

## BZA APPLICATION FORM

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The undersigned hereby petitions the Board of Zoning Appeal for the following:

Special Permit: X Variance: X Appeal: 2021 JUN 17 AM 11:30

PETITIONER: City of Cambridge

PETITIONER'S ADDRESS: 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 617-349-4251

LOCATION OF PROPERTY: 197 Vassal Lane, Cambridge, MA 02138

TYPE OF OCCUPANCY: PreK-8 School ZONING DISTRICT: Residence B & OS

## REASON FOR PETITION:

☐ Additions ☐ New Structure  
☐ Change in Use/Occupancy ☐ Parking  
☐ Conversion to Add'l Dwelling Unit's ☐ Sign  
☐ Dormer ☐ Subdivision  
☒ Other: **Construction of preK-8 school campus on existing site for Tobin School and Father Callanan Playground**

## DESCRIPTION OF PETITIONER'S PROPOSAL:

new construction of a 299,942 gsf school building, for Pk - 8th grade, on the existing Vassal Lane school site and contiguous Father Callanan playground. The City of Cambridge seeks a Variance for relief from the Board of Zoning Appeal from the procedural requirements of Section section 4.25 or a non-open space use in an OS district; FAR, .5 for RES B (1.2 allowed by 5.45.1) and .25 for OS; the Height requirement of 45' for RES B and 35' for OS (5.54.1.d); the 80% solar energy system roof coverage (22.35.2). Relief from Article 7 sign requirements quantity, size and allowance is requested. A variance for relief is requested on the vehicular aisle width (6.42) in the Garage. below grade parking area.

Additionally, a Special Permit is sought to allow for tandem parking which will provide an additional 33 parking spaces (there are 66 tandem parking spaces), Section 6.43.2 requires that parking spaces permit entering and existing without moving another vehicle.

## SECTIONS OF ZONING ORDINANCE CITED:

Variance	4.000	Section	4.25 - OS procedural requiremnt	*Additional impacted related sections and references: 4.30 footnote 11, 5.31, 5.35 and 10.30
Article	5.000	Section	5.54.1.a - FAR	
	5.000		5.54.1.d - Height	
Article	6.000	Section	6.42 - Off Street Parking - Width of Aisles	
	7.000		7.16.11 and 7.16.21.B - Signage	
Article	22.000	Section	22.35.2 - 80% Solar energy system coverage	
Special Permit	6.000		6.43.2 - Tandem Parking	

Applicants for a Variance must complete Pages 1-5

Applicants for a Special Permit must complete Pages 1-4 and 6

Applicants for an Appeal to the BZA of a Zoning determination by the Inspectional Services Department must attach a statement concerning the reasons for the appeal

Original Signature(s):

(Petitioner(s)/Owner)

Louis DePasquale  
(Print Name)

Address:

795 Mass Ave.  
Cambridge, MA 02139

Tel. No.:

617 349 4300

E-Mail Address:

citymanager@CambridgeMA.gov

Date:

June 14, 2021

**BZA APPLICATION FORM - OWNERSHIP INFORMATION**

To be completed by OWNER, signed before a notary and returned to  
The Secretary of the Board of Zoning Appeals.

I/We **City of Cambridge**

(OWNER)

Address: **795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139**

State that I/We own the property located at **197 Vassal Lane, Cambridge, MA**,  
which is the subject of this zoning application.


The record title of this property is in the name of \_\_\_\_\_  
**City of Cambridge, School Department**

**tax taking**

\*Pursuant to a ~~deed of duly recorded~~ in the date **November 12, 1919**, Middlesex South  
County Registry of Deeds at Book **4309**, Page **420**; or

Middlesex Registry District of Land Court, Certificate No. \_\_\_\_\_

Book \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

  
SIGNATURE BY LAND OWNER OR  
AUTHORIZED TRUSTEE, OFFICER OR AGENT\*

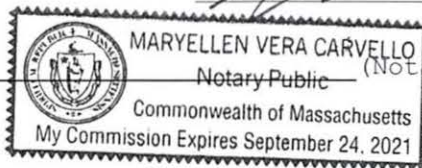
\*Written evidence of Agent's standing to represent petitioner may be requested.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, County of Middlesex

The above-name Louis DePasquale personally appeared before me,  
this 16 of June, 2021, and made oath that the above statement is true.

  
Notary

My commission expires \_\_\_\_\_ (Notary Seal).



- If ownership is not shown in recorded deed, e.g. if by court order, recent deed, or inheritance, please include documentation.



BZA APPLICATION FORM

SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR A VARIANCE

EACH OF THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS FOR A VARIANCE MUST BE ESTABLISHED AND SET FORTH IN COMPLETE DETAIL BY THE APPLICANT IN ACCORDANCE WITH MGL 40A, SECTION 10:

- A) A Literal enforcement of the provisions of this Ordinance would involve a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the petitioner or appellant for the following reasons:

PLEASE SEE BZA APPLICATION ATTACHMENT for THE CORRESPONDING RESPONSE.

- B) The hardship is owing to the following circumstances relating to the soil conditions, shape or topography of such land or structures and especially affecting such land or structures but not affecting generally the zoning district in which it is located for the following reasons:

PLEASE SEE BZA APPLICATION ATTACHMENT for THE CORRESPONDING RESPONSE.

- C) DESIRABLE RELIEF MAY BE GRANTED WITHOUT EITHER:

- 1) Substantial detriment to the public good for the following reasons:

The project will be a significant improvement from the existing school building. The project improves and increases the usable open space, providing a betterment to the neighborhood and the larger Cambridge community. The usable open space settings, fields and paths offer benefits to the neighborhood for use, including the creation of multi-use paths and improved facilities and equipment. Additionally, this project will provide for better stormwater management, (this project is designed) to allow for achievement of zero on-site greenhouse gas emissions and will include various sustainability features. The building and site have been designed as a setting that respectfully and sensitively responds to and ties-in to the fabric and context of the neighborhood. Below grade parking contributes to maximizing the grade level site for usable open space and removes parked cars from visual sight. The vehicular car aisle width of 16'-0" wide and 16'-6" wide at the southwest wing of the garage should provide better traffic control, by mitigating vehicular speed and deterring vehicles from passing for the below grade drop-off. The use of the site is unchanged, but greatly enhanced by the site improvements, and will provide an anchor to the community setting.

- 2) Relief may be granted without nullifying or substantially derogating from the intent or purpose of this Ordinance for the following reasons:

The intent or purpose of the Ordinance should not be substantially derogated with the requested FAR and height relief. Both the FAR and height relief are necessary to maintain the operations of the school and context driven design. Additionally, the requests for waiving the procedural requirements and the relief of the photo voltaic panel system area coverage should not substantially derogate from the intent and purpose of the Ordinance. The project has been reviewed with the Community, which aligns with Procedural requirements of Section 4.25 and the project will maximize the photo voltaic panel coverage, likely meeting, or being only shy of the 80% coverage requirement. The signage requests, support and optimize the program and function of the building and site, which help to avoid nullification and derogation of the Ordinance intent. The request to decrease the width of the drive aisle in the parking garage is done as a speed mitigation and traffic control measure resulting in a more controlled drop-off.

- \* If You have any questions as to whether you can establish all of the applicable legal requirements, you should consult with your own attorney.

## Tobin Montessori School and Vassal Lane School

BZA APPLICATION ATTACHMENT

6-16-2021

FROM PAGE 5 – BZA APPLICATION FORM – SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR A VARIANCE

A) Response to question (please see form for question):

A literal enforcement of the provisions of this Ordinance would involve substantial hardship, financial or otherwise. The site shape, configuration (with the lot spanning both the Open Space and Residential B Districts), size and geometries, the design aim to maximize the open space for the community and Article 97 restrictions unique to this site in this neighborhood are all hardship factors for the project. Outlined below are each of the variances sought and the hardships that would result from enforcement of the Ordinance.

**PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS:** A variance is sought to waive the procedural requirements of Section 4.25 for a non-open space use in an Open Space district. To undertake the Section 4.25 requirements, generally would be repeating work and procedures completed as part of the process of this project. This could result in confusion for the community and would be a significant cost burden to the project.

At the commencement of the project, a Feasibility Study, dated March 12, 2020, was completed (a copy is attached to this application). The study that looked at options for the development of the project.

Furthermore, since the Spring of 2019, this Project has had multiple meetings and forums with the Community where use, details and size of the Project's open space were reviewed. The following is a list of dates, when a meeting or forum occurred where the topic was discussed and/or when comments were collected for response: 4-30-2019, 11-13-2019, 11-15-2019, 11-16-2019, 11-25-2019, 11-26-2019, 12-2-2019, 1-8-2020, 1-16-2020, 2-12-2020, 7-29-2020.

Additionally, the Article 97 package was submitted to the State Legislature at the time of this filing. Finally, of note, the design of the building and the site has afforded that the usable open space area is larger at the completion of this project compared to the current condition.

**VEHICULAR DRIVE WIDTH:** The southwest wing of the garage will provide short-term parking for parents and a designated area for student drop-off. To realize the project parking needs, mitigate speed and deter cars from passing other cars in the one-way vehicular aisle of this wing, the aisle width in this zone of the basement parking area has been reduced to 16'-0" and 16'-6" with direction and guidance from TP&T. The Section 6.42 of the Ordinance requires these aisles respectively to be 20', where compact cars are parked, and 22' where standard cars are parked. The narrowed aisles for this area were recommendations made by the City and the Design Team traffic consultant for traffic management.

The drop-off area is supported by one-way traffic flow. The first leg is a double-loaded aisle with compact size car parking at 60 degrees. The second leg of the one-way drive aisle includes 60 degree standard car size parking on the driver side and parallel drop off on the opposite passenger side. The width requirements of the Ordinance would prevent achieving the recommended traffic management measures, which are aimed at supporting safe and efficient student drop-off and pick-up in a covered, temperature controlled environment on the school property and away from surrounding neighborhood streets.



# PERKINS — EASTMAN

**FAR:** The program requirements for the three schools: Department of Human Services Preschool and Community School, Tobin Montessori, and the Vassal Lane Upper School, drive the gross area for the building and make the relief requested necessary. Compliance with the FAR would call for a drastic reduction in the program, not allowing the three schools to operate adequately or properly. In addition to relieving the schools of their inadequate building space, this project serves the City of Cambridge by providing a home for the Department of Human Services Preschool, and increases capacity for future enrollment. These program enhancements drive the required gross area of the building.

**HEIGHT:** Efforts to optimize open area ratio, maintain setbacks and tie-in to the neighborhood character, scale and context all on a constraining shaped site, with the majority of the site is in the OS district making the height limitations on the project stringent. Out of respect for the neighbors to the south and east of the site, the taller portions of the building were kept to the northeast side of the site, adjacent to commercial uses, but within the OS district. Compliance with the height would change the massing, causing a decrease of usable open space (falling below the existing usable open space) and shifting a higher massing to be located near the abutting houses. These unique site constraining factors, the Article 97 restrictions, the aim to maximize open space for the community, the neighborhood sensitive context driven design and program requirements impose a hardship to the project that necessitate height relief.

**SOLAR PANEL SYSTEM PANEL % COVERAGE:** The project's design intent is to maximize the coverage area of the photo voltaic roof panel system. At the time of this application submission, the project is expected to meet this requirement; however, roof coordination is at a mid-Design Development level. Changes to mechanical equipment locations, screens, etc. could cause adjustments to the layout within the existing boundaries of the roof that could prevent project from achieving the 80% coverage required by the Ordinance. A small reduction of the coverage is sought as relief to ensure project compliance.

The hardship results from the roof size, geometries and configuration. The roof geometries make some areas impractical for a PV panel installation; there are some areas of the roof where there is little sun exposure resulting from the roof configuration. The origins of this hardship come from the constraining site factors that drive the building design. The unique site size, shape and configuration (most of the site is in the OS District), Article 97 restrictions, and a campus design driven to maximize usable open space all result in limited available roof area for PV system installation.

**SIGNS** The project includes signs at the site and on the building for identification, wayfinding, safety, educational purposes and field support (sports score board); a variance is sought for relief on signage that is beyond what is permitted and exempt from Article 7. Outlined below are the details for the requested relief:

- Identification Signage (Section 7.16.21.B)  
Relief is requested on the quantity of signs. The building includes 5 entrances, each will have a sign or signs identifying the schools. There will also be up to 3 entrances having a corresponding low wall sign on the site, near the street. Two signs are permitted per building; relief is sought for an additional ten (10) signs, each up to 20 sf.
- Educational signage  
The project design and history is full of teaching opportunities regarding sustainable design elements, details about the planting, environmental cycles and other related elements. Signs with the related educational information will be placed throughout the site. This type of sign is not addressed in Article 7 (under permitted 7.16.21.B nor exempt 7.16.11). The City of Cambridge seeks a relief to allow for up to 6 signs, at up to six (6) sf, mounted with the top of the sign up to 5' above the surrounding mean grade.



- Wayfinding and site circulation (Section 7.16.11)  
The City of Cambridge seeks relief for a size of up to 21 sf on up to three (3) wayfinding signs, for public safety and convenience. To facilitate the circulation of pedestrians, busses and cars at the site, clear, site distinguished signage are important for safety and wayfinding.
- Sports Score Board  
A variance is sought for relief to allow for the installation of a scoreboard of up to 180 sf, mounted at a height of up to 14' above the surrounding mean grade. Article 7 does not address scoreboards. A scoreboard is needed to track the scores at games.

B) Response to question (please see form for question):

Hardships for the project that trigger the need to seek the variances outlined in this application include and stem from conditions unique to the site. In addition to the hardships described above, there are existing soil conditions including a high water table and hazardous soil contaminants (which will be mitigated as part of this project) that are also hardships for this site. The Open Space district portion of the site is significantly larger than the Residential B area, further restricting the site. Additionally, the project's program, neighborhood context sensitive design approach and drive to maximize and optimize open space on the site all play a role in the resulting constraints and resulting in the need to seek relief by variance.

Outlined below are the variances being sought, which are impacted by these hardships.

**PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS:** Section 4.25, procedural requirements related to a non-open space use in an OS district, allows a City school as a permitted use pursuant to Section 4.33.b.1. The design aimed to maintain, optimize and maximize open space was driven by a process and procedures that included those considerations.

To undertake the Section 4.25 requirements, generally would be repeating work and procedures completed as part of the process of this project. This could result in confusion for the community and would be a significant cost burden to the project.

**VEHICULAR DRIVE WIDTH:** The below grade garage parking and circulation layout is bound and constrained by the building footprint and structural column configuration, which results from the site shape, the project design to maximize/optimize open space on the site and other hardship factors described above.

The area of below-grade drop-off removes this traffic function from the street and grade level of the site, which further contributes to unencumbered open space at grade level. The request for relief for a narrowed width of the one-way drive aisle in the southwest wing is a traffic control measure needed to accommodate the conditions of the below-grade drop-off area. Width relief from Section 6.42 of the Ordinance is sought.

**FAR and HEIGHT:** The FAR and Height relief being sought is in alignment with relief provided by Section 5.54 for schools in residential districts. The massing and height of the building tie-in to the context of the neighborhood and provide the site with increased usable open space. The relief requested relates to the shape of the lot and the structure, where a significant portion of the land is subject to protection by Article 97.

**SOLAR PANEL SYSTEM % COVERAGE:** The request for relief on the photo voltaic panel system coverage at the roof, generally does not affect the zoning districts for R and OS. The project intent is to maximize the coverage of the system on the roof, however, there are 'left-over' areas resulting from the geometries of the



roof, equipment or clearances that make it a hardship to install panels in these kinds of areas/locations. The hardship relates to the structure and the shape of the lot and the Article 97 restrictions, which necessitated the use of various angles, which may prevent some areas of coverage due to equipment dimensions or otherwise, and due to the required installation of geothermal wells deep underground immediately adjacent to the structure.

**SIGNAGE:**

- The Identification signage hardship stems from one building with 5 functioning entries serving 3 assigned schools, as well as, the community; which is, in part, due to the shape and configuration of the lot.
- The Educational signage hardship stems from a need for communicating important educational features and elements of the building and site that will not/cannot otherwise be shared with the community and children at the site.
- The urban site creates a complexity hardship for wayfinding that necessitates signage that can establish a graphic hierarchy and distinction making it quickly and easily understood.
- The scoreboard allows the tracking of scores at games. It becomes a hardship to not have a scoreboard at a field used for games.

**END OF RESPONSES on ATTACHMENT**

BZA APPLICATION FORM

SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR A SPECIAL PERMIT

Please describe in complete detail how you meet each of the following criteria referring to the property and proposed changes or uses which are requested in your application. Attach sheets with additional information for special permits which have additional criteria, e.g.; fast food permits, comprehensive permits, etc., which must be met.

Granting the Special Permit requested for 197 Vassal Lane  
Cambridge, MA 02138 (location)  
would not be a detriment to the public interest because:

- A) Requirements of the Ordinance can or will be met for the following reasons:

The new construction of 299,942 gsf school building, for Pk - 8th grade, is on the existing Vassal Lane school site and contiguous to and includes the Father Callanan Playground. A Special Permit is sought to allow for below-grade tandem parking, which will provide capacity for an addition of 33 parking spaces to be used by staff during school-time use. The parking requirement is 105, there are 150 spaces provided, all below grade. At times when school is not in use, the School facility will be made available to rent by the public. As such, the below-grade parking will be made available in those instances.

As a precedent, King Open has tandem parking. Similarly, the King Open building is available for rent by the public, with the below-grade parking available to the renting entity in those instances.

- B) Traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would not cause congestion hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character for the following reasons:

A Traffic report, dated, January 13, 2021, was completed for the project; the report is attached to this application. Traffic mitigation measures for the project outlined in the report are incorporated into the project.

The tandem parking for which a special permit is being sought, while indirectly related to traffic, has the positive benefits of relieving overall car congestion with the increase of off-street parking. The tandem parking will be utilized to meet the project requirement of 150 parking spaces, which exceeds the 105 spaces required by the Ordinance. The additional tandem parking spaces should result in fewer staff parking on the streets; or in the surrounding area, thus benefiting the neighborhood.

- C) The continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would not be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use for the following reasons:

Tandem parking will provide additional parking capacity, which will relieve neighborhood street parking. The parking is below grade, so it is not seen and is an improvement from the current surface parking. The tandem parking is for school staff, not public use and follows the precedent of the King Open School project.

- D) Nuisance or hazard would not 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 for the following reasons:

Parking is below grade, the tandem parking will provide additional capacity, which relieves nearby parking and alleviates congestion in the neighborhood.

- E) For other reasons, the proposed use would not impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district or otherwise derogate from the intent or purpose of this ordinance for the following reasons:

The Special Permit request to allow for below-grade tandem parking, for staff only, is minimal and has other benefits by relieving neighborhood parking congestion and increasing public recreation usable open space.



BZA APPLICATION FORM  
DIMENSIONAL INFORMATION

APPLICANT: City of Cambridge PRESENT USE/OCCUPANCY: School

LOCATION: 197 Vassal Lane, Cambridge, MA 02138 ZONE: Residence B & OS

PHONE: 617-349-4251 REQUESTED USE/OCCUPANCY: School

		<u>EXISTING*</u> <u>CONDITIONS</u>	<u>REQUESTED</u> <u>CONDITIONS</u>	<u>ORDINANCE</u> <u>REQUIREMENTS</u> <sup>1</sup>
TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA:		Res B = 128,895 sf	Res B = 154,373 sf	Res B = 138,991 sf
		OS = 47,525 sf	OS = 145,581 sf	OS = 71,441 sf (max.)
LOT AREA:		Res. B = 111,193 sf	Res B = 111,193 sf	Res B = 5,000 sf
		OS = 285,765 sf	OS = 285,765 sf	OS = 43,560 sf (min.)
RATIO OF GROSS FLOOR AREA TO LOT AREA:		Res B = 1.2	Res B = 1.4	Res B = 0.5 (1.2 by 5.54.1)
		OS = .2	OS = .5	OS = 0.25 (max.)
LOT AREA FOR EACH DWELLING UNIT:		NA	NA	NA (min.)
SIZE OF LOT:	WIDTH	Varies		Res B = 50'
	DEPTH			OS = 150' (min.)
Setbacks in Feet:	FRONT	NA	39'-6"	Res B = 15'
	REAR	NA	42'-0"	OS = 25' (min.)
	LEFT SIDE	NA	53'-0"	Res B = 25' (min.)
	RIGHT SIDE	NA	58'-0"	OS = 25' (min.)
SIZE OF BLDG.:	HEIGHT	NA	Res B = 56'	Res B = 7.5' (sum of 20')
	LENGTH	*Note: existing building to be demolished.	OS = 71'	OS = 15' (min.)
	WIDTH			Res B = 35' (45' by 5.54.1.d)
				OS = 35' (max.)
RATIO OF USABLE OPEN SPACE TO LOT AREA: <sup>2</sup>		.602	.663	.602 (min.)
NO. OF DWELLING UNITS:		NA	NA	NA (max.)
NO. OF PARKING SPACES:		80	150	105 (min./max)
NO. OF LOADING AREAS:		1	2	2 (min.)
DISTANCE TO NEAREST BLDG. ON SAME LOT:		NA	NA	NA (min.)

Describe where applicable, other occupancies on same lot, the size of adjacent buildings on same lot, and type of construction proposed, e.g.; wood frame, concrete, brick, steel, etc.

**None.**

- SEE CAMBRIDGE ZONING ORDINANCE ARTICLE 5.000, SECTION 5.30 (DISTRICT OF DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS).
- TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA (INCLUDING BASEMENT 7'-0" IN HEIGHT AND ATTIC AREAS GREATER THAN 5') DIVIDED BY LOT AREA.
- OPEN SPACE SHALL NOT INCLUDE PARKING AREAS, WALKWAYS OR DRIVEWAYS AND SHALL HAVE A MINIMUM DIMENSION OF 15'.

Tue, Jun 29, 2:41 PM (18  
hours ago)

**Leah Klein**

Dear Board of Zoning Appeals Crew,

I am writing in support of the Vassal Lane Upper School building project. As a neighbour and parent, I am looking forward to the thoughtful improvements on the old Tobin school building. This is an opportunity to create spaces for our students and children for many years to come.

Cambridge introduced middle schools while my children were moving up from elementary to middle and I now understand why it was so important to create middle schools for that age group. I am glad that the new buildings are going to be able to enhance the middle school experience even more for children who are in some of their most important developmental years.

I fully support a dedicated upper school building next to the Montessori school. It will benefit not only the middle school students but also the younger Montessori children, families and staff. I believe two buildings will also provide more flexibility in the future should we face other obstacles such as the recent/current pandemic.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Leah S Klein

parent of two CPSD students

& VLUS Neighbour

[www.citylivingboston.com](http://www.citylivingboston.com)

twitter: @BostonintheCity @bffoodie

Instagram: @citylivingboston

Dear members of the ZBA,

I am a parent of a recent graduate of VLUS. Her academic and social experiences there were excellent. The building, however, was another story. I am strongly in support of future middle school students and staff having a new building that will treat the middle school years as an important time in a young person's life. There should be a separate entrance for them, infrastructure and circulation space that allows for them to socialize in the hallways with lockers big enough for their stuff along with dedicated gym and cafeteria that won't need to be shared with elementary school students.

These students and staff deserve a space that reflects how important they are to the city. Please allow for whatever variances are needed in order to allow for this new building to proceed.

