

August 31, 2026

To: Cambridge Development Department Staff

From: Hans D. Strauch

Re: **9 & 25 Birch Street & 30 Bay State Road, Cambridge
Responses to Cambridge Planning Board Comments
July 21, 2026 Meeting**

This memorandum responds to Planning Board comments received at the July 21, 2026 meeting for the proposed multifamily residential project at 9 & 25 Birch Street & 30 Bay State Road (the "Project").

Project Program

- *We were asked to confirm the Project's compliance with the requirements of CZO Section 11.203.3 relative to the provision of Family-Sized Dwelling Units.*
 - On August 7, 2026, we met with Senior Housing Planner, Alex Bob. He confirmed that we were properly calculating the square footage required to be dedicated to IZ units (based on Dwelling Unit Net Floor Area of 59,920 sf, 20% is 11,984 SF, within which two 3-BR units would be required).
- *Planning Board members requested that we evaluate the feasibility of adding more Family-Sized (3-bedroom) units to the Project.*
 - We have run the numbers and determined that doing this with respect to the market rate units is not financially feasible for the project and, given the projected rents for a market-rate 3-bedroom unit, it is more likely that these units would be rented by unrelated roommates rather than families.
 - Shifting from smaller units (studios/one beds) to 3-bedroom units would also change our assumptions about parking demand, which we anticipate being problematic.
 - We have, however, found a way to reconfigure the preliminary unit mix for the IZ portion of the program, consolidating two smaller units to create another IZ 3-bedroom unit. See Exhibit 1.
 - We note that this reconfiguration reduces the total number of units in the project from 85 to 84.
- *We were encouraged to consider seeking a special permit to utilize bike stackers in the Project bike room.*
 - After consultation with CDD staff, it is our understanding that this is not something that staff would support because it would render the Project no longer compliant with zoning and create accessibility issues.

Flood Plain Elevation

- *Board members requested that we clarify the flood plain elevation and location of building elements (including critical infrastructure) in relation thereto.*
 - Ground elevation tags have been added to the first-floor plan. See Exhibit 2.
 - Critical building systems and equipment are indicated at elevation 23.5', exceeding the minimum elevation of 23.3', satisfying the 1%-LTFE protection standard pursuant to section 22.84.1(C).
 - See attached Flood Resistance Plan prepared by Hancock Associates at Exhibit 3.

Fire Access

- *We were asked about fire access throughout the site.*
 - The Code and Fire Engineering Group at Cosentini Associates reviewed the plans and determined that the Project complies with the MA Comprehensive Fire Safety Code. MA Comprehensive Fire Safety Code. See Exhibit 4.

Roof Plan

- *Planning Board members requested that we refine the roof deck plans to create more functional space and with a particular focus on the trellis/shade elements/planter locations.*
 - The design has been enhanced with planters, outdoor amenities and defined private and social gathering spaces of varied scale. See Exhibits 5-8.
- *We were asked to clarify how we calculated the Green Roof Area for purposes of Article 22.35 compliance.*
 - The extent of the green roof and associated calculations have been clarified. See Exhibit 9.

Floor Plans

- *We were asked to provide floor plans showing the proposed location of all windows and doors.*
 - See Exhibits 10-15.

Bay State Road Garage Entrance

- *We were asked to consider adding a door to the garage on the Bay State Road entrance, which was initially presented as open.*
 - While we studied this alternative as requested, for the following functional and aesthetic reasons, we continue to believe that it is preferable to maintain the open entry:
 - Adding the garage door would require us to remove proposed plantings along 5' setbacks to allow Fire Department access to building perimeter. See Exhibit 16.
 - Our traffic consultant, VAI, has concerns that adding a door to the entry may cause cars to temporarily block the sidewalk, conflicting with pedestrians and potentially causing them to walk into the street.
 - Closing this entry off with a door means that we will no longer be able to use spaces within the garage for short-term visitor/delivery use, which will lead to increased congestion on the street.
 - The addition of a garage door removes the visual connection with the streetscape and public realm, reduces the level of transparency and permeability, and adds visual bulk to the façade along Bay State Road.
 - Exhibits 17-25 depict the Bay State Road frontage with and without a garage door.
 - We look forward to discussing this further with the Board.

Façade Design

- *Planning Board members made numerous suggestions about potential façade/design revisions, including the following:*
 - *Further develop the northeastern edge of the Project;*
 - *Evaluate whether the Bay State Road elevation can have more of a 3-story rather than 4-story feel, through articulation or otherwise*
 - *Break up the Birch Street elevation further;*
 - *Use warmer color palette to make the Project read more residential;*
 - *Reduce the amount of brown in favor of other colors;*
 - *Reduce the amount of metal panels, particularly at the building base.*
- In response, we have done the following, as shown in Exhibits 17-32:
 - Added stone at the ground level of the building facades facing the public realm.
 - Changed building color from darker brown to a lighter terra cotta tone.
- Modified Bay State Road façade to help reduce the apparent scale of the building. These modifications establish lower horizontal façade

- lines that reduce the scale of the building and relate more closely to the existing context of the streetscape.
- We also modified Birch Street elevation, adding stone at the ground level and full height at the forecourt main entrance to the building.
 - Our design strategy for Birch Street creates two volumes on either side of the forecourt, which are differentiated by stepping the façade back at different heights to further break up the massing, with one volume emphasizing a more horizontal design approach and the other a more vertical approach. This overall strategy effectively breaks up the mass of the building with horizontal façade lines at varying heights.

Transformer Enclosure

- We were asked to refine the doors to the transformer enclosure to make it “read less tall”.
 - As shown on Exhibit 26, we have altered the design of the door to diminish its scale and presence along Birch Street.

DIMENSIONAL FORM**Project Address:** 9 & 25 Birch Street and 30-36 Bay State Road**Date:** September 18, 2026

	Existing	Allowed or Required (max/min)	Proposed	Permitted
Lot Area (sq ft)	24,775	N/A	24,775	
Total Gross Floor Area (sq ft)	13,500	N/A	91,585	
Residential Uses	N/A	N/A	91,585	
Non-Residential Uses	13,500	N/A	N/A	
Total Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	0.54	N/A	3.7	
Residential Uses	N/A	N/A	3.7	
Non-Residential Uses	0.54	N/A	N/A	
Total Dwelling Units	N/A	N/A	84	
Total Stories Above Grade	3	6 (max)	6	
Max. Height – Residential (ft)	N/A	75' (max)	69'-10"	
Max. Height – Non-Residential (ft)	35'	N/A	N/A	
Front Yard Setback(s) (ft)*	0'	10' (min)	10'	
Side Yard Setback(s) (ft)*	3'	5' (min)	5'	
Rear Yard Setback(s) (ft)*	1'	10' (min)	10'	
Total Open Space (% of Lot Area)**	N/A***	3,716 SF (15%)	7,217.5 SF (29.1%)	
Private Open Space	N/A***	N/A	4,302 SF (17.4%)	
Permeable Open Space	N/A***	3,716 SF (15%)	5,965.5 SF (24.1%)	
Publicly Beneficial Open Space	N/A***	N/A	4,539.9 SF (18.3%)	
Off-Street Parking Spaces	22	N/A	15	
Long-term Bicycle Parking Spaces	0	89 (min)	89	
Short-term Bicycle Parking Spaces	0	10 (min)	10	
Loading Bays	N/A	N/A	N/A	

*Indicate all applicable setbacks. Make sure distances match the submitted site plans.

