



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

To: Planning Board

From: Jeff Roberts, Land Use and Zoning Planner
Swaathi Joseph, Associate Zoning Planner
Suzannah Bigolin, Urban Design Planner

Date: March 8, 2016

Re: Special Permit **PB #309, 95 Fawcett Street**

This memo contains an overview of the proposed project at 95 Fawcett Street, the special permits being requested, and related comments.

Summary of Proposal

The applicant is proposing to remove the existing two-story non-residential building to construct a five-story multifamily residential building with 44 units. The project also includes 48 off-street parking spaces accommodated at the basement and ground levels, 60 long-term bicycle spaces, 8 short term bicycle spaces, and a landscaped courtyard accessible to the building residents and general public.

Requested Special Permits

The project is located in an Alewife Overlay District (AOD) and requires Special Permits for increasing the FAR per Section 20.95.1, the height per Section 20.95.2, and the dwelling unit density per Section 20.95.4. The project is also located within the Flood Plain Overlay District and hence requires a Special Permit for development per Section 20.70. In addition, the project is seeking a Special Permit for construction of a multi-family dwelling in the Office-1 zoning district.

The Applicant has been advised that the project, as designed, will also require a waiver of FAR limitations for above-ground structured parking. This may be approved by special permit per Section 5.25.42 (for development in a flood plain) or 20.97.3 (for development in an AOD). Since neither request was included in the application, amended application materials will be required before approval can be granted at a future hearing.

The project also requires relief for front, rear and side yard setbacks. The AOD zoning allows the Planning Board to grant relief from yard requirements but may only reduce the front yard setback to 15 feet; since the project is proposing a 10-foot front yard setback, it will require a variance from the BZA. The project also requires review by the Conservation Commission for compliance with Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

The applicable special permit findings, goals of the *Concord-Alewife Plan*, and the *Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines* are summarized on the following pages. Applicable sections of the zoning and *Concord-Alewife Planning Study* are provided in an appendix.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Increase FAR and Height, and Reduce Lot Area per Dwelling Unit in Alewife Overlay Districts (Sections 20.95.1, 20.95.2, & 20.95.4)	The project promotes the general interests of the larger commercial and residential neighborhood noted in Section 20.92 and is consistent with the goals, objectives and guidelines established in the Concord-Alewife Plan (see following page and plan excerpts in appendix).
Construction in Flood Plain Overlay District (Section 20.70)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No encroachment of the floodway or displacement of water retention capacity is allowed unless fully offset. • Flood water systems shall not cause nuisance, hazard or detriment to site or abutters. • Development is consistent with zoning, area plans and guidelines, and applicable laws including Wetlands Protection Act. • Review by the City Engineer and Conservation Commission are required. (See full criteria in appendix).
Construction of Multifamily Dwelling in Office-1 District (Section 4.26.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key features of natural landscape are preserved. • New buildings relate sensitively to existing built environment. • Open space provides visual benefits to abutters and passersby and functional benefits to occupants. • Parking, access and egress are safe and convenient. • Intrusion of onsite parking is minimized. • Services such as trash collection and utility boxes are convenient yet unobtrusive. (See full 10.47.4 criteria in appendix).
General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43 (see appendix).

Concord-Alewife Plan Goals for Quadrangle (intended to provide general guidance)

- Encourage creation of housing along Concord Avenue.
- Introduce neighborhood-focused retail to form a mixed-use core near the Alewife Brook Parkway edge of the Quadrangle.
- Continue to allow light industrial uses closer to the railroad tracks.
- Create appropriate transitions between the Highlands and nonresidential uses in the Quadrangle by introducing a green buffer and allowing lower densities and heights near the Highlands.
- Create a public space that serves a stormwater function as well as being an open space resource.
- Increase the amount of permeable surface in the Quadrangle as the area redevelops.
- Encourage future development to respond to stormwater goals for the area.
- Create a hierarchy of boulevards, avenues, streets, and pathways.
- Enhance the character of Concord Avenue by improving its streetscape.
- Design new public spaces and places that support a range of community-focused activities.
- Improve traffic circulation within the Quadrangle by enhancing existing roads and adding new ones—without creating a direct vehicular connection to the Highlands.
- Improve the streetscape within the Quadrangle to enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment. Strengthen pedestrian/bicycle access to Alewife Station to improve connections to transit and to the Minuteman Path and Linear Park.
- Improve the pedestrian environment along Concord Avenue and provide safe crossings.
- Continue to encourage residential use along Concord Avenue.
- Encourage housing development within the Quadrangle, particularly close to the Highlands.

Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines – Areawide (intended to provide general guidance)

- Break up large blocks into smaller blocks, of sizes similar to those in surrounding Cambridge neighborhoods.
- Vary the design of individual buildings to create an architecturally diverse district.
- Street level facades should include active uses such as frequent residential entrances; neighborhood-serving retail; services for the public or for commercial offices; and community spaces.
- Encourage awnings/ canopies to provide shelter and enliven ground-floor façades.
- Design residential buildings with individual units and front doors facing street.
- Utilize low impact development principles in building and site design
- Use site design that preserves future rights-of-way identified in the Circulation Concept Plan.
- Improve existing streets to meet City standards, including streetscape improvements.
- Strengthen bicycle and pedestrian links to adjacent areas.
- Screen service areas from major streets.
- Parking below-grade is preferred. If above-grade parking is to be provided, design it so it is not visible from public streets, or pathways; line above-ground structured parking with active uses.
- Design and locate lighting and signage in support of the district’s pedestrian-friendly quality.
- Use site design to minimize shadows on other buildings or on public streets, open spaces, parks, and plazas.
- Design residential development to include a range of units of various sizes and bedrooms.

Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines – Quadrangle (intended to provide general guidance)

- Use streetscape and other improvements to define Wilson Road as part of a major east-west connection through the Quadrangle.
- Create an open-space system characterized by parks and green spaces of varying scales and uses.
- Use pooled resources to create a new central public open space in the Quadrangle that incorporates stormwater management.
- Locate active uses around the future open space to create a safe and active environment throughout the day and evening.
- Provide pedestrian links to strengthen physical connections to the shopping center.
- Create building height/façade setbacks between 85' and 105'.
- Provide pedestrian links to strengthen connections to Fresh Pond Reservation, consistent with the Fresh Pond Master Plan.
- Strengthen the streetscape and other improvements to define Concord Avenue.
- Locate new development to allow for a future above-grade crossing between the Triangle and the Quadrangle.

Area Planning and Zoning

The base zoning for the site is Office-1 (O-1), which allows professional office and residential uses by right. The base zoning is modified by the Alewife Overlay District (AOD) zoning, which augments the base district zoning regulations in a way that allows greater density and more flexible dimensional requirements by special permit while imposing additional requirements and standards to respond to the unique issues identified in the Alewife area. This zoning regime of a more restrictive by-right zoning, which can be more permissive by special permit, was one of the results of the Concord-Alewife Rezoning that was recommended in the 2006 *Concord-Alewife Planning Study* (see below).

As with much of the Alewife area, the site is located within the Flood Plain Overlay District, which encompasses areas designated as Flood Hazard Zones A and AE on the Middlesex County Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Projects within this district require a Planning Board special permit. While the criteria for granting the special permit are meant to mitigate flood hazard in a fairly technical way, they also align with many of the environmental goals of the Concord-Alewife plan.

Concord-Alewife Plan

The planning goals that guide development in the area were established in the *Concord-Alewife Planning Study*, completed in 2006. In deciding special permits pursuant to the Alewife Overlay District (AOD) zoning, the key consideration for the Board will be the degree to which the proposal conforms to the Concord-Alewife plan. Attached to this memo is a selected set of materials from the Concord-Alewife report that are most relevant to consideration of a proposal in this area.

The Concord-Alewife study divided the Alewife area into four sub-areas:

- The “Triangle” is the area north of the Fitchburg rail line and south of the Alewife Brook Reservation, which has mostly transitioned from industrial use to a mix of office, commercial research labs, and housing.
- The “Quadrangle” is the area south of the Fitchburg rail line and north of Concord Avenue/Fresh Pond, which is still largely industrial in character, with some more recent additions of housing and office use and some remaining automobile-oriented retail.
- The “Shopping Center” is the corridor along both sides of Alewife Brook Parkway that is dominated by large-scale, auto-oriented retail complexes serving a regional market.
- The “Cambridge Highlands” is the small neighborhood off of Concord Avenue near the Belmont town line, characterized by single-family and two-family homes.

The Quadrangle sub-area is further subcategorized into Quadrangle Northeast, Quadrangle Northwest, Quadrangle Southeast, and Quadrangle Southwest. The 95 Fawcett Street site lies within the interior of the Quadrangle Southeast (classified on the Zoning Map as the “AOD-4” subdistrict). The area is currently transitioning from traditional industrial uses to mixed uses with prominent office and multifamily residential developments.

Future Development Goals

Some of the overall Concord-Alewife goals related to development are to promote a mix of housing and commercial uses throughout the area, to manage traffic demand by supporting walking, bicycling and public transportation as alternative modes of transportation, and to promote stormwater management through increased landscape and permeable area, as well as engineered interventions.

