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# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: 2/8/2022

Re: **AHO-2, Jefferson Park Federal** (45-60, 61-75, 77-92, 93-108 Jackson Circle; 1, 2-19, 21-41, 109-124, 1000 Jackson Place; and 266-278 Rindge Avenue) –

## **Advisory Design Consultation Meeting #2**

### **Overview**

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Submission Type: Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Advisory Design Review

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Applicant: Cambridge Affordable Housing Corporation

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Zoning District(s): Residence B

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Proposal Summary: Construct 6 residential buildings and one accessory maintenance building with a total of 382,762 square feet of Gross Floor Area, 278 affordable apartments, 138 off-street parking spaces, 258 long-term and 66 short-term bicycle parking spaces.

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Planning Board Action: Review and comment on the responses from the developer to the Board's initial comments regarding conformance with AHO Development Standards, City Development Guidelines for the proposal area, Design Guidelines for AHO, and Citywide Urban Design Objectives. The Board may discuss revising the initial report to generate a Final Report that will be provided to the Superintendent of Buildings to certify compliance with the advisory design consultation procedures under AHO zoning.

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Memo Contents: CDD Zoning Report & Urban Design Report

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Other Staff Reports: None

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**11.207.5 – 11.207.7 AHO Development Standards**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Building Height & Stories Above Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximum four (4) stories / 45 feet. With a ground-story active non-residential use, the maximum height may be increased to 50 feet.</li> </ul>
Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the underlying District Dimensional Standards establish a maximum FAR of less than 1.00, the AHO Development may not exceed an FAR of 2.00.</li> <li>There is no minimum lot area per dwelling unit requirement.</li> </ul>
Yard Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residence B underlying zoning requires a 15’ Front Yard, 7.5’ Side Yard, and 25’ Rear Yard. The AHO permits a reduction to a 20’ rear yard.</li> </ul>
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum 30% of lot area per AHO.</li> </ul>
Parking and Bicycle Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No minimum auto parking requirement.</li> <li>For AHO Developments of twenty (20) or more units if less than 0.4 spaces per dwelling unit (DU) are provided, specific Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures are required.</li> <li>Bicycle parking is required per Article 6.100, but additional flexibility is provided for the location, quantity and type (long-term and short-term) of bicycle parking required. The provision of a 23-dock Bluebikes station counts towards up to thirty (30) required long-term bicycle parking spaces.</li> </ul>
Site Design and Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building facades facing a public street or public open space shall have a minimum 20% clear glass.</li> <li>Buildings with front facades in excess of 250’ in length shall provide forecourts to break up massing.</li> </ul>
Building Facades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building facades facing public streets shall have a minimum percentage of glazing.</li> <li>Building facades shall incorporate projections/recesses at regular intervals to promote visual interest.</li> <li>Facades of ground stories shall have expanses of no more than 25’ with no windows or pedestrian entryways.</li> </ul>
Ground Stories and Below Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ground stories with non-residential uses must have a height of at least 15’, average depth of 35’ from the front façade, and at least 30% clear glass frontage.</li> <li>Facades of ground stories cannot have expanses of more than 25’ with no windows or pedestrian entryways.</li> </ul>

Standard	Indicators
Mechanical Equipment, Refuse Storage and Loading Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanical equipment shall be generally screened from view. Rooftop mechanical equipment must be set back from the roof line equal to its height.</li> </ul>

**AHO Design Guidelines**

Site Design Objectives	
Response to Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design site layouts to harmonize with the neighborhood context.</li> </ul>
Open Space & Landscape Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design open space to enhance the lives of residents and the broader community by offering aesthetic and environmental benefits.</li> <li>• Offer useful amenities to residents, provide opportunities to minimize the impact of new development on neighbors' privacy and quality of life, and contribute to the beauty of the city.</li> </ul>
Circulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote non-motorized mobility by prioritizing pedestrian-friendly and bike-accessible site design.</li> </ul>
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize the impact of parking and driveway.</li> </ul>
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize the visual, acoustical, and environmental impacts of essential utilities and services.</li> </ul>
Outdoor Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide lighting for safety and functionality while minimizing energy use, light pollution, and other negative impacts.</li> </ul>
Public Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrich the visual environment and strengthen the sense of place by incorporating art.</li> </ul>
Building Design Objectives	
Massing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Configure massing for compatibility with the prevailing or desired pattern of neighboring buildings and open spaces. In established neighborhoods, relate to the existing pattern of streets and other open spaces, and prioritize compatibility with existing buildings. In evolving areas, configure new developments to help realize the City's vision for urban form.</li> </ul>
Facades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design facades to enhance and enliven the public realm. In established areas, emphasize compatibility and reinforce sense of place. In evolving residential and commercial districts, contribute to the transformation of urban form by setting precedents for design excellence.</li> <li>• Where appropriate, incorporate ground level retail spaces and common areas to foster a lively enliven the urban environment.</li> <li>• Provide daylight to interior spaces, avoid excessive energy use, and protect the privacy of residents of neighboring buildings.</li> <li>• Design facades to relate to the residential scales and patterns of Cambridge's diverse and historic neighborhoods.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design street facades to offer a sense of civic presence and human scale, and visual interest as appropriate to their role in defining public space.</li> </ul>
Architectural Details, Materials, Color, and Finishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use materials that are warm, inviting, and compatible with surrounding existing buildings and the neighborhood context. Develop building facades of high-quality, durable materials and with colors, finishes, and textures appropriate to building contexts.</li> </ul>
Building Interiors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing, like all housing, should serve the needs of its residents while contributing to the residential character and sense of neighborhood within the area at large.</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainable Design Objective</b>	
Site and Building Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve resilience measures to the maximum extent possible, including energy efficiency and measures to promote the health and wellness of residents.</li> </ul>