Than you,

Deb Morse

45 Harris Street



Tue, Jun 29, 4:10 PM

**Iona Brightman**

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing to you as a middle school science teacher. For the past 9 years I have been teaching in a former music room, converted to a science room. It has been a challenge to teach science in a space that lacks adequate counter space and has no differentiated lab versus classroom space. It was configured in such a way that it was difficult for all students to see the board. While it had two sinks they were located in a small alcove at the end of the room complicating access. It completely lacked a dedicated preparation room. To access the only prep room I was required to exit my classroom, enter another classroom, and use the prep room there. It was in essence the bare minimum of what could count as a science room. In the era of increasing awareness of the importance of STEM, a science room that is designed for Middle School students is imperative.

Cambridge Massachusetts is renowned internationally for its contributions to science and engineering. It's public middle schools should support that reputation.

Tue, Jun 29, 2:13 PM )

**Sarah Foleno**

June 29, 2021

Dear Cambridge Board of Zoning Appeals,

I am writing in support of the new construction project for the Vassal Lane Upper School. I have been the Literacy Coach at the school since its opening in September 2012, my son graduated from the school last June 2020, and I am a Cambridge resident who lives in the Huron village area.

Since its beginning, the Vassal Lane Upper School has not had a space designed for the needs of middle school students. The new building project will provide our school with its own dedicated entrance and main office space that is easily accessible and not part of the Tobin Montessori School. Our classroom spaces will be large with flexible seating and configurations that will better serve our adolescent population of students.

I have been personally involved in the creation of the VLUS schedule for the last six years, and the challenges of not having our own full-sized gym or cafeteria has had a negative impact on our scheduling process and options. With our own dedicated VLUS spaces, we will be better able to schedule our classes and lunches with a focus on the academic and social needs of our students and educators rather than on the availability of certain spaces.

I am tremendously excited about this new phase in the history of the Vassal Lane Upper School, and I am grateful for the investment that Cambridge is planning to make in our students, families, and educators with a new VLUS building.



Sincerely,

Sarah Foleno

25 Grozier Road

Cambridge, MA 02138



Tue, Jun 29, 2:24 PM

**Jo Quest-Neubert**

Dear Members of the BZA,

As a member of the VLUS faculty, and a **resident of Alpine Street**, I am writing in support of the Tobin Montessori/VLUS building project. Prior to working at VLUS, I was a teacher at Putnam Ave during the years that the new building was under construction, as well as for several years after the school moved into the new building. The impact of a new, dedicated space designed to meet the needs of a middle school cannot be understated. The feel of the school changed when PAUS moved into its new space, where we were not negotiating sharing critical resources (like the gym), and where the building was designed with middle schoolers in mind. Students and staff alike felt more welcome and at home in the new building, both because we were no longer making do in a run-down, temporary setting, and because the space itself was created to meet our needs as a community, including the developmental needs of middle schoolers, such as having enough space for their growing bodies, and flexible spaces to support their growing independence. When approving the Innovation Agenda 10 years ago, the city made a promise to the community that the newly-created middle schools would be supported, including their physical infrastructure. I can personally attest to the positive impact of the fulfillment of that promise based on my experience at PAUS, and I am eager to see the impact on the VLUS and Tobin Montessori communities. And as I experienced as a parent during the Alewife Sewer Separation Project several years ago, the young children of the neighborhood will greatly appreciate an up-close view of the construction!

Sincerely,

Jo Quest-Neubert



100 Alpine St, Cambridge, MA 02138

Literacy Interventionist, Vassal Lane Upper School

10:50 AM

**Laura Sylvan**

To Whom it May Concern -

This letter is in support of the new school building at Vassal Lane. As one of the teachers involved with the Innovation Agenda set forth by the Cambridge Public schools in 2011, I remember the promise of a new Upper School building for each of the four schools created at that time. It was recognized that just adding a new school for 6th to 8th grades to an already existing building was not the best learning option for these students. Cambridge followed through on its promise with the construction of new buildings on Putnam Avenue and Cambridge Street and it is now time to follow through with the new building at Vassal Lane.

This planning process for this new building builds off of what has been learned from the two renovations and the experience of the Upper School housed at the Tobin building these past 9 years. It includes a separate entrance for the Upper School, and a grade appropriate gymnasium and cafeteria space. There will also be classroom learning spaces designed for 12 to 14 year olds with a sense that we are our own unique community and not an extra floor stuck on top of an elementary school.

I have attended several design meetings for the building and feel the architects listened to the needs of our school and created a wonderful learning space for future students at Vassal Lane. The city of Cambridge should move ahead with the construction of this new building.

Sincerely,

Laura Sylvan

French teacher at

Vassal Lane Upper School



Dear Board of Zoning Appeals,

As a resident of Cambridge, teacher at Vassal Lane Upper School (VLUS), and parent of a 14-month old who will be attending Cambridge Public Schools in a few years, I am writing to support the variances related to the construction of the new Tobin/VLUS building.

The most important aspect of this new construction is the opportunity for VLUS to create a bit of separation from the Tobin Montessori. It is crucial that during the middle school years students are part of a school community that has a clear identity (distinct from their elementary years) for them to be a part of and rely on, especially because this is a stage during which children begin to question and explore their own identities.

Creating academic wings with wide hallways and classrooms that allow for flexible seating opportunities will help us keep students comfortable and meet them where they are each day. Having our own gym, cafeteria, and library will allow us to create a flexible schedule in which we can meet as a whole school or individual grades when appropriate. Lastly, a separate entrance and easily accessible main office will allow us to make sure our families feel welcomed and a part of our school community as well.

We are excited for a space that is truly meant for our middle schoolers. One they can be proud to call their own and have every opportunity to excel as thinkers and explorers with us.

Thank you for your consideration and time,  
Sarah Steward  
13 Haskell St  
Cambridge, MA 02140

To the Board of Zoning Appeals,

I have worked as a teacher at VLUS for the past 9 years. I love working in a dynamic, energetic city that values education for all at all levels and I feel so fortunate to work with such exceptional colleagues and students. I am asking for community support in getting the students and staff of VLUS and Tobin the building that mirrors the dynamic, energetic city of Cambridge, as soon as possible.

Working in the current space has been increasingly challenging for many reasons. Students rightly feel that their school, a concrete monstrosity with small windows, looks like a jail. VLUS students and staff are sequestered to the top floor of the building, having to trespass through another school to even get to our front office. Our hungry, rapidly growing students have to eat lunch later than they should to accommodate the needs of the elementary school students. The hallways are so small and winding that getting to class can feel like running a gauntlet. The classrooms cannot be scrubbed hard enough nor the floors waxed enough to look clean. Our classrooms continue to be sectioned into smaller and smaller spaces to accommodate for our growing numbers but not the growing bodies of middle schoolers. Our antiquated HVAC system provides no AC on the hot days of the early fall and late spring, drafty and inconsistent heat during the long winter, and poor ventilation - which is increasingly a focus point in a post-CoViD world. We are a growing, 21st century school in a cold war era, brutalist style building. The physical building makes our students feel claustrophobic, jailed and unwanted. We deserve better.

The ongoing design process for the new building has been so exciting and positive. Every time the architects update the plan based on our feedback about how to best design for our needs and wants, we feel a renewed sense of hope and optimism for the future of VLUS. The current plan is what we need and what we deserve; a new, modern and welcoming space opens up so many possibilities! Imagine what it will feel like to welcome our students every day through a front door just for them. Imagine what it will be like to have spaces that are designed to not only comfortably fit our students, but meet all their needs. Imagine a schedule where students can eat, play and learn when it is developmentally appropriate. Imagine a building where natural light and clean air boosts spirits. Imagine a space students can walk through with personal space intact. The new building is designed as a welcoming second home for the children in our community.

None of us are looking forward to the sacrifices that it will take to build this beautiful school, but I think as a community we all look forward to the benefits that those sacrifices enable: a beautiful building that reflects to students that they are welcomed and valued as a part of a wonderful community like Cambridge.

Sincerely,

Elsa Zeigler  
7th Grade Math  
VLUS



Thu, Jul 1, 7:10 PM

**Imani Riley**

Dear Board of Zoning Appeals committee,

I am new to the Vassal Lane school community and this experience with them has been a positive one. The Students, staff and families of VLUS have been so welcoming and open. I'm happy that this school is going to have a building that reflects the atmosphere of the community! I hope that things move along in a positive way. In order to continue the work of educating and nurturing young healthy minds.

Thank you

Imani Riley

11:01 AM

**Sarah Shaw**

Dear Cambridge Board of Zoning Appeals,

I am writing to express my deep support and enthusiasm for a new school building for Vassal Lane Upper School. I have only excitement when I think about the opportunities that will come with a new facility.

For all of our existence so far, VLUS has been located on the upper floor of the Tobin building. This has been a source of perpetual confusion and intimidation for families. Particularly for our families who feel less connected to school or who do not speak English, and our students who did not begin as Tobin students, our current location is challenging to actually find, and at times creates genuine obstacles to engaging with the school. To be able to welcome our students and their families at our own door helps us match the warm, open, partnering tone we have worked to develop. It gives every student similar membership and equal footing as they join the school, rather than creating artificial divides among students and families.

As a teacher, I am excited to have physical spaces that are purposefully built for adolescent bodies and needs. The list of basic needs that can be met this way is extensive: classrooms designed for both the physical size and emotional needs of early teens, wide enough hallways for students to move without bumping into each other, access to lockers near classrooms, restrooms equipped to offer space and privacy for biological needs, single user and open gender restrooms near where students have classes, science labs and art rooms designed as

such, open sight lines that allow adults to balance the safe supervision with the freedom and independence that characterizes middle schoolers -- and the list goes on. Instructionally, the idea of teaching in a classroom purposefully designed with large group areas and small group breakout spaces means we can better accommodate learning needs and design instruction to maximize the opportunities available with co-teaching.

I am also eager for our students to have access to school-wide resources and facilities that allow us to design our instructional program in optimal ways, rather than limiting that program to what the physical plant allows. For example, a full-sized, middle school gym will allow students to move their bodies in healthy and age-appropriate ways throughout the school day. A cafeteria space that allows our school to eat lunch as one community creates schedule flexibility and creates space for cross-grade friendships. A Learning Commons/Library with multiple areas for learning and both book and technology resources allows many users to more fully access and share information, while educators open doors for the kinds of technological opportunities we have only begun to explore.

As our school has shifted from our early days of finding our way to the established school we have become, we have worked hard and invested fully in partnering with families, building the most inclusive practices we can, and investing deeply in anti-racist work, all in service of achievement for every single student. We have done this work in a building that has not been able to meet their needs, and in every respect, I believe our new building will lift our school's work to an even stronger place.

Respectfully,

Sarah Shaw

Grade 7 Humanities



Cambridge, Massachusetts. July 13, 2021

Attn. Board of Zoning Appeals

Ref. Vassal Lane Upper School New Building

Dear Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals

I'm writing to you as a 14-year schoolteacher in Cambridge (Tobin & VLUS), as the parent of two CPSD students from both, The Tobin Montessori and The Vassal Lane Upper School, and as a citizen of this great city.

It is commendable the work that the city and the school department have been embarking by renewing the infrastructure of its decaying schools. If the aesthetic of its buildings has been visionary, not so their size that by the end of construction has been deemed smaller than needed. Let us not make the same mistake with the vision and construction of our last Middle School.

A Middle School that makes its students and professionals feel welcome and that honors the vital space needed for its optimal functioning requires classrooms with flexible seating opportunities, it requires ample hallways that allow a large group of Middle School age children to walk freely, safely, and effectively between classes, specially when the transition between classes is so short. It requires the building of spaces (i.e. the gymnasium, art room, music room, library, etc.) that are specifically designed for the needs of its students. It includes a cafeteria in which students from both schools can have lunch simultaneously at a normal lunchtime (have you ever taught a group of preteens at 2pm when they had lunch at 10 am?). It means building a school that will host our students and professionals for generations to come. A school that represents our vision as a city and educational hub in this 21<sup>st</sup> century and probably the next century as well. A school that welcomes its families and the community. There is no going back

once decisions about our school have been finalized. Let's have the vision and courage to build what our children and our city needs.

Sincerely,

Oksana Deinak

15 Normandy Ave, Cambridge MA 02138

## **Pacheco, Maria**

---

**From:** Kelly Dolan <kelly.dolan.kd@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 13, 2021 10:10 AM  
**To:** Joseph, Swaathi; Singanayagam, Ranjit; sdanglian@cambridge.gov; City Manager; Pacheco, Maria  
**Subject:** Tobin School Renovation

Dear Planning Board, Board of Zoning Appeal and City Manager

We write concerning the issues surrounding the Tobin School renovation and the City's request to waive its own Open Space Zoning requirements, section 4.25.

Based on the information provided by the city on the project website there are still many issues to be investigated and considered before any waivers are to be granted, including the installation of the stormwater system and its required operational facilities. Such a project is required to receive a permit because it currently exceeds the standards allowed in Section 3.1 of the Wastewater and Stormwater Management Guidance.

The role of the PB and BZA is to provide checks and balances and enforce the city's ordinances which were developed based on sound planning and development practices. If these laws are unreasonable or outdated then it's the role of the city councilors to change them, not the PB or the BZA. The city should be held to comply with these ordinances just as the PB and BZA hold private developers accountable.

We look forward to having the PB and the BZA uphold and defend the existing zoning ordinances until all the information for the proposed development is examined and determined to be in the best interests of the City of Cambridge and its residents.

Sincerely

Kelly Dolan  
Greg Berndt  
Upland Road



## **Pacheco, Maria**

---

**From:** wsimmers <wsimmers@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:06 AM  
**To:** Pacheco, Maria  
**Subject:** TobinVassal Lane School Project

Ms. Pacheco: I would like to strongly second the thoughtful comments presented to you by Jan Devereaux. She summarizes the the grievances that the near and not-so-near abutters have been expressing throughout the process, a process seriously curtailed by the Covid crisis and the resulting lack of substantive outreach to the community. Prticu;arly galling is the lack of good faith in acquiring the Armory property to compensate for the massive value of the building, which has been brought into immediate focus by the proposed loss of trees that counters recent advances in preventing tree removal. The loss of open space was brought up forcefully in initial meetings before Covid hit, and it has been largely ignored. I hope that the BZA will give these matters serious consideration.

William Simmers  
8 Alpine Street

## **Pacheco, Maria**

---

**From:** Elizabeth Marran <Elizabeth.Marran@umb.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 8:12 PM  
**To:** Pacheco, Maria  
**Subject:** Tobin school serious concerns upcoming planning board

I agree with every single one of the notes of concern that former city councilor has raised in her email dated July 12th to the planning board re Tobin school variance applications As her email so clearly outlines - it certainly is concerning to Alpine St residents that her points highlight a host of problem that speaks to the thoughtless and careless planning of this large scale project Sincerely Liz Marran  
44 Alpine Street

## Pacheco, Maria

---

**From:** Norma Finkelstein <normafinkelstein@healthrecovery.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:50 PM  
**To:** Pacheco, Maria  
**Cc:** jan.devereux@gmail.com  
**Subject:** FW: Tobin School

Norma Finkelstein, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Institute for Health and Recovery

**From:** Norma Finkelstein  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 6:59 PM  
**To:** sjoseph@cambridgema.gov  
**Cc:** jan.devereux@gmail.com; Joy Hackel <joyhackel@yahoo.com>  
**Subject:** Tobin School

I wish to let the planning board know that I support all the recommendations re: the Tobin School Project made by Jan Devereux. My family and I have lived at 32 Alpine Street since 1980 and have had children who went to the Tobin School. I have participated in many of the community meetings around the Tobin School project and am surprised and disappointed to see many of our concerns not addressed.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Norma Finkelstein, 32 Alpine Street

Norma Finkelstein, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Institute for Health and Recovery  
349 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139  
P: 617-661-3991 / F: 617-661-7277ja  
[www.healthrecovery.org](http://www.healthrecovery.org)

Follow us on  



**Pacheco, Maria**

---

**From:** vaughn sills <vaughnsills@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 13, 2021 8:07 AM  
**To:** Joseph, Swaathi; Pacheco, Maria; DePasquale, Louie  
**Cc:** City Manager  
**Subject:** trees at Tobin School

Good morning,

I am very concerned about the reduced tree canopy in Cambridge.

I am writing to request that a transparent and well-vetted design process for *CASE NO. BZA-127462 -197 VASSAL LANE - TOBIN SCHOOL*: [Materials](#)

It is important that the City follow its own Ordinance procedure (**Section 4.25.1**) requiring a Planning Board Report.

Thank you.

Vaughn Sills  
20 Bellevue Ave.  
Cambridge, MA



## Pacheco, Maria

---

**From:** Carol O'Hare <carol@carolok.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 13, 2021 11:23 AM  
**To:** Joseph, Swaathi; Pacheco, Maria  
**Cc:** DePasquale, Louie; Farooq, Iram; Singanayagam, Ranjit; sdanglian@cambridgema.gov  
**Subject:** Planning Board & BZA re BZA Case 127462 - 197 Vassal Lane, 7/13 & 7/15 Hearings

Dear Cambridge Planning Board & BZA Chairs & Members:

I don't get it. Why should the City's own development/construction be permitted to bypass requirements and hurdles that private developers would have to satisfy? Shouldn't the City be a model?

I agree with Doug Brown, Kelly Dolan, Mike Nakagawa, Jan Devereux and the many others who have been encouraging the City to redesign to preserve the 4 mature trees on City property.

Then, I hope you will try to prevent the planned, massive **Tree-Axing** planned at CHA's Jefferson Park.



↑  
**Be Right on This!**

Thank you for your time, consideration and service.

Sincerely,

Carol O'Hare  
Cambridgeport

**Pacheco, Maria**

---

**From:** Jan Devereux <jan.devereux@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 7:25 AM  
**To:** Pacheco, Maria; Planning Board Comment  
**Cc:** Riley, Kate  
**Subject:** Comments on 197 Vassal Lane - Tobin VLUS

Dear Planning Board and BZA Members,

I offer the following comments on the Tobin VLUS project for your consideration as you review the application for variances and special permits.

**Section 4.25 (opposed to waiving the Planning Board's right to a hearing on open space)**

I respectfully ask the Planning Board to schedule a public hearing to review the non-open space uses in an open space district. The Planning Board's expert opinion is very much needed to evaluate a development project of this scale, complexity, cost, and impact on the open space and Callanan Park. Section 4.25 of the zoning ordinance entitles the Board and the public to a full hearing on the open space aspects of this project *and* to an evaluation of the alternatives considered for the project; please do not waive your and the public's right to due process.

**Tree Removal (opposed)**

To date, no public hearing has been scheduled for the proposed removal of 4 of the largest trees on the site to make room for the bus loop and the stormwater tank. The loss of this mature canopy (all of it located on the hotter, western side of the site) has prompted a great public outcry, which I'm sure you will hear more about from others. These 4 trees alone account for about one-third of the total canopy loss proposed for the site. The site design should have prioritized saving these trees. Had other site alternatives ever been seriously considered for some of the additional school programming planned for the existing Tobin VLUS site (as required under Section 4.25), we might not be in the position where we are told there is no choice but to sacrifice these very large, healthy trees. During the year

the project was paused due to the pandemic, negotiations with the state's Division of Capital Assets and Management (DCAM) could have taken place.

#### **Loss of Park Space (very strong concerns)**

The significant amount of additional school programming planned for the site leaves no room for un-programmed park space. The current park has a large, flat grassy area between the playground and the ball fields that was well-used by both students and residents for informal activities. In this part of Callanan Park, one could sit on a bench or on the grass under a tree and enjoy just being in a public park without any particular purpose. In the new site plan, there appears to be no un-programmed park space that will feel welcoming to residents who are not part of the school community or with children participating in youth sports or using a playground. The many neighbors without young children feel excluded from this overly school-centric design. The only un-programmed space seems to be a treeless mound or berm on the north side that is separated by a fence from the Alpine path (see rendering on page 17 of the application). Is this steep mound intended to be actively used - and if so, how and by whom? The application materials do not include detailed plans for the new open space so it is impossible to tell. The school's front yard was also an informal public gathering spot but with the garage driveway and new paths, that space is diminished.

#### **Exterior Design and Transparency (very strong concerns)**

Please ask the project team to elaborate on the "security reasons" that caused them to reduce window openings in the new school building, so that the overall transparency is 30% or less: *"We're at the lower end of the range for transparency, but for security reasons we can't be over exposed."* ([see Question 40](#))

The current school building has long been compared unfavorably to a prison or bunker, and many of us had hoped the new building design would take a different approach. Our hopes have been dashed in this respect. In comparison to the two prior school projects (Putnam Ave and Cambridge St), the school's exterior lacks "personality" or any design features that make it memorable or visually compelling. In my opinion, the public face of the

proposed building is cold and bland and a missed opportunity to create a warm and welcoming presence.

### **Garage Circulation, Narrowed Lanes & Tandem Parking (very strong concerns)**

The narrowed, tight circulation and the presence of angled and tandem parking in the garage give me pause. Has anyone calculated the time it could take to move through a full queue of cars to drop off or pick up a student? If people get frustrated with the length of time they spend queuing inside the garage and if the queue to enter the garage backs up onto Vassal Lane, people may decide to avoid the garage altogether, to the detriment of the surrounding area. Lengthy drop-off and pick-up lines at schools everywhere are notoriously frustrating to busy adults, and school children experience their caregivers' stress and negative energy, even witness instances of road rage. Excessive idling and poor air quality are also concerns when circulation is congested.

### **Neighborhood Traffic Circulation (very strong concerns)**

100% of the school's increased vehicular traffic will enter and exit onto Vassal Lane, a one-way street in a maze of other one-way streets. This burden on the neighborhood circulation, and potentially on safety, might have been avoided had the city made a serious, proactive effort to acquire an abutting portion of the Armory site to be able to create an egress onto Concord Ave. The construction contractor's office has been located on the Armory's land for more than a year and will be there for the 4 coming years of construction, so clearly this portion of the parking lot is not essential to the National Guard's operation.

### **Covered Bike Parking (inadequate and poorly placed)**

The covered bike parking is located at the far rear of the garage. Cyclists will have to navigate through the car traffic on narrow garage lanes to reach those 18 spaces. This design doesn't seem to make it easy or appealing to bring a bike into the garage, and convenient access to covered parking is an important consideration for bike commuters. Eighteen covered spaces seems low for the employee



population who will be using the building. Will any covered parking above ground be available for employees as well as for students, parents, and visitors? If we want to encourage year-round biking, we must provide better facilities to shelter people's bikes from rain and snow.

**Scoreboard (opposed)**

The application includes a hardship request for the installation of a scoreboard of up to 180 sf (14' high). This seems inappropriate for the site. There are no scoreboards on any of the fields at Danehy or at the new Glacken Little League complex, and those fields are regulation-sized for high school and adult league competition. The smaller soccer and baseball fields planned in this project are not going to host such serious competition -- how is the lack of a large scoreboard a hardship? Where would this scoreboard be placed and would it have lighting? There is no rendering to show how it would look in the park context. I suggest the BZA reject this variance.

Thank you for considering my comments as you review this project. I look forward to listening to your discussions at this week's meetings.

Jan Devereux  
255 Lakeview Ave.

**Pacheco, Maria**

---

**From:** Joy Hackel <joyhackel@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 8:22 AM  
**To:** Pacheco, Maria  
**Subject:** Fw: Comments on 197 Vassal Lane - Tobin VLUS

Dear Planning Board and BZA Members - As a direct abutters to this project we **STRONGLY** agree with Jan's criticisms below. This project has proceeded with **little foresight** and will be regretted by generations to come due to the mistakes delineated below. City officials have ignored much needed, informed public input. I'm sure I speak for many in the neighborhood. Just take a look at the discussion on NextDoor.

