



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date:	December 11, 2025
Subject:	Final Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Advisory Design Consultation Procedure Compliance Certification
Project Location:	28-30 Wendell Street
Date of Planning Board Meeting:	November 18, 2025

Project Overview

The Planning Board (the “Board”) met on Tuesday, November 18, 2025 to review and comment on the revised design for 28-30 Wendell Street, a residential development by HRI 30 Wendell LLC (the “Developer”) under the Affordable Housing Overlay (“AHO”) in Section 11.207 of the Zoning Ordinance. The Board reviewed a revised plan set submitted by the Developer dated October 9, 2025, as well as staff memos from the Community Development Department (CDD), which are attached. The Board held its first advisory consultation on August 5, 2025 and issued an initial report dated [August 25, 2025](#).

Board Comments

Overall, the Board noted that the revised designs by HRI were responsive to both staff and Board comments. Specifically, Board members appreciated the refined rear courtyard design, ground floor façade transparency changes, and adjustments to the cornices. In addition to the suggestions for further study in the CDD Urban Design report, the Board offers the following suggestions to explore as the proposal moves forward:

- The Board strongly suggests exploring ways to enhance the inset in the Wendell Street façade to celebrate it as a design feature. Or consider alternative façade recesses or projections, like bay windows, to meet the zoning requirement.
- Consider refinements to the ground floor right-hand side of the Wendell Street façade, including the garage door and Little Free Library, to add more visual interest. Some Board members appreciated the playful brickwork presented in the first iteration of the design.
- Consider adding lintels to the second-floor windows on the Wendell Street façade. Ensure these are carefully coordinated with the proposed brick soldier course.
- Continue to refine the overall landscape plan to achieve a more cohesive design.

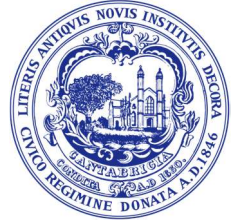
AHO Compliance Summary

This report certifies that HRI has completed the Advisory Design Consultation Procedure in order to comply with the procedures for development under the Affordable Housing Overlay set forth in Section 11.207.8 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance.

Submitted for the Planning Board,

Swaathi Joseph

Representative to the Planning Board, authorized by Tom Sieniewicz, Vice-Chair.



To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: November 12, 2025

Re: Affordable Housing Overlay Design Consultation **AHO-8, 28-30 Wendell Street**

Overview

Submission Type:	Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Advisory Design Review
Applicant:	HRI 30 Wendell LLC
Zoning District(s):	Residence C-2A
Proposal Summary:	Construction of 8-story building in place of the existing 3-story buildings and tennis court to create 95 new rental units and a community space under the AHO.
Planning Board Action:	Review and comment on conformance with AHO Development Standards, City Development Guidelines for the proposal area, Design Guidelines for Multifamily Housing, and Citywide Urban Design Objectives.
Memo Contents:	CDD Zoning Report & Urban Design Report
Other Staff Reports:	None

Zoning & Development Staff Report

Overview

Homeowners Rehab, Inc. (“HRI” or the “Developer”) is proposing to demolish the existing structures and construct a new 8-story, 90-foot tall building consisting of a total of 95 affordable units. The project will consist of 40 units designed for seniors and 55 units designed for families and will also include a 1,000 square-foot multipurpose community space on the ground floor that will be available to residents as well as neighborhood organizations. Five off-street parking spaces are proposed along with 77 long-term bicycle parking spaces and eight short-term bicycle parking spaces. The total Gross Floor Area (GFA) of the project is 112,066 square feet and will include a total of 6,764 square feet of open space.

Planning Board Comments from Initial Consultation Meeting

Board members were very supportive of the proposed use, acknowledging the need for both affordable senior housing and family-sized units. Some Board members had concerns about the massing but the Board generally supported the height of the building and the use of brick on the Wendell Street façade. The Board commended HRI on a thorough and responsive community engagement process.

The Board encouraged HRI to consider opportunities to add more plantings in the rear courtyard and explore ways to make the forecourt more publicly accessible as they continue to refine the project’s site design.

As they refine the design of the building, Board members suggested HRI explore opportunities to open the sunroom to the rear courtyard and alternative locations for the Hub. The Board suggested the Developer explore several refinements to the building’s façade including alternative color options for the main massing, reduced glazing on the first floor, and improving the aesthetics of the garage door.

Staff Comments on Revised Submission

A revised application was received by the City dated October 9, 2025, consisting of revised applications forms and narrative, revised graphics volume, and a revised appendix volume. Additional Green Factor materials were submitted on October 14, 2025 and a revised landscape plan was received on October 27, 2025.

CDD staff have confirmed the project has provided sufficient documentation to show compliance with both Green Building and Green Factor standards at this stage of review. The Developer made several changes to the proposed landscaping plan since the first Planning Board consultation, many of which are intended to ensure compliance with the Green Factor zoning requirements. Green Factor standards are designed to incentivize vegetation and other cooling features within 20 feet of the street, making the enhanced landscaping in the front yard a key component of the project’s heat resilience strategy. Adjustments to the rear courtyard increasing the area of passive landscaping also support the project’s overall Green Factor approach. The specific site plan changes are detailed further in the following Urban Design Staff Report.

