



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date:	November 23, 2021
Subject:	Initial Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Design Consultation
Project Location:	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)
Date of Planning Board Meeting:	November 9, 2021

## Overview

The Planning Board (the “Board”) met on Tuesday, November 9<sup>th</sup> to review and comment on the design for Jefferson Park Federal (“JP Federal”), a residential development proposed by the Cambridge Housing Authority (the “Developer”) under the Affordable Housing Overlay ([Section 11.207](#) of the Zoning Ordinance). The Board reviewed a plan set submitted by the Developer on September 24, 2021 and presentation dated November 9, 2021. They also reviewed memos from the Community Development Department (CDD) and the Department of Public Works (DPW), which are attached.

## Proposal Description

The proposal includes the demolition of eleven (11) existing buildings and the construction of six new multifamily residential buildings and one accessory maintenance building, resulting in approximately 380,000 square feet of new Gross Floor Area (GFA) and 278 permanently affordable dwelling units. The proposed new buildings will be built to the forty-five (45) foot height limit per AHO standards, and each building will have adjacent open spaces totaling approximately 106,000 square feet. A new system of private driveways with adjacent sidewalks, trees, and other public improvements will provide site circulation and tie buildings and open spaces together.

## Board Comments

Board members were generally supportive of the proposed development, and particularly supportive of the increase in affordable units and the provision of larger units for families. Several Board members said that the design could be improved, and made the following suggestions for further improvement and refinement as the design progresses:

- **Building Design**
  - The facades could use more articulation, to minimize “blank wall” effects, improve the pedestrian experience at ground level, and improve the overall aesthetic of the development.

- The elevations could be livened up by exploring the use of lighter window trim, different materials, more varied design approaches between the individual buildings.
- The rooflines of the buildings lack visual interest, and opportunities to add cornices or other roof details should be explored.
- Facades along Main Street could be given a greater design emphasis than the facades that face secondary ways within the development.
- **Materials**
  - Consider using fewer types of materials but greater relief in the façade order to keep costs reasonable and improve visual interest of the buildings.
  - Consider reducing the amount of cementitious panel and EIFS proposed.
  - More fully develop the details of the exterior walls of the development, including joint patterns, textures, and colors.
- **Amenity Space**
  - Opportunities to increase indoor amenity space in the individual buildings should be further explored.
  - Amenities for teenagers and older children should be included in the development.
- **Open Space**
  - Open space areas should be increased to adequately serve the number of residents that the new buildings will produce.
- **Unit Design**
  - Some of the unit layouts with two means of egress do not make functional sense; opportunities to redesign these units should be explored.
  - Explore opportunities to add balconies to upper-story units.
- **Development Budget**
  - The development costs per unit appear excessively high.
- **Parking, Loading & Bike Parking**
  - Opportunities to provide additional short-term bicycle parking racks throughout the development.
- **Landscape**
  - Additional site features should be provided to residents, including additional seating areas/benches/seatwalls/stoops, etc.
  - The Developer should explore opportunities for adding additional trees to the site, particularly along East Street & West Street. Proposed trees could be increased in size.
- **Roof**
  - Explore opportunities to provide accessible roof space/rooftop green space to residents as a tenant amenity.
- **Overall Site Design**
  - While Board members were generally supportive of the concept, one Board member suggested that an alternative plan that incorporates rehabilitation and additions to the existing buildings on the site would have benefits (though it may not conform to the AHO standards).

In addition to these topic areas, the Board supported comments made in the staff memos for this proposal and asked that they be considered in refining the design of the development.

Submitted for the Planning Board,

*Swaathi Joseph*

Representative to the Planning Board, authorized by Catherine Preston Connolly, Chair.