Please do not proceed in this rushed manner without taking these concerns into consideration.

Thank you.

Joy Hackel  
25 Alpine Street

-----  
  
Dear Planning Board and BZA Members,

I offer the following comments on the Tobin VLUS project for your consideration as you review the application for variances and special permits.

**Section 4.25 (opposed to waiving the Planning Board's right to a hearing on open space)**

I respectfully ask the Planning Board to schedule a public hearing to review the non-open space uses in an open space district. The Planning Board's expert opinion is very much needed to evaluate a development project of this scale, complexity, cost, and impact on the open space and Callanan Park. Section 4.25 of the zoning ordinance entitles the Board and the public to a full hearing on the open space aspects of this project *and* to an evaluation of the alternatives considered for the project;

please do not waive your and the public's right to due process.

**Tree Removal (opposed)**

To date, no public hearing has been scheduled for the proposed removal of 4 of the largest trees on the site to make room for the bus loop and the stormwater tank. The loss of this mature canopy (all of it located on the hotter, western side of the site) has prompted a great public outcry, which I'm sure you will hear more about from others. These 4 trees alone account for about one-third of the total canopy loss proposed for the site. The site design should have prioritized saving these trees. Had other site alternatives ever been seriously considered for some of the additional school programming planned for the existing Tobin VLUS site (as required under Section 4.25), we might not be in the position where we are told there is no choice but to sacrifice these very large, healthy trees. During the year the project was paused due to the pandemic, negotiations with the state's Division of Capital Assets and Management (DCAM) could have taken place.

**Loss of Park Space (very strong concerns)**

The significant amount of additional school programming planned for the site leaves no room for un-programmed park space. The current park has a large, flat grassy area between the playground and the ball fields that was well-used by both students and residents for informal activities. In this part of Callanan Park, one could sit on a bench or on the grass under a tree and enjoy just being in a public park without any particular purpose. In the new site plan, there appears to be no un-programmed park space that will feel welcoming to residents who are not part of the school community or with children participating in youth sports or using a playground. The many neighbors without young children feel excluded from this overly school-centric design. The only un-programmed space seems to be a treeless mound or berm on the north side that is separated by a fence from the Alpine path (see rendering on page 17 of the application). Is this steep mound intended to be actively used -- and if so, how and by whom? The application materials do not include detailed plans for the new open space so it is impossible to

tell. The school's front yard was also an informal public gathering spot but with the garage driveway and new paths, that space is diminished.

### **Exterior Design and Transparency (very strong concerns)**

Please ask the project team to elaborate on the "security reasons" that caused them to reduce window openings in the new school building, so that the overall transparency is 30% or less: *"We're at the lower end of the range for transparency, but for security reasons we can't be over exposed."* ([see Question 40](#))

The current school building has long been compared unfavorably to a prison or bunker, and many of us had hoped the new building design would take a different approach. Our hopes have been dashed in this respect. In comparison to the two prior school projects (Putnam Ave and Cambridge St), the school's exterior lacks "personality" or any design features that make it memorable or visually compelling. In my opinion, the public face of the proposed building is cold and bland and a missed opportunity to create a warm and welcoming presence.

### **Garage Circulation, Narrowed Lanes & Tandem Parking (very strong concerns)**

The narrowed, tight circulation and the presence of angled and tandem parking in the garage give me pause. Has anyone calculated the time it could take to move through a full queue of cars to drop off or pick up a student? If people get frustrated with the length of time they spend queuing inside the garage and if the queue to enter the garage backs up onto Vassal Lane, people may decide to avoid the garage altogether, to the detriment of the surrounding area. Lengthy drop-off and pick-up lines at schools everywhere are

notoriously frustrating to busy adults, and school children experience their caregivers' stress and negative energy, even witness instances of road rage. Excessive idling and poor air quality are also concerns when circulation is congested.

**Neighborhood Traffic Circulation (very strong concerns)**

100% of the school's increased vehicular traffic will enter and exit onto Vassal Lane, a one-way street in a maze of other one-way streets. This burden on the neighborhood circulation, and potentially on safety, might have been avoided had the city made a serious, proactive effort to acquire an abutting portion of the Armory site to be able to create an egress onto Concord Ave. The construction contractor's office has been located on the Armory's land for more than a year and will be there for the 4 coming years of construction, so clearly this portion of the parking lot is not essential to the National Guard's operation.

**Covered Bike Parking (inadequate and poorly placed)**

The covered bike parking is located at the far rear of the garage. Cyclists will have to navigate through the car traffic on narrow garage lanes to reach those 18 spaces. This design doesn't seem to make it easy or appealing to bring a bike into the garage, and convenient access to covered parking is an important consideration for bike commuters. Eighteen covered spaces seems low for the employee population who will be using the building. Will any covered parking above ground be available for employees as well as for students, parents, and visitors? If we want to encourage year-round biking, we must provide better facilities to shelter people's bikes from rain and snow.

**Scoreboard (opposed)**

The application includes a hardship request for the installation of a scoreboard of up to 180 sf (14' high). This seems inappropriate for the site. There are no scoreboards on any of the fields at Danehy or at the new Glacken Little League complex, and those fields are



regulation-sized for high school and adult league competition. The smaller soccer and baseball fields planned in this project are not going to host such serious competition -- how is the lack of a large scoreboard a hardship? Where would this scoreboard be placed and would it have lighting? There is no rendering to show how it would look in the park context. I suggest the BZA reject this variance.

Thank you for considering my comments as you review this project. I look forward to listening to your discussions at this week's meetings.

Jan Devereux  
255 Lakeview Ave.



# City of Cambridge

MASSACHUSETTS

BOARD OF ZONING APPEAL

831 Mass Avenue, Cambridge, MA.  
(617) 349-6100

4 Bds

BZA

## POSTING NOTICE – PICK UP SHEET

The undersigned picked up the notice board for the Board of Zoning Appeals Hearing.

Name: BRYNA CHARLTON Date: 6/23/21  
(Print)

Address: 197 Vassel lane - Tobin Schopf.

Case No. BZA-127462

Hearing Date: 7/15/21

Thank you,  
Bza Members

**BZA APPLICATION FORM**  
**DIMENSIONAL INFORMATION**

APPLICANT: **City of Cambridge**

PRESENT USE/OCCUPANCY: **School**

LOCATION: **197 Vassal Lane, Cambridge, MA 02138**

ZONE: **Residence B & OS**

PHONE: **617-349-4251**

REQUESTED USE/OCCUPANCY: **School**

2021 JUN 30 P 2:44

	EXISTING* CONDITIONS	REQUESTED CONDITIONS	ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS
TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA:	Res B = 128,895 sf OS = 47,525 sf	Res B = 154,373 sf OS = 145,581 sf	Res B = 138,991 sf OS = 71,441 sf (max.)
LOT AREA:	Res. B = 111,193 sf OS = 285,765 sf	Res B = 111,193 sf OS = 285,765 sf	Res B = 5,000 sf OS = 43,560 sf (min.)
RATIO OF GROSS FLOOR AREA TO LOT AREA:	Res B = 1.2 OS = .2	Res B = 1.4 OS = .5	Res B = 0.5 (1.2 by 5.54.1) OS = 0.25 (max.)
LOT AREA FOR EACH DWELLING UNIT:	NA	NA	NA (min.)
SIZE OF LOT:	Varies		Res B = 50' OS = 150' (min.)
Setbacks in Feet:			Res B = 15' OS = 25' (min.)
FRONT	NA 58' 5"	39' 6"	Res B = 25' (min.)
REAR	NA 61' 4"	42' 0"	OS = 25' (min.)
LEFT SIDE	NA 40' 5"	53' 0"	Res B = 7.5' (sum of 20') OS = 15' (min.)
RIGHT SIDE	NA 30' 10"	58' 0"	Res B = 7.5' (sum of 20') OS = 15' (min.)
SIZE OF BLDG.:	NA 41' 5"	Res B = 56' OS = 71'	Res B = 35' (45' by 5.54.1.d) OS = 35' (max.)
HEIGHT			
LENGTH			
WIDTH			
RATIO OF USABLE OPEN SPACE TO LOT AREA: (%)	.602	.663	.602 (min.)
NO. OF DWELLING UNITS:	NA	NA	NA (max.)
NO. OF PARKING SPACES:	80	150	105 (min./max)
NO. OF LOADING AREAS:	1	2	2 (min.)
DISTANCE TO NEAREST BLDG. ON SAME LOT:	NA	NA	NA (min.)

\*Note: existing building to be demolished.  
517' 8"

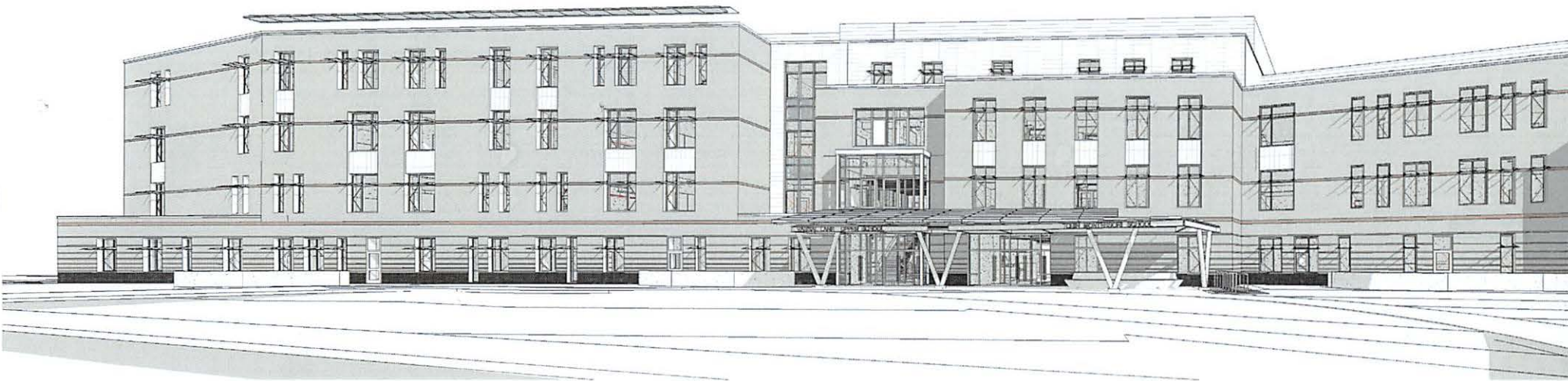
Describe where applicable, other occupancies on same lot, the size of adjacent buildings on same lot, and type of construction proposed, e.g.; wood frame, concrete, brick, steel, etc.

**None.**

1. SEE CAMBRIDGE ZONING ORDINANCE ARTICLE 5.000, SECTION 5.30 (DISTRICT OF DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS).
2. TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA (INCLUDING BASEMENT 7'-0" IN HEIGHT AND ATTIC AREAS GREATER THAN 5') DIVIDED BY LOT AREA.
3. OPEN SPACE SHALL NOT INCLUDE PARKING AREAS, WALKWAYS OR DRIVEWAYS AND SHALL HAVE A MINIMUM DIMENSION OF 15'.

# TOBIN MONTESSORI AND VASSAL LANE UPPER SCHOOLS

## ZONING PACKAGE



### Drawing List

- |                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1- PARCEL MAP              | 13- SOUTH ELEVATION            |
| 2- SITE SURVEY             | 14- EAST ELEVATION             |
| 3- SITE PLAN               | 15- WEST ELEVATION             |
| 4- LANDSCAPE PLAN          | 16- RENDERING- SOUTH           |
| 5- LEVEL 1 FLOOR PLAN      | 17- RENDERING- NORTH           |
| 6- LEVEL 2 FLOOR PLAN      | 18- RENDERING- SOUTH ENTRY     |
| 7- LEVEL 3 FLOOR PLAN      | 19- RENDERING - WEST ENTRY     |
| 8- LEVEL 4 FLOOR PLAN      | 20- RENDERING - NORTH ENTRY    |
| 9- ROOF PLAN               | 21- RENDERING- SOUTH ELEVATION |
| 10- BASEMENT PLAN(10a+10b) | 22- ZONING CHART               |
| 11- EXISTING CONDITIONS    | 23- SET BACK DIAGRAM           |
| 12- NORTH ELEVATION        | 24- LONG TERM BIKE PARK        |

6/16/2021

**PERKINS —  
EASTMAN**





1" = 100 ft

All data is provided for graphic representation only. The City of Cambridge expressly disclaims all warranties of any type, expressed or implied, including, but not limited to, any warranty as to the accuracy of the data, merchantability, or fitness for a particular purpose.

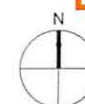
[www.cambridgema.gov/gis](http://www.cambridgema.gov/gis)



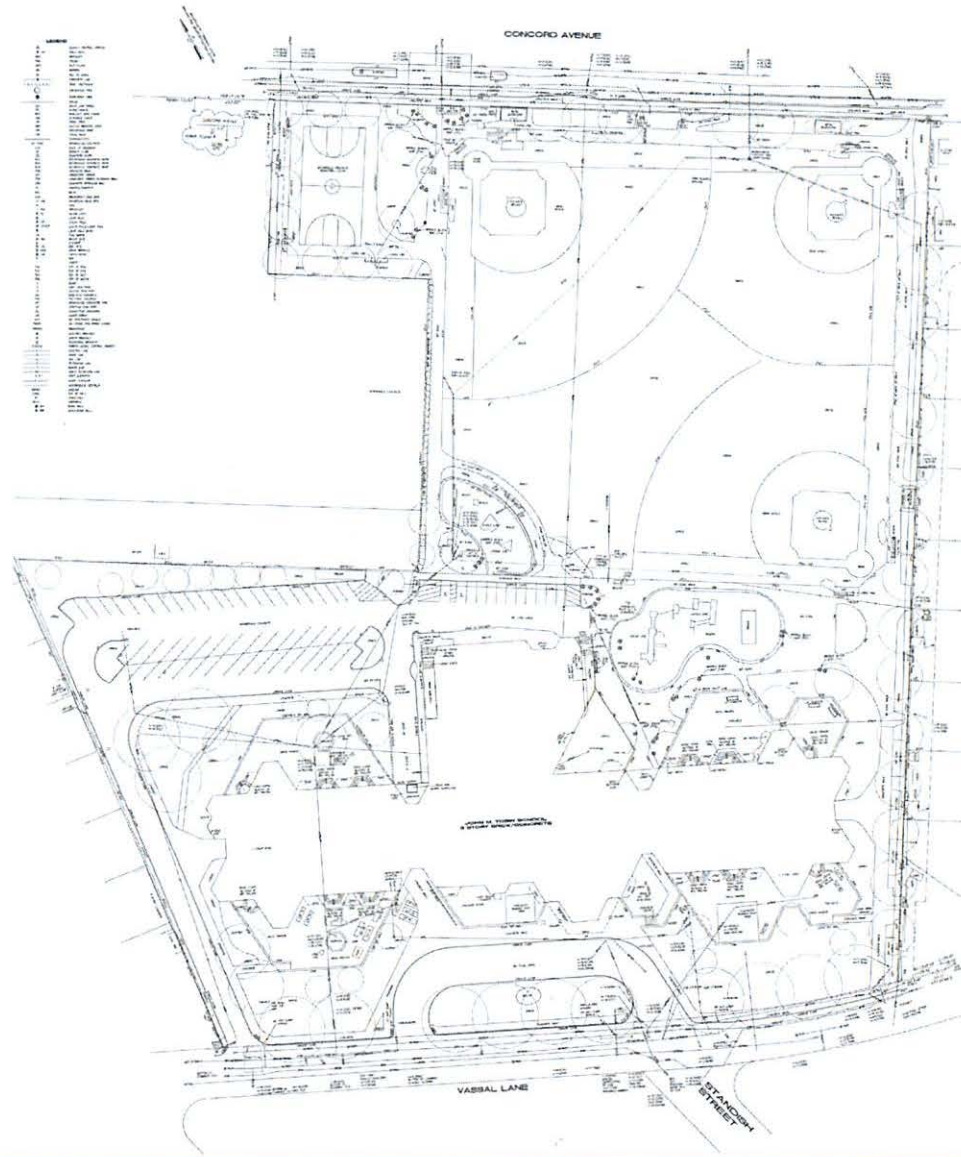
SCALE : 1" = 100'-0"

**— PERKINS —**  
**EASTMAN**

6/16/2021

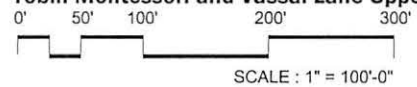






## Site Survey

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School



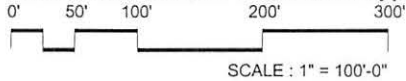
**PERKINS —  
EASTMAN**

6/16/2021





**Site Plan**  
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School







# Landscape Plan

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School

0' 30' 60' 120' 180'

SCALE: 1" = 60'-0"

PERKINS — EASTMAN

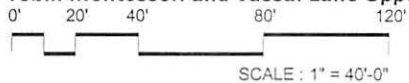
6/16/2021







**Floor 1 Plan**  
 Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School



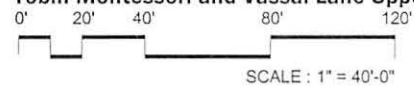
Profile view of the proposed road showing elevations and a scale. The horizontal axis is marked with stationing: 0', 20', 40', 80', and 120'. The vertical axis represents elevation. The profile shows a series of steps: a 10-foot high embankment from 0' to 20', a 5-foot deep cut from 20' to 40', a 10-foot high embankment from 40' to 80', and a 10-foot high embankment from 80' to 120'. The scale is given as 1" = 40'-0".





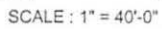
## Floor 3 Plan

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School



**PERKINS —  
EASTMAN**

6/16/2021

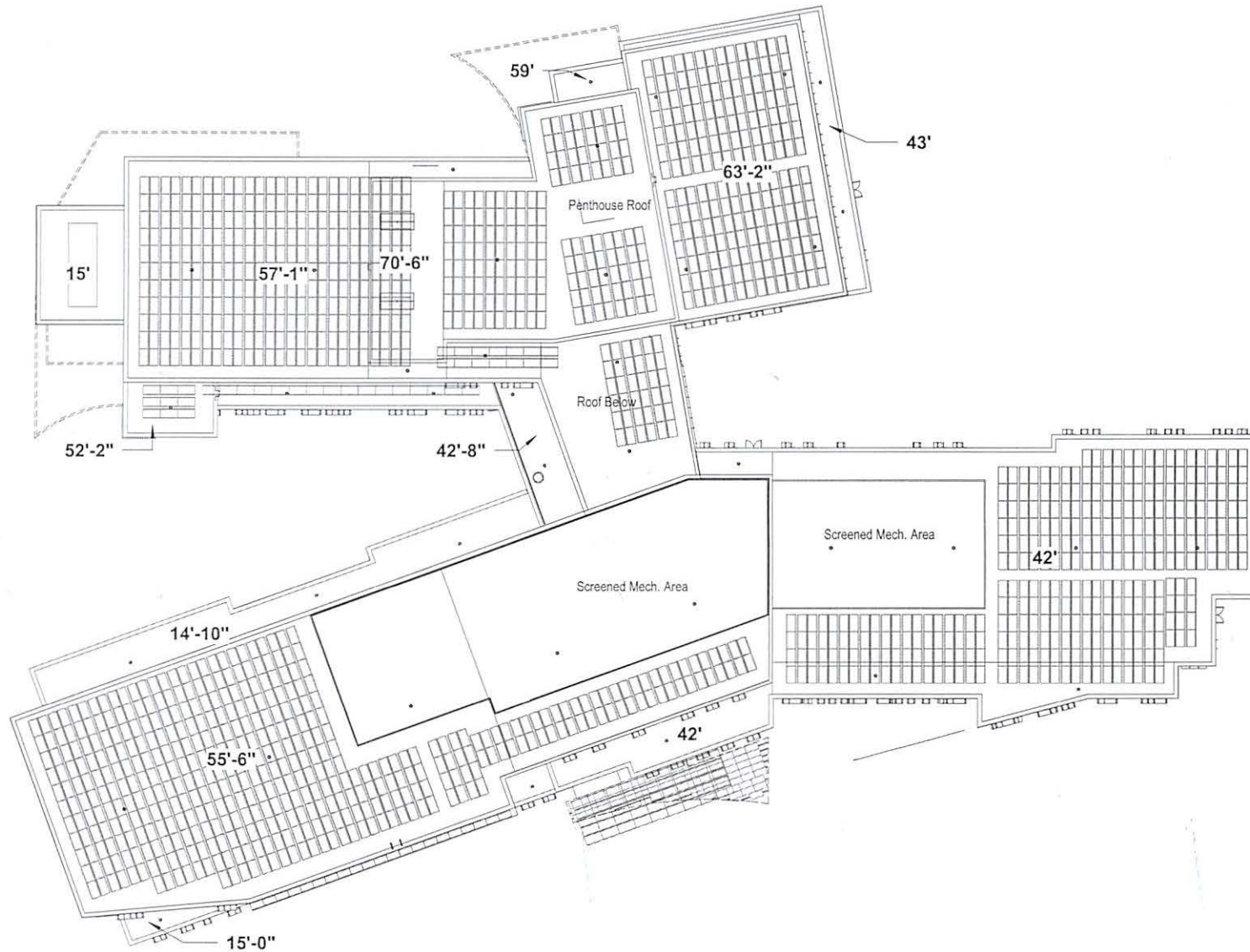


**Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School**

0' 20' 40' 80' 120'

SCALE : 1" = 40'-0"



