

City of Cambridge  
Department of Public Works

*Owen O'Riordan, Commissioner*

147 Hampshire Street  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
theworks@cambridgema.gov

Voice: 617 349 4800

TDD: 617 499 9924

January 19, 2021

TO: Planning Board

FROM: Katherine F. Watkins  
City Engineer

**RE: 51 Vassar Street Special Permit Application**

We are in receipt of the Special Permit Application materials, dated December, 2020 for the redevelopment of 51 Vassar Street for the MIT Stephen A. Schwarzman College of Computing. We have reviewed the materials and have presented below some comments related to the interests of the Department of Public Works.

The Applicant has met with the DPW and has been made aware of permitting requirements for the project. The DPW, based on the provided documentation, does not anticipate the project having any issue meeting all the requirements of the DPW as the project will be subject to thorough and complete engineering review at the time of the Building Permit Application.

**Climate Change / Resiliency:**

The Applicant has been asked to address flood level impacts and building resiliency associated with increased flood elevations presented in the November 2015 *Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment*.

The Applicant is proposing to elevate their structure entrances to above the 2070-100 year flood event thus creating passive protection of the spaces from the flooding occurrence. The DPW will continue to review the plans to ensure that as the proposal is developed other critical infrastructure is also protected.

**Right-of-Way Changes:**

The DPW has been working collaboratively with the Applicant and other City Departments on the Applicants proposal for work in the Vassar Street right of way. Generally, as this corridor has an established cross section, the DPW would support the reestablishment of the existing cross-section with consistent layout and materials. The DPW supports the modifications to the proposal, as outlined by the Traffic Department in their memo on the Special Permit Application.

We will continue to work the Applicant and other City Departments as the design progresses to revise the design to incorporate current City Standards while maintaining the consistency of the corridor. One example of this would be to review the street tree planting details for opportunities to be more consistent with the recommendations of the Urban Forestry Master Plan.

**Stormwater Management:**

The submitted documentation includes discussion of the proposed storm water management system for the development. The documentation indicates that the proposed system will meet the Mass DEP and City of Cambridge design standards. Under the City Land Disturbance Regulations due to the project requiring a Special Permit from the Planning Board, the Applicant will need to obtain a Stormwater Control Permit from the Department of Public Works. The permit requirements cover the design standards and long term operation and maintenance of a management system for the project site, as well as the construction phase erosion and sedimentation control plans.

A preliminary design was presented in the Special Permit Application that discussed using a combination of a green roof along with infiltration and detention BMP's to meet the City's water quality and quantity requirements. The Applicant will be reminded that all designs shall be based on the projected 2030 storm events to ensure that the systems will operate effectively under the changing precipitation events.


Consistent with all Special Permits, a thorough review of the design will be completed at the time of building permit submission.

**Urban Forestry and Tree Ordinance:**

The Urban Forestry Division of the DPW has reviewed the Applicants Tree Plan for compliance with the Tree Ordinance and approve the proposal for mitigation. At the time of the building permit submission, the Applicant shall provide confirmation that the Building Permit Plans are in conformance with the submitted Tree Plan and/or the current Tree Ordinance and if needed shall submit a revised tree plan for review and approval by the DPW.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns related to the comments provided above.

Sincerely,



Katherine F. Watkins, P.E.  
City Engineer