In the initial [Zoning Memo](#) on this proposal, CDD staff noted two elements that needed additional information to determine that the proposal will be compliant with the AHO zoning standards. These elements, along with the revised submission response, are highlighted below for the Board’s information:

- **Short-term Bicycle Parking:** Article 6.000 standards require a minimum 3-foot clearance on either side of each bike rack.
 - Page 32 of Volume 2 of the revised submission shows the enlarged short-term bicycle parking plan, which appears to demonstrate compliance with Article 6.000 standards. Three of the short-term bike racks were moved in the updated landscape plan. It appears the new design will also comply, but more detail is needed to confirm.
- **Minimum Façade Projecting/Recessed Elements:** The AHO zoning standards require that an AHO Project incorporate projecting and/or recessed architectural elements of at least two feet for every forty (40) feet of a façade facing a public street.
 - Page 15 of Volume 2 of the revised submission shows the façade details demonstrating compliance with the minimum projection requirements.

Consistency with AHO Development Standards

The AHO development standards applicable to this project are summarized in the table below.

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Residence C-2A	Summary of Compliance
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multifamily dwellings allowed • Active non-residential uses allowed in the base zoning district are permitted on the ground floor as-of-right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal includes multifamily dwellings and a 1,000 square-foot community space on the ground floor
Building Height & Stories Above Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying District Dimensional Standards allow six stories, 75 feet • AHO Developments are allowed up to 13 stories, 150 feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed project is eight stories and 90 feet in height.
Yard Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Front and Side Yard • 5’ Rear Yard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AHO Project proposes a rear yard setback of 15 feet.
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHO Developments must have 30% open space to lot area or meet the underlying District Dimensional Standard, whichever is less. • A lot in a C-2A district adjacent to a C-1 district has a 30% open space requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed AHO Project includes 7,124 square feet of open space, meeting the 30% minimum requirement. All open space is proposed to be permeable.
Parking and Bicycle Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no minimum off-street parking for an AHO Development. • Bicycle parking is required per Article 6.100, but additional flexibility is provided for the location, quantity and type (long-term and short-term) of bicycle parking required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AHO project includes a long-term bicycle parking room inside the building with 77 parking spaces and five bike racks along the Wendell Street side of the building, consisting of 10 short-term bicycle parking

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Residence C-2A	Summary of Compliance
		spaces. These spaces appear to conform to the quantity and dimensional requirements in Article 6.000.
Site Design and Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front yards may be landscaped or hardscaped but cannot be used for off-street parking. • Pedestrian entrances shall be visible from the street. • Buildings with front facades in excess of 250' in length shall provide forecourts to break up massing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed project meets all the Site Design and Arrangement requirements.
Building Facades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building facades facing public streets shall have a minimum percentage of 20% glazing. • Building facades must include projecting and/or recessed elements of at least two feet on an average interval of 40 linear feet along a Public Street, and 80 feet elsewhere. Such projecting or recessed elements do not apply to the lowest or highest Story Above Grade. • Facades of ground stories shall have expanses of no more than 25' with no windows or pedestrian entryways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed project meets all the Building Facade requirements.
Ground Stories and Below Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground stories with non-residential uses must have a height of at least 15' and a depth of 35'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AHO Project illustrates a 15-foot Ground Story height.
Mechanical Equipment, Refuse Storage and Loading Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical equipment shall be generally screened from view. Rooftop mechanical equipment must be set back from the roof line equal to its height. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground story mechanicals and refuse areas appear to be either within the building itself or on the rear side of the building. All rooftop equipment appears to be set back at least 10 feet.
Environmental Design Standards	<p>This AHO project is subject to the following Sustainable Development Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 22.20: Green Building • Section 22.80: Flood Resilience • Section 22.90: Green Factor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project intends to meet Green Building requirements by targeting Enterprise Green Communities certification. • Documentation demonstrating compliance with all relevant Sustainable Development Standards has been submitted to and certified by CDD and DPW staff.

19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]

Objective	Indicators
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods • Consistency with established streetscape • Compatibility with adjacent uses • Consideration of nearby historic buildings
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhabited ground floor spaces • Discouraged ground-floor parking • Windows on ground floor • Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways • Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/impact of mechanical equipment • Location/impact of loading and trash handling • Stormwater management • Shadow impacts • Retaining walls, if provided • Building scale and wall treatment • Outdoor lighting • Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management • Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service • Efficient design (LEED standards)
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional use focused on existing campuses • Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed • Preservation of historic structures and environment • Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as a component of large, multi-building development • Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families
Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development • Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks • Provide wider range of activities
Development should be resilient to the effects of climate change as anticipated in the <i>Resilient Cambridge</i> plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-to-date projections of climate change impacts over the project's anticipated lifespan are incorporated • Flood Resilience Standard in Section 22.80 and the Green Factor Standard in Section 22.90 are met or exceeded • Use of strategies that have environmental co-benefits • Integrative approach to climate change resilience that accounts for the existing context and promotes the other design objectives of the area and the City.

Urban Design Staff Report

Overview

The proposed design for the Affordable Housing project at 28-30 Wendell Street has continued to advance positively since the first Planning Board hearing was held on August 5, 2025. During the intervening time the applicant, Homeowners Rehab Inc. (HRI), met with City design staff to review and discuss the Planning Board's feedback as well as any outstanding zoning issues. Additionally, Planning Board members were offered the opportunity to view samples of the proposed materials at the City Hall Annex. Comments received afterwards suggest that members who viewed the materials were generally supportive of the choices.

The overall approach to the project's site plan, massing, cladding materials, and program distribution have generally remained consistent since the previous hearing. However, a number of changes and refinements have been made to address comments and concerns raised by members at the previous hearing. These include:

Front (north) Courtyard and Front Yard

- The design of the paved portions has been further consolidated and rationalized.
- The applicant has committed to working with the City Arborist and DPW to install additional street trees between the curb cut and entrance to the lobby.

