed dormitory use will not create nuisance or hazard, and all development activity will adhere to applicable health and safety regulations.

- (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 ...*

Expansion of university uses within existing campus areas is consistent with long-standing City policies and objectives for institutional growth and supports the purpose of Special District 6 and the MIT Institutional Use Overlay District. The replacement of the parking garage with a dormitory building of superior architectural quality will benefit the district as a whole.

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

The project is consistent with the City's Urban Design Objectives as set forth in the 19.30 Findings above.

DECISION

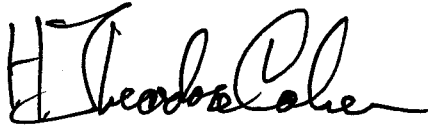
Based on a review of the Application Documents, testimony given at the public hearing, and the above Findings, the Planning Board hereby GRANTS the requested Special Permits subject to the following conditions and limitations. Hereinafter, for purposes of this Decision, the Permittee shall mean the Applicant for the requested Special Permits and any successor or successors in interest.

1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the Application Documents dated 11/08/2017, and all supplemental documents and information submitted by the Applicant to the Planning Board as referenced above. Appendix I summarizes the dimensional features of the project as approved.
2. The project shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department (“CDD”). Before issuance of each Building Permit for the project, CDD shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the final plans submitted to secure the Building Permit are consistent with and meet all conditions of this Decision. As part of CDD’s administrative review of the project, and prior to any certification to the Superintendent of Buildings, CDD may present any design changes made subsequent to this Decision to the Planning Board for its review and comment.
3. The Permittee shall address the following design comments through the continuing design review process set forth above. Each of the below items shall be provided to CDD for review and approval of the final design details:
 - a. Further consideration of opportunities to make the brick wall overhanging the main building entrance feel more welcoming and open.
 - b. Further review of the rear façade and design of the long-term bicycle parking area in relation to visibility from the public realm and the Grand Junction Path, safety and security, and opportunities to enrich the design.
 - c. Updated plans and elevations clearly showing key dimensions, scale and north arrow; including mechanical penthouse plan, sections through the social courtyard, cross-roads plaza and building overhang.
 - d. All external lighting, including conformance with technical guidelines recommended in the proposed Cambridge Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, with consideration given to facade lighting and tree up-lighting, and use of timers to minimize light trespass.
 - e. All proposed public realm, open space, streetscape improvements and landscape details, including seating, screening of the existing and any new transformers and fence details.
 - f. All building exterior materials, colors, and details.

- g. Potential opportunities to improve projected building energy performance through envelope design or other measures.
 - h. Parking, bicycle parking, access and egress, especially the final curb cut width, Vassar Street crosswalks, pedestrian ramps, emergency vehicle access, and public parking and loading zone on Vassar Street, to be reviewed by TP&T.
4. The Permittee shall consult with the City Arborist and other DPW staff to remediate proposed loss of street trees either by replanting or making a contribution to the tree fund; submit a replanting plan to replace 5 trees that were removed from the public way; and implement a tree protection plan during the entire duration of construction.
 5. All authorized development shall abide by all applicable City of Cambridge Ordinances, including the Noise Ordinance (Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code).
 6. Throughout design development and construction, the project shall conform to the Green Building Requirements set forth in Section 22.20 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. CDD shall certify that the applicable requirements are met prior to issuance of a building permit, and again prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy, for development authorized by this special permit.
 7. The Permittee shall be required to prepare and implement a Construction Management Program in accordance with Section 18.20 of the Zoning Ordinance, which shall be reviewed and certified by DPW prior to issuance of a Building Permit for development authorized by this Special Permit.
 8. Prior to the final selection of colors and textures for façade materials, the Permittee shall erect a mock-up(s) of an exterior wall section, including rooftop screening elements, on or near the building site to be reviewed by CDD for comment. Members of the Planning Board shall be notified when the mock-up is erected and given an opportunity to view the materials and transmit any comments to CDD.

Voting in the affirmative to GRANT the Special Permits were Planning Board Members Hugh Russell, Mary Flynn, Catherine Preston Connolly, H Theodore Cohen, Steve Cohen, and Louis Bacci, Jr. constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board, necessary to grant a special permit.

For the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H Theodore Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

H Theodore Cohen, Chair.

A copy of this decision PB #332 shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision has been filed on February 22, 2018 with the Office of the City Clerk, by Swaathi Joseph, duly authorized representative of the Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty days have elapsed since the above decision was filed in the office of the City Clerk and:
_____ no appeal has been filed; or

_____ an appeal has been filed within such twenty days.

The person exercising rights under a duly appealed special permit does so at risk that a court will reverse the permit and that any construction performed under the permit may be ordered undone. This certification shall in no event terminate or shorten the tolling, during the pendency of any appeals, of the periods provided under the second paragraph of G.L. c. 40A, §6.

Date: _____, City Clerk

Appeal has been dismissed or denied.

Date: _____, City Clerk

Appendix I: Approved Dimensional Chart

	Existing	Allowed or Required	Proposed	Permitted
Lot Area (sq ft)	765,106	5,000	No Change	No Change
Total GFA (sq ft)	1,011,677	2,102,877	1,167,655	1,167,655
Residential Base	N/A	N/A	N/A	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Non-Residential Base	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Inclusionary Bonus	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Total FAR	1.32	3.0	1.53	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Residential Base	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Non-Residential Base	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Inclusionary Bonus	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Total Dwelling Units	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Base Units	N/A	N/A	N/A	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Inclusionary Bonus Units	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Base Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Total Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Lot Width (ft)	>50	50	No Change	No Change
Height (ft)	42.1	100	64	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Front Setback (ft)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Side Setback – JFK Memorial Park walkway (ft)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Side Setback – (ft)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Rear Setback (ft)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Open Space (% of Lot Area)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements
Private Open Space	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Permeable Open Space	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Off-Street Parking Spaces	410	38	38 ¹	38 ¹
Long-Term Bicycle Parking	N/A	243	243	Consistent with Application Documents, and other applicable requirements
Short-Term Bicycle Parking	N/A	33	34	
Loading Bays	N/A	2	2	

¹ To be provided off-site within institutional pooled parking