In the Quadrangle in particular, the planning goals encourage the addition of housing, with a transition from lower-density development near the Cambridge Highlands neighborhood to medium-density development further to the east. The Quadrangle goals also support neighborhood-focused retail near Alewife Brook Parkway, while allowing the retention of light industrial uses in areas near the active railroad line. So far, there have only been a few scattered residential developments in the Quadrangle since the completion of the Concord-Alewife study. The most significant, and most proximate to 95 Fawcett Street, is the two-building, 429-unit residential complex at 70 Fawcett Street, known as the “Atmark” development, which was subject to Planning Board review and approval (PB #255). The 95 Fawcett Street site has the same underlying base zoning and AOD zoning as 70 Fawcett; however, 95 Fawcett is much smaller, and is located almost entirely within the 100-year flood plain.

Infrastructure

Another key component of the Concord-Alewife plan is desired infrastructure improvements to serve public goals. One major piece of infrastructure is a planned pedestrian/bicycle bridge providing a more direct connection from the Quadrangle to the Alewife MBTA station. The city is currently undertaking a feasibility study for this bridge connection, which also considers the possibility of creating a new MBTA commuter rail station along the existing Fitchburg line. One potential landing site for the bridge would be on railroad-adjacent land directly opposite from 95 Fawcett Street.

Other desired infrastructure improvements particular to the Quadrangle include roadway connections to allow more flexible east-west travel without relying on Concord Avenue, and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout the area. In addition, the plan identifies public open space as a goal, to serve community-gathering functions in addition to stormwater management. The AOD zoning provides mechanisms by which development rights and requirements can be shifted, pooled and transferred flexibly across sites to enable these public improvements. For example, in the Atmark project, the site was split to provide a roadway connection that would form part of a future east-west internal roadway system, which resulted in a development bonus.

Urban Design

One of the main urban design objectives for development in the Quadrangle is to transition from its current automobile-oriented character to a streetscape that enhances the bicycle and pedestrian environment. Key urban design considerations include fostering a pedestrian-friendly environment and vibrant public realm by creating active streets and outdoor gathering spaces, and reinforcing connections to nearby open spaces. Relevant design guidelines are summarized above and discussed further in this memo.

Comments on Proposal

Consistency with Planning and Zoning

Given the small size and unusual shape of the site, some of the major goals of the Concord-Alewife plan are difficult to achieve on this site alone without severely impacting the physical feasibility of a residential development. The site would benefit from some of the potential infrastructure improvements in the plan, including the pedestrian/bicycle crossing to Alewife, a future east-west roadway network, and public open spaces. However, to practically accommodate those types of improvements on this site, it would be necessary to incorporate it into a larger development area within which development rights could be shaped more flexibly, or to otherwise transfer the development rights to another location within the area.

Given the decision to proceed with a stand-alone residential development, the aspects in which the proposal may be evaluated against the Concord-Alewife goals are the ways in which the proposed building relates to its surroundings. For example, the relationship of the proposed building to the potential pedestrian/bicycle bridge landing across from the site, to a potential future roadway connection to the south of the site, and to a potential open space connection along the former rail spur corridor bordering the site on the northwest, are critical to support the vision for a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood.

The scale of the residential project is consistent with the AOD zoning requirements, and the project is exceeding the Article 6.000 requirements for parking and bicycle parking. The unusual triangular shape of the site constrains the design options, and appears to be the main cause for seeking variance relief to reduce the required front setback from 15 feet, which is allowed in the AOD with Planning Board approval, to 10 feet, which requires approval by the BZA.

Like some other residential developments in the AOD and Flood Plain districts, the project is designed with some parking above-grade. This approach is not encouraged either in citywide planning or zoning or in the Concord-Alewife guidelines, but may be justified in this case given the flood plain requirements and other site constraints. In order to receive approval the Applicant will need to submit revised materials demonstrating that the proposal meets the criteria to exempt above-grade structured parking from FAR and GFA calculations, which is allowed in the Flood Plan and in the AOD. One potential issue is that more than the required number of parking spaces is proposed, which conflicts with the city's urban design and transportation objectives. Another consideration is that the urban design guidelines in the *Concord-Alewife Plan* recommend above-grade parking structures to be wrapped with active uses and screened appropriately.

Though it is very small, the addition of some publicly accessible open space at the front of the site is consistent with the Concord-Alewife goals and will provide some visual and environmental benefit to the emerging neighborhood, as well as opportunities for small-scale community gathering.