Rear (south) Resident Courtyard

- Doorways have been added from both the Resident Common Room and Sunroom directly into the courtyard to increase indoor/outdoor connectivity.
- Additional vegetation has been added to the courtyard, with a canopy tree located at the center, additional planters, and a landscaped area along the western edge. The tree will act to reduce solar heat gain during the warmer portions of the year.
- The shade structure has been relocated to the southern side of the courtyard where it helps to further define the space and provides additional shading for the Resident Services room.
- The rear fence will be designed to incorporate hardwood panels with laser cut patterns to provide visual interest.

Building Massing and Facade

- The ground floor street-facing windows have been redesigned with a more residential scale and character that will help decrease light trespass at night.
- The primary lobby entrance has been moved further east so it is located more centrally and no longer immediately adjacent the western brick volume.
- The garage door will be painted or include imagery to reduce its impact on the public realm.
- The cornice profiles have been refined to better proportionally align with the scale of the building and similar examples from the existing adjacent context.
- The stone window lintels in the brick portions of the façade have been made taller to further visually increase the size of the windows.

Additional changes to the project’s design beyond those in response to the Planning Board’s comments include:

- The inclusion of a new canopy tree in the front (north) courtyard and additional understory trees in the front courtyard and west side yard setback.
- A reconfiguration of the floorplan on the seventh and eight floors that reduces the depth of the upper-level setback on the western side of the building but introduces a new upper-level setback on the southern façade to the west of the rear courtyard.
- The inclusion of a 30” wide by 24” deep inset in the central volume of the street-facing façade spanning from the second floor through the sixth floor to comply with the required number of façade offsets along the street-facing elevation.
- The redesign of the Little Free Library area to eliminate the previously proposed textured brick treatment and instead combine the library and the adjacent doors into a unified set of panels.

Urban Design Comments on Design Revisions

The majority of the design revisions proposed since the first Planning Board hearing have positively advanced the project. The building remains consistent with both the Multifamily and Citywide Urban Design Guidelines, and changes in response to Board feedback have addressed a number of earlier concerns. Remaining suggestions for consideration include:

Site Plan

The design of the front courtyard could be even further simplified to create a more unified space. Potential modifications could include:

- Consolidating the entry, bike parking, and seating area into a single cohesive composition.
- Widening the entrance to the space to create a more welcoming connection to the sidewalk.
- Including additional seating along the west edge of the paved entry area.
- Including an additional canopy tree on the west side of the courtyard to mirror the newly introduced one on the east side.
- Aligning the placement of trees with solid portions of the ground floor façade.
- Testing alternative orientations for the bike parking to increase ease of access.

Massing

The additional upper-level setback along the southwest portion of the seventh and eighth floors creates a more gradual transition in height between the project and the neighboring properties to the south. It also further reinforces the reading of the western portion of the building as a six-story volume. While the western upper-level setback above the sixth floor has been reduced, it remains substantial enough to provide a clear visual distinction between the 6-story and 8-story portions and reduce the perceived height of the building when viewed from street level.

Façade

Inset in the Central Building Volume

The inclusion of a vertical inset in the middle of the north elevation from the second through sixth floor creates an awkward solution to the requirement for a greater number of façade offsets. It introduces an incongruous design element and complicates the reading of the central volume by partially but not fully bifurcating it. Potential alternative strategies for satisfying the requirement could include:

- Optimally, introduce a projecting bay from floors two through six centered above the Lobby entrance. This would serve to further emphasize the building entry, provide a more substantial modulation of the middle façade, and moderately increase the size of the associated units.
- Less ideally, carry the inset all the way through the top of the building. This would create an alternative reading of the central portion as two cojoined volumes as opposed to a single one.

Ground Floor Fenestration

- Uniting the Hub entrance and the window immediately to the east into a single compositional element would eliminate the thin vertical band of brick currently shown between them.
- Evenly spacing the three windows on the ground floor of the north façade to the east of the Lobby entrance would better align them with the cadence of the windows above.
- The previous submission grouped the fenestration along the south-facing ground floor elevation of the courtyard. A similar organizational approach applied to the current design could produce a more logical arrangement and help further connect the inside to the outside.

Access

- Ensure the location and configuration of the garage access conforms to City sight line standards: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/Traffic/CPCC/dotsightlinereviewguidelines.pdf>
- Consider installing a vehicle exiting light (without sound) as an extra caution for pedestrians.
- Consider an automatic door for the bike room to make it easier to maneuver a bike through.

Rear Bays

- The darker color of the bays that form the east and west elevations of the rear courtyard could make the space appear smaller and less bright versus a lighter color cladding.
- Changing the bay spandrels to a more similar color to the rest of the bay's cladding would unify them as a single compositional object and avoid the "O" reading on the rear elevation.

Little Free Library

While the current proposal represents a more holistic approach to the Little Free Library and adjacent access doors, the loss of the textured brick shown in the previous proposal is unfortunate. Employing a similarly artful approach to the proposed paneled area would help enliven the public realm and could provide an opportunity to celebrate the site's history and connection to Lesley, as suggested by Planning Board members during the first hearing. The garage door could potentially benefit from being incorporated into this composition.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date:	August 25, 2025
Subject:	Initial Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Advisory Design Consultation
Project Location:	28-30 Wendell Street
Date of Planning Board Meeting:	August 5, 2025

Overview

The Planning Board (the “Board”) met on Tuesday, August 5, 2025 to review and comment on the design for 28-30 Wendell Street, a residential development by HRI 30 Wendell LLC (the “Developer”) under the Affordable Housing Overlay (“AHO”) in Section 11.207 of the Zoning Ordinance. The Board reviewed a plan set submitted by the Developer dated June 23, 2025, as well as staff memos from the Community Development Department (CDD) and Department of Public Works (DPW), which are attached.