**Refer to Open Space definitions in Article 2.000 and Open Space provisions in Section 5.22 of the CZO. Make sure all open space information matches the submitted site plans.

Use space below and/or attached pages for additional notes:

***THE ENTIRE, EXISTING SITE CONSISTS OF BROKEN DOWN ASPHALT, OVERGROWN LAWN / WEEDS AND PILES OF REFUSE.

DIMENSIONAL FORM

Project Address: 9 & 25 Birch Street and 30-36 Bay State Road

Date: September 18, 2026

CALCULATIONS:

TOTAL OPEN SPACE %: $(7,217.5 \text{ SF PROPOSED OPEN SPACE}) / (24,775 \text{ SF TOTAL PROJECT SITE}) = 29.1\%$

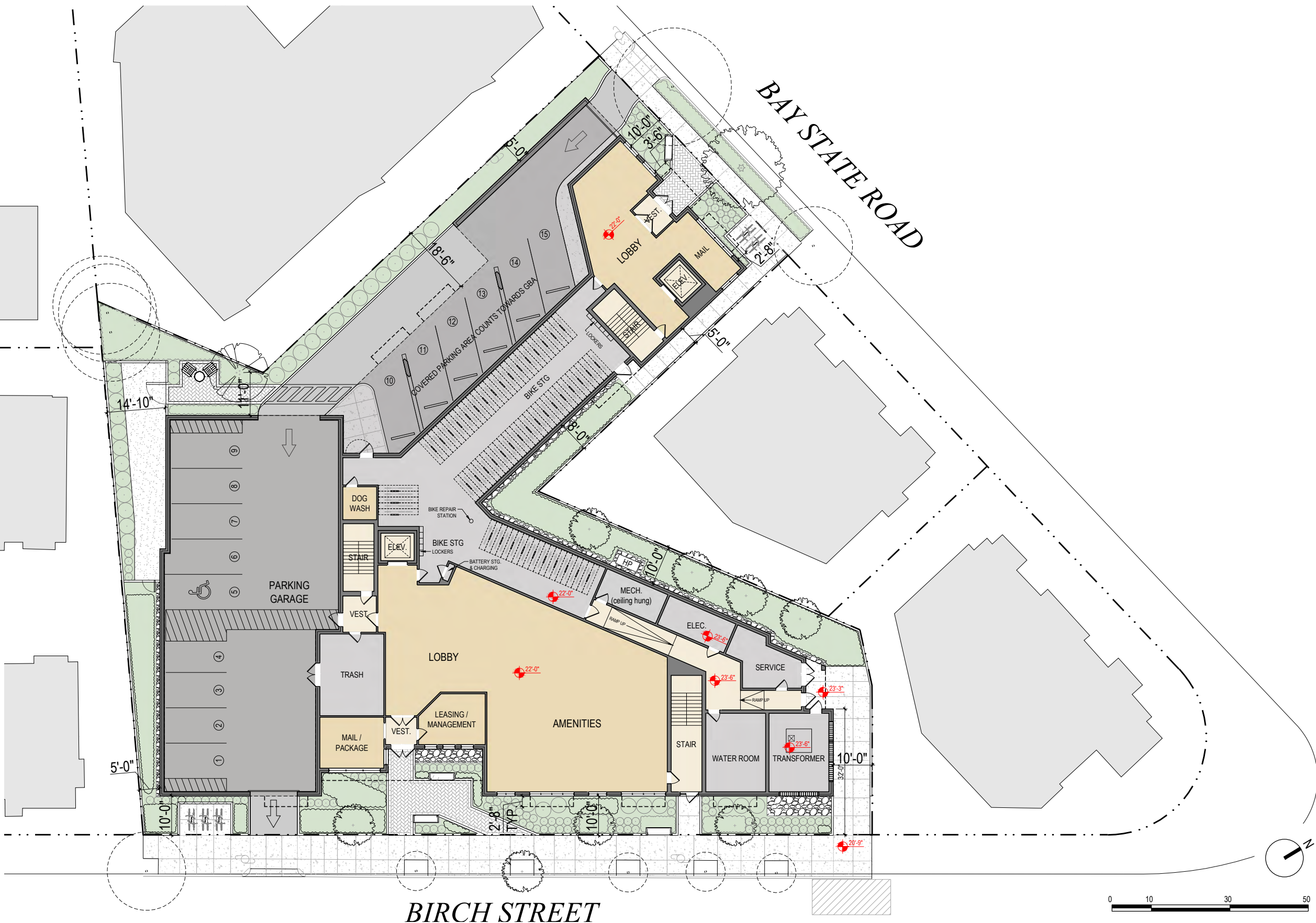
PRIVATE OPEN SPACE %: $(1,365 \text{ SF ON GRADE}) + (2,937 \text{ SF ABOVE GRADE}) = (4,302 \text{ SF TOTAL PROPOSED PRIVATE OPEN SPACE}) / (24,775 \text{ SF TOTAL PROJECT SITE}) = 17.4\%$

PERMEABLE OPEN SPACE %: $(5,965.5 \text{ SF TOTAL PROPOSED PERMEABLE OPEN SPACE}) / (24,775 \text{ SF TOTAL PROJECT SITE}) = 24.1\%$

PUBLICLY BENEFICIAL OPEN SPACE %: $(4,539.9 \text{ SF TOTAL PROPOSED PUBLICLY BENEFICIAL OPEN SPACE}) / (24,775 \text{ SF TOTAL PROJECT SITE}) = 18.3\%$