The complete set of Design Guidelines for Affordable Housing, 28 July 2020 can be found at:

[https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/Housing/Overlay/zngamend\\_aho\\_designguidelines\\_20200728v2.pdf](https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/Housing/Overlay/zngamend_aho_designguidelines_20200728v2.pdf)

**19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]**

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>



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Zoning Report: **AHO-2, Jefferson Park Federal** (45-60, 61-75, 77-92, 93-108 Jackson Circle; 1, 2-19, 21-41, 109-124, 1000 Jackson Place; and 266-278 Rindge Avenue) – **Advisory Design Consultation Meeting #2**

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## Overview

Cambridge Housing Authority (the “Developer”) proposes to redevelop the Jefferson Park Federal site (the “Site”) by demolishing the existing buildings and constructing six new, four-story multifamily residential buildings and one accessory maintenance building, consisting of approximately 380,000 square feet of GFA and 278 affordable dwelling units. A new grid system of private driveways with sidewalks will be provided, as well as a series of adjacent open spaces which will collectively serve a range of functions including internal courtyards and communal parks and play areas, totaling approximately 107,000 square feet.

## Planning Board Comments from Initial Consultation Meeting

Board members were supportive of the proposed development and the specific increase in the number of family-sized affordable dwelling units, with the majority of comments focused on improving the overall design of the buildings and the site. The report from the initial meeting is attached.

## Staff Comments on Responses to Planning Board’s Comments

The revised submission from the Developer remains generally consistent with the AHO standards. The Initial Report primarily focused on comments related to building design, which are addressed in the accompanying Urban Design report. The following are some aspects of the project that the Board requested additional information on in relation to AHO zoning standards:

- **Façade Articulation & Transparency.** For building facades facing a public street or public open space, the AHO requires that a minimum of 20% of the area of the building façade shall consist of clear glass windows. Building 1, fronting Rindge Avenue, is the only building in the development subject to these requirements. In adding façade articulation to Building 1, the overall fenestration as a percentage of façade area was reduced from 21.9% to 20%, which is still zoning compliant.

For the other buildings in the development, internal driveways are not public streets and therefore are not required to meet minimum transparency requirements. In the revised submission, the Developer notes that articulation was added to every façade and new ground level detail was added in order to improve the pedestrian experience. Techniques include the

use of different materials and secondary trim at fenestration and rooflines as well as new foundation plantings, additional seating, and CMU designs with varying patterns, textures and scales.

- Amenity/Open Space. In the initial report, the Planning Board urged the Developer to explore opportunities to increase indoor amenity space in the individual buildings, as well as the overall area of open space throughout the site to adequately serve the number of residents that the new buildings will produce. The AHO requires that the minimum percentage open space to lot area for an AHO project be 30%, unless the underlying zoning sets forth a less restrictive requirement. The revised submission incorporates new amenity spaces within the buildings, but the overall open space did not substantially change (106,163 square feet in the initial submission to 107,630 square feet in the revised submission) due to the fact that additional open space area would result in a subsequent reduction in number of overall units. The ratio of permeable open space was slightly reduced in the revised submission, but still meets the 30% requirement set forth in the AHO (32.35% to 30.96%). The Developer also provided a comparison of open space per bedroom at the Site with other existing CHA developments in Cambridge.
- Short-term Bike Parking. The Board requested that the Developer look at opportunities to provide additional short-term bicycle parking racks throughout the development. For this development, 30 short-term bike parking spaces are required and 32 were initially provided. In the revised materials, the Developer has added another 34 short-term bike parking spaces. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the Developer is encouraged to work with CDD staff to ensure the short-term bicycle parking racks meet all of the design standards set forth in Section 6.105 of the CZO.
- Long-term Bike Parking. In response to staff comments on the initial submission, the revised submission includes consolidated/relocated and redesigned bike rooms that meet the dimensional requirements set forth in Section 6.100 of the CZO. Generally, Building 3 previously contained Bike Rooms 03 and 04 which have been combined into a single Bike Room 04 in the revised submission. Building 4 previously contained Bike Rooms 05, 06 and 07 into a single Bike Room 04 in the revised submission. The overall number of long-term bike parking spaces on the site increased from 260 to 270 in the revised submission.