Proposal Description

Homeowners Rehab, Inc. is proposing to demolish the existing structures and construct a new 8-story, 90-foot tall building consisting of a total of 95 affordable units. The project will consist of 40 units designed for seniors and 55 units designed for families and will also include a 1,000 square-foot multipurpose community space on the ground floor that will be available to residents as well as neighborhood organizations. Five off-street parking spaces are proposed along with 77 long-term bicycle parking spaces and eight short-term bicycle parking spaces. The total Gross Floor Area (GFA) of the project is 110,803 square feet and will include a total of 6,764 square feet of open space.

Board Comments

Board members were very supportive of the proposed use, acknowledging the need for both affordable senior housing and family-sized units. Some Board members had concerns about the massing but the Board generally supported the height of the building and the use of brick on the Wendell Street façade. The Board commended HRI on a thorough and responsive community engagement process.

As the proposal continues to develop, Board members urged the Developer to focus on the following program and design elements:

Site Design

- Consider opportunities to add more plantings in the rear courtyard.
- Explore ways to make the forecourt more publicly accessible, including widening sidewalks and reorienting benches and bike parking towards the street.

Building Design

- Consider opportunities to open the sunroom to the rear courtyard.
- Explore alternative color options for the main massing of the building other than gray.
- Board members felt the ground floor was too commercial-feeling and suggested the Developer test alternate locations for the Hub space and reduce the amount of glazing.
- Refine façade and cornice details to further break up the central massing and reduce the perceived height of the building.
- Explore ways to improve the aesthetics of the garage door on the Wendell Street façade.
- Provide materials showing the building's relationship to the neighborhood context including a physical or digital model and additional renderings or elevations.
- Provide additional details on the fence materials.

In addition to these topic areas, the Board supported comments made in the staff memos for the proposal and asked that they be considered to refine the project's design.

Submitted for the Planning Board,

Swaathi Joseph

Representative to the Planning Board, authorized by Mary Flynn, Chair.



To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: July 30, 2025

Re: Affordable Housing Overlay Design Consultation **AHO-8, 28-30 Wendell Street**

Overview

Submission Type: Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Advisory Design Review

Applicant: HRI 30 Wendell LLC

Zoning District(s): Residence C-2A

Proposal Summary: Construction of 8-story building in place of the existing 3-story buildings and tennis court to create 95 new rental units and a community space under the AHO.

Planning Board Action: Review and comment on conformance with AHO Development Standards, City Development Guidelines for the proposal area, Design Guidelines for Multifamily Housing, and Citywide Urban Design Objectives.

Memo Contents: CDD Zoning Report & Urban Design Report

Other Staff Reports: Department of Public Works (DPW) in separate document.

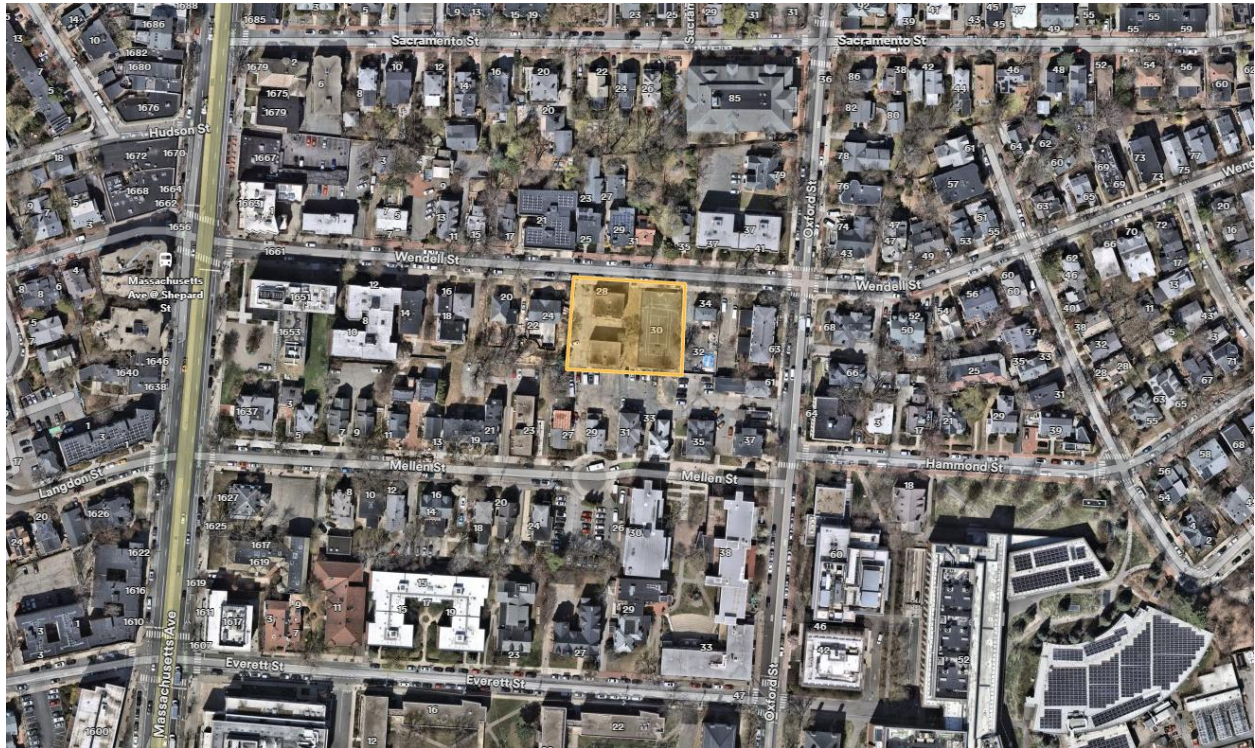
Melissa Peters | Assistant City Manager for Community Development
Sandra Clarke | Chief of Administration & Operations

Zoning & Development Staff Report

Site & Zoning Context

Site Context

The site is defined by two parcels located on the southern side of Wendell Street between Massachusetts Avenue and Oxford Street in the Baldwin neighborhood, a few blocks north of Cambridge Common. The neighborhood is characterized by a diverse collection of building types and uses, including 2-1/2 story houses, triple-deckers, 5-story brick residential buildings, and some larger institutional buildings on Lesley's and Harvard's campuses. The site currently contains two vacant three-story buildings and a tennis court. One building was licensed as a lodging house and operated as a dormitory by Lesley University and the other building was operated by Lesley as market-rate studio apartments.

