



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: October 29, 2019

Subject: CambridgeSide Galleria Associates Trust Zoning Petition

Recommendation: The Board recommends ADOPTION, with comments and suggested improvements.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On September 24, 2019, the Planning Board (the "Board") held a public hearing on a zoning petition (the "Petition") submitted by Stephen R. Karp, Trustee of Cambridgeside Galleria Associates Trust (the "Petitioner"), to amend the Zoning Ordinance by adding a Section 13.100 that creates a new PUD-8 District and to amend the Zoning Map by adding the new PUD-8 District, which would include the property located at 100 Cambridgeside Place, which is currently used as a mall ("CambridgeSide" or "Mall") (currently zoned in the Business A and PUD-4 Districts). The Petitioner initially submitted a zoning petition in February 2019 (the "Original Petition"), but it expired without action by the City Council and a modified version of the Petition was subsequently filed by the Petitioner. At the public hearing, the Board received information and testimony from the Petitioner, Community Development Department ("CDD") staff, and members of the public.

As with the Original Petition, the current Petition seeks to amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for the redevelopment of CambridgeSide into a mixed-use center by maintaining a core of retail use and adding commercial and residential uses. The Petition continues to propose creating a new PUD district (PUD-8) that would exist separately from the existing PUD-4 District and would allow additional Gross Floor Area ("GFA"), height, and uses beyond what is currently allowed in PUD-4. The proposed zoning would allow the addition of new commercial (office, laboratory, and/or retail) and residential development to the Mall site. At the public hearing, the Board received clarification from the Petitioner that the replacement of the existing above-grade parking garage with other uses is intended to be in addition to the 575,000 square feet of net new GFA proposed for the Mall site. The Petitioner identified that the parking garage has approximately 273,000 square feet of floor area, but, under current zoning, this is not included in GFA calculations for the Mall site.

After deliberation, a majority of the Planning Board expressed overall support for the Petition, but also raised issues for further consideration. The Board reached a favorable consensus on the following aspects of the petition:

- A majority of the Board generally favors the redevelopment of the Mall into a more mixed-use complex to ensure its long-term economic viability as a community retail center and gathering place.
- There was broad consensus among Board members of the importance of activating First Street through ground-floor retail, building setbacks, and an improved public realm. The Board encouraged the Petitioner to continue working with City staff as the project proceeds to identify appropriate standards and guidelines for setbacks and public realm improvements along First Street. A majority of the Board generally supported the Petition as a means to achieve this goal, though some Board members expressed concern that the narrow sidewalk along the former Sears building is proposed to remain.
- A majority of the Board expressed comfort with the overall heights and massing that would be enabled by the revised Petition. In particular, members were comfortable with the addition of step-back provisions to control the bulk of buildings along the street as well as the preservation of existing heights along the Lechmere Canal frontage and within the interior public atrium of the Mall. Some Board members would have been supportive of taller height limits if they applied only to housing.
- The Board appreciated that the Petitioner conferred with Eversource and is satisfied that the project is not expected to negatively impact the electrical load.
- The Board also appreciated the greater proportion of GFA allocated to housing and to affordable housing in the revised Petition, but raised some additional issues as described further below.

The following key issues were identified for further consideration, which fall into two main categories:

Housing

- The Board would like to see as much housing as possible enabled by this Petition, given that housing is a major priority identified in the City's recently-completed *Envision Cambridge* comprehensive plan. Board members were supportive of setting aside at least 30% of net new GFA for housing, as proposed in the Petition, but some Board members did not believe they had enough information to know if this proposal provides the maximum amount of housing that is economically feasible at the CambridgeSide site.
- The Board favored middle-income housing as a component of this proposal, but acknowledged concerns raised by CDD staff that there seems to be limited demand for income-restricted, middle-income rental units based on the City's recent experience administering such units. Board members suggested flexibility in the zoning language, so that it would allow and promote middle-income housing without being so constrained that it might result in middle-income units that remain empty while demand from low- and moderate-income households remains.

- The Board continued to question whether the required timing of the residential phase and the language of Section 13.104.1, Paragraph (d)1. were clear and sufficient to ensure that the housing would be constructed, and suggested considering other alternatives.
- The Board also discussed how to determine an appropriate mix of unit sizes for the affordable and market-rate housing. Some Board members suggested that unit size could be tailored to meet demand in order to reduce the likelihood of having empty units. Some Board members also questioned whether some family-sized market-rate units would be appropriate, because the current Petition would prohibit such units. In addition, the Petition specifies that all family-sized units would be Middle Income or Affordable, but does not further describe how many family-sized units would be created. In general, the Board wanted to have a clearer sense of the total amount of housing, low- and moderate-income housing, middle-income housing, and family-sized housing that would be enabled by the Petition.

Public Benefits

- The Board appreciated having the chance to see an overview of the commitments being made as a part of this proposal but thought that they need to be stated more explicitly and studied in more detail to assess whether the benefits of the project would outweigh the impacts to the community. Some members expressed a strong desire for the Petitioner to provide sufficient information to allow a better understanding of the economic rationale for the proposal in terms of the amount of new development, mix of uses, and extent of public benefits.
- Some Board members were hesitant to give full support to the Petition without knowing more details about many of the public benefits that would be set forth in a letter of commitment separate from the zoning petition. The following items were identified as outstanding questions:
 - Community use of and programming for the boathouse once it's rehabilitated;
 - Length of time and impacts from building construction;
 - Approximate cost per square foot of subsidized retail and other commercial business rents (e.g., local retail, day care, non-profits), as well as clarification of whether "reduced rate" in the context of day care and other services refers to the rental rates paid by the provider or the prices charged to clients;
 - Hiring practices (e.g., targeted incomes and skill levels for permanent jobs, preferential hiring for Cambridge residents); and
 - Total itemized financial commitment including and excluding property taxes.