Transportation

The project is not subject to the transportation impact requirements of Article 19.000, because its size (based on calculating the GFA prior to application of the inclusionary housing requirements) is just below the 50,000 square-foot threshold. Nevertheless, the applicant has performed a Transportation Impact Study, which is helpful in understanding how the project's transportation characteristics align with the goals in the Concord-Alewife plan of discouraging additional automobile trips and encouraging a more walkable, bikeable, and transit-oriented neighborhood. Specific comments on the project and recommendations for transportation enhancements will be provided in an accompanying letter from the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department.

Flood Plain Requirements

The Flood Plain Overlay District zoning requires technical review by the City Engineer and the Cambridge Conservation Commission to ensure that the development will not diminish the site's ability to accommodate the retention and flow of flood water. Approval is also conditioned on compliance with the Wetlands Protection Act, which potentially could include an Order of Conditions imposed by the Conservation Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. These requirements also dovetail with city standards for stormwater management, which are included as requirements in the AOD zoning. The Applicant has provided an engineering report and discussed the project with the City Engineer, who has provided a letter commenting on the project (see attached). The Applicant is also in communication with the Conservation Commission to schedule a hearing.

Urban Design

Prior to submittal of the Special Permit Application, Staff met with the Applicant to discuss the proposed project. Particular issues that were discussed include the importance of the Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines and the need to include façade features that promote architectural diversity of the district, and provide a positive public interface and active uses at the street level.

The unusual shape of the site and its three important interfaces pose several design challenges, which are responded to with an L-shaped plan. This site planning approach enables the creation of a well-landscaped, publicly accessible open space immediately off Fawcett Street. The proposed landscaping buffers the at-grade parking area, so it does not directly abut the sidewalk. The site layout also enables the possibility of a more active interface with a future potential east-west street connection on the south side of the building.

However, there are some areas where the proposed layout does not quite achieve the level of visible animation desired on Fawcett Street, which is further complicated by the reliance on ground floor parking. The main building entrance and lobby are set back from the sidewalk in the corner, and despite the covered canopy entrance, lack prominence on the street. The Fawcett Street sidewalk also lacks a strong streetwall, with only parking access at one end and the bicycle parking room at the other end, the latter having a more amenable streetscape interface.

The proposed scale and massing fits the context and reflects the type of architectural approach that has become characteristic of new residential buildings in Alewife, and the design appears to reference aspects of the Atmark building. Changes in massing help to create the impression of a series of structures rather than one building, and the L-shaped plan mitigates recurring concerns about long, unrelenting façades. Each façade is articulated with a series of bays and a combination of materials, and varying rooflines and cornices add visual interest. Balconies on the south and northwest elevations, along with a deck on the rooftop, help to provide more animated façades and a sense of domesticity.

There is a variety of window sizes and configurations, ranging from punched windows, which create a neighborhood feel and scale, to curtain wall glazing on Fawcett Street, which projects a strong commercial presence. The ground floor parking is treated appropriately with openings that mimic the rhythm of windows above and help to improve what might otherwise be a blank wall. Overall, though, staff would encourage exploring additional strategies to strengthen activity on the streetscape, such as providing more residential or amenity spaces closer to the street, putting more pedestrian/bicycle entrances at street level, or bringing the main entrance closer to the sidewalk and giving it more prominence and a residential feel.

The architectural language of the building includes a more contemporary architectural form at both ends, and a traditional row-house style in the center. The mix of materials and color selection are unclear in the application documentation and should be subject to further review either by the Planning Board or by staff. More detailed elevations should be provided to clarify material transitions and fenestration details. While there may be merit in articulating each façade differently to help break down the mass of the building, the project may also benefit from some simplification, given its relatively modest size.

Mechanical and service functions are arranged on the site in a logical way that reduces their impact on abutting properties and the public realm. Rooftop mechanical equipment appears to be well organized and screened by the parapet, as individual A/C units are proposed along the middle of the roof. Trash is handled internally in a space along Fawcett Street next to the garage entrance for ease of pickup. A transformer is shown toward the north side of the site along Fawcett Street, in a relatively unobtrusive location.

Sustainable Design

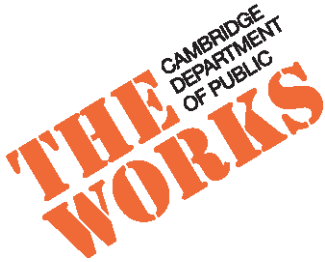
In addition to the flood mitigation and stormwater requirements, the project is required to meet the current Green Building Requirements, which require the project to be designed to a LEED Silver level. Staff has reviewed the submitted green building materials with the Applicant's consultant and has found that the project is on track to fulfill the requirements.