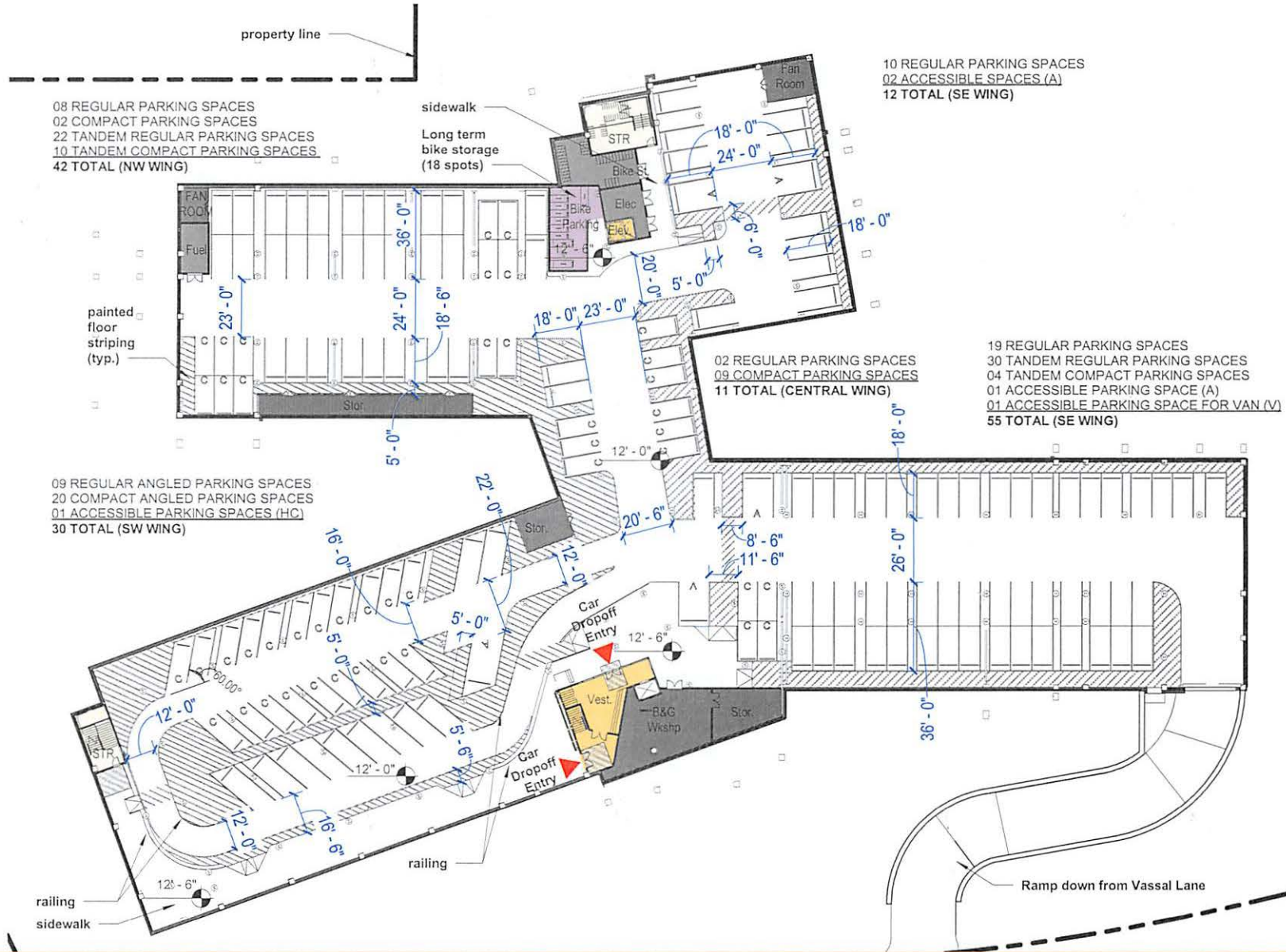


**Roof Plan**  
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School

0' 20' 40' 80' 120'

SCALE : 1" = 40'-0"





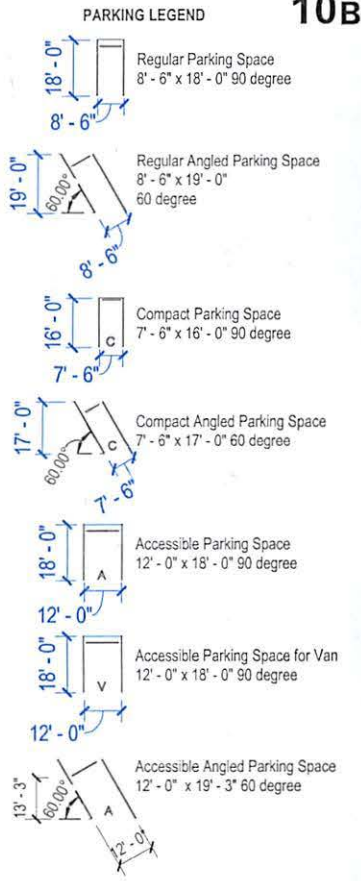
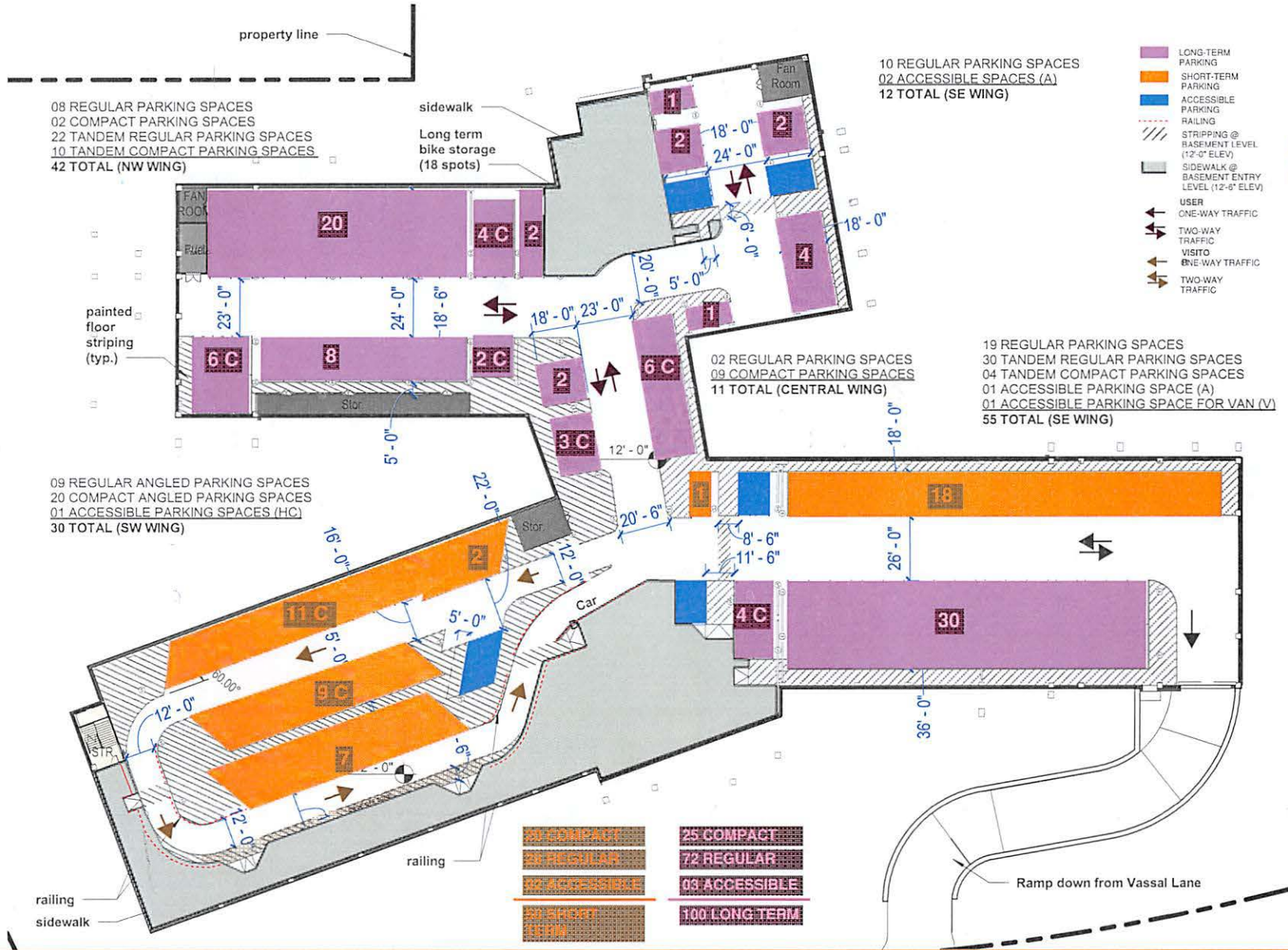
## Basement Plan

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School



**PERKINS — EASTMAN**

06/16/2021



**GENERAL NOTES:**

48 Regular Parking Spaces  
31 Compact Parking Spaces  
52 Tandem Regular Parking Spaces  
14 Tandem Compact Parking Spaces  
05 Accessible Spaces  
150 TOTAL PARKING SPACES

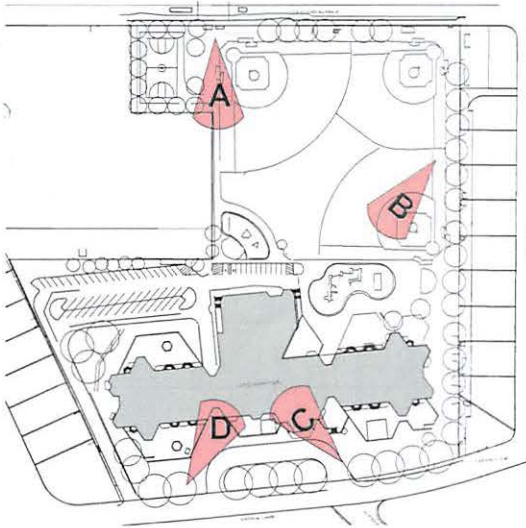
BASEMENT VERTICLE HEIGHT MEETS 8' - 2" VERTICAL CLEARANCE REQUIREMENTS.

**Basement Plan**  
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School

0' 20' 40' 80' 120'

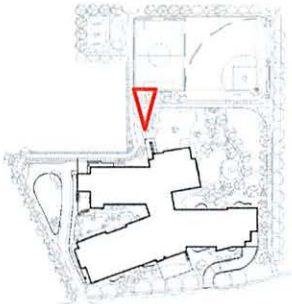
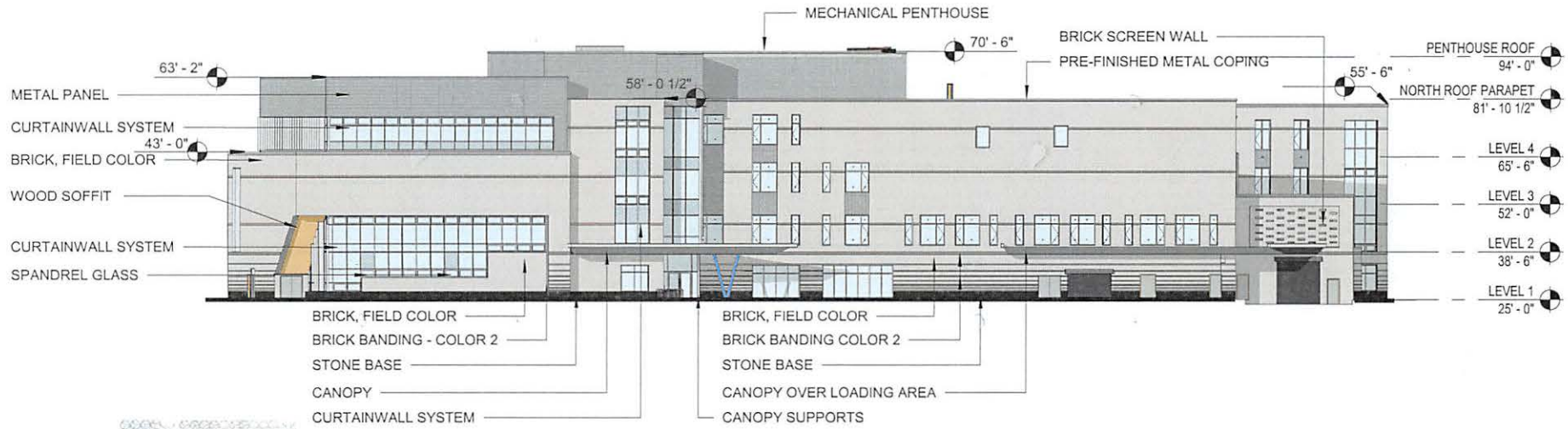
SCALE : 1" = 40'-0"





## Existing Conditions

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School



1" = 30'-0"

## Elevations - North

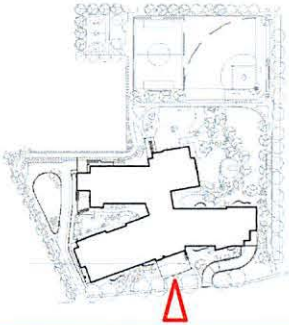
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School







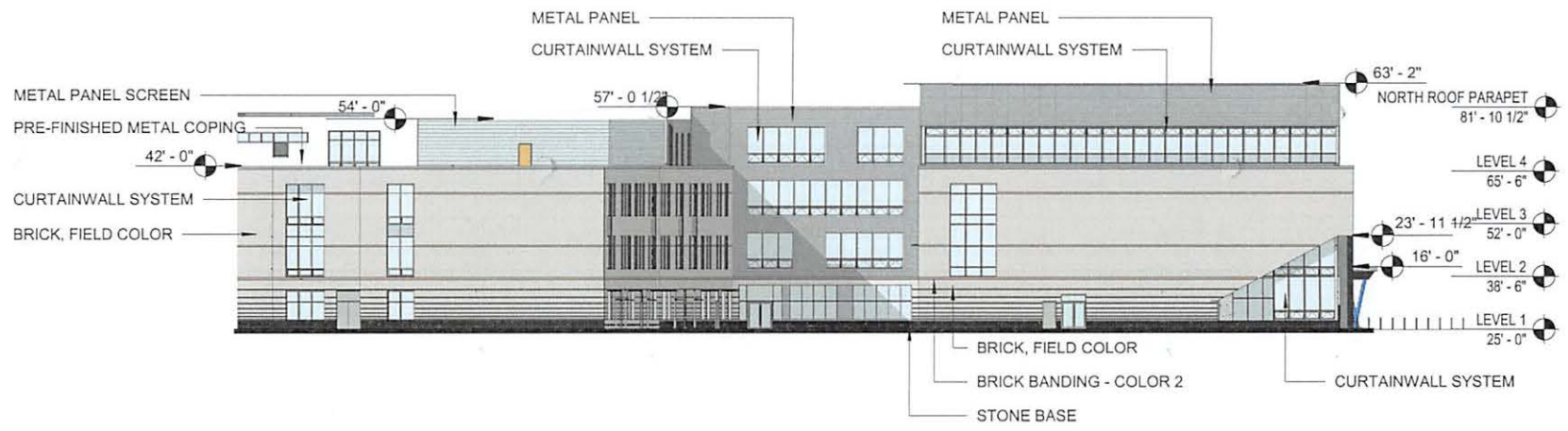
1" = 30'-0"



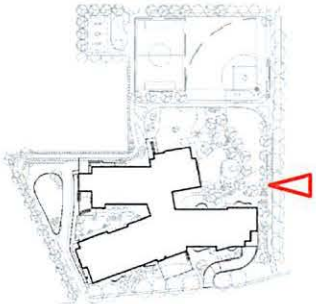
## Elevations - South

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School





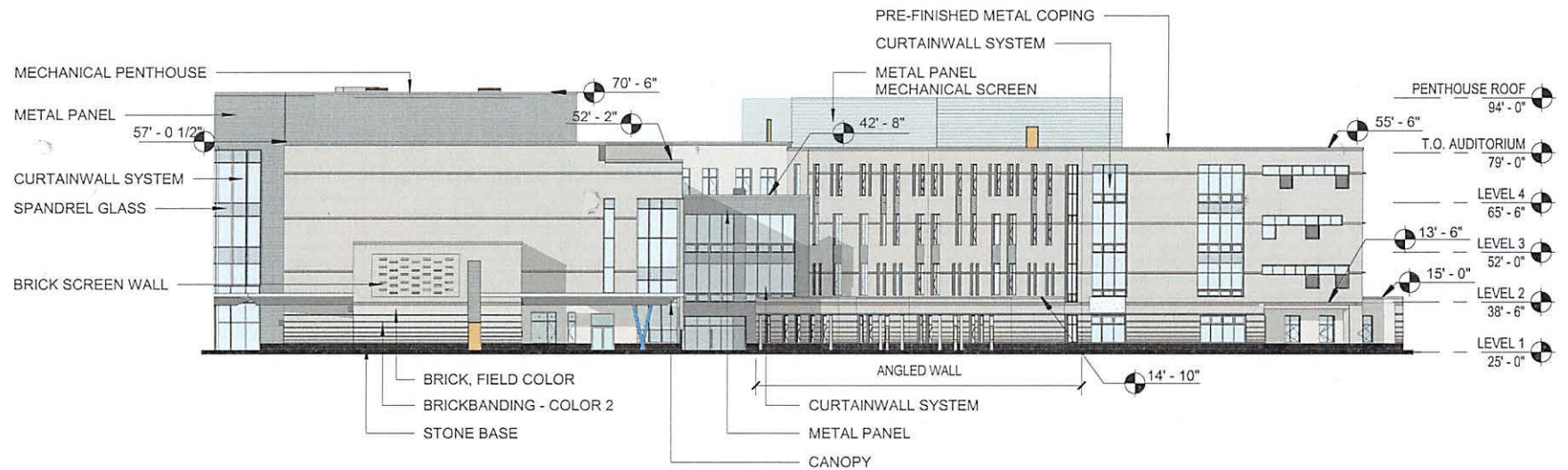
1" = 30'-0"



## Elevations - East

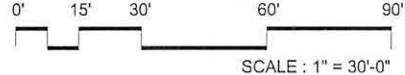
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School





## Elevations - West

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School







**South Approach Rendering**  
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School





North Approach Rendering  
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School





**South Entry Rendering**  
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School





**West Entry Rendering**  
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School





**North Entry Rendering**  
Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School



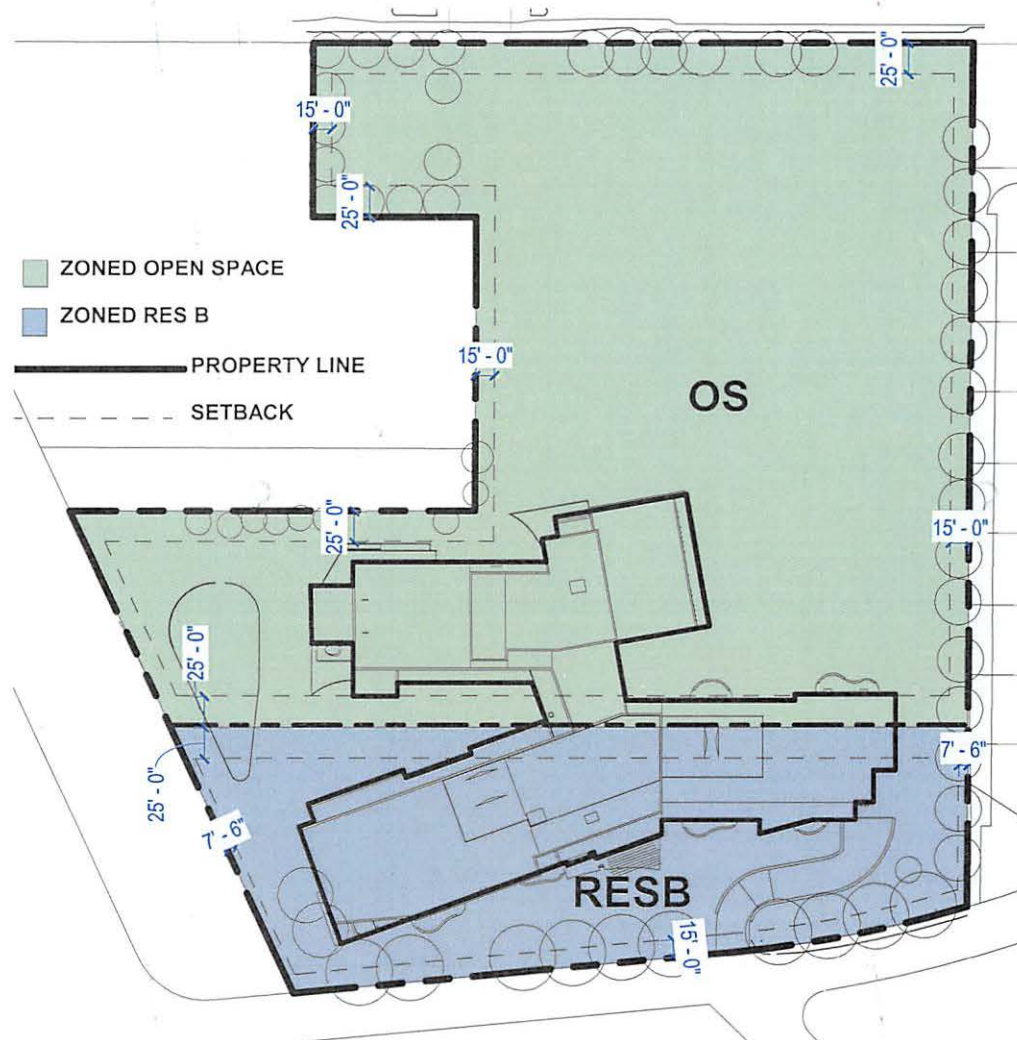


Residence B & Open Space					
CATEGORY	REQUIRED	PROPOSED IN...	REF.	Notes	
Zoning District	Res. B Residence B: two family or semi-detached dwellings OS (Open Space): Public parks and recreation...	No change			
Overlay District	None	None			
Uses	Educational	Educational	4.56		
Max. Ratio of Floor Area to Lot Area	Res. B: 0.5; 1.25* OS: 0.25	Res. B: 1.4 OS: 0.5	Table 5-1 & Table 5-5	*5.54.2 FAR shall not exceed existing FAR on lot, except Planning board may approve an increase in FAR to 1.25 for any portion of the lot located within a residential zoning district (but excluding portions of the lot located within an OS...	
Minimum Lot Area (SF)	Res.B: 5,000 SF OS: 43,560 SF	Res. B: 111,193 SF OS: 285,765 SF	Table 5-1 & Table 5-5	Complies	
Minimum Front Yard (ft)	Res. B: 15'...	39'-6"	Table 5-1 & Tabl...	Complies	
Minimum Side Yard (ft)	Res. B: 7'6" (sum of 20)...	53'-0"	Table 5-1 & Tabl...	Complies	
Minimum Rear Yard (ft)	Res. B: 25' OS: 25'	42'-0"	Table 5-1 & Table 5-5	Complies	
Maximum Building Height (ft)	Res B.: 55' OS: 35'	71'-0"	Table 5-1 & Table 5-5 5.54.1c	5.54.2 In a residential zoning district, the maximum height of any new building or addition to a building shall not exceed fifty-five (55) feet, except that the Planning Board may approve heights of up to sixty-five (65) feet for portions of a building located at least fifty (50) feet from any lot line. In an Open Space zoning district, the height of any new building or addition to a building shall not exceed the maximum height allowed in the base zoning district.	
Minimum Private Open Space Ratio (%)	Res B.: 40% OS: 60%	N/A	Table 5-1 & Table 5-5	Private space provided on lot used for residential purposes	
Minimum Lot Frontage	Res. B: 50' OS: 150'	Res. B: 543' OS: 527'	Table 5-1 & Table 5-5	Complies	
Public Recreational Open...	Existing: 5.48 AC	Proposed: 6.04 AC	5.54.1g	Complies	
Minimum # of parking spaces	3 per 2 instruction rooms or 1 per 5 seats in the main auditorium, whichever is greater. (60 instruction rooms and 525 auditorium seats)	150 (105 minimum)	6.36	Instruction: 3/2x60=90 Auditorium: 1/5 x 525=105 Minimum = 105	
Compact Parking Space...		7'-6" x 16'	6.40		
Regular Space Dimension		8'-6" x 18'	6.40		
Number of Long-term Bicycle Parking	18.00	18.00	6.107.2	.3 space per classroom or .015 per auditorium, whichever is greater Note: Plus bike share systems	
Number of Short-term...	102.00	102.00	6.107.3	1.70 space per classroom or .085 per auditorium seat	
Revised on 06/16/2021					