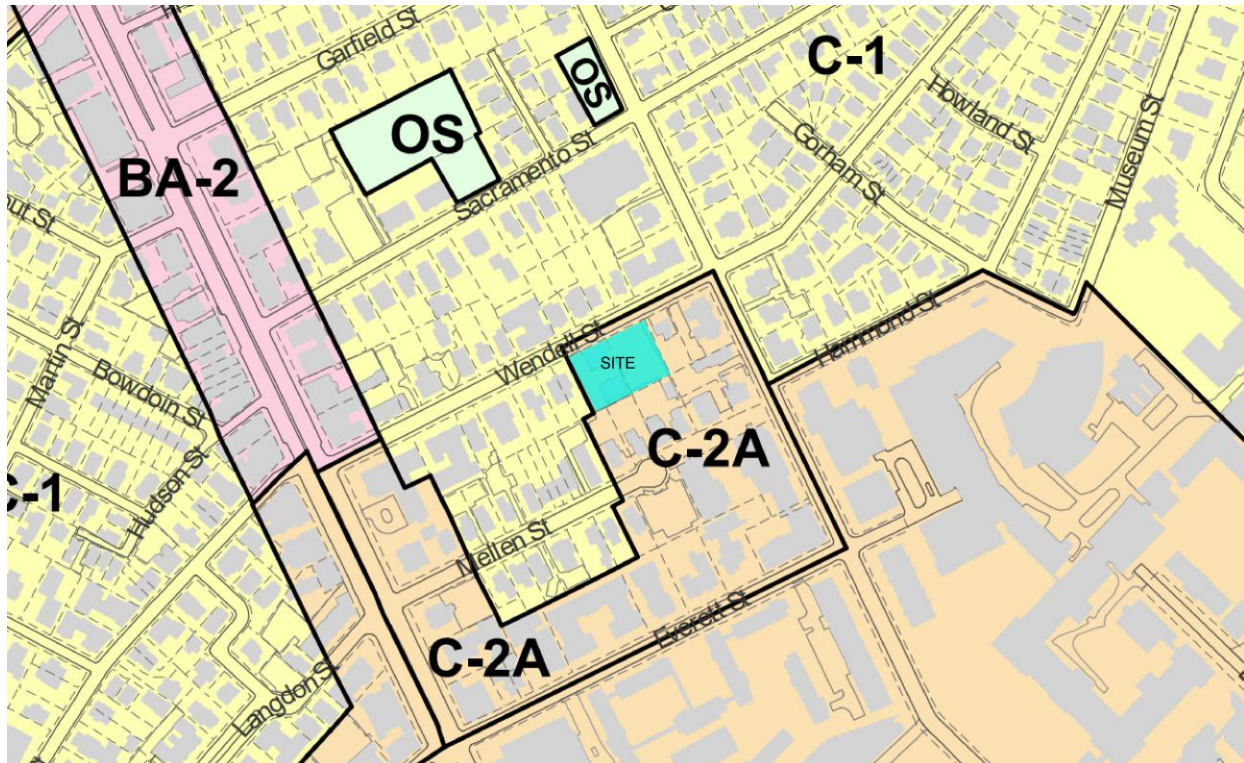


Context Map for 28-30 Wendell St. Source: Nearmap Aerial Imagery, 2025

Site Zoning

The site is zoned Residence C-2A and is across the street from a Residence C-1 zone. The adjacent properties to the east along Wendell Street are zoned Residence C-1. Residence C-2A is a moderate-intensity residential zoning district which permits all types of residential uses, as well as some institutional uses and neighborhood-scale retail and consumer service uses. Development in the C-2A district is permitted to build up to 75 feet and six stories in height, with a 10% minimum open space requirement. However, where a lot in a Residence C-2A district abuts a Residence C-1, C-2, or C-2B

district, the open space requirement is that of the adjacent district. In this case the open space requirement becomes 30%.



Site overview. Source: Zoning Map, City of Cambridge

Comments on Proposal

General Comments

There have been a few major changes to the AHO in recent years that have impacted this project. The 2023 amendments increased the height limit for AHO projects in the C-2A district from six stories to nine stories. The Multifamily Zoning Petitions adopted in February 2025 increased the base zoning height limit to six stories and 75 feet in C-2A districts, which in turn increased the allowed heights for AHO projects to 13 stories and 150 feet. This is the first AHO project to come before the Planning Board since the City Council adopted the Multifamily Zoning Petitions. Other dimensional standards for some AHO projects, like setbacks and open space, were reduced to reflect the relaxation of those standards under base zoning as well. In the Residence C-2A district, yard setback requirements were changed from a formula-based standard to a static five feet for front, side, and rear yards. No AHO projects are regulated by Floor Area Ratio (FAR) limits, which is consistent with new base zoning standards for residential uses.