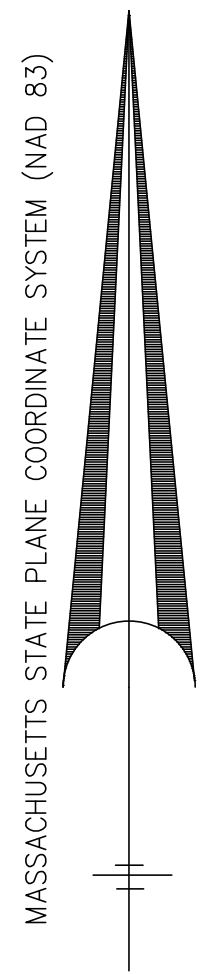


9 & 25 Birch Street & 30 - 36 Bay State Road
Cambridge, MA | Aug 31, 2026

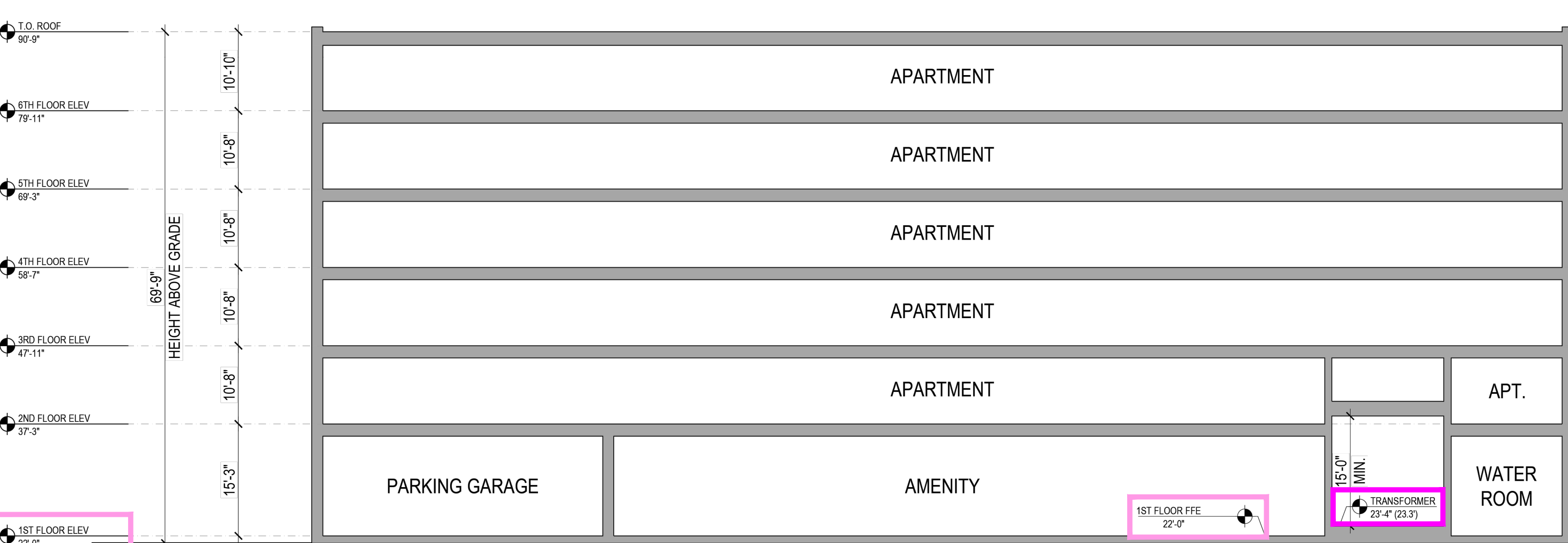


9 & 25 Birch Street & 30 - 36 Bay State Road
Cambridge, MA | Aug 31, 2026

EXHIBIT 2
First Floor Plan
REVISED



PLAN VIEW
(SCALE: 1"=20')



BUILDING PROFILE VIEW
(NOT TO SCALE)

- PER CAMBRIDGE ZONING ORDINANCE 22.84.1
- ALL OCCUPIABLE SPACES SHALL BE PROTECTED TO THE 10%-LONG TERM FLOOD ELEVATION (10%-LTFE) ELEVATION OF 22.0'(CCB)
 - ALL ENTRANCES TO OCCUPIABLE SPACES LOCATED ON THE FIRST FLOOR ARE SET AT OR ABOVE THE 10% LTFE OF ELEVATION 22.0'.
 - SMALL ENTRYWAYS BELOW THE 10%-LTFE WITH STAIRS THAT ALLOW ACCESS TO PROTECTED AREAS SHALL BE ALLOWED NOT TO BE PROTECTED PROVIDED THEY MEET THE STANDARDS FOR RECOVERY. RECOVERABLE AREAS ARE THOSE THAT ALLOW FLOOD WATER TO ENTER AND EXIT WITHOUT CAUSING DAMAGE THAT CANNOT BE READILY REPAIRED.
 - ALL ENTRANCES BELOW THE 10%-LTFE ARE RECOVERABLE.
 - ALL LIVABLE SPACES SHALL BE PROTECTED TO THE 1% LONG TERM FLOOD ELEVATION (1%-LTFE) ELEVATION OF 23.3' (CCB).
 - ALL LIVABLE SPACES ARE LOCATED ON FLOORS 2 THROUGH 6. FLOOR 2 IS AT ELEVATION 37.25. THERE WILL BE NO LIVABLE SPACES LOCATED ON THE GROUND FLOOR OR BELOW ELEVATION 23.3'.
 - CRITICAL EQUIPMENT WITHIN THE BUILDING SHALL BE PROTECTED TO THE 1% LONG TERM FLOOD ELEVATION (1%-LTFE) ELEVATION OF 23.3' (CCB).
 - ALL CRITICAL EQUIPMENT IS LOCATED WITHIN THE BUILDING AND IS SET ABOVE THE 1%-LTFE OF 23.3'

Flood Elevation Data		
2070 - 1% - SLR/SS	23.3	
2070 - 1% - Precip	21.1	
2070 - 10% - SLR/SS	22	
2070 - 10% - Precip	N/A	
2050 - 1% - SLR/SS	N/A	
2050 - 1% - Precip	21	
2050 - 10% - SLR/SS	N/A	
2050 - 10% - Precip	N/A	
Present Day - 1% - Precip	20.9	
Present Day - 10% - Precip	N/A	
FEMA 500-Year	22.3	
FEMA 100-Year	N/A	

Long-Term Flood Elevations	
1% - LTFE:	23.3
10% - LTFE:	22

EXHIBIT 3



3D RENDERING OF PROPOSED BUILDING
(NOT TO SCALE)

9 & 25 BIRCH STREET & 30 BAY STATE ROAD

Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

PREPARED FOR:

DON LAW MANAGEMENT

38 Bay State Road
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

HANCOCK ASSOCIATES

Civil Engineers

Land Surveyors

Wetland Scientists

185 CENTRE STREET, DANVERS, MA 01923
VOICE (978) 777-3050, FAX (978) 774-7816
WWW.HANCOCKASSOCIATES.COM

NO.	BY	APP	DATE	ISSUE/REVISION	DESCRIPTION
DATE:	04/20/2026	DESIGN BY:	OMR		
SCALE:	AS NOTED	DRAWN BY:	OMR		
APPRVD. BY:	KAC	CHECK BY:	AD		