## Zoning Chart

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School

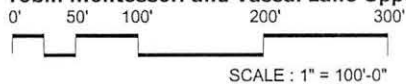




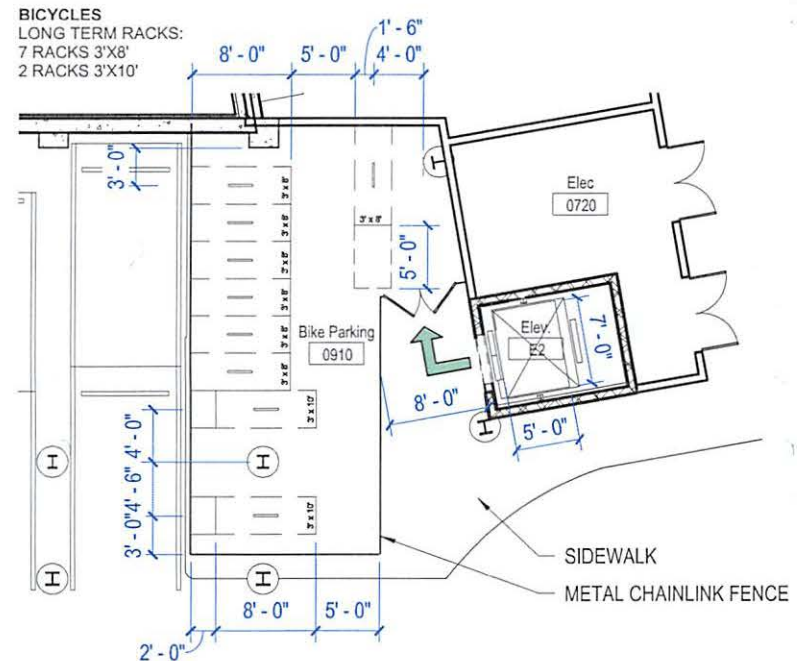
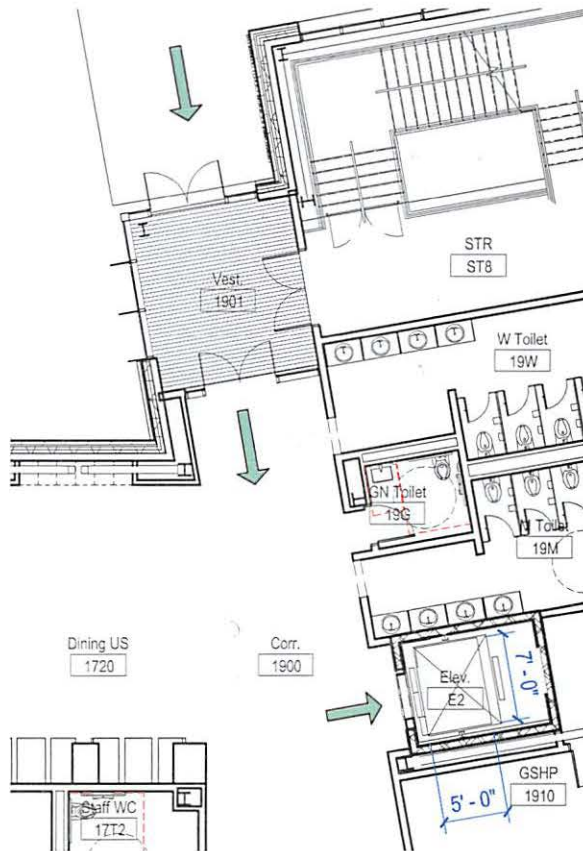
Proposed Building

### Diagram- Setback

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School







Legend

➔ Path to Long-Term Bicycle Parking

2

## LEVEL 1 - CONCORD MAIN ENTRY

1" = 10'-0"

1

## BASEMENT - 1/8" BIKE STORAGE

1" = 10'-0"

## LONG TERM BIKE PARK

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School

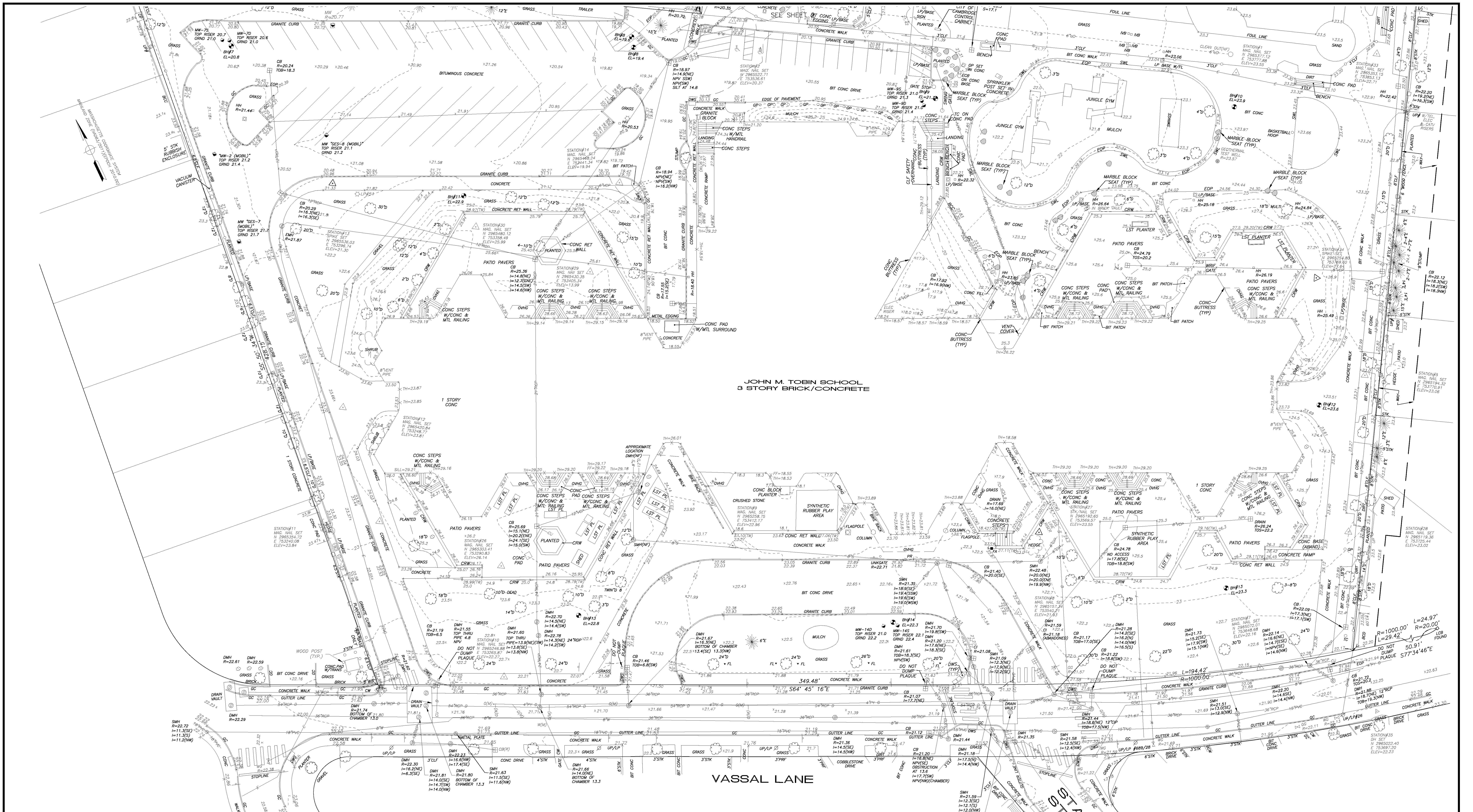


**PERKINS — EASTMAN**



06/16/2021





NOTES

- SUBSURFACE UTILITY LINES, AS SHOWN HEREIN, WERE COMPILED ACCORDING TO AVAILABLE RECORD INFORMATION FROM THE REFERENCED COMPANIES AND PUBLIC AGENCIES, AND THEIR LOCATIONS ARE APPROXIMATE ONLY. ACTUAL LOCATIONS MUST BE DETERMINED IN THE FIELD. SMC ASSUMES NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR DAMAGES INCURRED AS A RESULT OF UTILITIES OMITTED OR INACCURATELY SHOWN.
- BEFORE CONSTRUCTION, ALL UTILITIES, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, MUST BE NOTIFIED (SEE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS, CHAPTER 82, SECTION 40J) CALL "DIG SAFE" 1 (888) 344-7233 [HTTP://WWW.DIGSAFE.COM](http://www.digsafe.com)
- THE COORDINATES, IN FEET, ARE BASED UPON THE NORTH AMERICAN DATUM OF 1983 (NAD83/2011 EPOCH 2010.00) AS DEFINED BY THE KeyNet GPS VIRTUAL REFERENCE SYSTEM (VRS) NETWORK.
- ELEVATIONS, IN FEET, ARE REFERRED TO THE CAMBRIDGE CITY BASE AS DERIVED FROM the KeyNet GPS VIRTUAL REFERENCE SYSTEM (VRS) NETWORK.

PROPERTY REFERENCES

- PLAN OF LAND IN CAMBRIDGE, MASS. SURVEYED FOR MARJORIE C. O'BRIEN, PREPARED BY PETER BELLOUSCH ARCHITECT, SCALE: 1"=40' DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 1996
- SUBDIVISION OF BLOCK 1 LAND IN CAMBRIDGE, MASS. PREPARED BY W. A. MASON & SON CO. SCALE: 1"=40' DATE: MARCH 13, 1933
- SUBDIVISION OF PART OF BLOCK 1 SHOWN ON PLAN 12808A, FILED WITH CERT. OF TITLE NO. 27808, SOUTH REGISTRY DISTRICT OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY, SCALE: 1"=50' DATE: NOVEMBER 15, 1929
- ALPINE STREET FOR ACCEPTANCE, PREPARED BY DONALD J. RICHMOND, SCALE: 1"=40' DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 1929
- SUBDIVISION OF PART OF BLOCK 1 SHOWN ON PLAN 12808A, FILED WITH CERT. OF TITLE NO. 27808, SOUTH REGISTRY DISTRICT OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY, SCALE: 1"=50' DATE: MARCH 13, 1933
- PLAN OF LAND IN CAMBRIDGE, MASS. PREPARED BY FRED A. JOYCE, SCALE: 1"=20' DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 1946
- PLAN OF LAND IN CAMBRIDGE, MASS. PREPARED BY FRED A. JOYCE, SCALE: 1"=40' DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 1946
- SUBDIVISION OF LOTS 4 TO 24 INCL. AND LOTS 3 AND 25, SHOWN ON PLANS 12808A AND 20208A, FILED WITH CERTIFICATE OF TITLE NO. 27808 AND 81173, SOUTH REGISTRY DISTRICT OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY, PREPARED BY FRED A. JOYCE, SCALE: 1"=50' DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 1946

UTILITY REFERENCES

- JOHN M. TOBIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS GRADING AND UTILITIES PLAN, PREPARED BY PETER BELLOUSCH ARCHITECT, SCALE: 1"=30' DATE: OCTOBER 25, 1988
- CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS HURON A SEWER SEPARATION PROJECT, PREPARED BY PETER BELLOUSCH ARCHITECT, SCALE: 1"=30' DATE: OCT 25, 1988 REV. JAN. 20, 1989
- CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS CONCORD (CONTRACT 9) SEWER SEPARATION AND SURFACE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT, SHEETS C-2, C-3, C-13, U-2, U-3 & U-9, DATED JUNE 2016
- CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS HURON A SEWER SEPARATION PROJECT, CIVIL-PLAN AND PROFILE FOR CONCORD AVE. STA. 308+00 TO STA. 311+00, PREPARED BY KLEINFELDER, SCALE: 1"=20' DATE: JANUARY 27, 2014
- CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS HURON A SEWER SEPARATION PROJECT, CIVIL-PLAN AND PROFILE FOR VASSAL LANE, STA. 308+00 TO STA. 311+00, PREPARED BY KLEINFELDER, SCALE: 1"=20' DATE: APRIL 17, 2013
- EVERSOURCE GAS FACILITY MAP
- EVERSOURCE ELECTRIC FACILITY MAP
- CITY OF CAMBRIDGE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS WATER FACILITY MAP

Revised:	MAY 14, 2021
Drawn By:	SEPTEMBER 6, 2017
Checked By:	210003800W CCB.DWG
Drawn By:	MC
Checked By:	NP
Drawn By:	EP
Drawn By:	210003800W CCB.DWG
Drawn By:	1 OF 3



Kevin Hanley

10 June 2021  
KEVIN HANLEY, PLS  
MASSACHUSETTS REG. NO. 31313

SEE SHEET 2 FOR LEGEND

325 Wood Road  
Suite 109  
Branford, CT 06404  
t: 781.380.7766  
f: 781.380.7757

EXISTING CONDITIONS SURVEY  
JOHN M. TOBIN SCHOOL  
VASSAL LANE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA  
PREPARED FOR: CDM SMITH, INC.

SCALE: 1"=20'

REVISIONS: MAY 14, 2021  
REVISED: OCTOBER 2, 2017  
DATE: SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

SMC DWG. NO. 210003800W CCB.DWG

1 OF 2






Revised: MAY 14, 2021  
Date: SEPTEMBER 6, 2017  
Job No.: 210003800W  
Drawn By: MC  
Checked By: NP  
Circled By: ET  
Drawing No.: 210003800WS CCB.DWG  
Sheet: 2 OF 3



Kevin Hanley

10 June 2021  
KEVIN HANLEY, PLS  
MASSACHUSETTS REG. NO. 31313



325 Wood Road  
Suite 109  
Braintree, MA 01914  
t: 781.380.7766  
f: 781.380.7757

**EXISTING CONDITIONS SURVEY**  
**JOHN M. TOBIN SCHOOL**  
**VASSAL LANE**  
**CAMBRIDGE, MA**  
PREPARED FOR: CDM SMITH, INC.

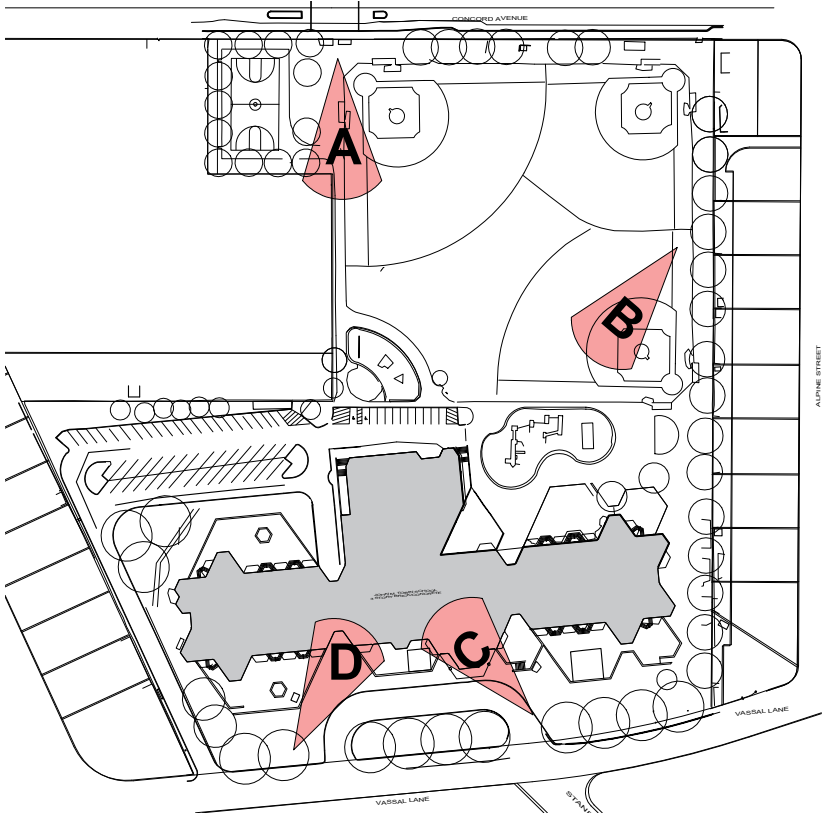
SCALE: 1"=20'

REVISED: MAY 14, 2021  
REVISED: OCTOBER 2, 2017  
DATE: SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

SMC DWG. NO. 210003800WS CCB.DWG

Sheet 2 OF 2







This map illustrates the layout of the Tobin Field area, highlighting the proposed route for the Tobin Field Trail. The trail is shown as a red line with blue arrows indicating the direction of travel. The route starts near the intersection of Bay State Rd and Birch St, proceeds south along Birch St, then turns east onto Concord Ave, and finally turns south onto Vassal Ln. The map also shows the locations of Fresh Pond Reservation, Basketball Courts at Tobin Field, Tobin Field, Father Callanan Playground, and Tobin Montessori School. Various streets and residential addresses are labeled throughout the area.



197 Vassal Lane

Petitioner

234-160  
ADAMIAN, DAVID C. &  
LYNNE CARVALHO ADAMIAN  
90 STANDISH ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

260-80  
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
C/O NANCY GLOWA  
CITY SOLICITOR

260-80  
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
C/O LOUIS DEPASQUALE, CITY MANAGER  
795 MASS AVENUE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

234-178  
275 FRSH POND LLC  
275 FRESH POND PKWY  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

234-176  
WILHELM, LUCILLE L.  
188 VASSAL LANE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
C/O BRENDON ROY  
795 MASS AVENUE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

234-174  
EDGERLY, WILLIAM S.  
100 NEWBURY COURT SUITE 6617  
CONCORD, MA 01742

260-63  
ROBBART, ANN M.  
55 ALPINE ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

260-69  
SIEGEL, JODIE,  
TRUSTEE THE JODIE M. SIEGEL FAM TR  
21 ALPINE ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

260-74  
EMJR PROPERTIES, INC.  
325 FRESH POND PARKWAY  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

261-109  
SAHLU, JOHANNES & BIZUNESH GROOM  
421 CONCORD AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-1215

261-110  
HELFELD, ALVIN AND SUSAN SCHENKEL  
417 CONCORD AVE.  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-1215

260-80  
CAMBRIDGE CITY OF SCHOOL DEPT –  
TOBIN SCHOOL  
159 THORNDIKE ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02141

234-161  
INGLE, DAMON SHAW  
180 VASSAL LN  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-6838

260-32  
BECHWATI PROPERTIES, LLC  
480 CONCORD AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

260-64  
SLATE, MALLORY H. & YLVA M. SLATE  
49 ALPINE ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-6810

260-66  
EGBERT, DERRICK B.  
35 ALPINE ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

260-67  
ENGELMAN, DORIS J.  
29 ALPINE ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-6810

260-68  
HACKEL, JOYCE M. & ROBIN A. LUBBOCK  
25 ALPINE STREET  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-6810

260-70  
DAMIAN, JOHN G. ELIZABETH L DAMIAN  
11 ALPINE ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-6810

260-72  
ZENS, PAMELA WENDY,  
TR. OF THE WENDY PAMELA ZENS FAMILY TR.  
153 VASSAL LA  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

260-77  
MASSACHUSETTS COMMONWEALTH OF  
STATE HOUSE  
BOSTON, MA 02133

261-130  
BULKOWSKI, CHARLES J.  
DOLORES M BULKOWSKI  
401 CONCORD AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-1215

261-146  
GOODMAN, PATRICIA  
391 CONCORD AVE. UNIT#2  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

261-147  
MOORE, NICOLA  
397 CONCORD AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

261-197  
SHAW, WILLIAM J. & CARLA L. WAHNON  
387 CONCORD AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

261-196  
CHETHAM, REBECCA &  
CHRISTOPHER A. PANZICA  
385 CONCORD AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

260-65  
YALIN, DANA & NOAM Y. KIRSON  
43 ALPINE ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

260-71  
WHELAN, KATHLEEN  
7 ALPINE ST.  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-6810

260-76  
EMJR PROPERTIES, INC.  
325 FRESH POND PARKWAY  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

197 Vassal Lane

261-108-167  
LYMAN, JAMES M., REINIER BEEUWKES JR.,  
AUSTIN BROADHURST,  
TR. OF LYMAN REAL ESTATE TRUST  
445 CONCORD AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

234-175  
RICHARDSON, MARGARET P.  
C/O ROPES & GRAY - BRENDA S. DIANA  
800 BOYLSTON ST  
BOSTON, MA 02199-3600

260-34  
FERNANDEZ, CAROLINA & JAMES D. LLOYD  
374 CONCORD AVE., #2  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

233-187  
BUJOREANU, MIHAELA  
164 VASSAL LN  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

233-187  
STEPHENS, NIALL & TALAYA DELANEY  
166 VASSAL LN  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

233-198  
YESSELMAN, JAY  
160 VASSAL LN  
CAMBRIDGE, MA

234-173  
TMANINO LLC  
495A HENRY ST, #124  
BROOKLYN, NY 11231

260-46  
TGCI FRESH POND LLC  
BROOKLINE GK, LLC  
ONE ADAMS PL  
859 WILLARD ST., #501  
QUINCY, MA 02169

261-146  
CHILINSKI, DAVID  
391 CONCORD AVE UNIT #1  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

233-189  
KENTON SCOTT  
152 VASSAL LN  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

260-73  
ELIE ON FRESH POND PKWY LLC  
97 NEW HAVEN ST  
WEST ROXBURY, MA 02132

260-34  
NARDIN, RACHEL  
174 FRANKLIN ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

233-189  
RUTHERFORD MATTHEW S & BRIDGET M  
TR. RUTHERFORD FAMILY TRUST  
154 VASSAL LN  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

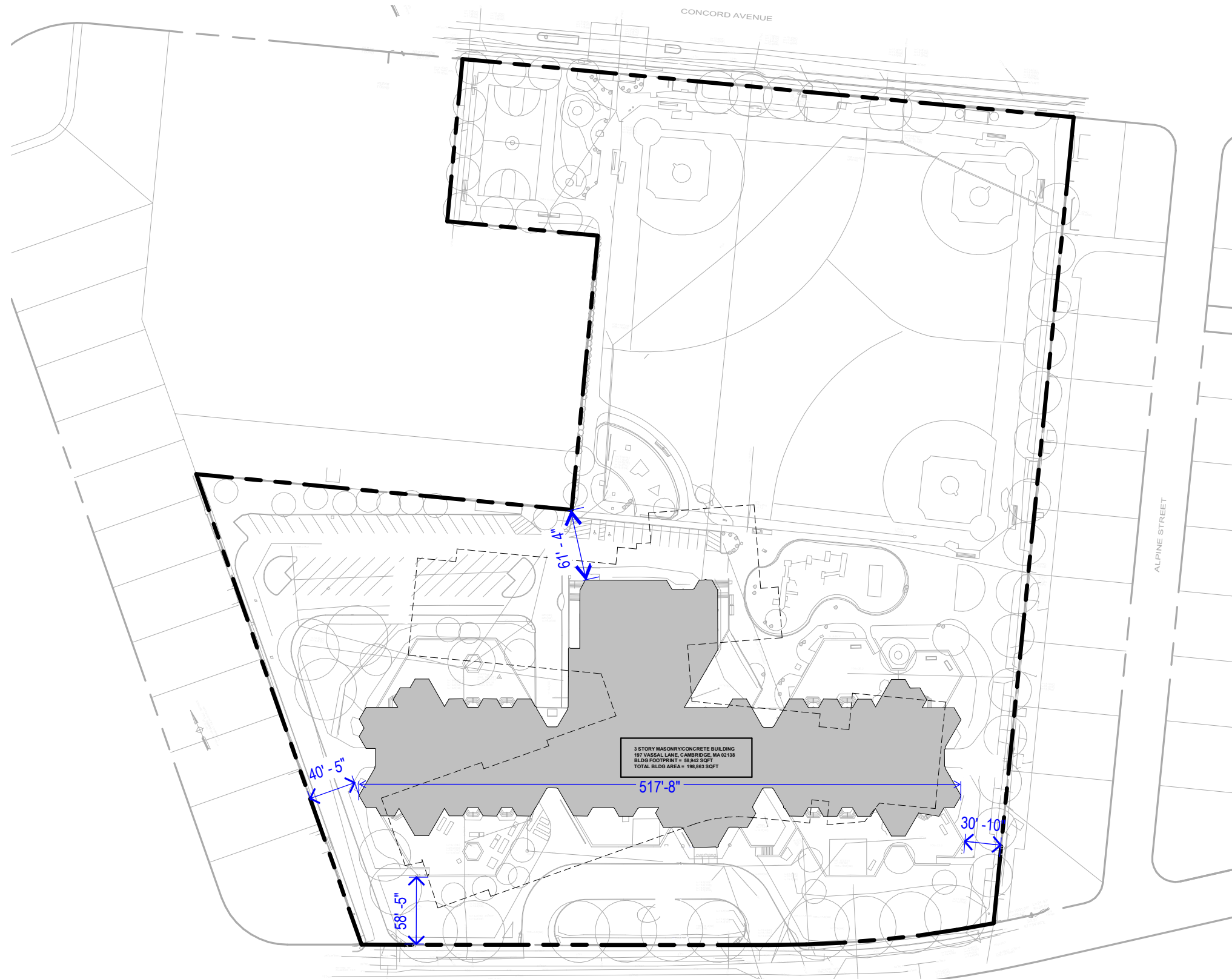
260-35  
372 CONCORD AVENUE, LLC  
134 MAIN STREET, UNIT 7  
STONEHAM, MA 02180