AHO projects are no longer subject to certain transportation requirements. Before the recent zoning changes, AHO projects of 20 or more units, providing a parking ratio of less than 0.4 spaces per dwelling unit, were required to provide specific Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures. This is no

longer a requirement under the AHO. Design standards related to site design, building facades, and mechanical equipment now only apply to AHO projects at least 25,000 square feet. This proposal exceeds that 25,000 square-foot trigger so all of those design standards still apply.

Previously, all AHO projects were required to go through the same design review process – two consultation sessions with the Planning Board – before seeking a building permit. The Multifamily Zoning Petitions amended those requirements so that only larger projects need to go through the Planning Board Advisory Consultation process. AHO developments 50,000 square feet or greater will still go through the same two-session Planning Board process as before. Projects less than 50,000 square feet that exceed the height limit of the base zoning district are also subject to the Planning Board Advisory Consultation requirement but only need to go through one session. This proposal is larger than 50,000 square feet so it will go through the two-session Planning Board advisory review process.

The intent of all the above changes was to make sure the standards for AHO projects are no more onerous than those for comparable market-rate residential developments under the new zoning. The Multifamily Zoning Petitions relaxed many of the base dimensional and review standards for residential developments, necessitating the above changes to the AHO.

Project Description

Homeowners Rehab, Inc. (“HRI” or the “Developer”) is proposing to demolish the existing structures and construct a new 8-story, 90-foot tall building consisting of a total of 95 affordable units. The project will consist of 40 units designed for seniors and 55 units designed for families and will also include a 1,000 square-foot multipurpose community space on the ground floor that will be available to residents as well as neighborhood organizations. Five off-street parking spaces are proposed along with 77 long-term bicycle parking spaces and eight short-term bicycle parking spaces. The total Gross Floor Area (GFA) of the project is 110,803 square feet and will include a total of 6,764 square feet of open space.

Consistency with AHO Use Development Standards

The AHO development standards applicable to this project are summarized in the table below.

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Residence C-2A	Summary of Compliance
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multifamily dwellings allowed • Active non-residential uses allowed in the base zoning district are permitted on the ground floor as-of-right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal includes multifamily dwellings and a 1,000 square-foot community space on the ground floor
Building Height & Stories Above Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying District Dimensional Standards allow six stories, 75 feet • AHO Developments are allowed up to 13 stories, 150 feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed project is eight stories and 90 feet in height.
Yard Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Front and Side Yard • 5’ Rear Yard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AHO Project proposes a rear yard setback of 15 feet.
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHO Developments must have 30% open space to lot area or meet the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed AHO Project includes 6,764 square feet of open space, meeting the 30% minimum

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Residence C-2A	Summary of Compliance
	<p>underlying District Dimensional Standard, whichever is less.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot in a C-2A district adjacent to a C-1 district has a 30% open space requirement 	<p>requirement. All open space is proposed to be permeable.</p>
Parking and Bicycle Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no minimum off-street parking for an AHO Development. Bicycle parking is required per Article 6.100, but additional flexibility is provided for the location, quantity and type (long-term and short-term) of bicycle parking required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AHO project includes a long-term bicycle parking room inside the building with 77 parking spaces. These spaces appear to conform to the quantity and dimensional requirements in Article 6.000. The Project shows five bike racks along the Wendell Street side of the building, consisting of 10 short-term bicycle parking spaces. It is unclear if these spaces meet the minimum three-foot horizontal clearance standards.
Site Design and Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Front yards may be landscaped or hardscaped but cannot be used for off-street parking. Pedestrian entrances shall be visible from the street. Buildings with front facades in excess of 250' in length shall provide forecourts to break up massing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed project meets all the Site Design and Arrangement requirements.
Building Facades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building facades facing public streets shall have a minimum percentage of 20% glazing. Building facades must include projecting and/or recessed elements of at least two feet on an average interval of 40 linear feet along a Public Street, and 80 feet elsewhere. Such projecting or recessed elements do not apply to the lowest or highest Story Above Grade. Facades of ground stories shall have expanses of no more than 25' with no windows or pedestrian entryways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed building consists of 25% transparency along Wendell Street. The Wendell Street façade will need more review as the design progresses to ensure the recesses and projections are provided at the required intervals.
Ground Stories and Below Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ground stories with non-residential uses must have a height of at least 15' and a depth of 35'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AHO Project illustrates a 15-foot Ground Story height.
Mechanical Equipment,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanical equipment shall be generally screened from view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ground story mechanicals and refuse areas appear to be either

Development Standard	Requirements for AHO Project in Residence C-2A	Summary of Compliance
Refuse Storage and Loading Areas	Rooftop mechanical equipment must be set back from the roof line equal to its height.	within the building itself or on the rear side of the building. All rooftop equipment appears to be set back at least 10 feet.
Environmental Design Standards	<p>This AHO project is subject to the following Sustainable Development Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 22.20: Green Building • Section 22.80: Flood Resilience • Section 22.90: Green Factor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project intends to meet Green Building requirements by targeting Enterprise Green Communities certification. A Green Building Report will be required ahead of the final Planning Board Advisory Consultation. • Documentation showing compliance with Flood Resilience Standards and Green Factor Standards as set forth in Article 22.000 will be required ahead of the final Planning Board Advisory Consultation.

Recommendations

The following is a summary of zoning issues that will need to continue to be looked at as the design progresses:

- Detail of short-term bicycle parking layout to confirm compliance with design standards in Article 6.000.
- Further review of Wendell Street façade recesses and projections to ensure AHO design standards are met.

