



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

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OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

NOTICE OF PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Case Number:	383
Location of Premises:	330 Third Street and 585 Third Street
Zoning:	Office 3A (O-3A); PUD-CDK; PUD-3
Applicant:	BMR- Third LLC 4570 Executive Dr, San Diego, CA 92121
Owners:	BMR- Third LLC 4570 Executive Dr, San Diego, CA 92121
Application Date:	September 20, 2021
Date of Public Hearing:	October 19, 2021
Date of Determination:	October 19, 2021
Summary of Proposal:	Construct a 16-story mixed-use building of 500,000 square feet gross floor area to include laboratory space, office space, art performance center, and indoor-outdoor public space pursuant to PUD-CDK district requirements.
Determination:	APPROVED, with conditions and requests for modification.

Copies of this Preliminary Determination and 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 Preliminary Determination, please contact Swaathi Joseph at 617-349-4668, or sjoseph@cambridgema.gov.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Application Documents and Supporting Material

1. Special Permit Application submitted on 9/20/2021, containing the following volumes:
 - Volume 1 – PUD Special Permit Submission dated 9/3/2021 and containing supporting written materials for issuance of the requested special permit including special permit forms, a general site history and project description, a summary of requested special permits and zoning compliance, community engagement summary, detailed responses to applicable special permit approval criteria, infrastructure narrative, noise mitigation narrative, sustainability narrative, and appendices including green building report with certification, traffic impact study, tree study certification, and wind study.
 - Volume 2 – Plans and Illustrations dated 9/3/2021 and containing existing conditions, proposed design, public realm and ground plan design, renderings, and appendices.
 - Volume 3 – Minor Modification of PUD-141 dated 9/3/2021 and containing materials for a Minor Amendment to PUD-3 Special permit (PB-141) including special permit forms, a general permit history, a brief project description, and a summary of the requested minor amendment.
2. Presentation slides shown to the Planning Board on 10/19/2021.

City of Cambridge Documents

3. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Katherine F. Watkins, City Engineer, dated 10/12/2021.
4. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Community Development Department (CDD) staff, dated 10/13/2021.
5. Memo to the Planning Board from Joseph E. Barr, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, dated 10/15/2021.

Other Documents

6. Email communication to the Planning Board from Jessica Smyser, dated 10/14/2021.

APPLICATION SUMMARY

This PUD-CDK application includes the relocation of an Eversource Gas Transfer Station (GTS) site away from Third Street, and the development of an 18-story, 535,000 square foot office/lab building with a 35,000 square foot arts and cultural center (exempt from GFA calculations) and 17,000 square foot ground floor interior public commons.

The development proposal includes improvements to Third Street and Kendall Street (a private way), as well as new sidewalks and crosswalks, street trees, and landscaping. Off-street parking for the new development is to be accommodated in two existing off-street parking garages constructed as part of the Cambridge Research Park development (PB #141). On-street parking and visitor drop-off areas are proposed along the streets surrounding the development. Six loading bays are proposed along Athenaeum Street to accommodate loading and service needs for the new building.

FINDINGS

Based on a review of submitted Application materials and testimony given at the public hearing, the Board makes the following findings with reference to the criteria for preliminary approval of a Planned Unit Development Proposal as set forth in Article 12.000 of the Zoning Ordinance.

- (1) *The Development Proposal conforms with the General Development Controls set forth in Section 12.50, and the development controls set forth in the specific PUD district in which the project is located.*

The Board finds that the Development Proposal in conformance with the General Development Controls set forth in Section 12.50 and the development controls of the PUD-CDK zoning district contained in Section 13.200 of the Zoning Ordinance. The Application Documents demonstrate compliance with the particular requirements set forth in the PUD-CDK zoning adopted in 2020.

- (2) *The Development Proposal conforms with adopted policy plans or development guidelines for the portion of the city in which the PUD district is located.*

The zoning for the PUD-CDK district was developed to be consistent with a variety of plans and guidelines for Kendall Square and East Cambridge, including the Kendall Square (“K2”) Planning Study and Design Guidelines (2013); the Connect Kendall Square Open Space Plan (the “Kendall Square Open Space Plan”), and the Volpe Working Group Planning and Design Principles dated July 20, 2017 (the “Volpe Guidelines”); collectively referred to as the “PUD-CDK Guidelines and Principles”. The Board has reviewed the PUD-CDK Guidelines and Principles along with comments provided in the memo from Community Development Department (CDD) staff dated October 13, 2021, and finds the Development Proposal, in concept, to be in conformance with such guidelines and principles.

- (3) *The Development Proposal provides benefits to the city that outweigh its adverse effects.*

The Board finds that, on the whole, the redevelopment of the vacant Constellation Center site and relocation of the Eversource GTS site into a mixed-use office/lab building with significant ground floor public space and a robust arts and cultural center will benefit the City by improving the streetscape along Third Street, enhancing the existing network of open spaces around Kendall Square, and adding a significant public arts and cultural venue to the neighborhood. The proposed PUD will provide additional benefits as outlined in the Letter of Commitment that is incorporated by reference into the PUD-CDK zoning.