233-186  
KIM, JINAH MYUNG-KOO KANG  
87 STANDISH ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

261-111-112  
CLARK, EMORY J. XONNABEL G CLARK  
413 CONCORD AVE  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138-1215

233-186  
CRARY, HARRIET S.  
85 STANDISH ST  
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138





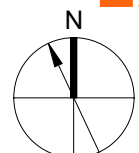
## Site Survey (Existing and Proposed)

Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper Schools

0' 50' 100' 200' 300'

SCALE : 1" = 100'-0"

**PERKINS —  
EASTMAN**



6-17-21

**PERKINS —  
EASTMAN**

*Human by Design*

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

**TOBIN MONTESSORI AND VASSAL LANE UPPER SCHOOLS PROJECT**

**JULY 15, 2021**

# BZA HEARING





# PROJECT COMPONENTS

- Tobin Montessori School
- Vassal Lane Upper School
- Preschool
- Community School
- Fr. Callanan Playground Improvements
- Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements
- Underground Parking
- Soil Remediation





---

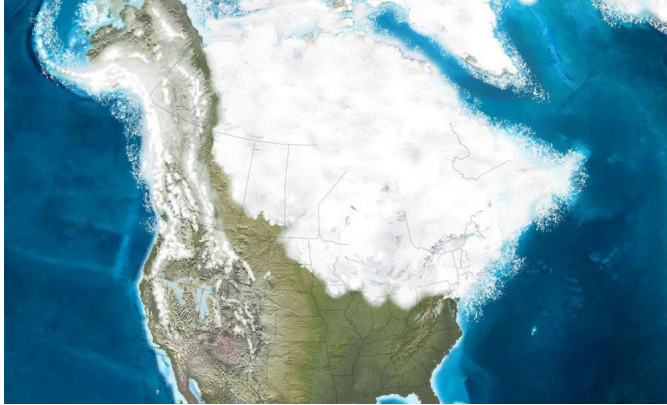
# EXISTING & PROPOSED



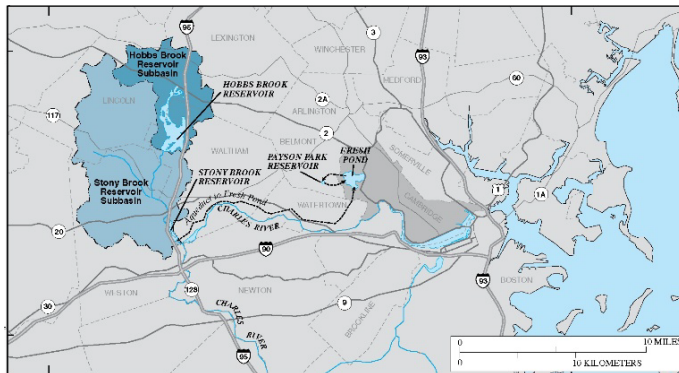


# A BIT OF HISTORY

## TIMELINE OF TRANSFORMATION



### Last Ice Age – Kettle Lakes



Fresh pond, a kettle lake left behind.

PERKINS EASTMAN TOBIN MONTESSORI/VASSAL LANE SCHOOLS

### Clay Deposits– Industrialization



Site was quarried to create manufactured ballast bricks.

### Waste Collection Point



The site was used as a city waste site.



# WASTE BOUNDARY



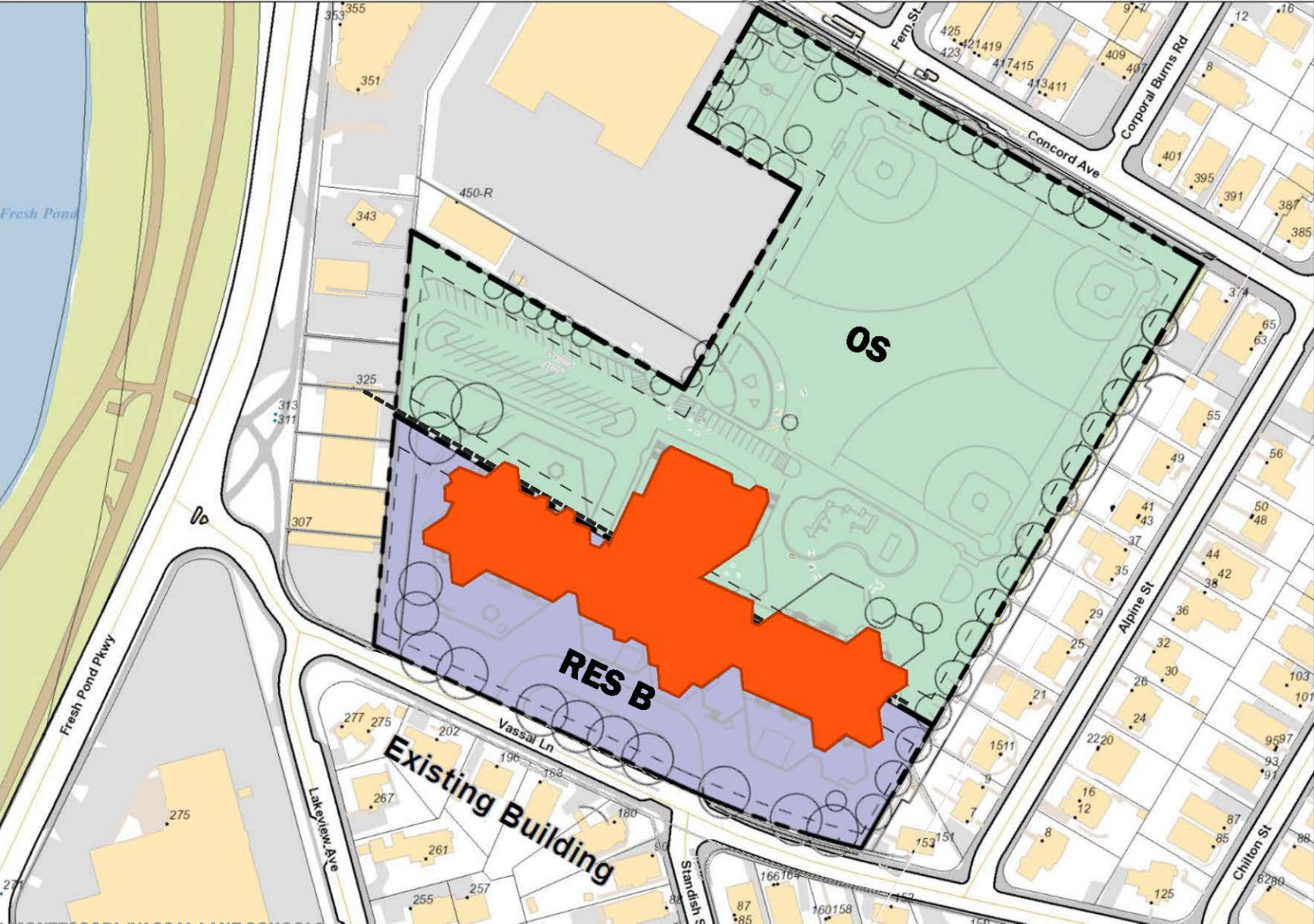


# EXISTING ZONING

City of Cambridge

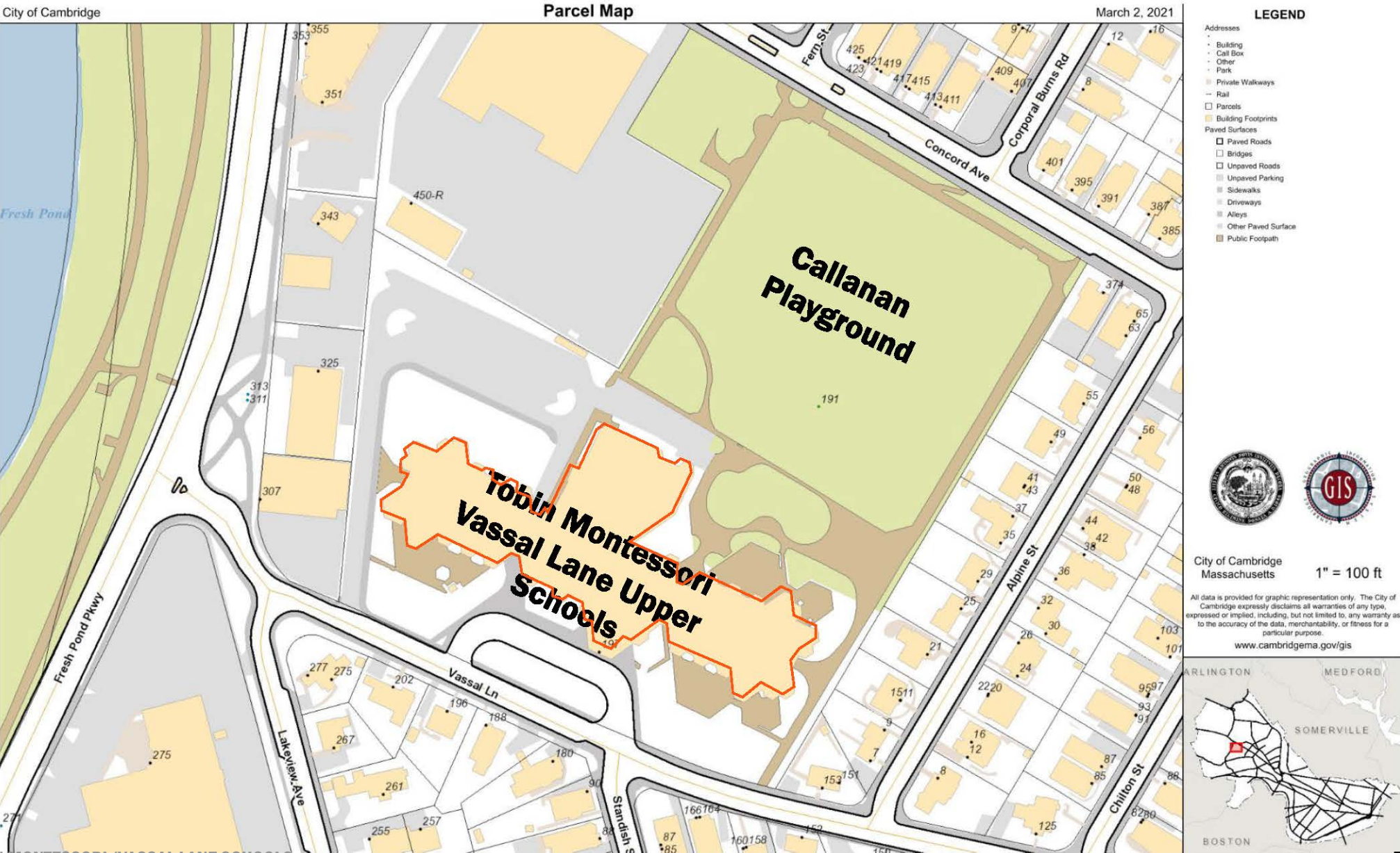
Parcel Map

March 2, 2021



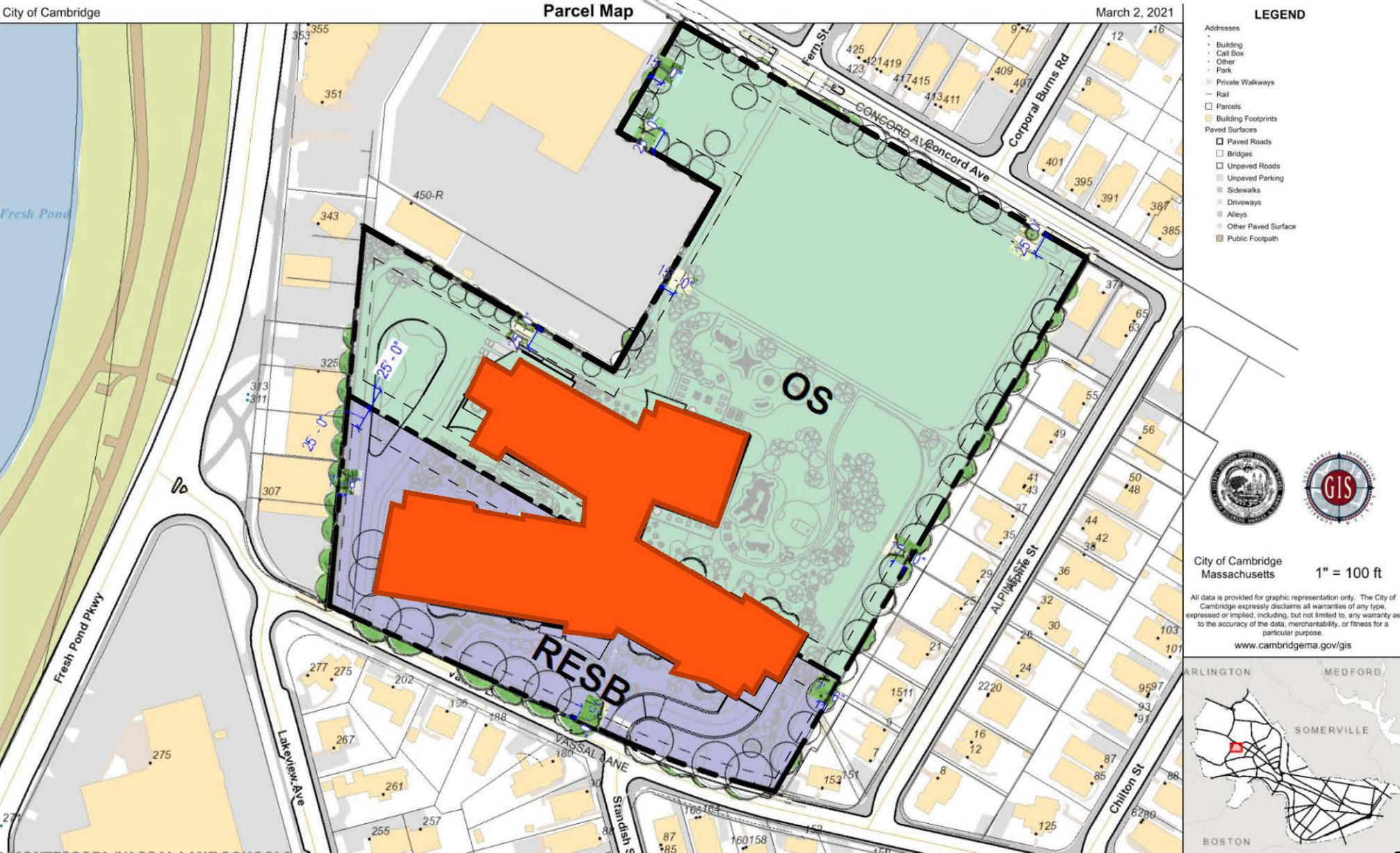


# EXISTING CONDITIONS





# PROPOSED BUILDING LOCATION



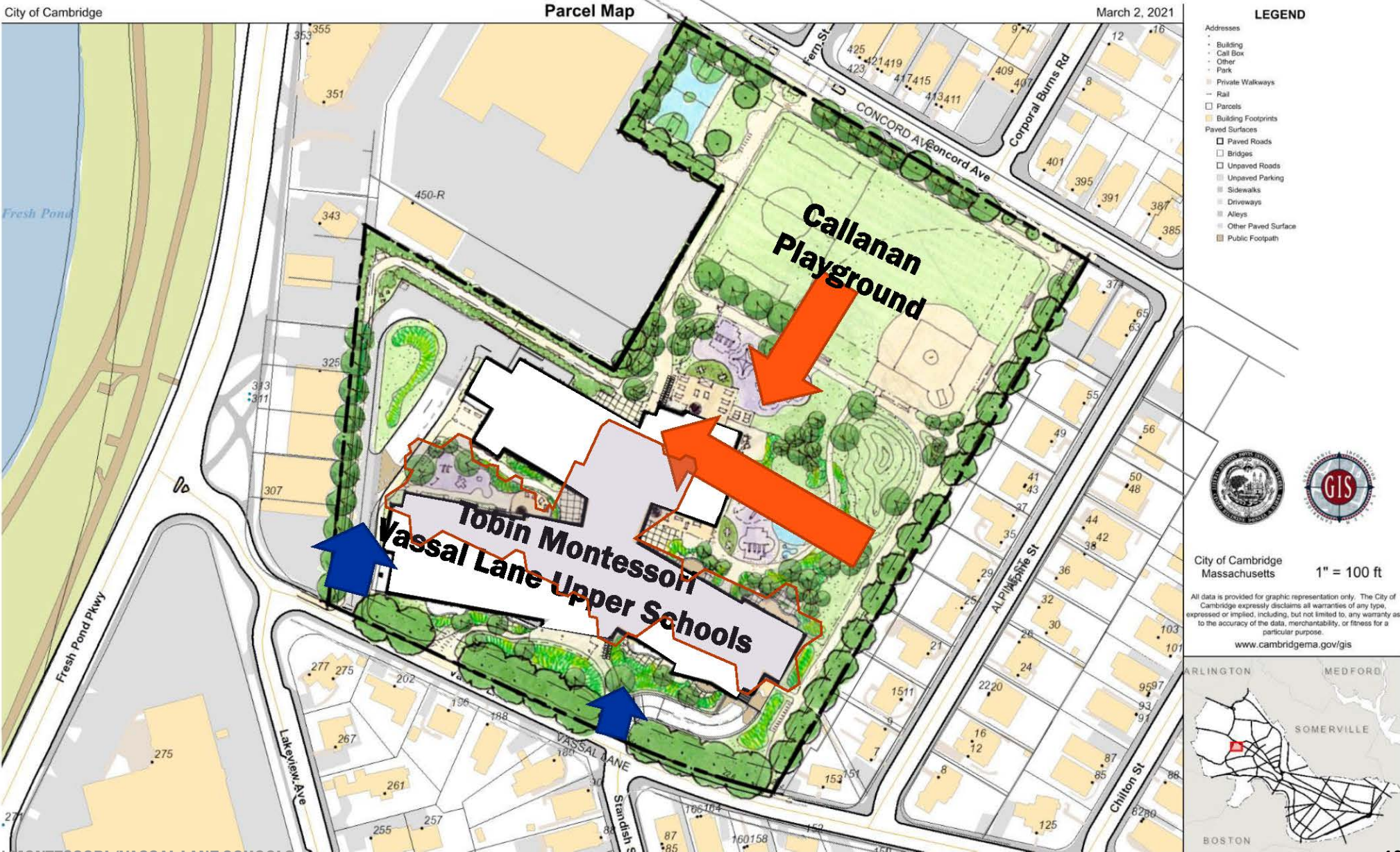


# PROGRAM DIAGRAM



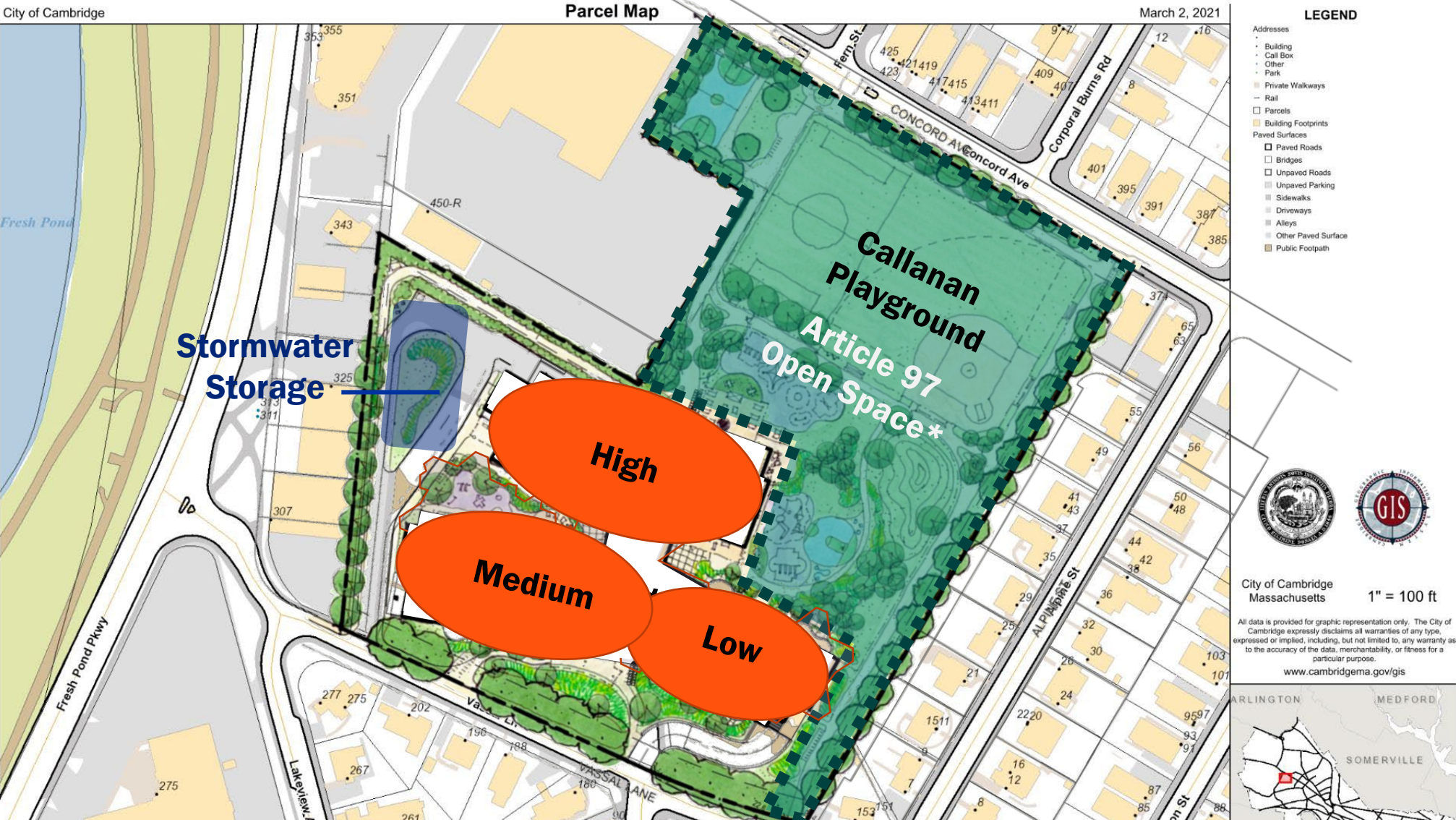


# BUILDING LOCATION STRATEGY





# BUILDING HEIGHT STRATEGY



\* The City has undertaken an extensive process with the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to adjust this open space and is seeking special legislation to permit this adjustment.

