

May 30, 2024

Cambridge Planning Board
Attn: Swaathi Joseph
344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA

Dear Planning Board,

We appreciate the design feedback provided at the Planning Board hearing on March 12, 2024 regarding the proposed Walden Square 2 project located at 21 Walden Square Road. The project team took the feedback provided under serious consideration and has made the following revisions to the proposal:

- **Reconsideration of Walden Square Road:** During the Planning Board's discussion, several questions were raised as to the fundamental operation of Walden Square Road as either a road or a driveway. Walden Square Road is fully on the Walden Square property and is private property. It is used by both Walden Square residents, as access to the property, and by neighbors, as a cut through from Sherman Street to Raymond Street. The project team recognizes that Walden Square Road, as it exists today, does not cleanly fit the definition of either a driveway or a road as it serves both functions to different groups of people. However, the project team feels strongly that Walden Square Road should be improved to feel more "driveway-like" in an effort to favor pedestrian and cyclist safety over car access.

In an effort to make this transition, several alternatives for Walden Square Road were evaluated, including converting it to a one-way road, closing off access to vehicular public through-traffic, and making additional improvements to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety. Ultimately, it was decided that options such as converting Walden Square Road to a one-way or adding gates or other features to block non-resident vehicular traffic were too disruptive to the project site and were not viable options. Instead, a focus was placed on adding additional pedestrian safety measures to the road to slow vehicular traffic and improve pedestrian and cyclist safety. Those improvements include:

- Narrowing the curb cut at Raymond Street from 43' to 20' to shorten the distance pedestrians must cross.
- Adding driveway aprons at the Raymond Street and Sherman Street entrances to give the entrances a more residential feel and differentiate the entrances from the surrounding public streets.

- Adding a pedestrian path and crosswalk along the southern boundary of the proposed "Building A" to continue a strong East-West pedestrian desire line that currently exists on the site today.
 - To the west of the proposed Building A, changing two proposed crosswalks into raised crosswalks to slow traffic moving along this section of the road. A speed bump in this area will be eliminated in favor of the raised crosswalks.
 - Adding directional signage at strategic locations throughout the site.
- **Further site planning improvements:** Further changes were made based on public comment and planning board feedback which further improve the quality of the site for residents and neighbors. The changes include:
 - Internalizing an exterior dumpster enclosure that was located at the center of the property into the proposed Building A. Relocating this dumpster enclosure to an interior space will improve appearance and cleanliness around trash areas and help mitigate rodents and pests, which may be drawn to outdoor trash areas.
 - Further consideration was given to site lighting to both ensure all public spaces surrounding the new buildings are adequately lit through a combination of ground-level wall-mounted fixtures, light poles, and lit bollards, while minimizing the spillover of site lighting onto adjacent properties.
 - Further consideration of planting species to ensure that shade trees could be provided where realistic and feasible given site dimensional constraints necessary to ensure healthy growth.
- **Changes to building massing & cladding strategies:** Based on feedback from City design staff and the Planning Board, modifications were made to the building massing and exterior design to simplify and improve the overall design of the building:
 - The height of Building A was increased from 80' to 85', which will allow for greater floor to ceiling heights within residential units from 8'3" to 9', which will improve the interior quality of the units. This also allows for a simpler and more cost-effective steel podium to be used for construction, which will help project financial feasibility relative to the previously proposed post-tensioned concrete slab podium.
 - The color of the dark fiber cement panel was lightened to respond to staff and Board feedback.
 - Colored panel details around the windows were added more deliberately and consistently across window openings to enhance the organizational pattern of the windows.

- At the northern elevation of Building A, the projected bays of the building were all made a uniform height. The light gray lap-siding sections of the building now enhance the notion of a building step down from the existing 9-story building to the existing 3-story buildings without impacting the overall unit count.
- The decorative solar awnings were removed to allow for a more efficient layout of solar panels on the building roofs, maximizing the potential for renewable power generation at the new buildings.

Since the time of the first Planning Board meeting, the project has also completed compliance with the City's Green Building Requirements, Green Factor requirements, and Flood Resiliency Requirements. We appreciate the feedback provided by the public, city staff, and the Planning Board to date. We respectfully submit our revised proposal for the Planning Board's consideration.

Sincerely,

Matthew Robayna,
Development Consultant