In making this determination the Planning Board shall consider the following:

- (a) *The quality of the site design, including integration of a variety of land uses, building types, and densities; preservation of natural features; compatibility with adjacent land uses; provision and type of open space; provision of other amenities designed to benefit the general public*

The Development Proposal includes the development of a new building at the Third Street frontage, which closes a gap in the Third Street streetwall and, alongside new sidewalk and landscaping improvements, helps to create a more inviting and safer atmosphere for neighborhood residents, visitors and employees. 17,000 square feet of ground-floor public space will occupy a portion of the Third Street frontage, and wrap around the length of the south façade along Kendall Street to the south.

(b) Traffic flow and safety

The Development Proposal includes no new off-street parking being constructed as part of the development, which helps to minimize new vehicular traffic in the area. The Development Proposal also includes the provision of short-term and long-term bicycle parking and public bicycle sharing stations which exceeds the minimum zoning requirements. Drop-off areas for visitors to the arts and cultural center are located along Kendall Street at the east end of the building, away from Third Street to minimize any potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. The Development Proposal will be subject to the requirements that mitigate potential traffic and transportation impacts in accordance with the Project Review Special Permit requirements (Section 19.20 of the Zoning ordinance, which will be reviewed at the Final Development Plan stage) and will be designed to provide safe access, egress and circulation meeting City standards.

(c) Adequacy of utilities and other public works

The Application Documents, testimony at the public hearing and the memo from the Department of Public Works dated October 12, 2021 indicate that City requirements related to infrastructure are understood and will be met in the proposed new development.

(d) Impact on existing public facilities within the city

The Development Proposal is not expected to result in any negative impacts on existing public facilities.

(e) Potential fiscal impacts

The Development Proposal is generally expected to result in positive fiscal impacts for the City, including increased tax revenues and contributions to public improvements and mitigation as required in the PUD-CDK zoning and Letter of Commitment.

DETERMINATION

Section 12.35.2 of the Zoning Ordinance requires that the Planning Board make a preliminary determination on a Development Proposal prior to holding a hearing to consider granting a special permit for a PUD Final Development Plan. The Planning Board may make a preliminary approval, potentially with conditions and subject to additional review and final approval of a special permit at a subsequent public hearing, or deny the application.

It is the Planning Board's Determination to **APPROVE** the Development Proposal and to authorize the Applicant to prepare a Final Development Plan to be submitted to the Board and reviewed at a future public hearing for possible granting of a special permit, subject to the additional requests for modification and additional information set forth below.

REQUESTS FOR MODIFICATION AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Final Development Plan shall respond to the specific comments made by the Board at the preliminary public hearing and set forth in memoranda provided to the Planning Board by the Community Development Department, Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department, and Department of Public Works, attached to this Preliminary Determination. The following is a high-level summary of comments provided, with more detail in the attached materials.

Site & Building Design

- Incorporation of a more comprehensive response to the Design Guidelines in the Application Narrative.
- Inclusion of floor plans with key dimensions, such as setbacks and architectural modulations.
- Explore opportunities for alternative massing approaches for the building that allow it to better connect with the existing built context north of Athenaeum Street and south of Kendall Street.
- Consideration of additional distinctions between the primary front and rear facades, and the more subdued side facades; including changes in plane, material, color, size and format of fenestration.
- Provide revised elevations with dimensions (i.e., floor heights) and sharper image drawings.
- Provision of additional perspective renderings looking down the side streets and from farther vantage points.

- Provision of a materials color palette with photographs of each exterior material included, and specifications for all materials and potential colors, including Glass Visible Light Transmittance and Reflectance.
- Clearer drawings illustrating the gradient treatment of the façade specified in the elevation drawings.
- Opportunities for variations of the façade colors that better align with existing neighborhood context.
- Inclusion of a miniature visual mock-up with actual material samples.
- Explore opportunities to use nano walls/operable windows and doors on the south façade along Kendall Street so that a seamless connection with the open space can be created.
- Explore opportunities to make the Public Commons a double-height space along Third Street to give it more prominence alongside the commercial/lab lobby.
- More information related to the ground floor design details, such as glass specification and details of the glass wall system. Opportunities to include more structural glass into the ground floor.
- Provision of zoomed in/focused elevations of the ground floor facades details.
- Opportunities to add fenestration or occupied ground level spaces with windows between loading/servicing areas wherever possible.
- Opportunities to use architectural loading doors designed to complement the overall façade composition.
- Provision of more detailed street-level elevations of the ground floor and a perspective rendering looking down Athenaeum Street towards the loading docks.
- More information related to the proposed gloss finish of the façade material.

- More information related to night-time lighting mitigation measures, and inclusion of a night-time rendering to better understand the visual impacts of the interior lighting.
- Explore opportunities for differentiating the public space entrance along Third Street from the lab lobby, through differentiated building façade /entrance design, changes in section, signage, lighting, etc.
- Opportunities to provide improved screening for the exposed lab stacks, or demonstrate that they will not be visible in longer range views of the building. If necessary, provide technical justification for their exposure.

