



---

# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

---

To: Planning Board

From: Community Development Department (CDD) Staff

Date: September 8, 2020

Re: **Canal District Kendall – PUD-CDK District Zoning Petition**

**IRAM FAROOQ**  
Assistant City Manager for  
Community Development

**SANDRA CLARKE**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Administration

**KHALIL MOGASSABI**  
Deputy Director  
Chief of Planning

## Overview

Petitioner: BMR-Third LLC, c/o BioMed Realty, L.P.

Petition: To amend the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to create a Planned Unit Development Canal District Kendall (“PUD-CDK”) Overlay District, with regulations in a new Section 13.200. This amendment would allow for the potential build-out of up to approximately 580,000 square feet of new development, predominantly for office/laboratory use with a required arts use component, in addition to existing residential office, lab, retail, and open space uses in the district.

Context: The new PUD-CDK district would overlay a portion of the existing PUD-3 district and would enable a modification to a Planned Unit Development, authorized by Planning Board Special Permit #141 (the “PUD”), which included 1,376,000 square feet of total gross floor area, comprised of 757,970 square feet of office/lab uses, 467,530 square feet of residential uses, and 150,500 square feet of retail uses including an 85,000 square-foot theater use.

Summary: This Petition would enable a change in use of the remaining undeveloped site within the PUD (“Parcel C”), currently permitted as the theater use, to office/laboratory use with a required arts use component. It would also enable an alternative development scenario if the existing Eversource Gas Transfer Station (GTS) site along Third Street is included in the Parcel C redevelopment, after relocation of the GTS facility. If the GTS site is included, the petition would allow 550,000 square feet of new office/lab gross floor area and a 30,000 square foot Arts and Culture Center in a building up to 250’ in height. Otherwise, the petition would allow 450,000 square feet of new office/lab gross floor area and a 15,000 square foot Community Arts Facility in a building up to 230’ in height.

Report: This memo will provide background into the area’s planning and development history, summarize key provisions of the Petition in the context of the City’s past planning efforts, and suggest issues for the Planning Board to consider in its deliberations.

---

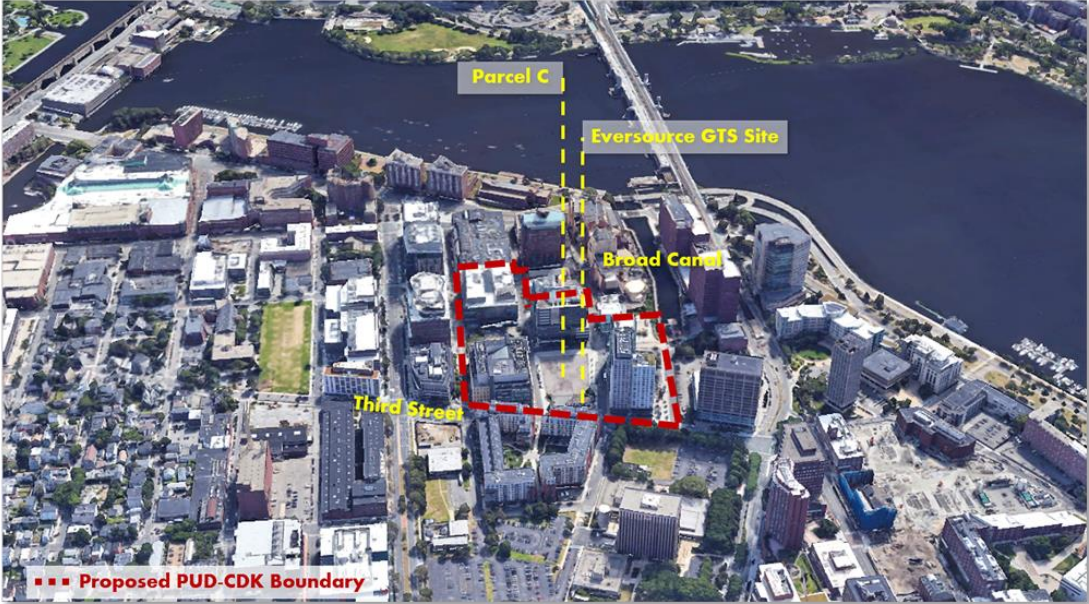
344 Broadway  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
Voice: 617 349-4600  
Fax: 617 349-4669  
TTY: 617 349-4621  
www.cambridgema.gov

---

**Planning & Zoning Background**

*Site Context*

The Kendall Square area of Cambridge, once an industrial base for the Boston region, has transformed over the past several decades into a mixed-use innovation and research district, anchored by the presence of the Kendall MBTA station and MIT. Most of the area proposed to be rezoned is part of a 10-acre Planned Unit Development (PUD) that was permitted by the Planning Board in 1999 (special permit PB-141) and developed over the course of about 15 years with a mix of commercial laboratory/office buildings, residences, retail, and open space amenities. Previously, the site was home to a manufactured gas plant that resulted in the need for significant environmental remediation. The area has been completely redeveloped with the exception of two sites: a lot at the center of the PB-141 development plan (identified in that plan as Parcel C), which was permitted for an 85,000 square-foot performing arts center that was not built; and a lot on Third Street controlled by Eversource and used as a natural gas transfer station (not included in the PB-141 development).