FLOOD RESISTANCE PLAN

PLOT DATE: Apr 22, 2026 12:55 pm
PLOT: \\s:\s2\m1\Draw_30\Project\28559\Draw-Cambridge\Eng\DWG\
DWG: 25814_Flood_Plan.dwg
LAYOUT: EC
SHEET: 1 OF 2
PROJECT NO.: 28559

C1

101 Federal Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02110
T: 617.748.7800
F: 617.748.7801
www.cosentini.com

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Hazardous Materials and Process Analysis
Smoke Control System Design
Due Diligence and 3rd Party Reviews

August 4, 2026

Hans Strauch
HDS Architecture
625 Mt. Auburn Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

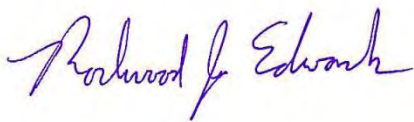
Re: Code Summary– The Commons at River Road
9 & 25 Birch St & 30 Bay State Rd, Cambridge

Dear Mr. Strauch,

The proposed project at Birch and Bay State is provided with compliant fire department vehicle access to the building and fire department access around the building in accordance with 527 CMR: Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

COSENTINI ASSOCIATES, INC.
Code Consulting and Fire Engineering Services



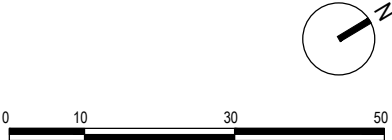
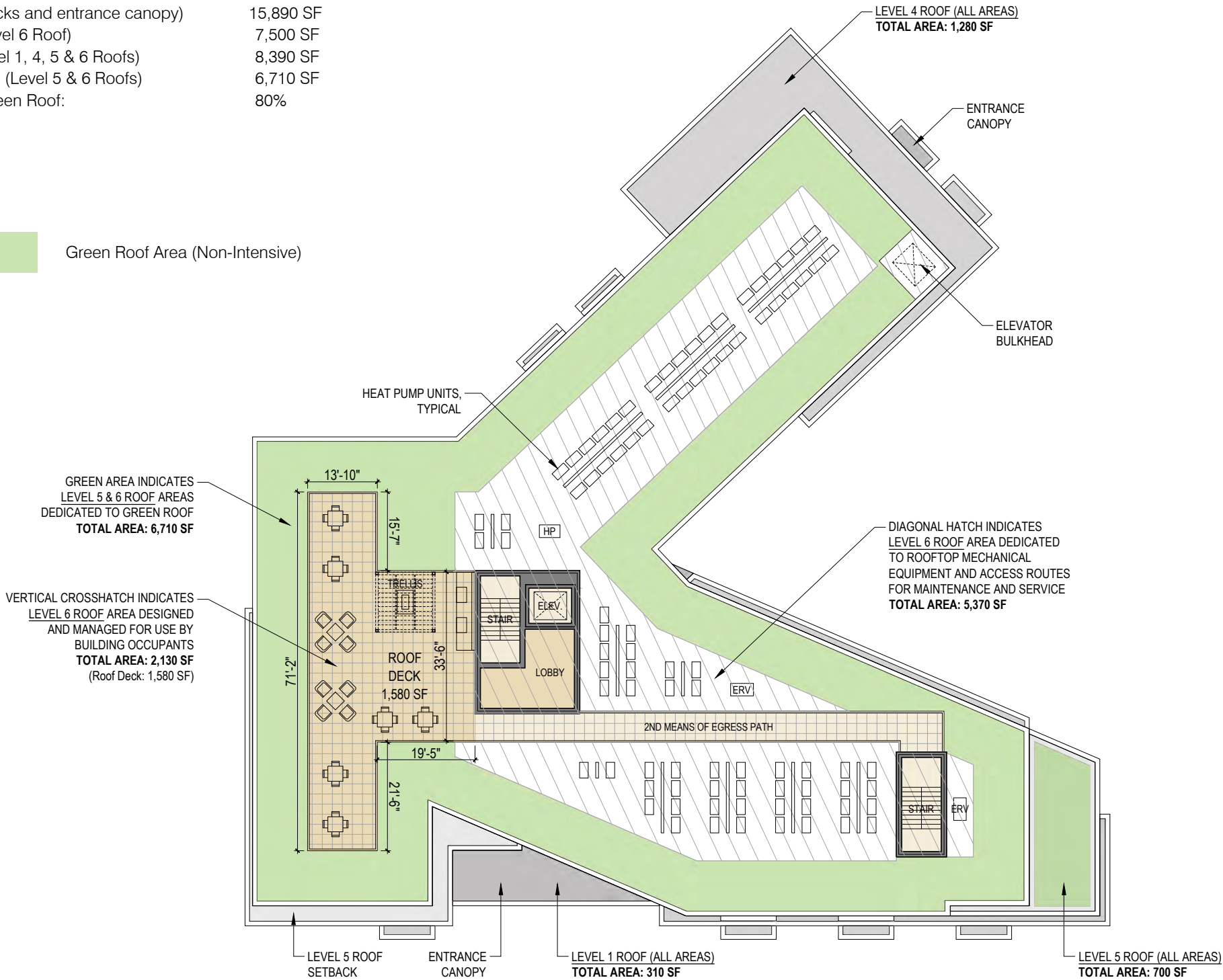
Rockwood J. Edwards, PE | Senior Vice President
Code and Fire Engineering Group
Phone: 617-748-7800 | Fax: 617-748-7801 | Direct Dial: 617-748-0021
redwards@cosentini.com

Cosentini Associates, Inc. - A Tetra Tech Company
101 Federal Street – Suite 600
Boston, MA 02110
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Article 22, Section 22.30 Compliance:

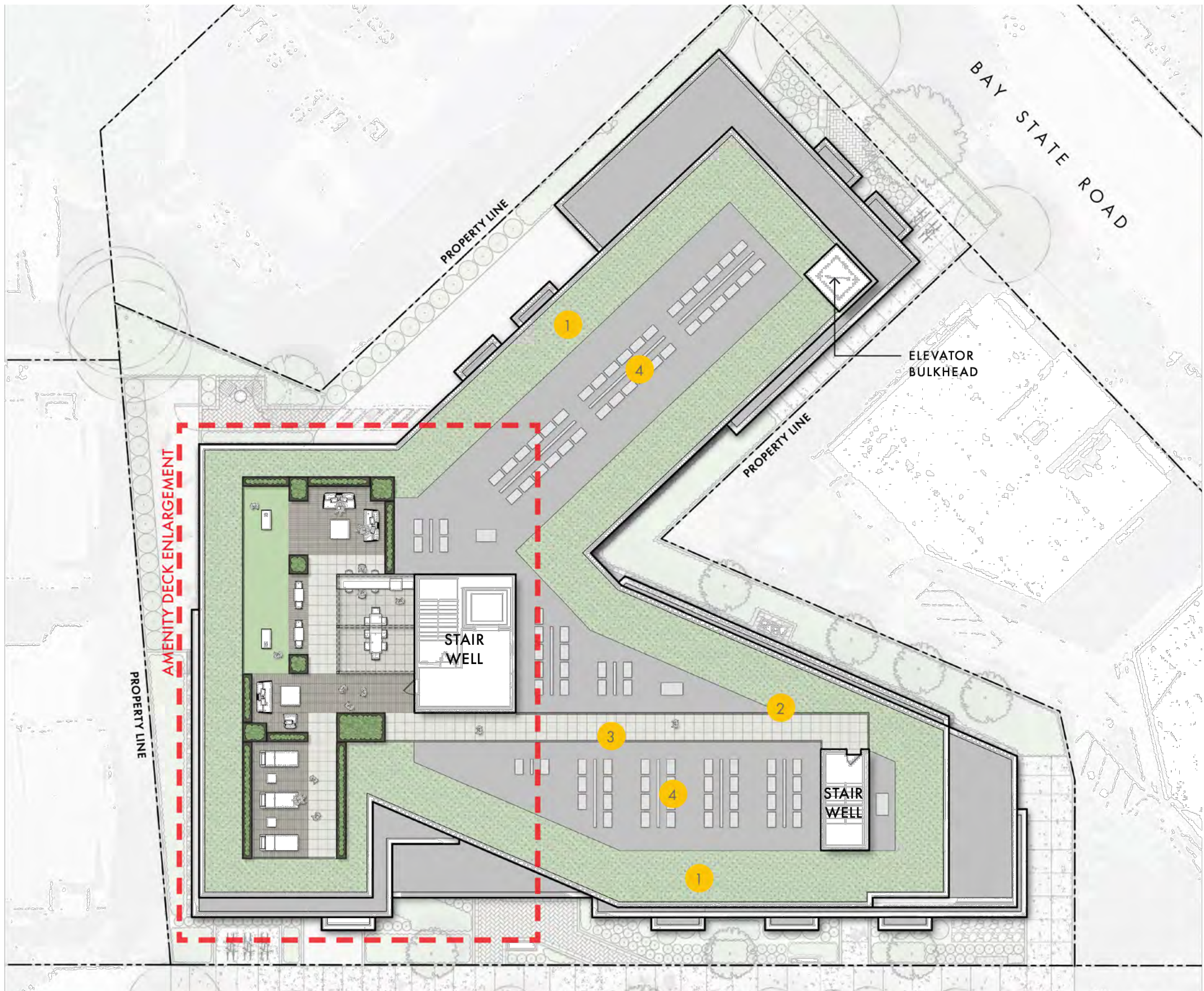
Total Roof Area: (including low roofs at setbacks and entrance canopy)	15,890 SF
Total Roof Area Excluded per Ordinance: (Level 6 Roof)	7,500 SF
Total Roof Area Included per Ordinance: (Level 1, 4, 5 & 6 Roofs)	8,390 SF
Total Included Area Dedicated to Green Roof: (Level 5 & 6 Roofs)	6,710 SF
Percentage of Included Area Dedicated to Green Roof:	80%

- Level 1 Roofs
- Level 4 Roofs
- Level 5 Roofs
- Level 6 Roofs
- Green Roof Area (Non-Intensive)



9 & 25 Birch Street & 30 - 36 Bay State Road
Cambridge, MA | July 21, 2026

EXHIBIT 5
Roof Plan
PREVIOUS



LEGEND

- 1 NON-INTENSIVE GREEN ROOF SYSTEM
- 2 42" DECORATIVE GUARDRAIL
- 3 2X2 PRECAST CONCRETE PAVERS ON PEDESTAL PAVERS
- 4 ROOFTOP MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

