



To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: August 12, 2025

Re: Special Permits **PB-294, 88 Ames Street & PB-315 Amendment (Minor), MXD Infill Development Concept Plan (IDCP)**

Overview

Submission Type:	Special Permit Application
Applicant:	BP Cambridge Center Residential LLC
Zoning District(s):	Mixed Use Development (MXD) District
Proposal Summary:	Amend PB-294 & PB-315 to share 150 long-term bicycle parking spaces at 88 Ames Street with 325 Main Street.
Special Permits Requested:	Amendment of previously approved special permit for Modification of Bicycle Parking Requirements (6.108)
Other City Permits Needed:	None
Planning Board Action:	PB-294 - Grant or deny requested special permit. PB-315 - Grant or deny requested minor amendment.
Memo Contents:	CDD Zoning Report
Other Staff Reports:	None

Zoning Section	Required Planning Board Findings <i>(Summary - see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Special Permit to modify bicycle parking standards, specifically location and quantity (Section 6.108)	<p>The proposal is consistent with the purpose of Section 6.100 and that the Bicycle Parking Plan proposes a quantity, design and arrangement of bicycle parking that will serve bicycle users in a way that is sufficiently comparable, given the circumstances of the specific project, to the bicycle parking that would be required under the regulations of Section 6.100.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bicycle Parking Plan will satisfactorily serve the needs of all expected users, based on quantitative and/or qualitative evidence provided by the Applicant. Such a modification may be appropriate for a campus master plan or other large development site within which bicycle parking is planned comprehensively across an area instead of on a specific site-by-site basis.
General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	<p>Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or (e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and (f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.
Determination of Minor Amendments (Section 12.37.2)	<p>Minor amendments are changes which do not alter the concept of the PUD in terms of density, floor area ratio, land usage, height, provision of open space, or the physical relationship of elements of the development. Minor amendments shall include, but not be limited to, small changes in the location of buildings, open space, or parking; or realignment of minor streets.</p>

Zoning & Development Staff Report

Background Information

BXP owns the residential building with commercial uses on first and second floors at 88 Ames Street as well as the commercial building at 325 Main Street. These buildings were built during various times in 2000's, and are subject to different special permits:

88 Ames Street (PB-294) received a Project Review Special Permit in 2015 to construct a building with 280 dwelling units and 20,000 square feet for retail use. 295 long-term bicycle parking spaces and 42 short-term bicycle parking spaces were built as part of the project, distributed on various levels of Green Garage. PB-294 includes a special permit for modification of bicycle parking requirements pursuant to Section 6.108 to provide long-term bicycle parking in an attached shed located more than 200 feet from the primary building entrance and to access upper-level spaces via an existing elevator slightly smaller than the minimum dimensional requirements.

325 Main Street is one of the buildings in Infill Development Concept Plan (PB-315), which was first approved in 2017. This building was approved to be built in 2019 with 108 long-term bicycle parking spaces and 47 short-term bicycle parking spaces but constructed a storage room for only 104 long-term bicycle parking spaces and no short-term bicycle parking spaces. PB-315 also includes a special permit for modification of bicycle parking requirements pursuant to Section 6.108 to reduce the total number of bicycle parking spaces but to employ a free bicycle valet program to make more efficient use of space.

Requested Amendments

Both buildings are built and occupied. The proposal is to make 150 long-term bicycle parking spaces, located on the first three levels of the five-level bicycle parking shed built to serve 88 Ames Street, shared parking that would be available to users of both 88 Ames Street and 325 Main Street. This would technically be considered a reduction in required bicycle parking for 88 Ames Street, because bicycle parking requirements are applied independently to different uses.

The applicant has submitted documentation, which denotes that the existing bicycle parking facilities allocated for 88 Ames Street are underutilized with no more than an average of 18% total utilization. The applicant plans to monitor bicycle parking utilization in the entire facility to ensure that the demand from residential users continues to be met over time.

To effectuate the proposed change, both special permits will need to be amended to authorize a further modification to bicycle parking requirements.

Planning Board Action

PB-294 has to be amended to authorize the reduction in bicycle parking. Because this is a standalone special permit, the amendment must be heard and decided procedurally in the same way as a new special permit. Per the criteria in Section 6.108, the Board would need to find that the proposed plan for shared bicycle parking between the two buildings will satisfactorily serve the needs of all users.