While all Board members agreed that more information was needed on these points, some members expressed the view that these issues are more likely to be resolved in the Petitioner's discussions with the City Council than at the Planning Board.

Board members also had specific comments about the Petition language and encouraged the petitioner to work with the City to address them. In some instances, the language should be simplified to improve clarity; in other instances, the provisions should be revised to ensure that the proposed zoning is enforceable and does not conflict with existing procedures. The Board recommends further review of the following Sections of the petition:

- Section 13.102.2: The Board had concerns about whether this language might constrain the Planning Board's ability to determine Major and Minor Amendments pursuant to Section 12.37. The language could be simplified and made to be more consistent with Section 12.37.
- Section 13.102.3 Paragraph (j): The requirement to "describe how the proposed development will evaluate the feasibility of achieving the goals set forth in the Net Zero Action Plan" seems vague and could be made more definitive.
- Section 13.102.3 Paragraph (n): The phrase "shall control for all purposes" is unclear; if the intent is to allow the Planning Board to modify signage provisions in Article 7.000 of the Zoning Ordinance in granting a PUD Special Permit, that would need to be made explicit in the text.
- Section 13.102.4 Paragraph (g): The Board believes that these criteria should be clarified or deleted as it would be difficult for the Board to determine if they are met.
- Section 13.102.7: The Board recommends review of this paragraph by the City's Law Department.
- Section 13.102.8: The Board recommends review of the second paragraph in this Section by the City's Law Department.
- Section 13.104.4: The Board found it somewhat confusing that various dimensional requirements are waived by this section, but other dimensional standards are suggested in the "PUD-8 Design Guidelines and Principles" in Section 13.107.5. It should be made clear that the waiver of dimensional requirements is subject to approval by the Planning Board in granting a PUD Special Permit, and that the Planning Board's approval is based on its finding that the Final Development Plan is in general conformance with Section 13.107.5 and other applicable criteria.

In addition, the Board recommends revising the petition to reflect the following items identified in the CDD Memo dated September 19, 2019 and agreed to in concept by the Petitioner at the hearing on September 24, 2019:

- Section 13.102.3 Paragraph (b): The Development Proposal submission should include ground level views from significant vantage points in addition to other required studies.

- Section 13.102.3 Paragraph (c): The Parking and Loading Plan should include a thorough explanation of how the existing parking facilities are being used, including the requirements of existing commercial parking permits and how they may be amended in the future.
- Section 13.102.4 Paragraph (c): The petition should clarify whether the objective is to maintain the existing pedestrian connection between Charles Park and Lechmere Canal Park as a skylit atrium with retail activity at the ground floor, or whether some other form of connection might be anticipated.
- Section 13.102.11: The range of topics considered in design review should include sidewalk widths and features, the continuity of the streetwall, the height and façade expression of ground floors, and window to wall ratios.
- Section 13.104.1 Paragraph (d)3: Middle-Income Units should be subject to the other standards for Affordable Units set forth in Sections 11.203.3 and 11.203.4, but adjusted to conform to the higher income limit of 120% of area median income (AMI).
- Section 13.104.1 Paragraph (e): Rather than applying only to “Net New” development, the text should be amended so that Incentive Zoning would be applied in a manner consistent with the definition of Incentive Project and with other development throughout the city.
- Section 13.106.3: While the Planning Board will have the ability to approve reduced minimum parking ratios in a Final Development Plan, it should be made clear that there must be some provision of parking for residential occupants of the development.
- Section 13.106.5: It should be clarified that the purpose of a shared parking plan is to consider parking demands for different land uses that have peak parking demands at different times of a day, thus enabling parking facilities to be used more efficiently. The shared parking analysis should be approved by the Planning Board, with guidance from City staff, and the shared parking analysis may be approved as a working plan that can be adjusted over time, as dictated by changes in parking demands that may occur in the future.
- Section 13.107.4: It should be stated that new development will, at a minimum, conform to the most up-to-date standards for sustainable design and development that are applicable to comparable development throughout the City.
- 13.107.5 Paragraph (a)i.: Guidelines pertaining to building height should identify key locations (such as the Lechmere Canal frontage and existing central Mall atrium) where it would be preferable to maintain the existing building heights if taller buildings are added elsewhere on the site.

- 13.107.5 Paragraph (a)i.2.: Guidelines should specify that building setbacks may need to exceed 10 feet, to approximately 12 feet, to provide adequate space for comfortable pedestrian access, with at least four to five feet of clearance in addition to spaces used for street furniture, bicycle parking, tree plantings, and other streetscape features.
- 13.107.5 Paragraph (a)iii.: Guidelines should specify that new buildings should be separated by courtyards or other significant breaks to avoid long lengths of unbroken building mass, and an effort should be made to align these breaks along First Street with Spring and Hurley Streets.

Planning Board Action

On October 29, 2019, the Planning Board reviewed the comments set forth above and voted, with five members present in favor and one opposed, to recommend that the City Council adopt the Petition, with consideration to the suggested improvements and other comments set forth above.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Preston Connolly".

Catherine Preston Connolly, Chair.