As a result of the 2015 Net Zero Action Plan, the City is developing a proposal to increase the sustainable design standards for new buildings, with a particular focus on energy performance and enhanced commissioning. For this particular project, enhanced commissioning would be of particular benefit both to the city's sustainability goals and to the future homeowners of the building. The green building submission for the project does not include the enhanced commissioning credit, but the Applicant has agreed to consider expanding the scope of their independent commissioning to earn the credit. Staff recommends that all efforts be made to earn this credit in the building's final design.

Continuing Design Review

The following is a list of some key issues that staff recommends should be addressed further as the building and site designs advance. Additional comments from the Planning Board are welcome.

- Exploration of alternative site layouts that would bring activation strategies to the ground floor, including residential or amenity spaces and more prominent pedestrian and/or bicycle entrances.
- Further exploration of ways to improve connections to possible future streets and pathways abutting the site.
- Detailed elevations, with consideration of creating greater design consistency across façades.



City of Cambridge
Department of Public Works

Owen O'Riordan, Commissioner

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March 7, 2016

TO: Planning Board

FROM: Katherine F. Watkins, PE
City Engineer

RE: 95 Fawcett Street; Special Permit Submission

We are in receipt of the Special Permit Application materials, dated January 20th, 2016, for the redevelopment of the site at 95 Fawcett Street. We have reviewed the materials and have presented below some comments related to the interests of the Department of Public Works.

Generally, the DPW, based on the provided documentation, does not anticipate the project having any issue meeting all of the requirements of the DPW as the project will be subject to thorough and complete engineering review at the time of the Building Permit Application.

As the project is further advanced, DPW will work with the applicant to ensure the following requirements are met:

Flood Plain Mitigation:

1. In response to the requirements of the Flood Plain Overlay District Ordinance, the Applicant has provided documentation and discussion, to the DPW, related to the developments proposed impact on flood levels. In addition, the Applicant was asked to address flood level impacts and building resiliency associated with increased flood elevations presented in the November 2015 *Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment*.

In summary, the submitted documentation adequately demonstrates that the development will have the ability to meet all requirements associated with being located in the Flood Plain. A brief summary of the items that were addressed are listed below. As the design is developed, in addition to further DPW review, confirmation of the designed and as-built development elevations will be required to be formalized through the Conservation Commission process.

Documentation or narrative was provided to address the following:

1. Flood Plain elevation compensatory storage for the current established FEMA Floodplain will be addressed formally as part of the Conservation Commission process. At this stage in the design, a memorandum from the design consultant indicates that the proposed building footprint will be reduced in size from the

existing building footprint providing mitigation for flood volumes at all elevations.

2. The submitted memorandum also provides discussion related to how the development will be able to provide compensatory storage for the projected 2030 and 2070 flood elevations. DPW review of these volumes will be required as the site plan and building architecture is finalized and will be memorialized by the Department's approval of a Building Permit Application.
3. The development will establish a first floor elevation above the anticipated 2030 100-year flood elevation and proposed to take design measures to minimize potential for surface flooding to the property during a 2030 flood event.
4. The development has provided plans and discussion related to the building's resiliency and ability to respond and operate under an anticipated 2070 flood event.

Public Infrastructure:

1. Requirements for temporary and permanent alterations to the Public Right of Way, based on proposed impacts to the public right of way, will be considered as part of the Building Permit review process.
2. Based on the project's location in a sewer shed that is prone to surcharging, the Applicant will be required to provide storage to provide protection of the facility during a surcharge event. The Applicant has acknowledged the need to provide the sewer storage in the Special Permit Application materials.

Stormwater Management:


1. Under the City Land Disturbance Regulations due to the project requiring a Special Permit from the Planning Board, the Applicant will need to obtain a Stormwater Control Permit from the Department of Public Works. The permit requirements cover the design standards and long term operation and maintenance of a management system for the project site, as well as the construction phase erosion and sedimentation control plans. The permit requirements also include the standard to mitigate the stormwater runoff from the site from the proposed 25-year storm to a rate below the pre-redevelopment 2-year storm event.

The Applicant has acknowledged the above mentioned permit requirements in the Application Materials.

A thorough review of the development during design and construction will be required by the DPW to ensure that the above items are implemented as described.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns related to the comments provided above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Katherine Watkins", is displayed on a light yellow rectangular background.

Katherine F. Watkins, P.E.
City Engineer

Special Permits to Increase FAR and Height, and Reduce Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit in Alewife Overlay Districts

20.92 *General Purpose.* It is the purpose of this Section 20.90 to augment existing base district zoning regulations to respond to the unique problems and pressures for change in the Alewife area. The regulations contained in this Section 20.90 provide for more careful public scrutiny of future development proposals and provide an opportunity to shape the form and character of that development in ways that will benefit both individual property owners and the general interests of the larger commercial and residential neighborhood as a whole.