*Area Planning and Development – 1970s to 2000*

The base Office 3A (O-3A) zoning district and PUD-3 overlay zoning districts for this area were established in 1978, anticipating a transition of the area from its past industrial character to more technology-oriented commercial office uses. Under the new PUD zoning, some office buildings were developed through the 1980s and 1990s, including 1-101 Main Street (on the opposite side of Broad Canal) and 235 First Street (an expansion to the “Carter’s Ink” building). The historic “Athenaeum Press” building on First Street was also converted to offices. Meanwhile, development of the “Cambridge Center” (now Kendall Center) office and hotel complex proceeded in the adjacent MXD zoning district under the Kendall Square Urban Renewal Plan.

The current Petition area had been paved over for use as parking but remained undeveloped through the 1990s. In 1999, the Planning Board approved the 10-acre PB-141 PUD (then known as “Cambridge Research Park,” later as “Kendall Square” and currently as “Canal District”). Although this special permit predated the completion of the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study and rezoning, discussed below, the development reflected many of the goals of the plan by incorporating housing and ground-floor retail in addition to office/lab uses, creating new public open space amenities such as a seasonal skating rink and small boat launch, and putting all parking in a shared below-grade facility (requiring users to walk from a central headhouse to the various buildings that it serves).

The most recent building in the PUD was completed in 2015. The central element of the PUD was intended to be an 85,000 square-foot performing arts facility called “Constellation Center,” which is now the only remaining undeveloped site within the PUD. The group that had planned to build the Constellation Center sold the site in 2018 to Biomed Realty, which owns the other commercial buildings in the PB-141 development.

#### *ECaPS and Citywide Rezoning*

Beginning in the early 2000’s, the City undertook planning efforts across Cambridge that emphasized a more urbanistic approach to redevelopment, focusing on mixed-use development districts with offices, housing, retail, and public space, and an emphasis on the pedestrian realm as opposed to auto-oriented development patterns. The planning study from this time that is most relevant to this area is the [Eastern Cambridge Planning Study \(ECaPS\)](#), which was completed in 2001 and led to a rezoning of the area that same year.

The ECaPS plan and associated design guidelines identified the PB-141 development parcel to the west of Third Street as an “Activity Generator,” which would help underpin further development in the Kendall Square area. The ECaPS rezoning reduced the allowed commercial density in the district from 3.0 to 2.0 FAR while keeping the allowed residential density at its present level to incentivize housing and mixed-use development. Similar rezoning was enacted in commercial zoning districts throughout the city at the time.

ECaPS established a series of goals for development in the Kendall Square area and surrounding neighborhoods that would transform East Cambridge from a largely industrial center to a more vibrant mixed-use district. Specific recommendations for this district included:

- Encouraging active street life along the Third Street corridor through ground floor retail uses and new residential development;
- Preserving and enhancing a network of green spaces throughout the area;
- Promoting a series of bicycle and pedestrian connections to the Broad Canal and Charles Riverfront; and

- Developing a new retail and multifunction theater on the GTS site and adjacent vacant parcel (per the PB-141 development plan).

The 2001 rezoning led to major PUD development plans in the North Point area, but few buildings were constructed in the Kendall Square area. Most notably, the 303 Third Street residential development across from the PB-141 site was permitted under the PUD zoning adopted in 2001.

#### *Alexandria and K2*

A series of zoning petitions have been enacted in Kendall Square in subsequent years. These petitions have followed a common theme of expanding the capacity for commercial office/lab growth in Kendall Square – in many cases, restoring the level of commercial density allowed before the 2001 rezoning – while requiring other uses and investments that support the City’s planning objectives, such as housing, retail, public space, public improvements, and funding contributions to support transit and community programs. These zoning changes also instituted new development standards, including limits on parking creation and enhanced sustainability.

In 2009, the City Council adopted a rezoning of land controlled by Alexandria Real Estate Equities, Inc. along Binney Street to the north of the current Petition area. That rezoning enabled about 1.5 million square feet of office/lab development while requiring the construction of mixed-income housing and the conveyance to the City of land and a building (the Foundry), which are being developed for public open space and other community uses. This rezoning helped set the stage for an area-wide planning effort that would renew focus on the potential of the Kendall Square area to develop into a more vibrant, mixed-use innovation district.

