



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

WRITTEN DETERMINATION MINOR AMENDMENT TO MXD INFILL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

Case Number:	315 Amendment 4 (Minor)
Location of Premises:	325 Main Street, 290 Binney Street, 135 Broadway, 145 Broadway, 250 Binney Street, and 255 Main Street
Zoning:	Business A (BA); Residence C-2B (C-2B); Office 2 (O-2); PUD-KS; PUD-7
Applicant:	Boston Properties Limited Partnership 800 Boylston Street, Suite 1900, Boston, MA 02199
Owners:	Various owners as listed in Application Documents
Application Date:	March 10, 2025
Date of Determination:	March 25, 2025
Summary of Proposal:	Allow specific Office and Biotechnology Manufacturing uses to be located in the second floor of 325 Main Street building, where retail uses were previously approved; reduce the requirement for active uses for this building façade from 75% to 70%; and approve changes to the qualifying criteria for Innovation Space to accommodate a tenant known as "Fab Foundation."
Determination:	APPROVED AS MINOR AMENDMENT.

2025 APR 15 PM 3:34
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Copies of this Written Determination and plans, if applicable, are on file with the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board: Swaathi Joseph

For further information concerning this Written Determination, please contact Swaathi Joseph at 617-349-4668, or sjoseph@cambridgema.gov.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Documents Submitted by Permittee

1. Request for Minor Amendment to Infill Development Concept Plan (IDCP) from Jeffrey Lowenberg (bxp Boston Properties) dated 3/10/2025.
2. Presentation slides shown to Planning Board on 3/25/2025.

Other Documents

3. Memo to the Planning Board from Community Development Department (CDD) Staff, dated 3/20/2025.

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The Applicant seeks to modify the approved IDCP with respect to the use located at the second story of 325 Main Street (also referred to as Commercial Building B). This location was originally approved as part of a two-story retail space accessible from the ground level (by stair and elevator) and from a new public outdoor staircase connecting the ground-level Kendall Plaza to the Rooftop Garden. The ground story will remain retail except as described below.

The Applicant requests the following modifications:

- a. Allow three types of Office and Biotechnology Manufacturing uses (Business or professional offices, Research and development office, and Research, experimental and testing laboratory) to be located in approximately 12,132 square feet of the second floor of 325 Main Street building, where retail uses were previously approved.
- b. Reduce the requirement for active uses for this building façade from 75% to 70% to create an entry vestibule for this additional use
- c. Approve changes to the qualifying criteria for Innovation Space to be leased for periods of approximately one month to up to ten years and allow a single entity to occupy up to 15,000 square feet at this location.

The explanation of the request is to accommodate a tenant on the second story called “Fab Foundation,” an educational not-for-profit organization which operates facilities called “Fab Lab” at various worldwide locations. The activities proposed at this location include:

- maker spaces such as a wood shop, metal shop and textile machine room;
- spaces that would include tools for rapid-prototyping and short-run production of functional systems (3D printing);
- an event space for classes, talks, workshops, demonstrations and collaborations related to the goal of enhancing maker knowledge and skillsets;

- office spaces for the Fab Foundation's headquarters;
- a storefront selling products designed by the global network and produced locally and maker equipment; and
- a café space.

This use is proposed as an alternative to the retail uses originally proposed at the second story, and as a use that would fulfill a component of the Innovation Space requirement for the IDCP. Retail uses would continue to be allowed at this location if the use were to change in the future.

FINDINGS

1. Minor Amendment to Planned Unit Development Special Permit (Sections 14.32.2.5 and 12.37)

The following standards are set forth in the Zoning Ordinance regarding Minor Amendments to IDCP Special Permits.

12.37.1 Amendments to the Final Development Plan shall be considered major or minor. Minor amendments, as specified in Section 12.37.2 shall be authorized by written approval of the Planning Board. Major amendments, as specified in Section 12.37.3, shall be considered as an original application for a Special Permit to construct a PUD and shall be subject to procedures specified in Section 12.34 through 12.36. The Planning Board shall decide whether proposed changes are major or minor.

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.

The proposed change in use affects only a small component of the IDCP. However, in terms of the public benefits that result from the development plan, the use at this location was anticipated to play a critical role by providing publicly accessible activities and activating the connected system of public space within the district.

The Board is supportive of the proposed use and believes that it can play a role comparable to what was envisioned in the earlier plan by providing community-supporting activities that will help to activate the area. This determination is made with the recognition that retail uses are facing tougher economic challenges than when the plan was originally conceived.

However, the determination of a Minor Amendment is made with conditions to ensure that the design and activity of the space will continue to support the original vision, and will not evolve over time into a use that detracts from the sense of community or activation that the space was intended to create.

2. Variations to Characteristics of Innovation Space (Section 14.32.5)

(c)Variations. In approving a Concept Plan, Major or Minor Amendments to the Concept Plan, or through subsequent design review of individual building design per Section 14.32.2.4, the Planning Board may approve variations in the specific characteristics set forth above if the proposed Innovation Space is found to be consistent with the purposes of these characteristics.