These regulations are intended to harness the opportunities presented with the redevelopment of private property in ways that will:

1. Encourage forms of development, mix of uses, and range of improvements that will facilitate and encourage walking, biking and transit use and reduce the growth of auto trips in an area already burdened with regional vehicular traffic passing through to other destinations in the metropolitan region;
2. Preserve and enhance the capacity to store floodwater, recharge groundwater and manage the collection and disposal of stormwater in ways that add to the quality and visual appeal of the built environment as well as to the quality of the water itself;
3. Minimize the negative impact of new development on the adjacent Cambridge Highlands residential neighborhood while introducing new amenities and services that will benefit the residents of that neighborhood;
4. Integrate the entire area through the creation of new pedestrian paths, roadways, green spaces and bridges that will facilitate movement within the several Districts and beyond to the Cambridge Highlands, North Cambridge and Neighborhood Nine neighborhoods and the Fresh Pond Reservation;
5. Introduce a significant component of residential living and support retail services to enhance the area's appeal for all persons who come to work, shop as well as live within the Districts; and
6. Create an identity and sense of place for the Alewife Districts that parallels the development of the historic urban centers that characterize much of Cambridge.

20.95.1 Maximum Floor Area Ratio. The maximum ratio of floor area to the lot area may be increased as set forth below, after the issuance of a special permit from the Planning Board.

3. Quadrangle Southwest and Quadrangle Southeast Districts: 1.5 for non-residential uses; 2.0 for residential uses.

20.95.2 Maximum Permitted Height. The maximum height for any building may be increased as set forth below, after the issuance of a special permit from the Planning Board:

3. Quadrangle Southeast District: 70 feet for non-residential uses; 85 feet for residential uses.

20.95.4 Dwelling Unit Density. In any instance where the required Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit in any base district is greater than 600 square feet the Planning Board may issue a special permit to reduce the required Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit to 600 square feet.

Special Permit for Building Construction in Flood Plain Overlay District

20.73 *Applicability.* No structure or building shall be erected, constructed, expanded, substantially improved, or moved and no earth or other materials shall be dumped, filled, excavated, transferred or otherwise altered in the Flood Plain Overlay District unless a special permit is granted by the Planning Board.

20.74 *Procedure.* Application for a special permit shall be made on a form prescribed by the Board. In addition to the information required for the submittal, the applicant shall also present the following:

1. A detailed landscape plan drawn to a scale of one inch equals twenty (20) feet showing the elevation and design of flood water retention systems as required by applicable law;
2. Base flood elevation data, where the base flood elevation is not provided on the FIRM;
3. Certification and supporting documentation by a Massachusetts registered professional engineer demonstrating that such encroachment of the floodway as specified above in Subsection 20.73 shall not result in any increase in flood levels during the occurrence of the 100-year flood;
4. Such other technical information as necessary to permit the Planning Board to make the findings required in Section 20.75 below;
5. Description of the status of the proposal, pursuant to the requirements of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, before the Cambridge Conservation Commission, including any Order of Conditions or Determination of Applicability issued; and
6. Four (4) copies of all application materials.

20.74.1 Upon receipt of the application and development plans, the Planning Board shall transmit copies of the plans to the Conservation Commission and the City Engineer. Within forty-five (45) days of receipt of the plans, the Conservation Commission and the City Engineer shall review said plans and submit their respective reports and recommendations to the Planning Board. The Planning Board shall not render any decision on an application for a special permit for development in the Flood Plain Overlay District until said reports have been received and considered or until the forty-five (45) day period has expired without the receipt of such report, whichever is earlier.

20.75 *Criteria.* The Planning Board shall grant a Special Permit for development in the Flood Plain Overlay District if the Board finds that such development has met all of the following criteria in addition to other criteria specified in Section 10.43:

1. No filling or other encroachment shall be allowed in Zone A areas or in the floodway which would impair the ability of these Special Flood Hazard Areas to carry and discharge flood waters, except where such activity is fully offset by stream improvements such as, but not limited to, flood water retention systems as allowed by applicable law.