PB-315 has to be amended to authorize the alternative location of the 4 long-term bicycle parking spaces and 47 short-term bicycle parking spaces required under zoning. The Board can take one of the following actions for PB-315:

If the Board determines that the changes meet the criteria for a minor amendment, then the Board may issue a written determination making that finding on the affirmative vote of five Planning Board members.

Alternatively, if the Board does not find that the changes meet the criteria for a minor amendment, then the applicant would need to apply to amend the special permit following the same procedure as for a new special permit.

Per the general provisions in Sections 14.32.2.5 and 12.37 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Board determines whether changes to the Infill Development Concept Plan may be approved as minor or major amendments. The following guidance is provided in zoning:

(12.37.2) Minor amendments are changes which do not alter the concept of the PUD in terms of density, floor area ratio, land usage, height, provision of open space, or the physical relationship of elements of the development. Minor amendments shall include, but not be limited to, small changes in the location of buildings, open space, or parking; or realignment of minor streets.

(12.37.3) Major amendments represent substantial deviations from the PUD concept approved by the Planning Board. Major amendments shall include, but not be limited to, large changes in floor space, mix of uses, density, lot coverage, height, setbacks, lot sizes, open space; changes in the location of buildings, open space, or parking; or changes in the circulation system.

Zoning Comments on Proposed Amendments

The proposal remains in conformance with the MXD District requirements. The proposed shared use of the bicycle parking facility is not expected to substantively change the transportation impacts of the Infill Development Concept Plan. The applicant has discussed the proposal with CDD staff and DOT staff.

Better utilization of existing bicycle parking facilities aligns with planning goals that are specified in [Envision Cambridge Comprehensive Plan](#) (2019) and the [K2 Kendall Square Plan](#) (2013). The criteria in Section 6.108 also support modifications of bicycle parking requirements in mixed-use development that can be served by pooled facilities. Since both buildings have been occupied for a few years, shared parking arrangement between residential buildings and non-residential buildings may support optimized utilization of existing parking facilities to match needs of both uses.

Transportation Comments on Proposed Amendments

The Department of Transportation (DOT) staff has been working with Boston Properties and supports this application, which will be a functional and successful pooled bike parking program that will enable sharing of bike spaces. The program will work for the specific users of the bike parking in this unique location. The amendment will not eliminate the requirement for the 88 Ames Street residential project to provide the minimum zoning required number of bike parking spaces for its residents. It will allow sharing of unused bike spaces during the daytimes for employees at 325 Main Street. DOT staff believe there will be no negative consequences from the approval of this amendment.

Appendix - Zoning Text Excerpts

Special Permit to Modify Access Standards for Bicycle Parking

6.108.3 *Findings and Approval.* Upon granting a special permit to modify any requirements of this Section 6.100, the Planning Board shall make a general determination that the proposal is consistent with the purpose of this Section 6.100 and that the Bicycle Parking Plan proposes a quantity, design and arrangement of bicycle parking that will serve bicycle users in a way that is sufficiently comparable, given the circumstances of the specific project, to the bicycle parking that would be required under the regulations of this Section 6.100. The Planning Board shall also make specific determinations applicable to the modifications being sought as set forth below:

- a. Where an alternative design or layout of Bicycle Parking Spaces is proposed, the Planning Board shall determine that such design or layout shall be durable and convenient for the users whom it is intended to serve. Where new technologies are proposed, the Board may require that the Applicant demonstrate such technologies for review by City staff.
- b. Where modifications to the location or quantity of bicycle parking is proposed, the Planning Board shall determine that the Bicycle Parking Plan will satisfactorily serve the needs of all expected users, based on quantitative and/or qualitative evidence provided by the Applicant. Such a modification may be appropriate for a campus master plan or other large development site within which bicycle parking is planned comprehensively across an area instead of on a specific site-by-site basis.

General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit

10.43 *Criteria.* Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:

- (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or
- (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or
- (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or
- (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or
- (g) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and
- (h) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

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"> • Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods • Consistency with established streetscape • Compatibility with adjacent uses • Consideration of nearby historic buildings
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhabited ground floor spaces • Discouraged ground-floor parking • Windows on ground floor • Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways • Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/impact of mechanical equipment • Location/impact of loading and trash handling • Stormwater management • Shadow impacts • Retaining walls, if provided • Building scale and wall treatment • Outdoor lighting • Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management • Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service • Efficient design (LEED standards)
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional use focused on existing campuses • Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed • Preservation of historic structures and environment • Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as a component of large, multi-building development • Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families
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"> • Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development • Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks • Provide wider range of activities