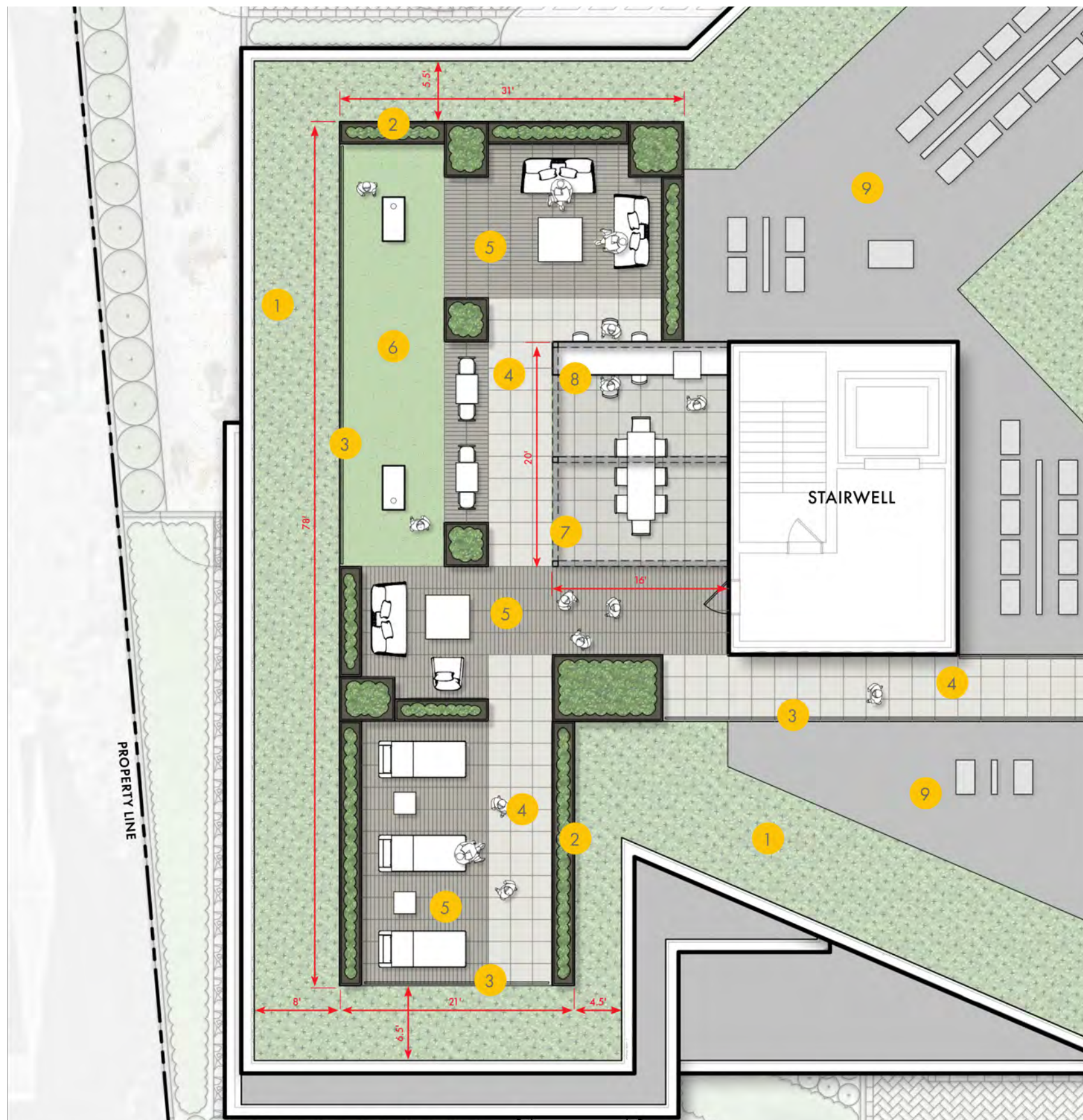


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EXHIBIT 6
Roof Plan
REVISED

REVISIONS:
• ENHANCED ROOF DECK DESIGN WITH
PLANTERS AND OUTDOOR AMENITIES



LEGEND

- 1 NON-INTENSIVE GREEN ROOF SYSTEM
- 2 42" TALL DECORATIVE ALUMINUM PLANTERS
- 3 42" DECORATIVE GUARDRAIL
- 4 2X2 PRECAST CONCRETE PAVERS ON PEDESTAL PAVERS
- 5 2X2 WOOD DECK TILES ON PEDESTAL PAVERS
- 6 SYNTHETIC TURF SYSTEM ON PEDESTAL PAVERS
- 7 STEEL FRAMED PERGOLA WITH STATIC IPE LOUVERS
- 8 OUTDOOR KITCHEN
- 9 ROOFTOP MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT



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EXHIBIT 7 Amenity Roof Deck REVISED

REVISIONS:

- ENHANCED ROOF DECK DESIGN WITH PLANTERS AND OUTDOOR AMENITIES

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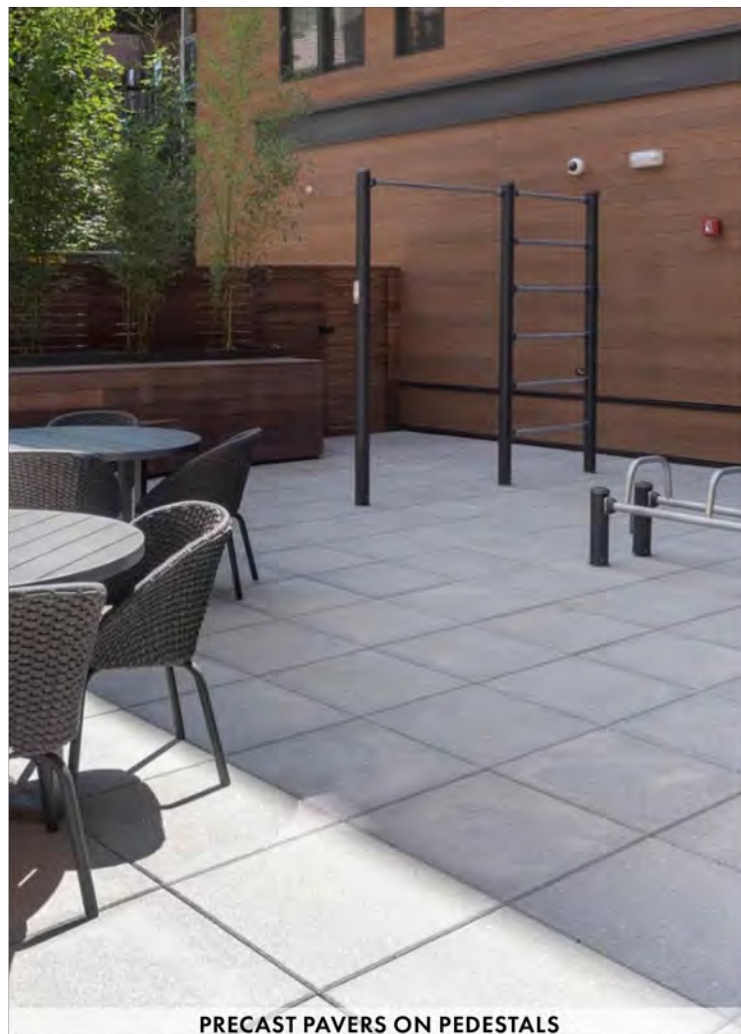
NON-INTENSIVE GREEN ROOF