2. Displacement of water retention capacity at one location shall be replaced in equal volume at another location on the same lot, on an abutting lot in the same ownership, on a noncontiguous lot in the same ownership, or in accordance with the following requirements.
3. All flood water retention systems shall be suitably designed and located so as not to cause any nuisance, hazard, or detriment to the occupants of the site or abutters. The Planning Board may require screening, or landscaping of flood water retention systems to create a safe, healthful, and pleasing environment.
4. The proposed use shall comply in all respects with the provision of the underlying zoning district, provisions of the State Building Code, Wetlands Protection Act, and any other applicable laws.
5. Applicants for development in the Alewife area shall be familiar with area-specific and general city-wide land use plans and policy objectives (e.g. *Concord-Alewife Plan, A Report of the Concord Alewife Planning Study*, November 2005; *Toward a Sustainable Future, Cambridge Growth Policy, 1993, Update, 2007*; Section 19.30 - Urban Design Objectives of this Zoning Ordinance) and shall demonstrate how their plan meets the spirit and intent of such documents in conjunction with the requirements of this Section 20.70 - Flood Plain Overlay District and Section 20.90 – Alewife Overlay Districts 1-6.
6. The requirement of Section 20.74(3) has been met.

Special Permit Provisions to Waive GFA for Parking Facilities

Note: *A revised application will need to be submitted to request a special permit pursuant to one of the following provisions.*

20.97.3 Waiver of Gross Floor Area Provisions for Parking Facilities – Section 5.25. Because of the unique factors related to flooding and groundwater management in Alewife, the importance of maintaining a high level of permeability, and the difficulty of constructing large areas of building below grade, the Planning Board may by special permit exempt the Gross Floor Area contained in any above ground structured parking facility from the FAR limitations established in this Section 20.90 and any applicable base zoning (such special permit shall supersede the provisions of Section 5.25.42 for any lot within the Alewife Overlay Districts). In granting such a special permit the Planning Board shall consider the following:

1. The facility advances the objective of the Concord-Alewife Plan.
2. A shared facility is established that aids in implementation of effective Transportation Demand Management measures to reduce dependence on the single occupancy automobile.
3. The facility is well designed, does not diminish the pedestrian –friendly quality the area around it, and is otherwise consistent with the urban design objective of the Concord-Alewife Plan
4. The additional bulk of building above grade is well designed and does not have an unreasonably negative impact on its abutters or the public realm.
5. The extent to which the construction of an above grade parking structure facilitates the creation of at grade soil permeability.

**** alternative provision ****

5.25.42 Where an above ground parking facility in a structure is proposed to be constructed (a) in the 100-year flood plain, identified as the Zone A flood hazard area (See Section 11.70), or as determined by credible evidence and calculations from a registered professional engineer or (b) on a contaminated site that is listed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection under the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (310 CMR 40.00) with a Release Tracking Number and has been tier classified, the Planning Board may grant a special permit to waive the limitations of this Section 5.25 so that the parking facility is not subject to the requirements in this Ordinance as to Floor Area Ratio provided only the minimum number of parking spaces required for the uses on the site are provided. In granting such a special permit, the Planning Board shall find the following:

- (1) Where in a flood hazard area, the construction of a parking facility underground is (a) not technically feasible due to the requirements of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. ch. 131, s.40, (b) would require construction that would violate requirements or

- limitations of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, (c) would, in the view of the Cambridge Conservation Commission, seriously compromise the wetlands protection objectives of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act), and (d) would result in costs of construction that are significantly greater than would otherwise be typical for the location were it not in a flood hazard area; or
- (2) Where the site is contaminated, the construction of a parking facility underground (a) would, in the opinion of a Licensed Site Professional, pose significant risks to public health or the environment through disturbance of hazardous materials and could not be reasonably mitigated in accordance with state and federal regulations, (b) require construction that is prohibited by state or federal regulations related to hazardous wastes, and (c) would result in costs of construction that would render the project financially unfeasible; and
- (3) The above ground facility is designed so as to reduce its actual or perceived bulk through, among other possible techniques, limiting the number of parking spaces it contains, placement of portions of the facility below grade where feasible, or its location relative to actively occupied portions of the construction. Construction above grade is discouraged that would increase the amount of impervious area on the lot.

Special Permit for Multifamily Dwelling in Office-1 District

4.26.1 The construction of a multifamily dwelling containing twelve (12) or more dwelling units or of elderly oriented congregate housing containing twenty-four (24) or more separate living spaces in a Residence C, Residence C-1, Residence C-1A, Office 1, Business A-1, or Business A-3 district shall require a special permit granted by the Planning Board.