Urban Design Staff Report

Urban Design Comments

Introduction and Context

The project proposes the redevelopment of two adjacent parcels fronting Wendell St - currently consisting of tennis courts and two small brick dormitory buildings - into a single 8-story building containing 95 units of 100 percent affordable mixed-age housing. The building forms an “H” shaped footprint in plan that occupies the majority of the site and defines two courtyards: a shallower, wider public open space and entry forecourt along Wendell St, and a deeper, narrower private courtyard on the building’s south side for its residents. Each courtyard is lined with active ground-floor uses. Additionally, the project includes a community “Hub” space along Wendell Street, intended as a resource for use by residents of Homeowners Rehab Inc. (HRI) projects in the surrounding area. The project also provides five internal parking spaces for staff and resident service providers.

Wendell Street is a smaller one-way residential street in the Baldwin Neighborhood extending from Massachusetts Avenue in the west to near the border with Somerville in the east. It is located one to two blocks north of Lesley University’s Doble campus. The project’s block contains a diverse range of building types, including 2-1/2 story wood-clapboard residential homes, triple-deckers, 5-story brick apartment buildings, and two 5-6-story institutional buildings located at the intersection with Massachusetts Avenue. The development pattern is characterized by front yard setbacks ranging from 5’ to 20’ deep, with the majority within the 10-20’ range. Side setbacks vary, but buildings are generally close enough to one another to produce a coherent and legible street wall. One unprotected bike lane spans between Oxford St and Massachusetts Avenue, and parking is allowed on both sides of the street. The site is a roughly 15-minute walk to both Harvard and Porter Red Line Stations and is served along Massachusetts Avenue by the 77 & 96 bus routes. Nearby public open spaces include the Sacramento Field and Community Garden and Alden Play Area, both located one block north on Sacramento Street.

The applicant team has met with City design staff multiple times since the project was first introduced, and the design has positively and collaboratively evolved throughout the process. The applicant has demonstrated an ongoing openness to incorporating feedback to align the project with the City’s goals.

Consistency with Multifamily Design Guidelines

The design as proposed generally adheres to the applicable principles as outlined in the Multifamily Design Guidelines by:

- Reflecting common design elements and materials present in the surrounding context,
- Enhancing the public realm with active ground-floor uses, higher levels of transparency, high-quality materials, and landscaped open spaces,
- Modulating the massing to respond to the form and scale of nearby buildings,
- Providing internal and exterior common spaces to build a sense of community, and
- Achieving high levels of energy efficiency and minimizing greenhouse gas emissions.

Both the Updated Affordable Housing Overlay and the Multifamily Zoning purposefully allow for potentially larger and taller residential buildings than the existing context in an effort to address Cambridge's critical housing shortage. Within this framework, contextualism needs to be achieved through employing creative design strategies that can effectively harmonize between different building scales. While new developments need not directly mirror their surroundings, they can be evaluated on how well they foster dialogues with their context and add to the beauty and livability of the City.

For reference, the complete set of Design Guidelines for Multifamily Housing can be found at:
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/ZoningDevel/OtherProjects/multifamilyhousing/multifamilydesignguidelines20250625final1.pdf>

Site Design

The proposed project creates a coherent street wall foregrounding a landscaped zone which serves to visually expand the public realm. Roughly half of the building's front facade is set back 8-9' from back-of-sidewalk, with the other half set back roughly 20' to create a landscaped public forecourt. Along the middle and eastern portions of the ground floor, two building entrances and high levels of transparency into the lobby, offices, and "Hub" help to activate Wendell Street. Along the western portion of the north elevation, a free little library and "reading nook" animate the blank façade of the parking and transformer room. Both the transformer and parking are internal and completely shielded from view. The south-facing resident courtyard space provides outdoor common space for residents and includes a trellis to mitigate heat in the warmer seasons.

Recommendations

- Further coordination between the existing street tree wells and the proposed hardscape areas along the back-of-sidewalk could provide additional clearances at these potential pinch points.
- The inclusion of an additional street tree roughly aligned with the Short-Term Bike Parking near the Lobby entrance would further enhance the public realm and combat heat island effect.
- Ensure that both the shade and ornamental tree proposed at the southeast corner of the site adjacent to the rear parking easement are feasible and will have adequate space to thrive.
- Consider reorienting the Short-Term Bicycle parking at the Lobby to be perpendicular to the sidewalk to aid ease of access and avoid narrowing the sidewalk when bikes are locked to them.
- Reassess the orientation of the short-term bike parking located at the entrance to the Hub, as the current configuration could block pedestrian access to the entry area and benches.
- Ensure the condensers shown in the southeast corner of the site are adequately shielded and will not negatively impact the adjacent properties.

Building Design

The proposed design employs a number of strategies intended to integrate with the surrounding context despite the inherent differences in scale. A substantial step-back of the western portion of the building above the 6th floor reduces the visibility of the upper floors when approached from the west. Step-backs at the same height along the northern Wendell Street façade, as well as their brick cladding, mirror

similar proportions and materials of the existing brick apartment buildings along the street. Design elements such as soldier courses and stone lintels further reinforce this relationship and aid in balancing the low window-to-wall ratio required by Passive House standards. The asymmetrical composition of these brick-clad volumes creates a more dynamic and varied experience along the street.

The taller central portion of the building is set back a further 10' from Wendell St along the north side. Its ground floor is clad in a manufactured stone material, and the top is capped by a prominent projecting cornice. Its windows are logically arranged into vertical bands separated by clapboard-clad sections framed by shallow vertical fins. The uppermost two floors on the south side of the building are clad in a lighter tan-colored material. Two darker gray bays wrap the southeast and southwest corners from the second to sixth floors, and two additional dark gray bays frame the upper floors of the resident courtyard.