In 2011-2013, the City undertook the [Kendall Square / Central Square \(“K2C2”\) Planning Study](#); the Kendall Square component became known as “K2.” That study addressed future growth in areas controlled by MIT along Main Street, infill development in the MXD district, and the Volpe Center parcel, among other portions of the area. The City Council adopted new zoning for those three areas in 2013, 2015, and 2017, respectively. The major elements of each zoning change were established in the K2 study recommendations, but the specific rezoning proposals were initiated by property owners and the City Council was able to negotiate a unique set of public benefits for each proposal.

In each area that was rezoned based on K2, commercial development limits were increased contingent upon meeting requirements for housing (with affordable and middle-income components), active ground-floor uses, open space, commercial space for small companies and start-ups, sustainable design standards, transportation investments, and other public benefits. Zoning based on the K2 study also eliminated most minimum parking requirements and established maximum parking limits in order to control traffic growth and promote reduced auto dependence. The K2 study also

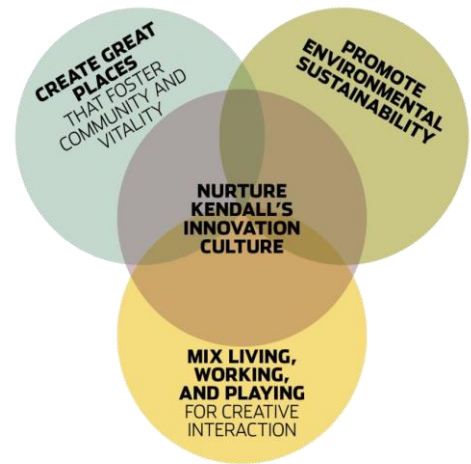
resulted in a set of Kendall Square Design Guidelines to inform the review of new buildings.

The K2 study identified possible infill development sites in the area west of Third Street, including Parcel C and the GTS parcel (see below), but no new zoning for that area was adopted because future development plans for those sites were uncertain at the time.

The following goals were established in the K2 study:

1. *Nurture Kendall's Innovation Culture*

- *Expand opportunities for Kendall Square knowledge economy to continue to grow.*
- *Foster a strong connection between the MIT campus and the rest of Kendall Square. Enable MIT to develop in a manner consistent with its academic and research mission, so that it continues to be a magnet attracting innovative businesses to the area.*
- *Support a vibrant environment for creative interaction.*
- *Three themes (below) working together supporting the central theme of nurturing Kendall's innovation culture.*



2. *Create great places*

- *Support open space and recreation needs of a growing neighborhood.*
- *Create lively, walkable streets.*
- *Expand opportunities for Kendall's diverse community to interact.*
- *Development and public place improvements must happen in tandem.*

3. *Promote environmental sustainability*

- *Expand convenient, affordable transportation and access choices.*
- *Enhance streets as public places.*
- *Create a healthier natural environment.*
- *Reduce resource consumption, waste and emissions.*
- *Leverage the environmental and economic benefits of compact development.*

4. *Mix living, working, learning and playing*

- *Leverage community and innovation benefits of mixed-use environment.*
- *Focus intensity around transit.*
- *Minimize development pressures on traditional neighborhoods.*
- *Continue to support city and state economic development.*

The K2 planning process led to two other planning efforts that strengthened and complemented the study's goals. In 2013-2015, an [Eastern Cambridge / Kendall Square Open Space \(ECKOS\) study](#) was conducted that included a "Connect Kendall Square" competition, in which teams of landscape designers and planners offered visions for connecting and activating public space within Kendall Square, to create a more integrated open space system and to better serve the surrounding neighborhoods. Later, in 2017, a working group met to establish [Volpe Site Planning and Design Principles](#) specific to that site, highlighting civic life, connectivity & permeability, activation, inclusiveness, comfort, and sustainability as main principles.

### ***Comparison of Current Zoning to Proposed Zoning***

#### *Current Zoning and PUD Special Permit*

The underlying zoning is an Office 3-A zoning district, modified by the PUD-3 overlay district. Both base and overlay zoning establish a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.0 for non-residential uses and 3.0 for residential uses, not including the 30% density bonus allowed by inclusionary housing provisions. The base zoning height limit is 120 feet, but the PUD overlay zoning allows height increases of up to 230 feet, with limitations on the amount of development that can exceed the base height and subject to approval by the Planning Board under PUD procedures.

The PB-141 development, which was permitted before the standards in the PUD-3 district were amended in 2001, has a total FAR of about 3.2, with the non-residential component making up about 2.1 FAR and the residential about 1.1 FAR. The office/lab component makes up about 1.8 FAR, while the remainder is retail and theater use.

As noted, most development under the current PUD special permit is built with the exception of the 85,000 square-foot theater site. Requirements for open space and other public improvements have also been met. The special permit explicitly authorizes, by minor amendment, a conversion of any permitted non-residential building to residential use. However, a conversion of permitted development to any other non-residential use would require a major amendment.

#### *Overall Zoning Approach*

The Petition proposes the creation of a new PUD-CDK district over an existing portion of the PUD-3 district whose boundaries largely coincide with the PUD Development Parcel approved by Planning Board Special Permit PB-141. In addition to the PB-141 parcel, the PUD-CDK district would include the Eversource Gas Transfer Station (GTS) site. Thus, the



PUD-CDK district would effectively overlap the western portion of the PUD-3 district but would not include its eastern portion (see attached zoning map).

PUD zoning is common in Kendall Square due to the nature of redevelopment in the area. PUD zoning authorizes large-scale, phased development over multiple sites by setting broad limitations on development, such as overall Gross Floor Area (GFA), mix of uses, building heights, and open space requirements, and requiring Planning Board review and approval of detailed development plans. When approving a PUD Plan, the Planning Board must find that the development is in conformance with City plans for the area and provides public benefits outweighing its adverse impacts. The Planning Board Special Permit includes conditions for ongoing review and mitigation.

Some PUD overlay districts have been modified since their creation and some have been overlaid with other PUD districts in recent years, including PUD-5 (MIT's Kendall Square redevelopment), PUD-7 (Volpe site), and PUD-8 (CambridgeSide site). One advantage of establishing a new PUD district instead of modifying an existing one is that there is less risk of affecting existing development that received prior PUD approval. To account for the overlap between the existing PUD-3 and the proposed PUD-CDK, Section 13.204.1(a) of the PUD-CDK petition includes a table of parcels with existing approved GFA based on issued Planning Board Special Permits. However, if the zoning is adopted and a development proposal comes before the Planning Board, there will need to be clarification of what development is controlled by the previous PUD special permit and what is controlled by a new PUD special permit.

#### *Allowed Development Under Proposed Zoning*

The PUD-CDK zoning effectively provides for two development scenarios: one in which development occurs only on Parcel C ("Scenario 1" in this memo) and one in which the GTS site is included with Parcel C in a development plan ("Scenario 2"), with some caveats described below. In Scenario 1, there is less overall height and commercial GFA allowed (230 feet and 450,000 square feet, respectively), and the arts use would be smaller (defined as a "Community Arts Facility") with a minimum of 15,000 square feet. In Scenario 2, development would be allowed greater height and commercial GFA (250 feet and 550,000 square feet, respectively), and a larger 30,000 square-foot arts center would be incorporated (defined as a "Arts and Culture Center").

The precise language in the petition describing Scenario 2 states that the development project will "abut and/or have frontage along at least 75 linear feet of Third Street," or, "...at the developer's option, provide[s] an appropriate pedestrian corridor between the existing or planned open space in the PUD-CDK District and open space to the west of Third Street." There is no clear definition of what constitutes an "appropriate pedestrian corridor" or what is meant by "at the developer's option," and so this language could enable a scenario in which the GTS facility is not relocated but the full allotment of up to

580,000 square feet could be built on a smaller site. It would be helpful to clarify what kinds of outcomes might be enabled by this provision.

	<b>Current PUD Approval</b>	<b>Proposed Zoning - Scenario 1 (GTS Site Excluded)</b>	<b>Proposed Zoning - Scenario 2 (GTS Site Included)</b>
<b>Total Land Area</b>	425,319 SF	425,319 SF	439,173 SF
<b>Total GFA</b>	1,376,000 SF (1,291,000 SF built)	1,756,000 SF	1,871,000 SF
<b>GFA – Office/Lab</b>	757,970 SF	1,207,970 SF (max)	1,307,970 SF (max)
<b>GFA - Residential</b>	467,530 SF	467,530 SF	467,530 SF
<b>GFA – Retail</b>	65,500 SF	65,500+ SF	65,500+ SF
<b>Maximum Building Height</b>	Range: 120'-230'	230' (Parcel C) <sup>1</sup>	250' (Parcel C / GTS) <sup>1</sup>
<b>GFA - Performing Arts Facility</b>	85,000 SF performing arts center approved	15,000 SF "Community Arts Facility" required	30,000 SF "Arts and Culture Center" required
<b>Publicly Beneficial Open Space</b>	ca. 22.5% of Land Area (ca. 95,000 SF) <i>Min. 15% required by zoning</i>	15% of Land Area (63,797 SF)	15% of Land Area (65,875 SF)
<b>Parking Spaces</b>	2,238	No min. or max.; flexibility in Planning Board approval	No min. or max.; flexibility in Planning Board approval
<b>Loading Requirements</b>	14 bays	Planning Board may approve waiver, sharing	Planning Board may approve waiver, sharing
<b>Bicycle Parking</b>	500	Per citywide zoning (6.100)	Per citywide zoning (6.100)
<b>Uses</b>	Residential, Office & Lab, Institutional, Some Retail & Consumer Business Establishments, Performing Arts Center	Residential, Office & Lab, Institutional, <b>all</b> Retail & Consumer Business Establishments, Arts & Culture Uses (new definition)	Residential, Office & Lab, Institutional, <b>all</b> Retail & Consumer Business Establishments, Arts & Culture Uses (new definition)

<sup>1</sup> The petition includes a provision whereby the Planning Board may permit additional height if mechanical equipment, which would otherwise be located on the roof, is internalized within the building and occupies a minimum of 75% of the building's



floorplate for the corresponding floors. Such a provision would be a novel concept in Cambridge, and essentially allows unrestricted additional height for the internalization of mechanical equipment within a building. While this type of incentive may help achieve certain planning goals (e.g., less ambient sound, more attractive building crown design), it would diverge from the way that height limits are determined throughout the city and the outcomes would be uncertain.

#### *PUD Review/Approval Process*

Development under the proposed zoning would be subject to a PUD review and approval process in accordance with Article 12.00 of the Zoning Ordinance. Per the Petition, the review would consist of a required informal pre-application conference with the Planning Board (which is normally optional), followed by at least two public hearings prior to Planning Board approval of the development at a master plan level. Because the current Petition would effectively enable development on only one site, it may not be necessary or productive to require a pre-application conference, two public hearings to approve a master plan, and subsequent design approval. Unless additional changes to the PB-141 parcel are contemplated, a more focused process to review and approve development on the Parcel C / GTS site with connective landscape and public realm improvements might be more productive than an extensive master plan review.

#### *PUD Plan Requirements*

Section 13.202.3 lists the required components of a Final Development Plan for a PUD-CDK Eligible Development Parcel. These submittal requirements are largely based on the requirements in recently adopted zoning for the PUD-7 and PUD-8 districts, which contemplate phased, multi-site development over a longer time period in accordance with a master plan. Some notable differences are discussed below:

- **Transportation Plan:**

Rather than submitting a Transportation Impact Study (“TIS”), the PUD-CDK authorizes the developer to instead submit a “Transportation Assessment” in a “...form and substance acceptable to the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department.” Such a substitution may be authorized by the Planning Board if the Planning Board “...determines that the materials submitted with the Final Development Plan adequately describe the impacts of traffic and parking on the area surrounding the Development Parcel.”

The substitution of a TIS for an alternative study is not currently allowed elsewhere in the Zoning Ordinance. Within the proposed PUD-CDK, a Transportation Assessment is undefined, and there are no listed criteria for what must be included therein.

- **Housing Plan, Phasing Plan**

Other PUD districts require a Housing Plan, which provides relevant information on the approximate number and mix of housing unit types proposed on a residential site, and a Phasing Plan, which describes the general sequence of a multi-building development. Because the current proposal contemplates a single phase of non-residential development, these plans may not have relevance.

- Arts & Culture Operations Plan, Local Retail Plan

The PUD-CDK distinguishes itself from other PUD districts by requiring the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Operations Plan as well as a Local Retail Plan. The former would require information on a strategy for local engagement and intergenerational arts and culture programming within a newly built Arts and Culture Center or Community Arts Facility. The latter would establish a framework for how local artists and their work, crafts or wares could be promoted within retail spaces in the PUD-CDK. These fall more under the category of operational plans than development plans, but are particularly relevant to this proposal in order to provide clarity around the unique set of uses included in the proposed zoning.

*PUD Approval Criteria*

Section 13.204.2 lists the objectives by which the Planning Board should be guided in making a finding to issue a PUD-CDK Special Permit, summarized below:

- The arts facility provided is thoughtfully designed and promotes community-based theater;
- The development contributes to the diversity of East Cambridge and Kendall Square;
- The development improves the streetscape along the Third Street corridor;
- The development integrates development with new and existing open spaces physically and functionally;
- The development enhances pedestrian connections between existing open spaces and natural areas;
- If the development includes a 30,000 square-foot Arts and Culture Center, the developer has made a commitment to relocating GTS infrastructure;
- The development demonstrates a commitment to locally based retail and restaurant uses where applicable.

These objectives provide important considerations for the Planning Board in evaluating a Final Development Plan for a PUD-CDK parcel. As discussed later in this memo, there are other objectives and recommendations from City planning documents, such as K2, which are not captured above.

*Consistency Language*

The petition proposes a new Section 13.206.1, “Relationship to PUD-3,” which addresses the issue noted above that it can be difficult to predict how overlapping PUD zoning districts might interact. This can usually be resolved during the PUD review and approval process, in which the Planning Board has broad latitude to grant amendments to resolve unforeseen circumstances. The proposed language states several provisions pertaining to “rights granted” under PUD special permits, as well as a catchall provision regarding conflicts among differing approvals. In the past, this type of language has been concerning for Planning Board members, and the City has avoided including such language within PUD zoning.

*Letter of Commitment*

The Petitioner submitted a Letter of Commitment in conjunction with the proposed zoning amendment, agreeing to provide additional community benefits if the Petition is adopted, summarized below:

- At the Petitioner’s cost, the Petitioner will make commercially reasonable efforts to negotiate a relocation of the GTS site with Eversource.
- The provision of an arts use (either an Arts and Culture Center or Community Arts Facility) and establishment of an Arts Advisory Committee to operate the space. Such a facility will be accompanied by at least 10,000 square feet of public space within the building, an exhibit area, public art, and funding for the employment of an Executive Director of the Arts, with a theater incorporated if the Arts and Culture Center is developed.
- Additional open space around the project should the GTS site be included.
- For 20 years following the adoption of zoning, 100 free canoe and kayaking tickets per year and 100 free ice-skating tickets per year for local youth.
- An annual Winter Market to be hosted in the interior public space described above.
- No new parking construction, and subsidized parking for events.
- Additional sustainability standards, including a commitment to eliminate fossil fuel fired equipment as is feasible and use of steam as an energy source.
- Limitation on building height to 85 feet within 10 feet of the property line should the development project include frontage along Third Street.

Some of the proposed commitments overlap with or duplicate standards that are commonly regulated in the Zoning Ordinance, including height and step-back limitations, requirements for open space and landscaping, and standards for sustainable design.

The commitments to eliminate on-site fossil fuel consumption and to utilize steam energy (presumably, from the existing cogeneration power plant) are notable, given that

zoning can promote sustainable design but generally does not regulate the sources of building energy.

The commitment to support an on-site arts use (either an Arts and Culture Center or Community Arts Facility) through functional space, public exhibition/programming space, and other operational support is also notable. Aside from funding to hire an executive director, the extent of the financial commitment to supporting this center is not entirely clear. The letter specifies that the non-profit operating entity would not be responsible for site-wide maintenance and that subsidized rates (which are not specified) would be charged to users, but other financial considerations such as construction/fit-out costs, staffing, and rents are not described. Such types of commitments are unusual, but the most comparable precedent may be the commitment to establish a Community Center agreed to by MIT as part of the Volpe Site rezoning, which included specific funding amounts to support the development and operation of the center.

#### ***Considerations for Review***

The following comments focus on planning considerations that are relevant to this Petition. Specific comments on the language of the zoning text are not included, but as with any zoning petition, the Planning Board's recommendation could include potential changes to the text and could direct City staff to conduct a careful text review for clarity and consistency with the City's zoning practices.

#### ***Overall***

The current proposal takes a similar form to other recent rezoning proposals in this part of the City. It has become clear that the urban development market in Kendall Square is driven primarily by commercial office/laboratory uses, which generate economic value that can support other community-desired uses and public contributions. Since the original vision for a large performing arts center did not materialize, the site's owner is proposing an alternative vision for the site that includes a community-focused arts center supported economically by the commercial space. The main consideration is whether the zoning would enable a development, taking into account all of its component uses, public improvements, and other investments, that advances the City's planning goals.

#### ***Planning Objectives***

One of the principles of PUD zoning is that it works hand-in-hand with a redevelopment plan for a particular area. Zoning requirements control the total amount and overall scale of development, along with other high-level requirements, but the outcome relies on detailed review by the Planning Board to evaluate whether a specific development proposal meets the City's planning objectives for that area. PUD zoning should identify

the City planning objectives that will guide the development process, and include strong approval criteria to ensure that key planning objectives are met.

As described at the beginning of this memo, there have been many past planning efforts and documents that have informed the development of this site and its larger context. Although there are some differences that should be considered, the K2 Study and Kendall Square Design Guidelines that emerged from that study provide the most recent and relevant set of objectives for this area, along with other supplementary planning efforts including the ECKOS / “Connect Kendall Square” open space plan, the principles established by the Volpe Working Group, and the recommendations from the Mayor’s Arts Task Force. Such relevant studies should be referenced within section 13.202.4 of the PUD-CDK text, and criteria for the Planning Board’s review and approval of a development plan should be linked to those plans.

#### *Active Ground Floors*

While the Petition expands the scope of retail and consumer service establishment uses permitted in this area, it does not provide the same requirements for active ground floor use that have been incorporated into other “K2” rezoning areas. This is a particular concern if the development has frontage along Third Street, which is identified as a high priority for providing a concentration of active use. The proposed arts use on the site could have public-facing components, though the petition does not describe how such uses might provide street front activation comparable to retail.

Similar to other recent zoning changes in Kendall Square, stronger standards could be included for ground floor retail or other active use, such as a minimum active use frontage on Third Street or specific criteria to be evaluated and approved by the Planning Board. This would bring the Petition in closer alignment with the recommendations of ECaPS and K2, which envisioned Third Street as a walkable, mixed-use corridor. Without clear standards, major street frontages often tend to be dominated by office lobbies.

#### *Urban Design*

One of the most notable aspects of this petition is the potential to relocate the GTS facility, which would be a costly intervention and a dramatic improvement to the character of Third Street, if it can be accomplished. The approach to designing a significant new building fronting Third Street will be of crucial importance given the transformative effect it would have on the area.

Although the Petition includes illustrations of what a proposed building enabled by this zoning would look like, the zoning itself does not include any clear statement of design intent nor does it cite design objectives or guidelines that would inform the Planning Board’s review of a project. The K2 study and associated design guidelines provide a

number of design recommendations for new buildings that would be relevant to this proposal. Specifically:

- New development should orient itself towards Third Street and help establish a Third Street “streetwall”, and exhibit the feeling of a compact, pedestrian-scale block.
- Ground floor retail or active use along Third Street (see above).
- Minimizing the impacts of shadows, wind and noise from new development on the surrounding area.
- Designing buildings and facades in such a way that minimizes monolithic massing and helps break up long building facades, enhancing visual interest from the street.
- Providing careful design consideration to the crown of tall buildings.

As recommended in K2, the zoning could include specific reference to design guidelines established for this part of the city, or the Petitioner and urban design staff could work to determine what guidelines and objectives would be most appropriate to this particular site. The City’s Kendall Square Design Guidelines include important considerations for large commercial buildings and active ground floors that were developed through study. However, they do not provide specific guidance for the design of arts uses in the context of Kendall Square, which could use further investigation.

#### *Open Space*

Since the proposal does not contemplate removing existing open space, and additional open space is suggested on the new development sites, it is unclear why the Petition retains the current minimum open space requirement of 15% rather than requiring an amount closer to what exists in the district. In many other redevelopment areas, minimum open space requirements have been increased to the equivalent of about 20% or more in some cases.

In addition to the quantity of open space, the site planning and design of new open space has been a crucial element of recent planning for Kendall Square that should inform the review of any new development. The ECKOS planning effort provides a number of open space recommendations that would be relevant to the review of development in this area, including:

- Locating new open spaces to create linkages between existing parks and open spaces where possible.
- Using creative lighting and street furniture to activate open spaces, provide opportunities for public space programming, and create a sense of identity within the district.
- Designing shared spaces to be multi-use, multi-seasonal and multi-generational.

*Parking & Loading*

The Petition follows the K2 recommendations of establishing flexible minimum parking and loading requirements (subject to Planning Board approval) and allowing off-site parking within 2,000 feet of a development. By making a commitment not to build new parking, the proposal aligns with the overall objective in K2 of limiting parking growth in order to control traffic growth and discourage reliance on automobile travel.

The K2 plan also establishes recommended limits on parking ratios for different uses, and further study may be needed to assess the existing parking supply in relation to the proposed development. Under development Scenario 2, there would be approximately 1.2 parking spaces for every 1,000 square feet of total development, which is generally higher than the ratios recommended in K2, suggesting that there may still be excess parking on-site. Maximum parking ratios for new development may still be desirable, and analysis may be needed at the development review stage to determine how excess parking could be used in a way that furthers the City's transportation goals.

*Transportation Impact Study (TIS)*

The Petition includes a provision in which the Planning Board may allow a "Transportation Assessment" in lieu of a TIS in accordance with Section 19.20 of the Zoning Ordinance. Though not defined, a transportation assessment may be a higher-level evaluation of the potential traffic and transportation-related impacts of a development proposal. It is important to distinguish this type of study, which may be useful during the evaluation of a zoning change, from the type of study that is ordinarily required as part of the special permit review process.

A Development Proposal should remain subject to TIS requirements per Section 19.20, in addition to other transportation studies that have been incorporated into Kendall Square rezoning areas such as studies of shared parking, transit (in relation to the City's 2015 Transit Strategic Plan), and relationships to future transportation connections in the area, to remain consistent with requirements for comparable development (zoning requirements for the PUD-7 district provide an example). This approach is necessary to ensure that an appropriate program of mitigation and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) can be implemented. Therefore, staff would not support the substitution of a Transportation Assessment for a TIS as required by Section 19.20.

*Bicycle & Pedestrian Considerations*

The Petition includes a requirement for the submission of a Connectivity Plan, which illustrates how bicycles, pedestrians and transit connections and circulation would operate within the district in the context of a development proposal. Such a plan should be evaluated for its conformance with the City's established plans for the area as a whole in addition to functional considerations such as clear movement, spaces to gather and rest, weather protection, and visibility.



Cambridge's 2015 Bicycle Master Plan and its 2020 update envision reconstructing Third Street with fully-separated bicycle facilities. A Connectivity Plan should consider how development along Third Street can implement this recommendation, especially given the potential for the relocation of the GTS site. The plan should also address anticipated demand for Bluebikes and how the proposed development will mitigate such increased demand and ensure the Bluebikes system remains in a state of good repair.

#### *Sustainable Design*

Previous planning efforts have resulted in increased standards for the overall sustainability of new development across the City, including the Kendall Square area. Recommendations from the K2 Study and Net Zero Action Plan have now been incorporated into the City's Green Building Requirements, including:

- Requiring LEED Gold level design standards, or meeting Passive House or Enterprise Green Communities standards as an alternative to LEED.
- Requiring new construction to meet the requirements of LEED's Enhanced Commissioning Credit.

Other recommendations from K2 have not been codified across the city or within this specific area, and could be considered for inclusion in the PUD-CDK. These include:

- Requiring new buildings to evaluate the feasibility of steam energy (note: the Letter of Commitment includes a commitment for steam energy);
- Requiring cool roofs for all new development;
- Requiring new development to address heat island impacts; and
- Requiring new buildings to be solar-ready.

Some of the above standards are being considered through citywide efforts such as the Climate Resilience Zoning Task Force. Similar to other areas with recently amended zoning, these provisions could be included as explicit review criteria in the PUD-CDK district, along with additional performance requirements to advance the City's objectives in this district.

Although it is beyond the purview of zoning, the commitment to develop a building without on-site fossil fuel consumption is a significant step toward advancing the City's Net Zero Action Plan. Along with improving energy efficiency, eliminating fossil fuel consumption on-site and relying mainly on electricity and low-carbon energy sources (such as on-site renewable energy systems) enables future reductions in greenhouse gas emissions as regional efforts reduce the amount of emissions produced across the electrical grid as a whole.

#### *Arts and Public Space*

The main contribution that is contemplated in the proposed zoning is an arts use, which would vary in size and character depending on the development scenario. In either case,

the use would be smaller in size than the Constellation Center, the performing arts center originally envisioned for the site. However, an arts use contemplated by the current proposal appears to be oriented more toward the local arts community, whereas the Constellation Center was envisioned more as a regional center hosting larger performances staged by larger organizations. The current approach appears to be more aligned with the recommendations of the Mayor’s Arts Task Force, which emphasize affordable workspace for local artists and smaller organizations that are having difficulties remaining in Cambridge. The arts uses would also be complemented by public space, which is proposed to extend around the site and throughout the building’s ground floor.

Since the inclusion of arts and public space in a commercial building of this type is fairly novel, it will be important in the review process to understand how the spaces will function, how they will be accessed, and how they will relate to other uses within the building and the surrounding area.

#### *Other Considerations*

The K2 study established some area-wide zoning recommendations that are not included in this proposal. These recommendations identify City priorities for uses and contributions to be included in all new Kendall Square development. However, it is possible that the inclusion of a community-oriented arts center is a preferable alternative to some or all of the contributions and uses discussed below.

- A Kendall Square Fund contribution of \$10 per square foot of new non-residential gross floor area to be applied toward public open space, transit improvements, and workforce readiness programs;
- Providing at least 5% of all new non-residential gross floor area as “innovation space” to serve smaller companies and start-ups on more flexible lease terms. (Up to 50% of the provided space would be exempt from GFA limitations, up to 5% of the development’s total non-residential GFA.)
- Required housing as a component of any new large-scale commercial development plan, with components of affordable housing per citywide requirements and middle-income housing units in some instances. (Note that all commercial development remains subject to Incentive Zoning, requiring fund contributions to the Affordable Housing Trust on a per-square-foot basis.

# Building Height Limits Under Existing Zoning

Cambridge, Massachusetts