The characteristics of Innovation Space set forth in Section 14.32.5 anticipate office and laboratory facilities that would be rented to very small companies on very short-term leases, providing opportunities for early-stage companies to continue to be part of the mix of businesses in Kendall Square. The Planning Board can approve modifications to support new concepts that serve the intent of promoting innovative activities that supplement the larger private businesses which occupy most new commercial space.

As proposed, the Fab Lab use does not meet the specified characteristics of Innovation Space and varies from the original vision of providing space for small, early phase businesses. However, Section 14.32.5 does list among the entities that could qualify as innovation space "... facilities for teaching and for theoretical, basic and applied research, product development and testing and prototype fabrication or production of experimental products," which align with the activities proposed by the Fab Foundation. Although the Fab Foundation itself would be a medium-sized tenant operating on a longer lease, its activities would be open to the larger community. Based on those findings, the Board determines that the requested modification to allow the Fab Foundation to occupy this space in its entirety on a longer-term lease is consistent with the purpose of Innovation Space, so long as it is done to accommodate a use that provides shared facilities as described above.

DETERMINATION

Based on a review of the documents submitted and the above Findings, the Planning Board hereby approves the following changes as a Minor Amendment to the IDCP authorized by Planning Board Special Permit Decision PB-315, subject to the conditions and limitations set forth below:

1. In addition to the Innovation Space previously approved at 255 Main Street (See Condition #1.a.iii of Major Amendment 2 to PB-315), up to 15,000 square feet of Innovation Space is approved at the second story of 325 Main Street. The Board hereby approves variations to the Innovation Space characteristics set forth in Section 14.32.5 to allow the space at 325 Main Street to be leased for periods of approximately one month to up to ten years and to allow a single entity to occupy up to 15,000 square feet at this location, provided that such entity provides facilities for teaching and shared resources for fabrication and prototyping as principal activities to support the intent of the Innovation Space requirement in section 14.32.5.
2. In addition to the previously approved retail uses authorized at the second story of 325 Main Street (and notwithstanding Condition #6 of Major Amendment 2 to PB-315), the Board hereby authorizes Business or professional offices (14.21.2(1)), Research and development office (14.21.2(1)), and Research, experimental and testing laboratory (14.21.2(4)) as permitted uses at that location provided that such uses:
 - a. Contain fabrication and/or event spaces that are beneficial to the broader community, in accordance with the operating model described in the request for Minor Amendment and other supporting materials submitted to the Planning Board;
 - b. Remain tenanted separately from the office or laboratory tenants in the remainder of the building;
 - c. Maintain a publicly-accessible entrance directly adjacent to the public second-story terrace that is open during the full hours of operation of the tenanted use;
 - d. Do not alter the design of the façade, including entrances and windows, without approval from the Planning Board, and maintain visibility into the interior of the space; and
 - e. Enable the space to be occupied by retail uses in the future if there is a change in tenancy.
3. Notwithstanding Condition #1.a.v of Major Amendment 2 to PB-315, the Board hereby authorizes a reduction in the required 75% ground story retail frontage on the Main Street side of 325 Main Street to a minimum of 70%, solely for the purpose of allowing a stair/elevator vestibule to access the second-story space described in Conditions #1 and #2 above.
4. The design of the tenanted second-story space at 325 Main Street shall be subject to review by CDD as set forth in Condition #3.d.vii of Major Amendment 2 to PB-315. The following items at a minimum shall be reviewed by CDD prior to issuance of a Building Permit:

- a. Information regarding how the space will be designed to connect with the public pedestrian connector located at the western end of the building. As originally approved, the second story tenant space was meant to have direct visual and physical connections with the north-south pedestrian connector.
 - b. Retail/coffee space signage, where applicable, to ensure that such uses are accessible and welcoming to the public. This should include signage at both the ground floor and second floor levels.
 - c. Information regarding how the terrace will be activated during the tenant's hours of operation, including the use of outdoor furniture, signage, and possible interactive elements and programming, such as games and displays, that can help make the terrace feel public and inviting.
5. Except as explicitly set forth above, the Conditions of Special Permit Decision PB-315, as modified by prior Amendments, shall continue to be in effect.

Voting in the affirmative to APPROVE the Minor Amendment were Planning Board Members H Theodore Cohen, Mary Flynn, Mary Lydecker, Diego Macias, Ashley Tan, and Associate Members Daniel Anderson and Joy Jackson, appointed by the Chair to act on the case, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board.

For the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary Flynn".

Mary Flynn, Chair.

A copy of this determination approving Amendment 4 (Minor) to Planning Board Special Permit PB-315 shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and accurate copy of the above determination has been filed on April 15, 2025 with the Office of the City Clerk by Swaathi Joseph, duly authorized representative of the Planning Board. All plans referred to in the determination have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty days have elapsed since the above decision was filed in the office of the City Clerk and:
_____ no appeal has been filed; or

_____ an appeal has been filed within such twenty days.

The person exercising rights under a duly appealed special permit does so at risk that a court will reverse the permit and that any construction performed under the permit may be ordered undone. This certification shall in no event terminate or shorten the tolling, during the pendency of any appeals, of the periods provided under the second paragraph of G.L. c. 40A, §6.

Date: _____, City Clerk

Appeal has been dismissed or denied.

Date: _____, City Clerk