Recommendations

- Employing a prominent cornice at the topmost portion of the building may unintentionally reinforce the difference in scale between the project and its context. A more subtle design strategy for terminating the building façade may call less attention to the height of the building.
- For the cornices at the top of the brick portions, a smaller projecting dimension may produce a stronger relation to the detailing found on the nearby brick apartment buildings.
- The full-height projecting bays along the southern façade of the building appear to reinforce the vertical height of the building, and their darker gray cladding will reflect less light into the southern courtyard space. Additional iterations that reduce or eliminate them could potentially help to further diminish the building's presence when viewed from Mellen Street.
- Further exploration of the approach to the windowsills on the brick portions is encouraged, as these may provide additional opportunities to visually expand the windows.

Sustainable Design

The design as proposed generally follows the principles outlined in the Multifamily Design Guidelines:

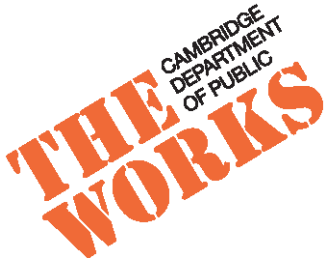
- The building is designed to meet Passive House standards.
- The building is all-electric.
- Many units have two exposures, allowing for increased passive ventilation.
- The depth of the return at the brick windows and the vertical fins present at the windows in the main body of the building will help reduce solar gain on the east and west elevations.

Recommendations

- Determine if including sun shading devices at windows on south-facing elevations would reduce undesirable solar gain, especially at the glazed ground-level courtyard and rear elevations.
- The inclusion of photovoltaic systems can help sustainably lower energy costs.
- The inclusion of a green roof on the western step-back would help with storm water management, provide additional green space, and be a visual amenity for the adjacent units.
- Ensure the five in-building parking spaces are able to charge electric vehicles.
- Include frequent outlets in the bike room to allow residents to charge their electric bicycles.

Appendix - 19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]

Objective	Indicators
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods • Consistency with established streetscape • Compatibility with adjacent uses • Consideration of nearby historic buildings
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhabited ground floor spaces • Discouraged ground-floor parking • Windows on ground floor • Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways • Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/impact of mechanical equipment • Location/impact of loading and trash handling • Stormwater management • Shadow impacts • Retaining walls, if provided • Building scale and wall treatment • Outdoor lighting • Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management • Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service • Efficient design (LEED standards)
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional use focused on existing campuses • Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged • Preservation of historic structures and environment • Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as a component of large, multi-building development • Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families
Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development • Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks • Provide wider range of activities
Development should be resilient to the effects of climate change as anticipated in the <i>Resilient Cambridge</i> plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-to-date projections of climate change impacts over the project's anticipated lifespan are incorporated • Flood Resilience Standard in Section 22.80 and the Green Factor Standard in Section 22.90 are met or exceeded • Use of strategies that have environmental co-benefits • Integrative approach to climate change resilience that accounts for the existing context and promotes the other design objectives of the area and the City



City of Cambridge
Department of Public Works

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July 29, 2025

TO: Planning Board

FROM: James Wilcox, PE
City Engineer

RE: 28-30 Wendell AHO Design Review

We are in receipt of the AHO Submission Documents for the project at 28-30 Wendell Street, dated June 23, 2025.

The DPW supports the project and acknowledges that HRI and their consultant team have demonstrated a general understanding of our department's requirements for development projects and have indicated a willingness to work with the DPW to meet the requirements and to address our concerns. With the understanding that the project will be subject to a thorough and complete engineering review at the time of the Building Permit Application, we anticipate continuing to work with the Applicant. Items discussed with the Applicant related to our purview, are summarized below.

Stormwater Management:

The development will be required to obtain a Stormwater Control Permit prior to the issuance of a Building Permit which will include a detailed review of the proposed stormwater management system, plans for erosion and sedimentation control during construction and the plans for long term operation and maintenance of the system.

We have met with HRI's Consultant and reviewed design materials that acknowledge the standards of the Stormwater Control permit and provides discussion on how the Development plans to meet the requirements. Final review and approval of the design will occur with the Building Permit.

Sewer Mitigation:

The development will trigger Inflow and Infiltration Mitigation as it will increase the flow to the City's infrastructure by more than 15,000 gallons per day. The mitigation requirement is to mitigate the addition flow at a rate of 4:1. HRI's civil consultant acknowledges the mitigation requirement. DPW will work with HRI on an establishment of the design sewer flow and the required mitigation.

Flood Resiliency:

The Project has 1% Long Term Flood Elevations assigned to the parcels. Consistent with the discussion in the submitted documentation, the impact of the LTFE elevations is limited to the frontage of the parcel, with the structure being established above it. Flood Resilience Compliance Confirmation is required in advance of any building permit application to confirm that development is meeting all the Flood Standards established in Zoning Section 22.80.

Urban Canopy:

The submitted documentation identifies trees on the development parcel that will need to be removed to support the housing project. While exempt from the Tree Protection Ordinance the City will advocate for tree plantings to be proposed onsite to support the development of the Urban Canopy and the associated benefits.

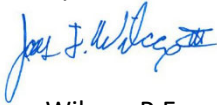
Specific to Public Shade Trees, the DPW would note that all street trees located along the project frontage shall be maintained and protected during all construction activities. Also, we would ask that street trees be added along all frontages as is allowed by the design standards.

Public Right of Way:

DPW will review and evaluate all proposed work and impacts in the public right of way, as the design is developed. Connections to both public and private utilities as well as all proposed disruption in the public right of way shall be reviewed as part of the Building Permit and construction permit processes. As noted in the Application, the development will support, as needed, improvements to the public sidewalk to obtain an accessible and comfortable sidewalk width for the project frontage.

We look forward to working with the HRI and other City Departments on this project. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns related to the comments or information provided above.

Sincerely,



James Wilcox, P.E.
City Engineer