STEEL FRAMED PERGOLA W/ WOOD SLAT LOUVERS



OUTDOOR KITCHEN



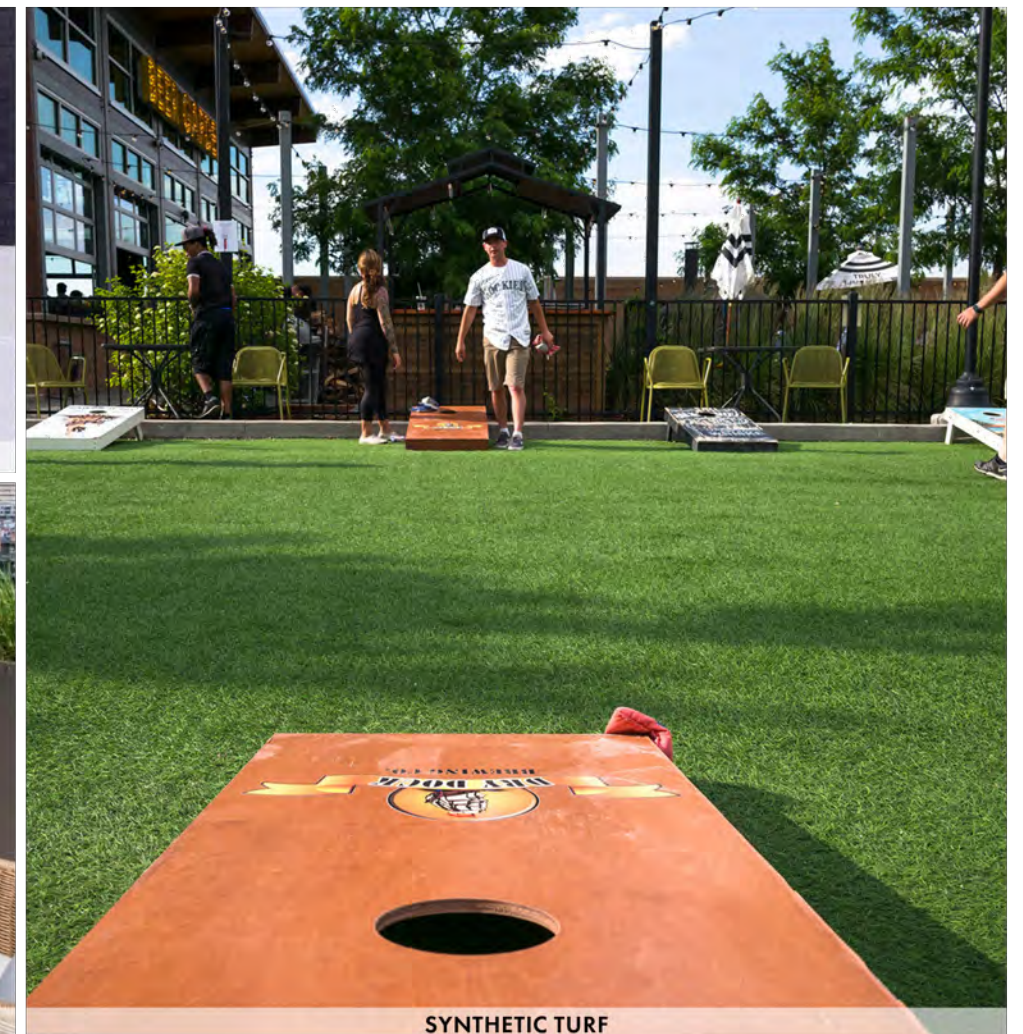
PRECAST PAVERS ON PEDESTALS



DECORATIVE ALUMINUM PLANTERS



IPE DECK TILES ON PEDESTALS



SYNTHETIC TURF

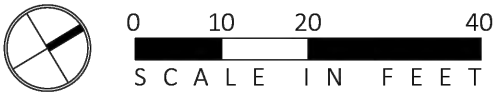
EXHIBIT 8

9 & 25 Birch Street & 30 - 36 Bay State Road
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Roof Design Inspiration

ARTICLE 22, SECTION 22.30 COMPLIANCE

TOTAL ROOF AREA	15,660 SF
ACCESS PATHWAYS (EXEMPT)	788 SF
OCCUPIED TERRACES (EXEMPT)	2,937 SF
MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT & CLEARANCES (EXEMPT)	5,466 SF
NON-EXEMPT ROOF AREA	6,469 SF
GREEN ROOF AREA REQUIREMENT (80% OF NON-EXEMPT ROOF AREA)	5,176 SF
PROPOSED NON-INTENSIVE GREEN ROOF AREA	5,301 SF (81.9%)



9 & 25 Birch Street & 30 - 36 Bay State Road
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EXHIBIT 9
Article 22 Compliance
REVISED

REVISIONS:
• CLARIFIED GREEN ROOF AND EXEMPTED
AREA CALCULATIONS



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EXHIBIT 11
Second Floor Plan
REVISED

REVISIONS:
• ADDED WINDOWS AND DOORS GRAPHICALLY



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EXHIBIT 12
Third Floor Plan
REVISED

REVISIONS:
• ADDED WINDOWS AND DOORS GRAPHICALLY



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EXHIBIT 13
Fourth Floor Plan
REVISED

- REVISIONS:
- ADDED WINDOWS AND DOORS GRAPHICALLY
 - CONVERTED TWO UNITS INTO A 3-BEDROOM UNIT ON THIS FLOOR



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EXHIBIT 14
Fifth Floor Plan
REVISED

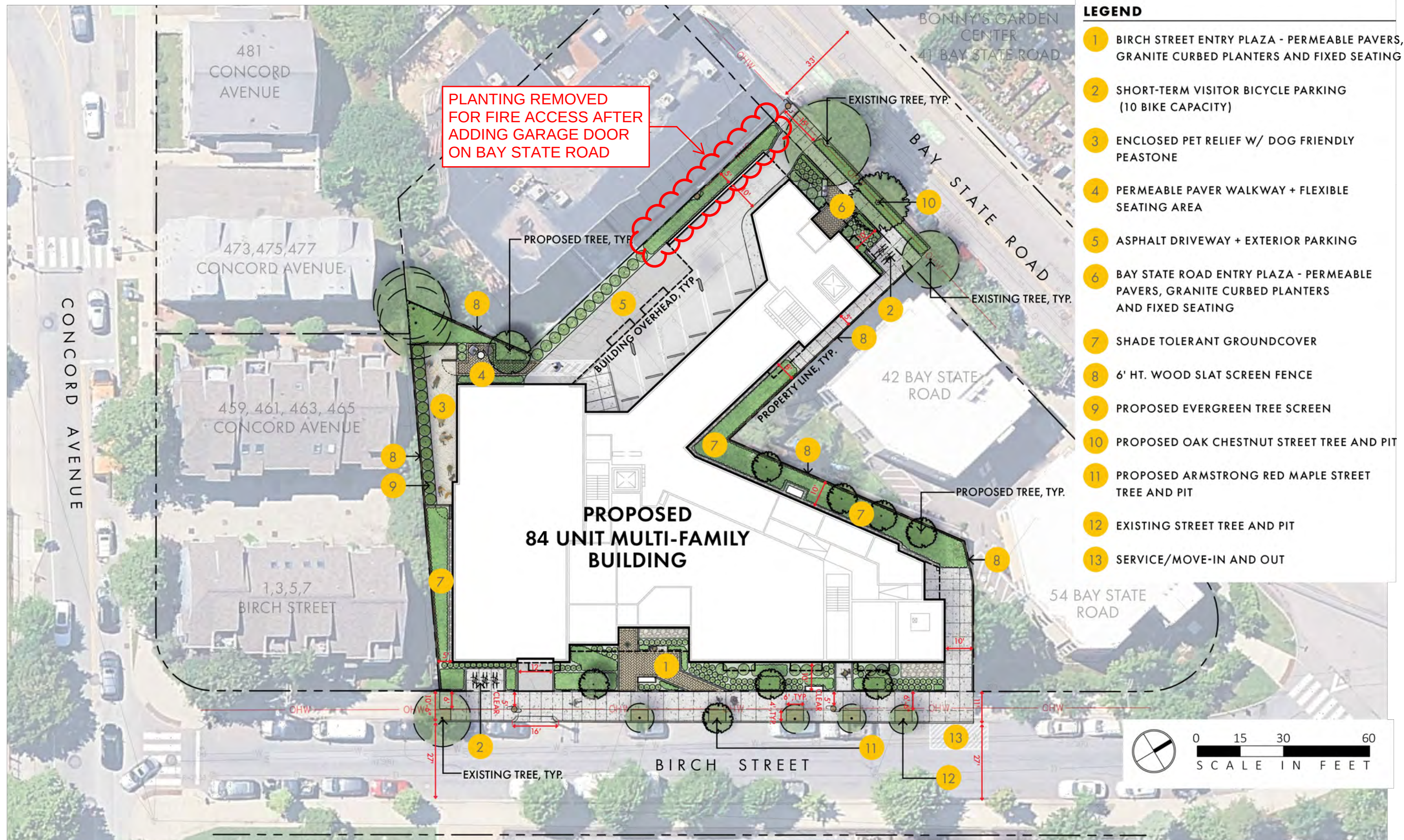
REVISIONS:
• ADDED WINDOWS AND DOORS GRAPHICALLY