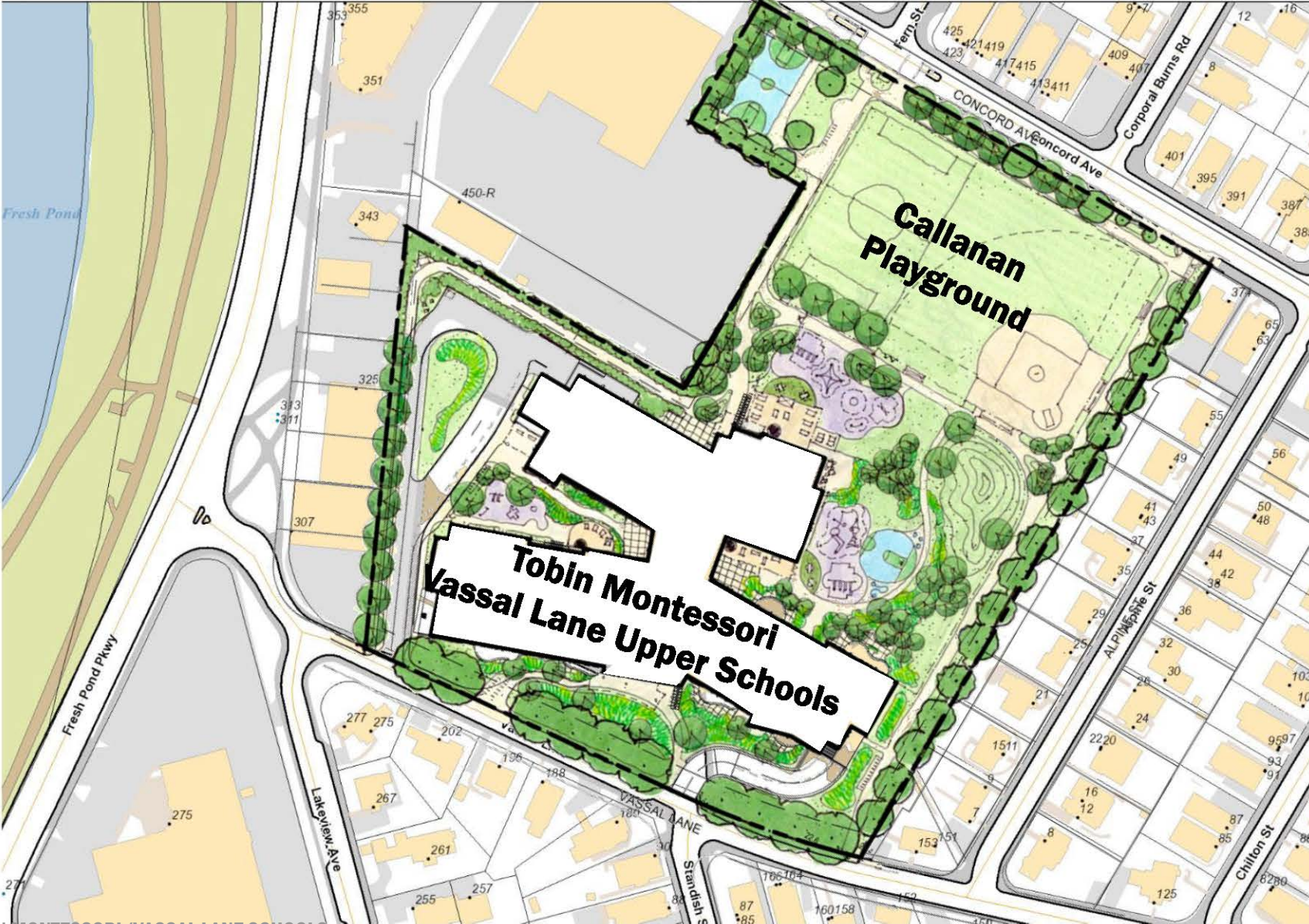


# PROPOSED SITE PLAN

City of Cambridge

Parcel Map

March 2, 2021



LEGEND

- Addresses
- Building
  - Call Box
  - Other
  - Park
- Private Walkways
- Rail
- Parcels
- Building Footprints
- Paved Surfaces
- Paved Roads
  - Bridges
  - Unpaved Roads
  - Unpaved Parking
  - Sidewalks
  - Driveways
  - Alleys
  - Other Paved Surface
  - Public Footpath



City of Cambridge  
Massachusetts 1" = 100 ft

All data is provided for graphic representation only. The City of Cambridge expressly disclaims all warranties of any type, expressed or implied, including, but not limited to, any warranty as to the accuracy of the data, merchantability, or fitness for a particular purpose.  
[www.cambridgema.gov/gis](http://www.cambridgema.gov/gis)





# EXISTING CONDITIONS - EXTERIOR

A BUILDING BEYOND ITS USEFUL LIFE





# EXISTING CONDITIONS - INTERIOR

A BUILDING BEYOND ITS USEFUL LIFE





# VIEW FROM VASSAL LANE



Existing



Proposed



# VIEW FROM THE PLAYGROUND



Existing



Proposed

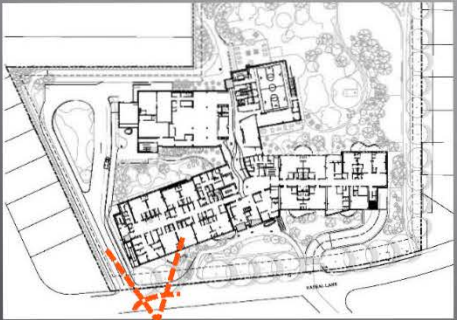


# ARRIVING AT THE FRONT DOORS





# ARRIVING AT PRESCHOOL





**ALONG THE BUS LANE**





**ARRIVING FROM CONCORD AVE**



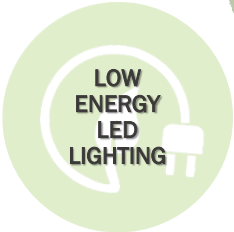
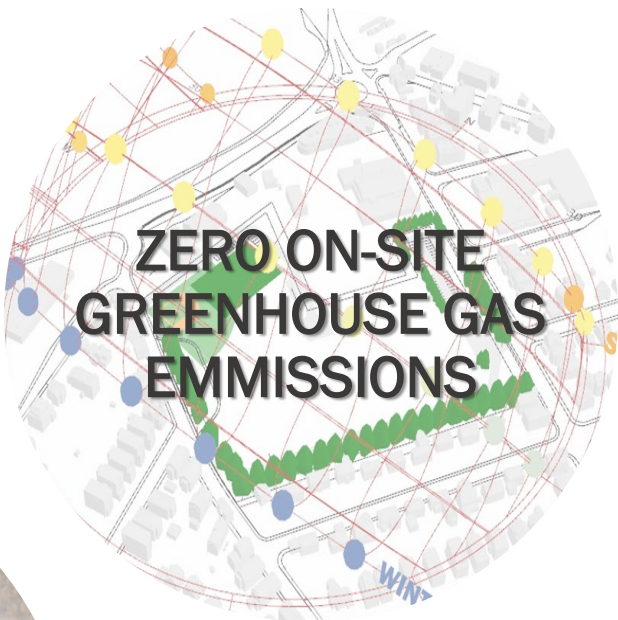


# HEART OF SCHOOL





# SUSTAINABLE GOALS





---

# RELIEF REQUESTED





# RELIEF REQUESTED

- Procedural Requirements
- Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
- Height
- Solar Energy Roof Area
- Signage
- Vehicular Aisle and Tandem Parking





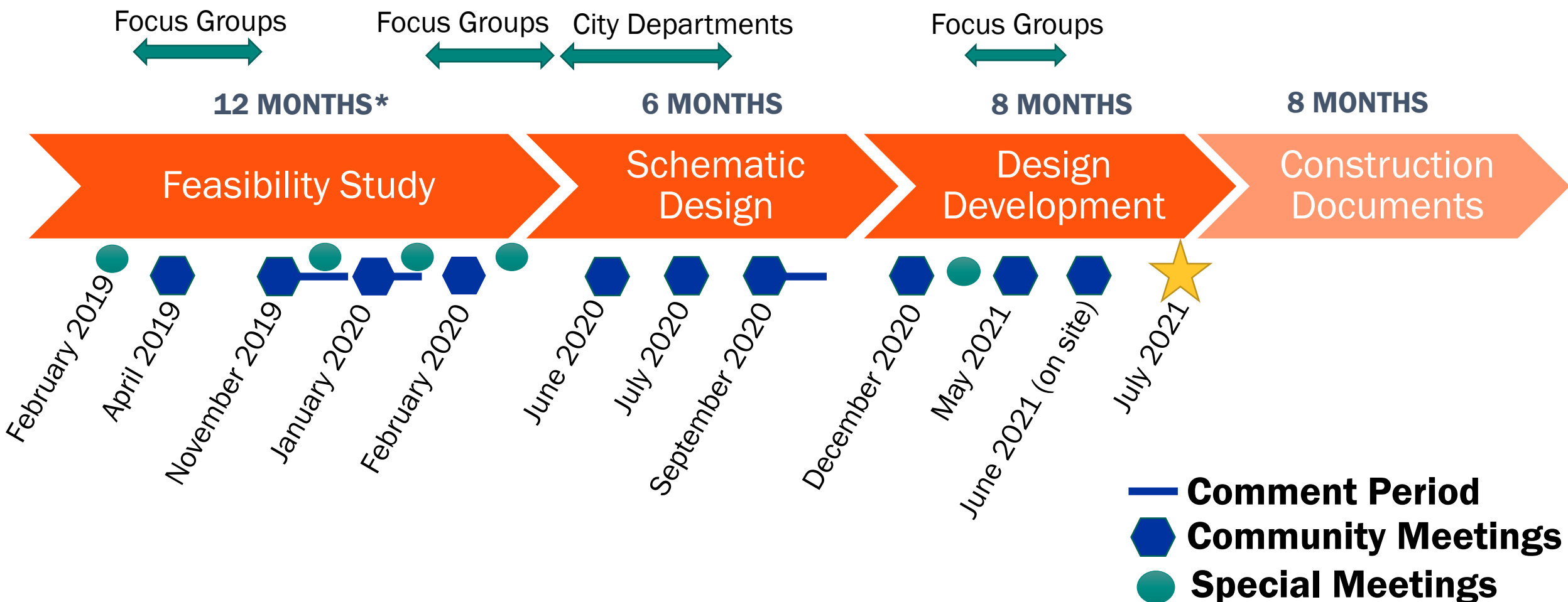
# PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND FEASIBILITY STUDY



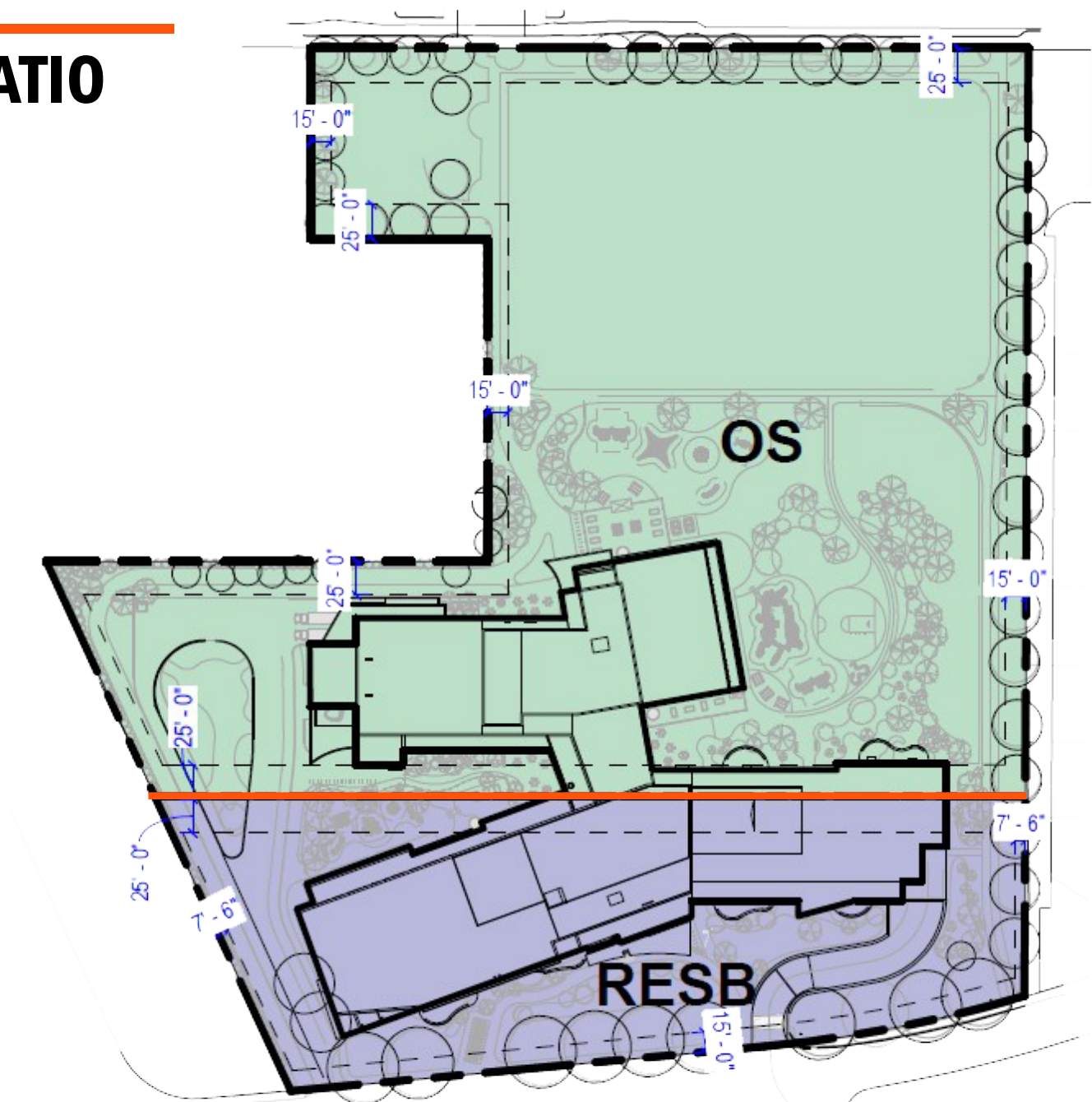


# MEETINGS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



\* Schedule extended to allow for additional community input

# FLOOR AREA RATIO



**OS**

Allowed: 0.25  
Requested: 0.5

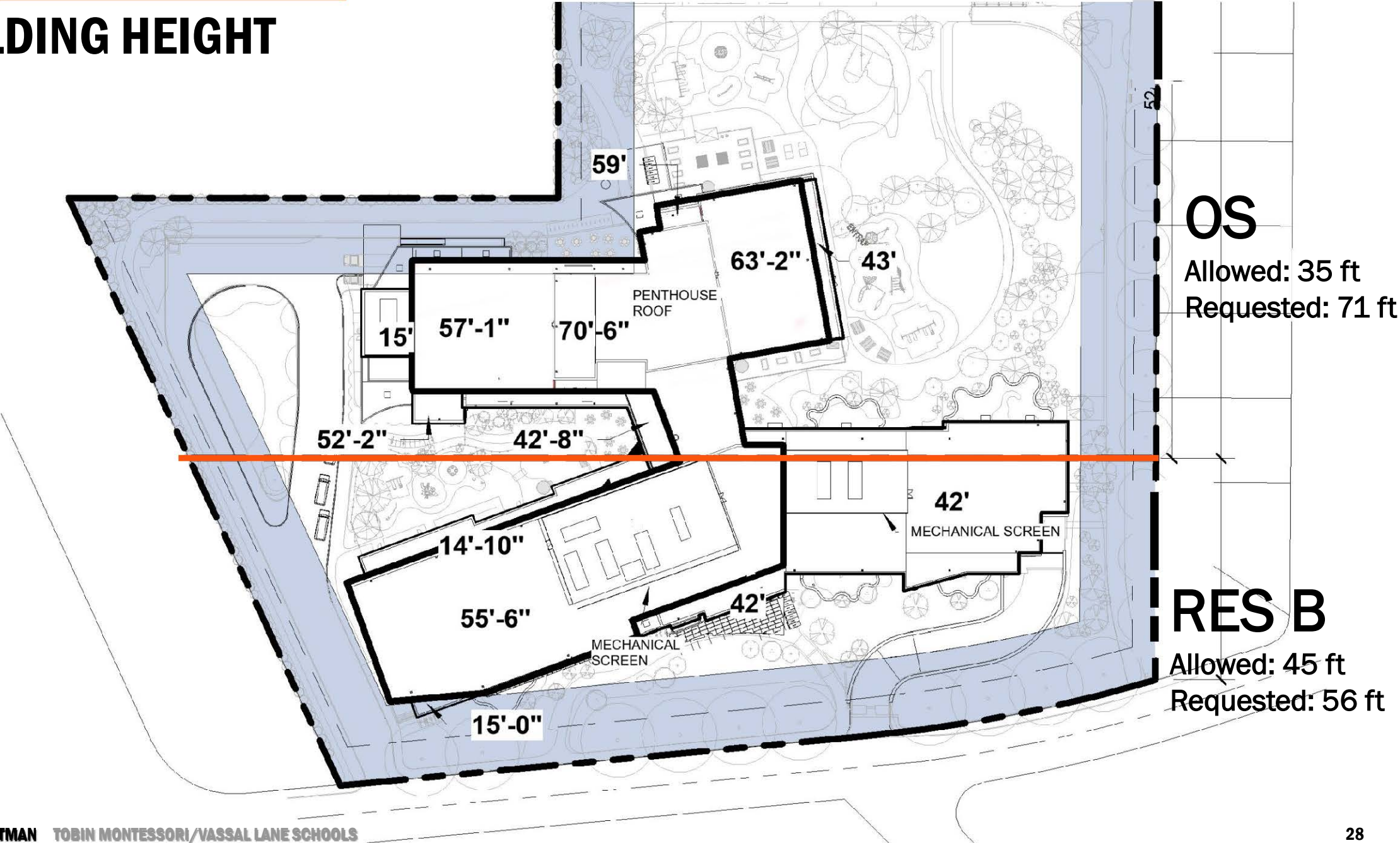
**RES B**

Allowed: 0.5  
Requested: 1.4

--- PROPERTY LINE  
--- SETBACK



# BUILDING HEIGHT



# SOLAR PANEL COVERAGE

REQUIRED: 80% REQUESTED: REDUCTION



 Solar Panels



# SIGN LOCATIONS

ALLOWED: 2 MAX

REQUESTED:

12 BUILDING SIGNS

6 EDUCATIONAL SIGNS

3 WAYFINDING SIGNS

1 SCOREBOARD



## REQUESTED TANDEM PARKING

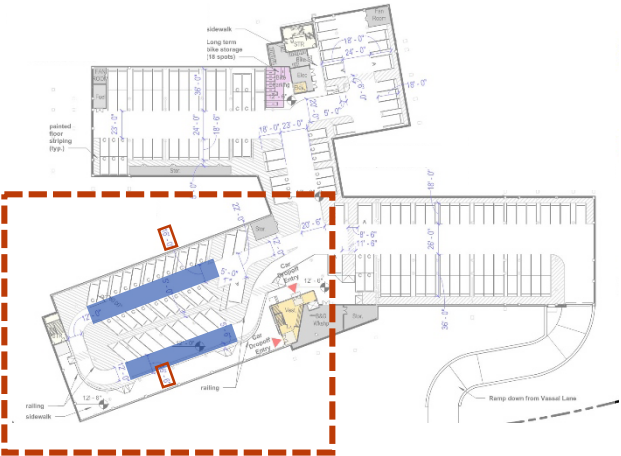




# VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

REQUIRED, STANDARD: 22' REQUESTED 16'- 6"

REQUIRED, COMPACT: 20' REQUESTED 16'



 Impacted Aisles





**PERKINS —  
EASTMAN**

*Human by Design*

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

**TOBIN MONTESSORI AND VASSAL LANE UPPER SCHOOLS PROJECT**

**JULY 15, 2021**

# BZA HEARING





## MEMO

Perkins Eastman  
Architects DPC

Date	7/9/2021	
Project Name	Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper	
Project Number	79131	
Subject	Tobin Montessori Vassal Lane Upper Schools Project BZA Application – supplementary and additional information	
From	Dan Arons AIA, LEED	d.aron@perkinseastman.com
To	BZA	
	City of Cambridge	
	Email Address	VIA: VIA

The following is a consolidation and additional information highlighting the **GENERAL STATEMENTS ON HARSHIPS applicable to each condition for which relief is requested** in the referenced application:

### Statements from Application

*A literal enforcement of the provisions of this Ordinance would involve substantial hardship, financial or otherwise. The site shape, configuration (with the lot spanning both the Open Space and Residential B Districts), size and geometries, the design aim to maximize the open space for the community and Article 97 restrictions unique to this site in this neighborhood are all hardship factors for the project. Outlined below are each of the variances sought and the hardships that would result from enforcement of the Ordinance.*

*Hardships for the project that trigger the need to seek the variances outlined in this application include and stem from conditions unique to the site. In addition to the hardships described above, there are existing soil conditions including a high water table and hazardous soil contaminants (which will be mitigated as part of this project) that are also hardships for this site. The Open Space district portion of the site is significantly larger than the Residential B area, further restricting the site. Additionally, the project's program, neighborhood context sensitive design approach and drive to maximize and optimize open space on the site all play a role in the resulting constraints and resulting in the need to seek relief by variance.*

## Additional Information

Particular conditions unique to this site, but not to the entire zoning district, overburden it with hardships that impact the development of the site and would do so, regardless of the development considered. They are not unique to the particular project under consideration. These conditions, unique to this site, but not to the entire zoning district, leading to the need for relief include:

- **Contaminated soils** are the result of the historic use of the site which was previously excavated as a clay pit. The void was then used as a dump, eventually filled up and covered over before using the site for the Tobin School and the Father Callanan Park. Extensive remediation is required for the control and remediation of contaminated soils. These are costly and impact the timing of the project.
- **Bearing capacity of soils** – the site cannot support conventional footings and foundations, resulting in the need for sophisticated, complex and costly deep foundation systems. The costs and difficulty of using these deep piles results in making a taller building with a relatively compact footprint significantly more feasible than a low, wide building with a larger footprint. The resultant height requires relief from height restrictions.
- **Irregularly shaped site/lot and Protected Open Space** adds complexity to the development. The C-shaped lot leaves little useful space and approximately half of the lot is constitutionally protected under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution. Although, the importance of the Open Space is certain, any significant development of this site bears the hardship of continuing the commitment to protect the Open Space.
- The **limiting size** of the lot and that it **spans two districts, ResB and Open Space**, require creative design solutions, but also indicated the need for relief so as to limit hardships.

