



Memo

To: Cambridge Planning Board

From: Emily Carmody, AvalonBay Communities

CC: Swaathi Joseph, Suzannah Bigolin

Date: April 3, 2025

Re: DESIGN UPDATE: PB175 AvalonBay Open Space and Multi-Use Path

The following memo and exhibit are intended to provide a design update for the Open Space and Multi-Use Path adjacent to our property North Point II Apartments located at 2 Leighton Street approved under special permit PB175 and permitted under permit # BLDM-042391-2016:

Design Overview & Exhibit

- Exhibit A: 250404 North Point II Open Space & Multi-Use Path Schematic Drawings

AvalonBay would like to present the latest design for PB175 Open Space and Multi-Use Path located adjacent to our property North Point II, LLC located at 2 Leighton Street in Cambridge, MA. The project was originally approved under Special Permit PB175 as an area that would provide programming and open space dedicated to public circulation and enhanced activity for our residents and the general public. The special permit was approved in 2015, and a building permit was issued for the construction of our multifamily property and open space areas in 2016. While we completed construction of our community in 2019, we've been delayed nearly a decade in completing the multi-use path and open space area due to delays in the MBTA Green Line Expansion and the Mass DOT Monsignor O'Brien Highway and bike lane improvement projects.

We are finally able to move forward with completing this last element of our permit obligation. The overall design and vision remains largely unchanged; however, a few adjustments were required as a result of changes in design of the GreenLine Viaduct and Mass DOT Highway work. Additionally, through collaboration with CDD officials, we have incorporated their feedback to include additional outdoor programming such as exterior fitness equipment, improvements to the dog park design, and artistic elements in the form of seating, paver designs, and salvaging of old remnants to give nod to the historical significance of the area. Lastly, at the request of CDD, we have also improved the connection between Cambridge Crossing and Monsignor O'Brien Highway and Bike Path by adjusting our design to provide a continuous pedestrian pathway from Glassworks Ave to the sidewalk along the highway.

As part of our easement agreement with the MBTA, we are also required to seek their review and approval of the presented drawings. We have received MBTA approval of the drawings as presented and are working through final details of the License Agreement for construction. Should we inact any major changes from the current design, we would need to re-present the drawings to MBTA for review and approval, likely adding significant delays. We also have growing concerns around the impact of tariffs and overall market uncertainty significantly driving up costs, and thus are anxious to get started quickly. We have identified a Contractor that is ready to engage immediately upon receipt of permit. We hope through our early and on-going collaboration with the CDD and implementation of feedback from those meetings, that the Planning Board will find the updated Design in-line with the original vision and concept approved in 2015 and provide approval to move forward.

A summary of changes has been provided below and is further detailed in the included exhibit.

Summary of Changes

Shifted the multiuse path northward away from the busy Monsignore O'Brien Highway and Bike Path to align with the paver crosswalk and completed multi-use path across Leighton St at North Point Apartments Limited Partnership (Elevate Apartments).

The dog park design is largely the same as presented with slight modifications due to adjusted pier locations of the Green Line viaduct and continues to include public seating, pet play equipment, and water fountain.

Created a continuous pedestrian pathway from Glassworks Ave to Monsignor O'Brien Highway to provide pedestrian connection from Cambridge Crossing to the sidewalk along the highway and access to the MBTA Headhouse.

Further refined the hardscape to include a more artistic paver design and less concrete walkways. Maintained the interpretive paver design representing the previous location of the green line tracks. Added an artistic display utilizing a historic greabox donated by the MBTA.

Added an outdoor fitness element with new exterior grade fitness equipment.

Expanded seating opportunities to be more visually appealing as well as inclusive through providing a variety of seating options including "Lechmere" letter seating, colorful benches with backs and armrests and bleacher seating, and granite block seating as interpretive examples of the sea wall stones excavated during the construction of Cambridge Crossing.

Introduction of a linear plant bed taking advantage of one area of sunlight and precipitation exposure located below the opening of the tracks above.

Added trees and understory plantings along the building side of the path, providing visual separation for the ground floor residents while providing seasonal color, interest and texture for path users.