Traffic and Transportation

- Opportunities to provide landscaping (low in height) around the proposed Bluebikes station, so that it is not the dominant feature/backdrop to the plaza.
- More information related to the proposed parking schematic and whether the project will remain compliant with the parking maximums set forth in the PUD-CDK zoning.
- Opportunities to provide weather protection for the proposed short-term bicycle parking spaces.
- Opportunities to provide bike air pumps and bike repair tools that are available to the public somewhere on the site, such as the Public Commons.
- Information about how vehicles will be discouraged from dropping visitors off on the west side of Third Street, instead of along Kendall Street during events at the Arts and Culture Center.
- Opportunities to reduce/condense the number of loading bays proposed.
- Clarification as to whether PB-141 should be amended to allow for PUD-CDK uses to park in off-street garages reserved for PB-141 buildings and uses. Demonstrate that minimum parking requirements under PB-141 would not be violated.

Ground Floor Public Commons

- Study of public space precedents that demonstrate a similar scale of public space at the ground floor of a large, commercial/ mixed use building.
- More information on the public amenities (e.g., public restrooms, free public wi-fi) will be included in the interior public space that can help support a welcoming public atmosphere.

- More information on the general limitations or stipulations on the public's access and use of the space.
- More information on the legal mechanism proposed for guaranteeing public access to the Ground Floor Public Commons, and the anticipated timing of executing such a mechanism.
- More information on how any restrictions or limitations to the public's use of the space will be communicated and made clear to the public.
- Additional information related to the anticipated frequency of events and/or programming of the interior public space, and what other activities might be utilized to help draw visitors in during non-event times.
- A description of the full range of proposed retail and/or other consumer establishment uses per Article 4.000 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- Clarification as to whether the Winter Garden is part of the Ground Floor Public Commons or part of the Arts and Cultural Center.
- Information related to the need for an egress stair that separates the lobby and retail space, and opportunities for removing said stair in order to increase the space dedicated to the Public Commons.
- More information and design alternatives related to the interface between the commercial/lab lobby area and the Public Commons; specifically, if the interface should be solid, transparent, or a combination of both to achieve the most welcoming and friendly design.
- More information related to proposed wayfinding, signage, and lighting to draw visitors to the Public Commons from the exterior of the building and the street.
- Opportunities to increase the presence of the Ground Floor Public Commons along Third Street, relative to the proposed commercial office/lab lobby space.

Arts & Cultural Center

- More information on the design of the proposed Performing Arts Center, including details on managing lighting, acoustics, and other potential elements which may have effects on surrounding areas during program times.
- A logistics plan during event times, showing how visitors arriving/leaving the site will be managed to avoid conflicts between vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians.

- Information related to the service needs (trash, loading, deliveries, etc.) of the arts and cultural center will be managed alongside the regular service needs of the commercial office/lab use.

Open Space & Connectivity

- More information about the proposed oval planting beds, and opportunities to redesign them so as to avoid creating a physical and visual barrier between the public realm and the ground floor of the building.
- More information related to the proposed character of each landscape/open space zone, including opportunities to integrate public art and play for both children and adults, in order to activate the landscaping as public space, rather than for a strictly ornamental purpose.
- Landscape plans for the upper story terraces.
- Clarification of the landscape views provided in the building renderings, since they appear to be different.

Site & Building Sustainability

- More information related to the proposed building's anticipated embodied carbon and opportunities for reducing its impact.
- More detail on how the LEED Gold standard will be achieved, given the LEED chart included in the Sustainability Narrative contains unknowns.
- Information related to how the project responds to the City's Net Zero target for lab buildings by 2030.
- Opportunities to increase daylight penetration within the building.
- Information related to building acoustics and planned mitigation measures for the proposed rooftop mechanical equipment.
- More information related to the rooftop mechanicals, and if they've been right-sized for the proposed building.
- Opportunities to provide additional protection from wind, such as additional canopy trees, pedestrian scaled structures, and additional building stepbacks.
- Inclusion of seasonal mean wind speed figures to provide a more comprehensive understanding of wind issues.

- Opportunities to improve the building's façade performance through variations such as the addition of horizontal sunshades, vertical fins, etc.
- More information related to the use of motorized window blinds or special glass on the south and west façade to address light trespass concerns.
- Updating the proposed wind study to include the taller building proposed for the Volpe Exchange Parcel site.
- More information on the opportunity to preserve and/or relocate existing mature trees on the site.
- More information on the proposed path to net zero for the building, either through purchasing renewables, working with the steam energy provider, or alternative actions.
- More information related to the proposed special permits to reduce green roof area, such as the total reduction proposed, and ISD's determination as to whether future tenant mechanicals may be included in exempted area.

Voting in the affirmative to approve the Development Proposal were Planning Board Members Louis Bacci, Jr., H Theodore Cohen, Steven Cohen, Catherine Preston Connolly, Mary Flynn, Hugh Russell, and Tom Sieniewicz, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board.

For the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Preston Connolly".

Catherine Preston Connolly, Chair.

A copy of this Preliminary Determination PB #383 shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk.