

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

PUD DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL DETERMINATION

CASE NO.: PB 17

PETITION: Special Permit for a Planned Unit Development

PROJECT: Lechmere Canal Condominiums "Graves Landing"

APPLICANT: Unihab/Cambridge, Inc.

DISTRICT: BA/PUD-4

DEVELOPMENT PARCEL LOCATIONS: Monsignor O'Brien Highway between
Lechmere Square and Commercial Avenue

APPLICATION DATE: July 10, 1981

FIRST PUBLIC HEARING: August 4, 1981

DATE OF PLANNING BOARD DETERMINATION: August 4, 1981

THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The Development Proposal is for a special permit to construct a Planned Unit Development (PUD) consisting of a single 265,813 square foot residential structure with a floor area ratio (FAR) of 1.93 and a building height of 93 feet. It would contain 168 condominiums (208,549 s.f.) and a 57,264 square foot garage.

The proposed development project consists of both private and public actions. The development parcel contains property to be conveyed to the city and developed as a public park, a parcel to the north of the building site to be taken for widening of Monsignor O'Brien Highway and a parcel being developed by Unihab for residential use.

THE HEARING

Mr. Arthur Klipfel, applicant, described the development proposal to the Board, stating that the 168 unit condominium building is consistent with the objectives of the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan. Though the original concept included 40,000 square feet of retail space and a public parking garage in addition to residential use for this site, changes in public actions have made strict compliance with these guidelines financially unfeasible. Using a model and plans, Mr. Klipfel illustrated the design concept and details of the proposal. The two phase development project would be located on a 104,864 s.f. site situated on the northeastern side of the Lechmere Canal. Negotiations are underway to acquire an additional site from Bio-Research, Inc. upon which 24 additional units will be constructed and possibly the Citco site located to the northwest of the proposed building for open space. The open space area along the canal will be donated to the city and maintained through a fee charged to residents of the condominium building.

Public Comments

1. Timothy Toomey, 38th Street, member of the East Cambridge Stabilization Committee (ECSC) voiced his concern over the discrepancies between this project and the objectives of the Riverfront Plan, specifically the fact that the Plan suggested Section 8 housing be included in this project and none is being proposed. Mr. Toomey also noted that his committee never received notice of this hearing and question as to why these plans were not presented to the E.C.S.C.

Mr. Klipfel responded to the Section 8 issue by stating that it is unfortunate that Section 8 monies are unavailable and it would be impossible to include low/moderate income units without subsidies.

Mr. Zimlicki, project director for East Cambridge, informed Mr. Toomey that the plans for this project were filed on July 10, while the stabilization committee's last meeting for the summer was on July 8. Mr. Zimlicki apologized for not sending notice of this hearing to the committee.

2. Lawrence May, 203 Clark Street, stated that the project was not responsive to the housing needs of the community and questioned the applicant as to whether any tax deals were involved.

Mr. Klipfel responded by stating that no tax deals were made and in addition to paying taxes he was donating a substantial portion of land to the city for use as a public park.

A question arose regarding the figures for total taxes to be paid presented on page 17 of the application as to whether that figure represented taxes for the total project or just phase I.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Klipfel subsequently indicated that the figure of \$700,000 was for the total project.

3. Mr. Edward DePierro, 57 Fulkerson Street, voiced his concern over the possible lack of parking for residents of the building, suggesting that residents of the units would more than likely own more than one automobile.

Mr. Klipfel responded by stating additional spaces would cost approximately \$10,000/unit. More spaces could be provided on the deck where the tennis courts are proposed at a later date if necessary, but he believed that occupants would not own more than one automobile. Mr. Klipfel also stated that he would prefer to discourage automobile use and encourage alternate modes of transportation.

4. Mr. Frank Manganello, 109 Gore Street, asked the Board if the plans for this project would be viewed by the East Cambridge Stabilization Team prior to the final approval.

Mr. Zimlicki stated that a meeting could be arranged in September for that purpose.

THE APPLICATION

In support of the petition the applicant submitted the following documents:

1. Planned Unit Development Application, Development Proposal submitted by Unihab/Cambridge, Inc. for development in the Lechmere Canal project area.
2. Required site plans, elevations, and cross-sections, pages 1-12, dated July 8, 1981.
3. Certificates of ownership, for the Museum of Science and the City of Cambridge.
4. PUD Application Certification of Completeness, Development Proposal submitted to an authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board on July 10, 1981 and signed on July 13, 1981.

FINDINGS

1. The Development Proposal was submitted on July 10, 1981 and accepted as complete by an authorized representative of the Planning Board on July 13, 1981. The application met all requirements of subsection 12.343.
2. A pre-application conference with the applicant was held on February 3, 1981 in accordance with section 12.33. The applicant at that time proposed a development containing 130 condominiums and 28,000 square feet of ground floor retail space.
3. A public hearing was held on August 4, 1981 in accordance with section 12.35.
4. Prior to the public hearing a copy of the application was submitted to the Department of Traffic and Parking for their review.
5. The Development Proposal generally satisfies the criteria established in subsection 12.353 except as noted below:
 - a. The Development Proposal deviates from the controls set forth in section 13.50, PUD-4 District, as cited by the staff and as requested by the applicant. These violations are listed below.

	<u>Required</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
(1) Section 13.54 Height	85'	93'
(2) Subsection 6.371 Bicycle parking	84 spaces	0

b. The Development Proposal deviates from the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan (May 1978) in the following areas:

- (1) Lack of ground floor retail located between the parking garage and Lechmere Canal.
- (2) 168 residential units are proposed while only 120 units are suggested in the Riverfront Plan.
- (3) Eight stories are proposed as opposed to the six stories suggested in the Riverfront Plan.
- (4) The linear span of the building along the canal is reduced from 500 feet to 430 feet.

The Board notes that the above are deviations from development "guidelines" and are not necessarily considered negative aspects of the proposal. The proposed development clearly conforms to the overall intent and scope of the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan.

6. Residential development for the parcel is appropriate and desirable. However, the Board wishes to have a more active ground plane along the canal's edge as documented in the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan. The Board understands why retail/restaurant use is not presently shown, but it still feels it is necessary for the entire canal atmosphere and viability to have all developments participate in generating the activity.
7. The proposed residential density (70 units/acre) is within the maximum permitted density (72 units/acre) for this site. The proposed floor area ratio of 1.93 is slightly below the permitted 2.0 FAR. Both the proposed density and FAR are acceptable.
8. The building height (93') slightly exceeds the permitted maximum (85') for this district. Though the excess height of eight (8) feet appears to be a minor violation, the application does not adequately explain to the Board why this variance should be granted. The proposal does handle treatment of the upper floors in an interesting manner; the step back of the penthouse units and with the use of colorful awnings creates a dramatic break in the building mass, minimizing one's perception of the building height.
9. With regard to the overall massing:
 - a. The proposed garage provides neither an urban edge containing Monsignor O'Brien Highway nor a sensation of open space counterbalancing the Monsignor O'Brien Highway.
 - b. There is an unsettling transition between the residential tower and the low-lying garage, especially adjacent to the Wilder/Manley parcel at the termination of the Otis Street corridor. There should be some architectural or other visual treatment at this point to both convincingly end the corridor and contain the park.

10. The extensive linear span of the building with its repetitive elevations is of concern to the Board. The proposal, as noted above, treats the upper floors in an interesting manner but the overall flatness, even with finely detailed balconies, needs greater variety.
11. The residential qualities of the main entries off the canal should be stressed. The expanse of steps and elevation treatment are more appropriate to an office lobby than a residential enclave. The garage entry should be on an urban scale and clearly delineated as a private entry. The garage should be designed to assist in all aspects of security.
12. Data submitted with the Final EIR, dated March 15, 1979 for the Lechmere Canal and Triangle Area Development Project, reviewed proposed roadway improvements in conjunction with alternative development for this area, including the residential use of this site. It was found that the effects of increased traffic volumes resulting from the proposed development are offset by public roadway and intersection improvements contemplated for this project area.
13. The Board finds several problems in the parking and loading areas such as lack of loading area, inadequate provisions for handicapped parking, several spaces not meeting minimum design dimensions and a potentially dangerous entrance to the parking garage. Although the zoning ordinance does not require a loading area for residential uses, the only way to move household goods (furniture, etc.) in and out of the building will be through the main lobby entrance.
14. The Board finds that bicycle usage to and from the site may be significant and that the proposal does not sufficiently provide for the needs of bicycle users.
15. The Board preliminarily finds that the Development Proposal satisfies the criteria of section 12.353 except as noted above.

DETERMINATION

The Board, pursuant to section 12.352, conditionally approves the Development Proposal submitted on July 10, 1981, with recommendations for modification set forth below. Pursuant to subsection 12.36, the applicant may submit a Final Development Plan to the Board for consideration no later than October 2, 1981. The Final Development Plan shall satisfy the conditions set forth below.

RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS AND CONDITIONS FOR FINAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1. The project shall contain retail/restaurant space at the ground level on the northwestern edge of the building and facing the canal. There shall be a minimum of 10,000 square feet of gross floor area devoted to such retail use.
2. Unihab shall re-examine the massing and bulk of the project in light of the above findings and make appropriate revisions specifically with respect to treatment and design at the lower and ground floor levels prior to submitting Final Development Plans.
3. Unihab shall consider the following suggestions for architectural details:
 - a. The upper parking area shall be trellised or otherwise softened. A wooden trellis is preferred.
 - b. The balcony railing detail appears weak, a more nautical expression similar to the nearby Rowland Foundation building where brick capped with a railing 6" above is used is suggested.
 - c. Elements of color should be used, especially through the use of awnings and planters at the balconies.
 - d. A brick facing in conformity with other historic brick facings used in Cambridge such as Kainegonic brick or similar brick be used.
 - e. Unihab investigate the potential of adding a limited number of bay windows in an effort to further vary the strong building mass.
 - f. Further study be made of the end elevations.
4. The Final Development Plan shall contain the following modifications to the parking garage:
 - a. The parking garage shall be redesigned to comply with the requirements of Article 6.000; all spaces shall meet the minimum dimensional requirements. This can be accomplished by providing more impact and less standard spaces while still keeping within the maximum 50% compact space limit.

- b. The parking entrance shall be redesigned to meet the following conditions:
- (1) The street opening on to Monsignor O'Brien Highway shall be increased to a minimum width of 18 feet.
 - (2) The wall between the exit ramps shall be as low as possible to ensure visibility between vehicles leaving the upper level and the lower level.
 - (3) A stop sign shall be provided for cars leaving the upper level parking garage to ensure a full stop prior to merging with cars exiting the lower level.
- c. The project shall provide the required amount of bicycle parking and the final plans shall indicate the location and amount provided.
5. Unihab shall provide a satisfactory explanation to the Board justifying the requested height variance prior to final approval. This explanation shall include sufficient information for the Board to determine whether or not specific findings can be made for the issuance of a variance as required by Chapter 40A, Section 10.

This determination of Conditional Approval under subsection 12.352 of the Ordinance has been made by a unanimous vote of the Planning Board on Tuesday, August 4, 1981.

Respectfully submitted,

For the Planning Board

Arthur C. Parris

Arthur C. Parris
Chairman

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of determination filed with the Office of the City Clerk on August 7, 1981 by Elizabeth Murray, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board.