

August 27, 2026

To the Cambridge Planning Board,

Based on the presentation at our July 2026 meeting, the Cambridge Pedestrian Committee views Healthpeak's proposal to revitalize the Alewife Quadrangle favorably, subject to the recommendations below.

We support the proposal's emphasis on pedestrian safety and comfort, consistent with the City of Cambridge's "Complete Streets" principles, as well as its efforts to connect the proposed residential, retail, and commercial development with new green spaces and destinations throughout Alewife and Fresh Pond. We strongly believe that the civic and economic success of the redevelopment will depend on convenient, safe, and universally accessible walking, bicycling, and public-transit connections. Early investment in human-centered infrastructure can create a positive feedback loop that establishes this neighborhood as a model for new development in Cambridge. Accordingly, we recommend that approval be conditioned on early and enforceable delivery of this infrastructure, with clear timelines, occupancy-based milestones, maintenance responsibilities, and public reporting.

We have several specific comments and recommendations we are seeking for Healthpeak to address in the course of project development:

- For the proposed pedestrian bridge over the MBTA Fitchburg railroad tracks, we encourage the Planning Board to recommend that Healthpeak:
 - Accelerate the timeline for the construction of the bridge over the rail right-of way (ROW). This will increase access to the site from Alewife MBTA Station as well as the regional trails and paths.
 - Work with property owners north of the tracks to ensure that the bridge lands within a safe, continuous, and accessible pedestrian and bicycle network. The proposed landing would direct walkers and cyclists onto an access road with parking-garage entrances and exits but no sidewalks, creating a serious safety conflict. Instead, we recommend continuous sidewalks and a two-way bicycle facility connecting the bridge to Cambridgepark Drive, together with a safe and direct crossing to the Fitchburg Cutoff Path to the north where security gates and "Do Not Enter" signs currently exist. The necessary public-access easements and maintenance agreements should be secured, and these connections should be completed, before the bridge opens.
 - Furthermore, in the proposed design of the bridge we recommend incorporating a bike tunnel alongside the stairs so bicyclists can choose to walk up or down the stair portion.
 - If possible, create an integrated connection to the pedestrian bridge from the proposed path on the southern side of the ROW.
 - Approval should include enforceable standards for public access and long-term operation of the bridge and its approaches, including lighting, snow and ice removal,

drainage, surface maintenance, and emergency communications. Transportation connections should remain publicly accessible at all times.

- All bridge approaches, transportation paths, and other publicly beneficial connections located on private property should be secured through recorded public-access easements. Public access should not depend solely on signage, informal commitments, or the continued cooperation of an individual property owner.
- Design and locate the bridge with sufficient clearance, and without structural elements that would preclude future rail electrification (with overhead catenary wires), expansion of the rail right-of-way, additional tracks, or a potential commuter-rail station. Reference the City of Cambridge's proposed bridge design near Danehy Park for guidance.
- Greenway & Adjacent Development:
 - Some aspects of the proposal, such as the diagonal running greenway, require reaching agreements with adjacent developers. We recommend the design of alternative options that create similar connections in the event that agreements cannot be reached. Overall, holistic planning is encouraged to create seamless connections.
- Climate Change & Flooding:
 - The parcel of land sits in a designated floodplain. Healthpeak's proposal includes construction elements to address potential flooding of buildings. We would like to see more of how mitigations to the potential flooding of pedestrian paths will be included in the design proposal (i.e. raised sidewalks, porous pavement, bioswales, etc.). If there are raised sidewalks, we would encourage recorded public-access easements, clearly assigned maintenance responsibilities, and permanent accessible routes.
 - To mitigate heat, we recommend an extensive tree canopy and other cooling measures.
- Wayfinding:
 - A pedestrian-scaled wayfinding system should identify Alewife Station, bus and shuttle stops, the Fitchburg Cutoff Path, Fresh Pond, regional trails, accessible routes, and major destinations within the development. Signs should include walking & biking times and should be installed as each phase opens.
- Occupancy and Vibrancy:
 - To support an active and walkable district throughout the day, we encourage a flexible and diverse mix of commercial, civic, cultural, and neighborhood-serving uses, particularly on ground floors facing streets, parks, and pedestrian routes.
 - The development should avoid dependence on a single commercial sector (such as biotechnology) and should ensure that vacant or non-retail ground-floor spaces are nevertheless designed to be visually engaging and supportive of the public realm.
- Project Phasing:
 - The phasing of this project, with anticipated years for completion of the various elements of the project, should be included in the proposals more explicitly with transparent timelines, frequent updates, and milestone check-ins available to the public. Healthpeak should provide a construction-period pedestrian and bicycle access plan that maintains safe, direct, well-lit, and ADA-compliant routes throughout every phase of construction. The plan should address temporary sidewalks and crossings, protected

detours, snow and ice clearance, construction-vehicle conflicts, advance notice of closures, and continuity of access to transit and regional paths.

- Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure should be completed early in each phase and should not be significantly deferred until after the associated buildings or parking facilities are occupied. Completion of the bridge, multi-use paths, and key crossings should be tied to enforceable certificate-of-occupancy milestones. When a connection depends on third-party approval, the plan should identify an alternative.
- Reducing Car-centric planning:
 - We are concerned that the proposed quantity of automobile parking could undermine the project's walkability, increase vehicle trips, and create additional conflicts at garage and loading entrances. We recommend that the Final Development Plan establish a binding maximum parking cap; maximize shared and unbundled parking; periodically reassess actual parking utilization before later phases are approved; and design parking structures, where feasible, so they can be converted to other uses in the future. Garage and loading access should be consolidated and designed so that vehicles do not queue across sidewalks, bicycle facilities, or pedestrian crossings.
 - At every garage, loading dock, or service-road crossing, sidewalks and bicycle facilities should remain continuous and clearly prioritized. Vehicular curb cuts and driveway crossings should be kept as narrow as operationally feasible, turning speeds should be minimized, and loading operations should be managed so that trucks do not obstruct pedestrian or bicycle routes.
 - We encourage a long-term plan for shuttle bus service to Alewife MBTA Station and other regional destinations.

Overall, we are encouraged by the potential of this project to create a more connected, walkable, and accessible district in the Alewife Quadrangle. We look forward to continued collaboration with Healthpeak and the City to ensure that these transportation and public-realm improvements are delivered early, safely, and with lasting public benefit.

Sincerely,



Vincent Rudolph, Chair

On behalf of the Cambridge Pedestrian Committee