The following outlines hardships that would burden the project if the requested relief is delayed or not granted:

- A City promise to expand the preschool program would not come to fruition, if the program is further reduced.
- Students will be displaced for a longer period in inadequate conditions.
- If a new building is not built, existing building issues would need to be addressed
  - The majority of the existing building components are past their life expectancy
  - The building is not designed to current standards, lacks adequate daylight, has compressed corridors, lacks robust exterior wall and roof system, has substandard mechanical ventilation system
  - Repairs are needed – for example, leaky roofs - teachers have described walking into their classroom and having to clean up water puddles; and in the hallways needing multiple buckets to collect water dripping from the ceiling.
  - Seismic upgrades would be significant to an existing building of this vintage
  - Universal access upgrades are needed
  - The layout does not work with the current program and the building is too small.
  - Hazardous materials must be addressed with any renovation or upgrades
  - Risk of not having enough building envelop to support existing program, short of growth; resulting in less program



- If building height is reduced the building would tend to sprawl across the site, resulting in
  - a lower building built to set-backs that are closer to neighbors than current design
  - reduction in stormwater control systems
  - loss of recreation space
  - reduction in tree planting

## **HARDSHIPS BY REQUESTED VARIANCE OR SPECIAL PERMIT**

### **Article 4.000 Section 4.25 Open Space Procedural Requirements (Variance)**

#### Statements from Application

*A variance is sought to waive the procedural requirements of Section 4.25 for a non-open space use in an Open Space district. To undertake the Section 4.25 requirements, generally would be repeating work and procedures completed as part of the process of this project. This could result in confusion for the community and would be a significant cost burden to the project.*

*At the commencement of the project, a Feasibility Study, dated March 12, 2020, was completed. The study that looked at options for the development of the project.*

*Furthermore, since the spring of 2019, this Project has had multiple meetings and forums with the Community where use, details and size of the Project's open space were reviewed. The following is a list of dates, when a meeting or forum occurred where the topic was discussed and/or when comments were collected for response: **4-30-2019, 11-13-2019, 11-15-2019, 11-16-2019, 11-25-2019, 11-26-2019, 12-2-2019, 1-8-2020, 1-16-2020, 2-12-2020, 7-29-2020.***

*Additionally, the Article 97 package was submitted to the State Legislature at the time of this filing. Finally, of note, the design of the building and the site has afforded that the usable open space area is larger at the completion of this project compared to the current condition.*

*Section 4.25, procedural requirements related to a non-open space use in an OS district, allows a City school as a permitted use pursuant to Section 4.33.b.1. The design aimed to maintain, optimize and maximize open space was driven by a process and procedures that included those considerations.*

#### Additional Information

- If the variance is not granted, it will create a significant schedule burden with downstream impacts on budgeting, short-term facilities, and programs.
- The results of the foregoing community engagement resulted in community benefits including reduced traffic impacts and building size reduction due to programmatic reductions including the elimination of 4 preschool classrooms, and 2 community school classrooms, programs/classrooms which will have to be provided elsewhere in order to meet City commitments.
- As a point of information, the City continues to manage the size of the building and has reduced the gross area by

- 18% during the Schematic Design and Design Development phases.
- The scale of the foregoing community engagement included the dozen meetings and forums in which questions were addressed in real time, but the project team responded to over 600 comments and questions. The results of these efforts might need to be redone, if this variance is not approved.
- It should further be noted that the City has maintained a website for the project, announcing meetings and posting presentations from all Community meetings and other such forums. The website also posts reports and other related materials for the project for the Community engagement and information.

## **Article 5.000 Section 5.54.1.a – FAR (Variance)**

### Statements from Application

*The program requirements for the three schools: Department of Human Services Preschool and Community School, Tobin Montessori, and the Vassal Lane Upper School, drive the gross area for the building and make the relief requested necessary. Compliance with the FAR would call for a drastic reduction in the program, not allowing the three schools to operate adequately or properly. In addition to relieving the schools of their inadequate building space, this project serves the City of Cambridge by providing a home for the Department of Human Services Preschool, and increases capacity for future enrollment. These program enhancements drive the required gross area of the building.*

*The FAR and Height relief being sought is in alignment with relief provided by Section 5.54 for schools in residential districts. The massing and height of the building tie-in to the context of the neighborhood and provide the site with increased usable open space. The relief requested relates to the shape of the lot and the structure, where a significant portion of the land is subject to protection by Article 97.*

### Additional Information

- The existing building was constructed prior to the establishment of the Open Space Zone. Because the OS zone now exists, even the existing building could not be constructed by rights.
- To reconstruct the buildings to modern code and under the now-existing Massachusetts Architectural Access Board and Americans with Disabilities Act, a building constructed today to house the existing program would need to be larger than the existing building to house the same program.
- The program is larger than the existing program to meet the City's needs, require additional area and hence this variance.
- If this variance is not granted, the program would need to be dramatically reduced and the schools would either not meet modern standards or could not be constructed on this site.

## **Article 5.000 Section 5.54.1.d – HEIGHT (Variance)**

### Statements from Application

*Efforts to optimize open area ratio, maintain setbacks and tie-in to the neighborhood character, scale and context all on a constraining shaped site, with the majority of the site is in the OS district making the height limitations on the project stringent. Out of respect for the neighbors to the south and east of the*



*site, the taller portions of the building were kept to the northeast side of the site, adjacent to commercial uses, but within the OS district. Compliance with the height would change the massing, causing a decrease of usable open space (falling below the existing usable open space) and shifting a higher massing to be located near the abutting houses. These unique site constraining factors, the Article 97 restrictions, the aim to maximize open space for the community, the neighborhood sensitive context driven design and program requirements impose a hardship to the project that necessitate height relief.*

## Additional Information

- Through the design process and community engagement, a priority was set to minimize the building footprint. This results in the need to increase the number of stories to house the same program (even though reduced as noted above).
- If this variance is not granted, some other element of the site will need to be compromised:
  - Program
  - Underground stormwater tank located here to address local neighborhood flooding
  - Surface bioswales designed on this site to address flooding of vassal lane
  - Recreation space as Article 97 Open space might need to be used for school playgrounds
  - Other open recreation space
- The floor-to-floor heights have been reduced since the Feasibility Study in an attempt to optimize building height and cost. The building height is at a minimum to facilitate modern heating ventilation and air conditioning systems.
- If this variance is not granted, the program would need to be dramatically reduced and the schools would either not meet modern standards or could not be constructed on this site.

## **Article 6.000 Section 6.42 – Off street Parking – width of aisles (Variance)**

### Statements from Application

*The southwest wing of the garage will provide short-term parking for parents and a designated area for student drop-off. To realize the project parking needs, mitigate speed and deter cars from passing other cars in the one-way vehicular aisle of this wing, the aisle width in this zone of the basement parking area has been reduced to 16'-0" and 16'-6" with direction and guidance from TP&T. The Section 6.42 of the Ordinance requires these aisles respectively to be 20', where compact cars are parked, and 22' where standard cars are parked. The narrowed aisles for this area were recommendations made by the City and the Design Team traffic consultant for traffic management.*

*The drop-off area is supported by one-way traffic flow. The first leg is a double-loaded aisle with compact size car parking at 60 degrees. The second leg of the one-way drive aisle includes 60 degree standard car size parking on the driver side and parallel drop off on the opposite passenger side. The width requirements of the Ordinance would prevent achieving the recommended traffic management measures, which are aimed at supporting safe and efficient student drop-off and pick-up in a covered, temperature controlled environment on the school property and away from surrounding neighborhood streets.*

*The below grade garage parking and circulation layout is bound and constrained by the building footprint and structural column configuration, which results from the site shape, the project design to maximize/optimize open space on the site and other hardship factors described above.*

*The area of below-grade drop-off removes this traffic function from the street and grade level of the site, which further contributes to unencumbered open space at grade level. The request for relief for a narrowed width of the one-way drive aisle in the southwest wing is a traffic control measure needed to accommodate the conditions of the below-grade drop-off area. Width relief from Section 6.42 of the Ordinance is sought.*

#### Additional Information

- The site configuration/shape, Article 97 requirements, the desire to limit on-site and in-neighborhood parking and the desire to maximize open recreation area all lead to the designed below-grade garage configuration.
- The aisles are reduced in the southwest quadrant only. If the variance is not granted and the aisles are widened, according to the City's traffic department and third party traffic consultant, it would create a less safe environment.

#### **Article 7.000 Section 7.16.11 & 7.16.21.B – Signage (Variance)**

##### Statements from Application

*The project includes signs at the site and on the building for identification, wayfinding, safety, educational purposes and field support (sports score board); a variance is sought for relief on signage that is beyond what is permitted and exempt from Article 7. Outlined below are the details for the requested relief:*

- Identification Signage (Section 7.16.21.B)  
*Relief is requested on the quantity of signs. The building includes 5 entrances, each will have a sign or signs identifying the schools. There will also be up to 3 entrances having a corresponding low wall sign on the site, near the street. Two signs are permitted per building; relief is sought for an additional ten (10) signs, each up to 20 sf.*
- Educational signage  
*The project design and history is full of teaching opportunities regarding sustainable design elements, details about the planting, environmental cycles and other related elements. Signs with the related educational information will be placed throughout the site. This type of sign is not addressed in Article 7 (under permitted 7.16.21.B nor exempt 7.16.11). The City of Cambridge seeks a relief to allow for up to 6 signs, at up to six (6) sf, mounted with the top of the sign up to 5' above the surrounding mean grade.*
- Wayfinding and site circulation (Section 7.16.11)  
*The City of Cambridge seeks relief for a size of up to 21 sf on up to three (3) wayfinding signs, for public safety and convenience. To facilitate the circulation of pedestrians, busses and cars at the site, clear, site distinguished signage are important for safety and wayfinding.*



- Sports Score Board  
*A variance is sought for relief to allow for the installation of a scoreboard of up to 180 sf, mounted at a height of up to 14' above the surrounding mean grade. Article 7 does not address scoreboards. A scoreboard is needed to track the scores at games.*
- *The Identification signage hardship stems from one building with 5 functioning entries serving 3 assigned schools, as well as, the community; which is, in part, due to the shape and configuration of the lot.*
- *The Educational signage hardship stems from a need for communicating important educational features and elements of the building and site that will not/cannot otherwise be shared with the community and children at the site.*
- *The urban site creates a complexity hardship for wayfinding that necessitates signage that can establish a graphic hierarchy and distinction making it quickly and easily understood.*
- *The scoreboard allows the tracking of scores at games. It becomes a hardship to not have a scoreboard at a field used for games.*

## **Article 22.00 Section 22.35.2 – 80% Solar Energy System Coverage (Variance)**

### Statements from Application

*The project's design intent is to maximize the coverage area of the photo voltaic roof panel system. At the time of this application submission, the project is expected to meet this requirement; however, roof coordination is at a mid-Design Development level. Changes to mechanical equipment locations, screens, etc. could cause adjustments to the layout within the existing boundaries of the roof that could prevent project from achieving the 80% coverage required by the Ordinance. A small reduction of the coverage is sought as relief to ensure project compliance.*

*The hardship results from the roof size, geometries and configuration. The roof geometries make some areas impractical for a PV panel installation; there are some areas of the roof where there is little sun exposure resulting from the roof configuration. The origins of this hardship come from the constraining site factors that drive the building design. The unique site size, shape and configuration (most of the site is in the OS District), Article 97 restrictions, and a campus design driven to maximize usable open space all result in limited available roof area for PV system installation.*

*The request for relief on the photo voltaic panel system coverage at the roof, generally does not affect the zoning districts for R and OS. The project intent is to maximize the coverage of the system on the roof, however, there are 'left-over' areas resulting from the geometries of the roof, equipment or clearances that make it a hardship to install panels in these kinds of areas/locations. The hardship relates to the structure and the shape of the lot and the Article 97 restrictions, which necessitated the use of various angles, which may prevent some areas of coverage due to equipment dimensions or otherwise, and due*

*to the required installation of geothermal wells deep underground immediately adjacent to the structure.*

Additional Information

- The design will maximize the available rooftop
- The 80% requirement poses a hardship because there are code requirements for access and physical rooftop requirements for equipment that may make somewhat less than 80% of the roof available, even though the systems have been located as far north as possible to minimize rooftop array shading.

**Article 6.000 Section 6.43.2 – Tandem Parking (Special Permit)**

Statements from Application

*The tandem parking for which a special permit is being sought, while indirectly related to traffic, has the positive benefits of relieving overall car congestion with the increase of off-street parking. The tandem parking will be utilized to meet the project requirement of 150 parking spaces, which exceeds the 105 spaces required by the Ordinance. The additional tandem parking spaces should result in fewer staff parking on the streets; or in the surrounding area, thus benefiting the neighborhood.*

*Tandem parking will provide additional parking capacity, which will relieve neighborhood street parking. The parking is below grade, so it is not seen and is an improvement from the current surface parking. The tandem parking is for school staff, not public use and follows the precedent of the King Open School project.*

*Parking is below grade, the tandem parking will provide additional capacity, which relieves nearby parking and alleviates congestion in the neighborhood.*

Additional Information

- If the Special Permit is not granted, the number of below grade parking spaces will be reduced and a hardship created by having to provide spaces in lieu of recreational open space or surface stormwater bioswales.
- If the Special Permit is not granted, additional traffic on neighborhood streets may occur as staff may park on streets.

**– END OF MEMO –**



## **Pacheco, Maria**

---

**From:** Doug Brown <douglas\_p\_brown@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 27, 2021 12:43 AM  
**To:** Pacheco, Maria; 'Agassiz Baldwin Community - PHOEBE SINCLAIR, COMMUNITY LIAISON'; 'Agassiz Neighborhood Council - Fred Meyer'; 'ALEXANDRA OFFIONG'; 'Ann Tennis - Cambridge Highland Association'; 'Area 4 Neighborhood Coalition - Julian Cassa & Liz Layton'; 'Bethany Stevens'; City Council; 'Cambridge Transcriptionist (Buck Ewing)'; 'Cambridge Transcripts'; 'Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association C/o Rebecca Bowie, President'; 'CARL BARRON - CENTRAL SQ. BUSINESS ASSOCIATION'; 'Carol O'Hare'; 'Cathy Burns - Cambridge Transcriptionist'; Crane, Paula; 'Dana Park Neigh. Association - Ginny Payson'; 'Dennis Carlone - Carlone & Associates Architecture'; 'East Cambridge Business Association - Jason Alves'; 'East Cambridge Planning Team - Charles Hinds, President'; 'East End House - Mike Delia, Executive Director'; Hill, Eric; 'Freelance Journalist John Hawkinson'; 'Fresh Pond Residents Alliance - Alison Field-Juma, Co-Chair'; 'Ingrid Marchesano - Watertown Planning Board'; 'Jessica Kennicker - Cambridge Transcriptionist'; 'Margaret Fuller House - Selvin Chambers'; 'MICHAEL BRANDON'; Crosbie, Allison; 'Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association - C/o Fritz Donovan'; 'Neighborhood Association of East Cambridge'; 'North Cambridge Stabilization Committee - RICHARD CLAREY, CHAIRMAN'; 'Pebble Gifford'; Perez, Lori; 'Peter Kroon - (North Commons Area)'; 'Porter Sq. Neighborhood Association & Buena Vista Social Club C/o Ruth A. Ryals'; 'Richdale Ave Neighborhood Association - JEFFREY LIPSHAW'; 'Riverside Neighborhood Association - LAWRENCE ADKINS, PRESIDENT'; 'Ronald Axelrod - Planning & Development'; Burks, Sarah; Scott, Sarah; Shulman, Adam; Groll, Stephanie; Sullivan, Charles M.; 'Susan Hunziker - Porter Sq. Neighborhood Assoc.'; Joseph, Swaathi; 'Taylor Square Neighborhood Association - FENTON HOLLANDER'; Wilson, Anthony; 'Patricia Nolan'; 'Ann Stewart'; 'Mike Nakagawa'; 'Doug Brown'; 'Wendy Zens'; Quinton Zondervan; Totten, Daniel; 'Michael Scarlett'; 'Home'  
**Subject:** RE: July 15, 2021 BZA Agenda  
**Attachments:** JULY 15, 2021 Board of Zoning Appeal Agenda.pdf; 197vassallnbza127462documents.pdf  
**Importance:** High

Dear Maria,

Please accept the following comments regarding your notice of an upcoming BZA hearing for the Tobin project. Note that NO PUBLIC NOTICE was previously provided to the community in regards to this hearing, including a Tobin-related email communication sent out just this week that made no mention of the hearing. Further, at the last team meeting on site just two weeks ago, we were told that the building's design was still in process and that desired changes to the design could still be included. This was specifically said in regards to the amount of façade transparency, which many community members have commented about negatively. (The current design is just 30% or less transparent, compared to the new Cambridge Street school which is 100% transparent on the ground floor). Clearly, this was not true, as the team has now submitted their plans to the BZA for final approval.

Besides the clear lack of good faith shown by this surprise hearing, there are a number of problems with the application itself, as well as a problem with the specific variances sought. First, the

application fails to provide setback and height information for the existing building, implying on Page 9 that because the current building is to be torn down, no such information is needed. This is entirely incorrect, as abutters would have no way to compare the proposed design to the current one in regards to how close or far away the building will be to them, or how high it will loom over their homes. Similarly, to my point above, no calculations are provided regarding the actual amount of transparency on each aspect of the building such that the design can be fully understood or compared to similar City projects. Some facades appear to be almost entirely devoid of windows.

As for the design itself, besides the fortress-like appearance of the building, there are a number of other concerning details provided in the City's application, a copy of which is attached here but that has never been shared publicly before. For example, a review of the parking plan reveals a drop-off queue that would take up almost the entire length of the building. Air quality concerns within the garage and in the building above come immediately to mind. The circulation plan itself is also problematic, as it would appear to require a crossover of incoming and outgoing traffic in the center of the garage space. In addition, the travel lane is just 12' wide, which will most likely make it extremely difficult for drivers using the diagonal spaces to exit easily, particularly when cars are queued for pickup. (To that point, it's not clear why the basement garage needs to be confined to the dimensions of the building itself, as basement level spaces can be larger than the structure above them and would thus provide much simpler parking and drop-off options).

In addition, the project is seeking a variance to avoid a project analysis under Article 4.25, the section of the Zoning Ordinance that governs the use of open space for non-open space purposes. Among the requirements of this section is a requirement to provide "an analysis of alternative sites for the development outside of the district." To begin, it's not clear whether it is even possible to receive a variance for this requirement, as Section 4.25 does not actually restrict the building's design in any way. Instead, it simply requires the submission of a report to the Planning Board, an extremely prudent step before the funding and construction of a new 299,000 square foot building in an existing Open Space district. Indeed, a project of this size almost demands such a review by the Planning Board, and I hope that the BZA will see fit to request it.

Lastly, there has been much discussion regarding the existing large trees on the site and whether the large trees on the west side of the site can be saved rather than cut. These trees, currently running along the rear driveway, include two 18", two 20", and one 30" specimen, all in good health. It is the neighborhood's hope that these trees can be saved and incorporated into a revised driveway design. Sadly, the BZA application includes no tree plan, no information regarding the planned cutting of existing trees, and no comparison of the current and proposed building footprints such that an assessment can be made regarding the reuse of the current trees under a revised plan. Such information is standard for hearings before the Planning Board, and should be provided to the Board of Zoning Appeal, as well.



In conclusion, I am just now reviewing the full BZA application and will almost certainly find other issues of concern as I proceed. In doing so, it is my hope that the City is open to working with the community to get the details of this \$250 million project correct, rather than attempting to ram through a poorly conceived and hastily executed design.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Doug Brown  
35 Standish Street

---

**From:** Pacheco, Maria <mpacheco@cambridgema.gov>

**Sent:** Thursday, June 24, 2021 10:34 AM

**To:** Agassiz Baldwin Community - PHOEBE SINCLAIR, COMMUNITY LIAISON <psinclair@agassiz.org>; Agassiz Neighborhood Council - Fred Meyer (cambridgefred@comcast.net) <cambridgefred@comcast.net>; ALEXANDRA OFFIONG <ALEXANDRA\_OFFIONG@HARVARD.EDU>; Ann Tennis - Cambridge Highland Association <jatennis@comcast.net>; Area 4 Neighborhood Coalition - Julian Cassa & Liz Layton <area4neighborhoodcoalition@gmail.com>; Bethany Stevens <beth100springstreet@gmail.com>; City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; Cambridge Transcriptionist (Buck Ewing) <Buck@ctran.com>; Cambridge Transcripts <transcripts@ctran.com>; Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association C/o Rebecca Bowie, President <rsrbowie@gmail.com>; CARL BARRON - CENTRAL SQ. BUSINESS ASSOCIATION <carlbarron@aol.com>; Carol O'Hare <cbo1066@gmail.com>; Cathy Burns - Cambridge Transcriptionist <cathodic@gmail.com>; Crane, Paula <pcrane@cambridgema.gov>; Dana Park Neigh. Association - Ginny Payson <ginnyp214@comcast.net>; Dennis Carlone - Carlone & Associates Archiecture <dcarlone@carloneassociates.com>; East Cambridge Business Association - Jason Alves <baecamb@gmail.com>; East Cambridge Planning Team - Charles Hinds, President <chuckhinds@msn.com>; East End House - Mike Delia, Executive Director <michael@eastendhouse.org>; Hill, Eric <ehill@cambridgema.gov>; Freelance Journalist John Hawkinson (jhawk@alum.mit.edu) <jhawk@alum.mit.edu>; Fresh Pond Residents Alliance - Alison Field-Juma, Co-Chair <fieldjuma@gmail.com>; Fresh Pond Residents Alliance - Doug Brown, Co-Chair <douglas\_p\_brown@yahoo.com>; Ingrid Marchesano - Watertown Planning Board <imarchesano@watertown-ma.gov>; Jessica Kennicker - Cambridge Transcriptionist <jessica@ctran.com>; Margaret Fuller House - Selvin Chambers <Schambers@margaretfullerhouse.org>; MICHAEL BRANDON <mjbrandon@gmail.com>; Crosbie, Allison <acrosbie@cambridgema.gov>; Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association - C/o Fritz Donovan <fritzdonov@aol.com>; Neighborhood Association of East Cambridge <info@naeastcambridge.org>; North Cambridge Stabilization Committee - RICHARD CLAREY, CHAIRMAN <rclarey@aol.com>; Pebble Gifford <PebbleGifford@icloud.com>; Perez, Lori <lperez@cambridgema.gov>; Peter Kroon - (North Commons Area) <pbkroon@yahoo.com>; Porter Sq. Neighborhood Association & Buena Vista Social Club C/o Ruth A. Ryals <rryals@comcast.net>; Richdale Ave Neighborhood Association - JEFFREY LIPSHAW <jlipshaw@gmail.com>; Riverside Neighborhood Association - LAWRENCE ADKINS, PRESIDENT <MrLJAdkins@msn.com>; Ronald Axelrod - Planning & Development <Ronaldaxelrod@aol.com>; Burks, Sarah <sburks@cambridgema.gov>; Scott, Sarah <sascott@cambridgema.gov>; Shulman, Adam <ashulman@cambridgema.gov>; Groll, Stephanie <sgroll@cambridgema.gov>; Sullivan, Charles M. <csullivan@cambridgema.gov>; Susan Hunziker - Porter Sq. Neighborhood Assoc. <shunziker@comcast.net>; Joseph, Swaathi <sjoseph@cambridgema.gov>; Taylor Square Neighborhood Association - FENTON HOLLANDER <watmus@gmail.com>; Wilson, Anthony <awilson@cambridgema.gov>

**Subject:** July 15, 2021 BZA Agenda

Hi All,

Attached is the July 15, 2021 Board of Zoning Appeal Agenda.

Thanks, Maria