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EXHIBIT 15
Sixth Floor Plan
REVISED

REVISIONS:
• ADDED WINDOWS AND DOORS GRAPHICALLY



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EXHIBIT 16

Proposed Landscape Plan

REVISED



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EXHIBIT 17
Bay State Road View 3
PREVIOUS

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EXHIBIT 18
Bay State Road View 3
REVISED

- REVISIONS:
- ADDED STONE BASE AT GROUND LEVEL
 - ADDED GARAGE DOOR ON BAY STATE ROAD
 - ALTERED BUILDING COLOR TO TERRA COTTA TONE
 - MODIFIED FACADE TO REDUCE APPARENT SCALE

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9 & 25 Birch Street & 30 - 36 Bay State Road Bay State Road View 3
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EXHIBIT 19
WITHOUT GARAGE DOOR OPTION

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EXHIBIT 20
Bay State Road View 2
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EXHIBIT 21
Bay State Road View 2
REVISED

- REVISIONS:
- ADDED STONE BASE AT GROUND LEVEL
 - ADDED GARAGE DOOR ON BAY STATE ROAD
 - ALTERED BUILDING COLOR TO TERRA COTTA TONE
 - MODIFIED FACADE TO REDUCE APPARENT SCALE

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EXHIBIT 23
Bay State Road View 1
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EXHIBIT 24
Bay State Road View 1
REVISED

REVISIONS:

- ADDED STONE BASE AT GROUND LEVEL
- ADDED GARAGE DOOR ON BAY STATE ROAD
- ALTERED BUILDING COLOR TO TERRA COTTA TONE
- MODIFIED FACADE TO REDUCE APPARENT SCALE

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Bay State Road View 1

EXHIBIT 25
WITHOUT GARAGE DOOR OPTION

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EXHIBIT 26
Birch Street View 3
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EXHIBIT 27
Birch Street View 3
REVISED

- REVISIONS:
- ADDED STONE BASE AT GROUND LEVEL
 - ALTERED BUILDING COLOR TO TERRA COTTA TONE
 - ALTERED TRANSFORMER ENCLOSURE TO DIMINISH ITS SCALE

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EXHIBIT 28
Birch Street View 2
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EXHIBIT 29
Birch Street View 2
REVISED

- REVISIONS:
- ADDED STONE BASE AT GROUND LEVEL
 - ALTERED BUILDING COLOR TO TERRA COTTA TONE
 - ALTERED TRANSFORMER ENCLOSURE TO DIMINISH ITS SCALE

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EXHIBIT 30
Birch Street View 1
PREVIOUS

MDLA

HDS
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625 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
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9 & 25 Birch Street & 30 - 36 Bay State Road
Cambridge, MA | Aug 31, 2026

EXHIBIT 31
Birch Street View 1
REVISED

REVISIONS:

- ADDED STONE BASE AT GROUND LEVEL
- ALTERED BUILDING COLOR TO TERRA COTTA TONE

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METAL WALL PANEL SYSTEM (MP-2-B)
VERTICAL MATRIX METAL PANEL,
VARIED EXPOSURE WIDTHS, WARM
PEWTER COLOR

METAL WALL PANEL SYSTEM (MP-3-B)
SMOOTH / FLAT METAL PANEL
WARM PEWTER COLOR

METAL WALL PANEL SYSTEM (MP-3-C)
SMOOTH / FLAT METAL PANEL
CHAMPAGNE COLOR

METAL WALL PANEL SYSTEM (MP-1-A)
HORIZONTAL METAL PANEL
8" EXPOSURE HEIGHT
BROWN / BRONZE COLOR

ROLL-UP GARAGE DOOR
ART MURAL TO EXTEND OVER DOOR

ART WALL MURAL
FIBER CEMENT WALL PANEL SYSTEM

METAL WALL PANEL SYSTEM (MP-2-B)
VERTICAL MATRIX METAL PANEL,
VARIED EXPOSURE WIDTHS, WARM
PEWTER COLOR

METAL WALL PANEL SYSTEM (MP-3-B)
SMOOTH / FLAT METAL PANEL
WARM PEWTER COLOR

METAL WALL PANEL SYSTEM (MP-3-C)
SMOOTH / FLAT METAL PANEL
CHAMPAGNE COLOR

METAL WALL PANEL SYSTEM (MP-1-A)
HORIZONTAL METAL PANEL
8" EXPOSURE HEIGHT
BROWN / BRONZE COLOR

METAL CANOPY

MATERIALS LEGEND			
MP-1-A	METAL PANEL, TYPE 1, COLOR A HORIZONTAL METAL PANEL, 8" EXPOSURE HEIGHT, TERRA-COTTA COLOR	MP-3-B	METAL PANEL, TYPE 3, COLOR B SMOOTH / FLAT METAL PANEL, WARM PEWTER COLOR
MP-2-B	METAL PANEL, TYPE 2, COLOR B VERTICAL MATRIX METAL PANEL, VARIED EXPOSURE WIDTHS, WARM PEWTER COLOR	MP-3-C	METAL PANEL, TYPE 3, COLOR C SMOOTH / FLAT METAL PANEL, CHAMPAGNE COLOR

NOTE: FACADE MATERIALS NOTED IN VIGNETTE TYPICAL FOR WHOLE BUILDING. REFER TO BUILDING ELEVATIONS FOR APPLICATION / LOCATION OF FACADE MATERIALS. COLORS OF ACTUAL MATERIALS MAY VARY DEPENDING ON MANUFACTURER OF CHOICE / PRODUCT AVAILABILITY. REFER TO MATERIAL DESCRIPTIONS FOR COLOR INTENT.

METAL WALL PANEL SYSTEM (MP-3-C)
SMOOTH / FLAT METAL PANEL
CHAMPAGNE COLOR

ALUMINUM STOREFRONT SYSTEM
TYPICAL @ GROUND LEVEL
COMMON AREAS

STONE
STONE FACADE @ BUILDING
ENTRANCES

STONE
STONE @ BASE OF BUILDING
& UNDER WINDOWS

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EXHIBIT 32
Facade Materials
REVISED

REVISIONS:
• ADDED STONE BASE AT GROUND LEVEL
• ALTERED BUILDING COLOR TO TERRA COTTA
TONE