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## Urban Design Comments on Design Revisions

The updated design of the proposed Jefferson Park Federal affordable housing project is generally similar to the design presented in the initial Planning Board hearing. Numerous improvements have been made in response to Planning Board and staff comments, but the project's overall urban design concept remains the same, and the project's architectural and site design remains consistent with the Affordable Housing Overlay Guidelines. As before, the project will provide urgently needed affordable housing in addition to a Head Start facility.

The more fully developed design responds to many of the Planning Board's and city staff's comments. Highlights include:

1. Additional street trees are provided.
2. Benches have been added along the streets.
3. The landscape design of the courtyards and building front yards has been further developed. Additional play areas and grills are provided.
4. The site plan has been adjusted to accommodate the future multipurpose trail along the Fitchburg line. Further coordination with City staff will be needed, see below.
5. The building facades have been further developed to provide greater visual interest and articulation, including at the first floor, entrances, the fourth-floor/roofline, and at building corners.
6. The large areas of blank walls of the previous scheme have been reduced in size.
7. Window sizes have been increased and emphasized by color and materials.
8. The number of operable windows has been increased and they are now "tilt-turn" instead of outswing awning type.
9. The facades facing "Main Street" have been given greater emphasis and consistency in response to the street's importance as the central spine of the project. Changes include larger windows, additional cast stone detailing at window openings, colors and textures of CMU, slightly projecting vertically grouped windows at building corners, and façade mounted lighting sconces at the first-floor level.
10. The Rindge Avenue façade has been given a more vigorous and unique design in response to its role as the project's face to the city.
11. The amount of EIFS has been reduced and is limited to the fourth-floor facades, and the amount of broad fiber cement panels have been reduced.
12. A glass fiber reinforced concrete plank cladding material – "Öko Skin" - has been introduced. The narrow breadths of the planks create a joint pattern that will enliven previously blank wall areas.



13. Additional detail has been added at window trim, shading devices, trim at jambs and heads, and cornices.
14. Wooden railings have been substituted for metal ones at elevated entry stoops.
15. Indoor amenity spaces have been added to Buildings 4 and 5..
16. A roof terrace has been added at Building 4, facing the building's open space.
17. Numerous additional short term bicycle parking spaces have been provided throughout the site. Further coordination with City staff will be needed, see below.
18. Bicycle storage rooms and the routes to them have been developed in accord with Cambridge's standards and accessibility requirements.
19. The project's transformer, switchgear, and generator have been relocated to reduce their impact on the project's open spaces and residential units.

Because the Planning Board's review of this project is advisory, there are no conditions for continuing design review. However, as the developer further refines the design through the building permit and construction process, staff would encourage the developer to review the following considerations. Staff are happy to continue to consult with the developer as appropriate.

**Site Plan:**

1. Consider the use of benches without intermediate arm rests.
2. Consider increasing the size of the oval central area in Building 4's open space, and adjusting the paths that lead to it. More low planting, seat walls, and adjustments to the topography could also be considered.
- 3.
4. Staff would like to encourage greater development of the project's play areas. Staff would be happy to collaborate on ideas. Capitalize on additional opportunities for front yard plantings.
5. Consider the use of permeable paving in the parallel parking zones on the internal streets.
6. Carefully plan and select outdoor lighting to avoid light pollution and trespass.
7. Coordinate with City staff on the detailed design of crosswalks, curb cuts, etc.
8. While the site plan has been adjusted to accommodate the future multipurpose trail along the Fitchburg line, the proponent will need to work with City staff on the exact placement of new trees, landscaping and any other work in this zone.
9. Enlarged plans of short-term bicycle parking spaces, at 1"=10' scale should be provided, and clearances and dimensions should be reviewed with staff.

**Massing:**

10. On Building 1, consideration could be given to breaking up the horizontal continuity of corrugated metal cladding at the top of the façade by changes in plane in response to the configuration of the residential facades below.

**Elevations:**

11. Additional attention could be given to the terminations of Building 1's zig-zag façade on Rindge Avenue, possibly giving its edge a greater thickness.
12. Additional windows could be considered on the second and third floors of the Rindge Avenue façade.
13. The cornice at second floor level at Rindge Avenue and at Building 5's Community Room seem heavier than needed, a thinner profile could be considered.
14. Consideration could be given to adding the bluish colored cladding to Building 4's west elevation on Main Street – to more strongly relate it to the other streetwall facades along Main Street.

15. In places, such as at the east façade of Building 5, different applications of color to the building's form could be considered.
16. Canopies could be considered above ground level entrances.
17. Coordinate with City staff to review façade color and material selections, particularly at the ground floor of the Rindge Avenue Façade.
18. Coordinate with City staff on the detailed design of cornices and upper edge of facades.
19. assage.

**Plans:**

20. Additional consideration could be given to green roofs, photovoltaic panels, or biosolar systems, either as part of the initial construction or as future improvements to the building's energy performance.