10.47.4 Criteria for approval of Townhouses and Multifamily Dwellings. In reviewing applications for townhouse developments and multifamily dwelling, the special permit granting authority shall consider and address the following site plan criteria as applicable:

- (1) Key features of the natural landscape should be preserved to the maximum extent feasible. Tree removal should be minimized and other natural features of the site, such as slopes, should be maintained.
- (2) New buildings should be related sensitively to the existing built environment. The location, orientation and massing of structures in the development should avoid overwhelming the existing buildings in the vicinity of the development. Visual and functional disruptions should be avoided.
- (3) The location, arrangement, and landscaping of open space should provide some visual benefits to abutters and passersby as well as functional benefits to occupants of the development.
- (4) Parking areas, internal roadways and access/egress points should be safe and convenient.
- (5) Parking area landscaping should minimize the intrusion of onsite parking so that it does not substantially detract from the use and enjoyment of either the proposed development or neighboring properties.
- (6) Service facilities such as trash collection apparatus and utility boxes should be located so that they are convenient for resident, yet unobtrusive.

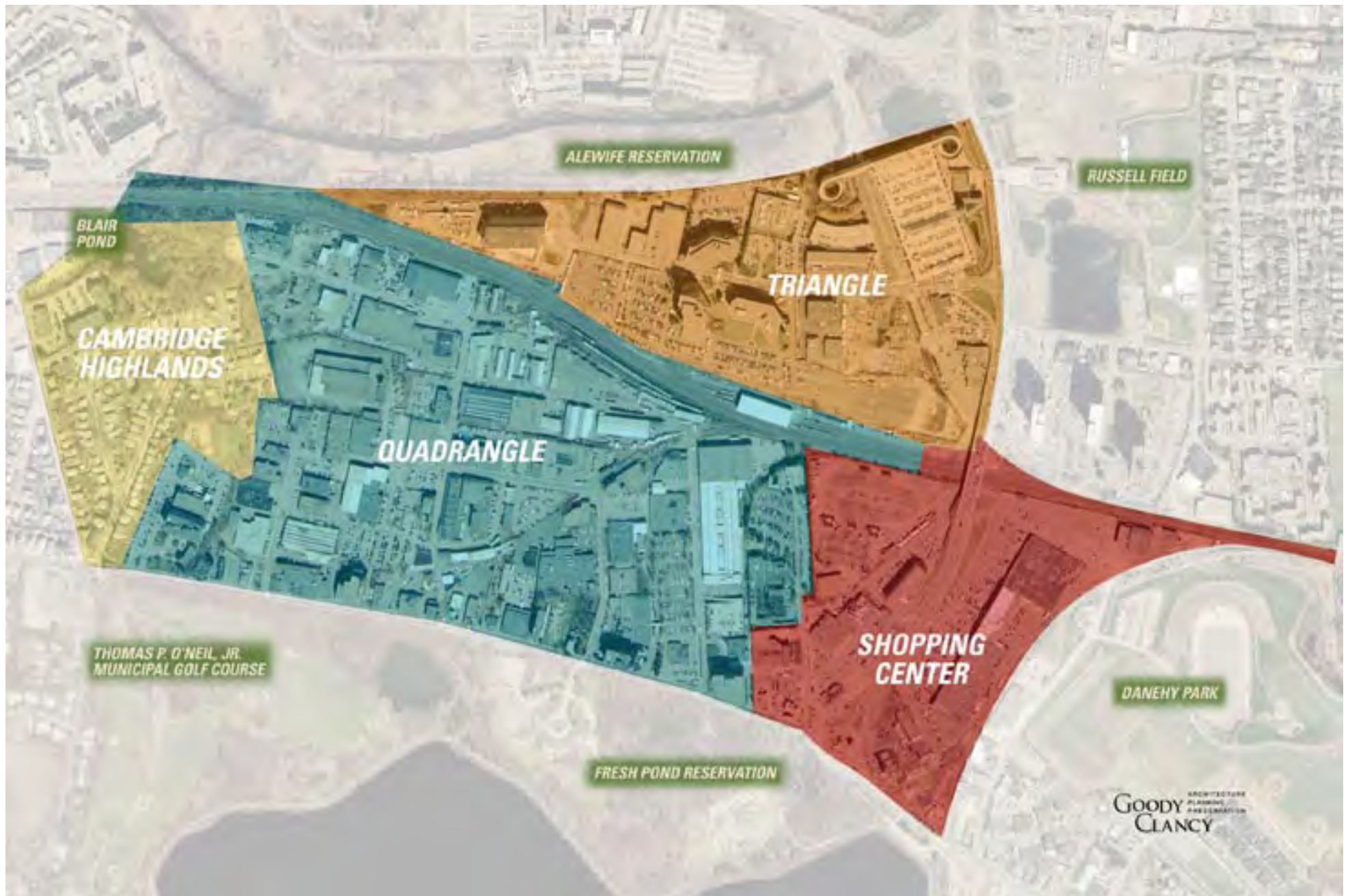
General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit

- 10.43** *Criteria.* Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:
- (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or
 - (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or
 - (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or
 - (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or
 - (e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and
 - (f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

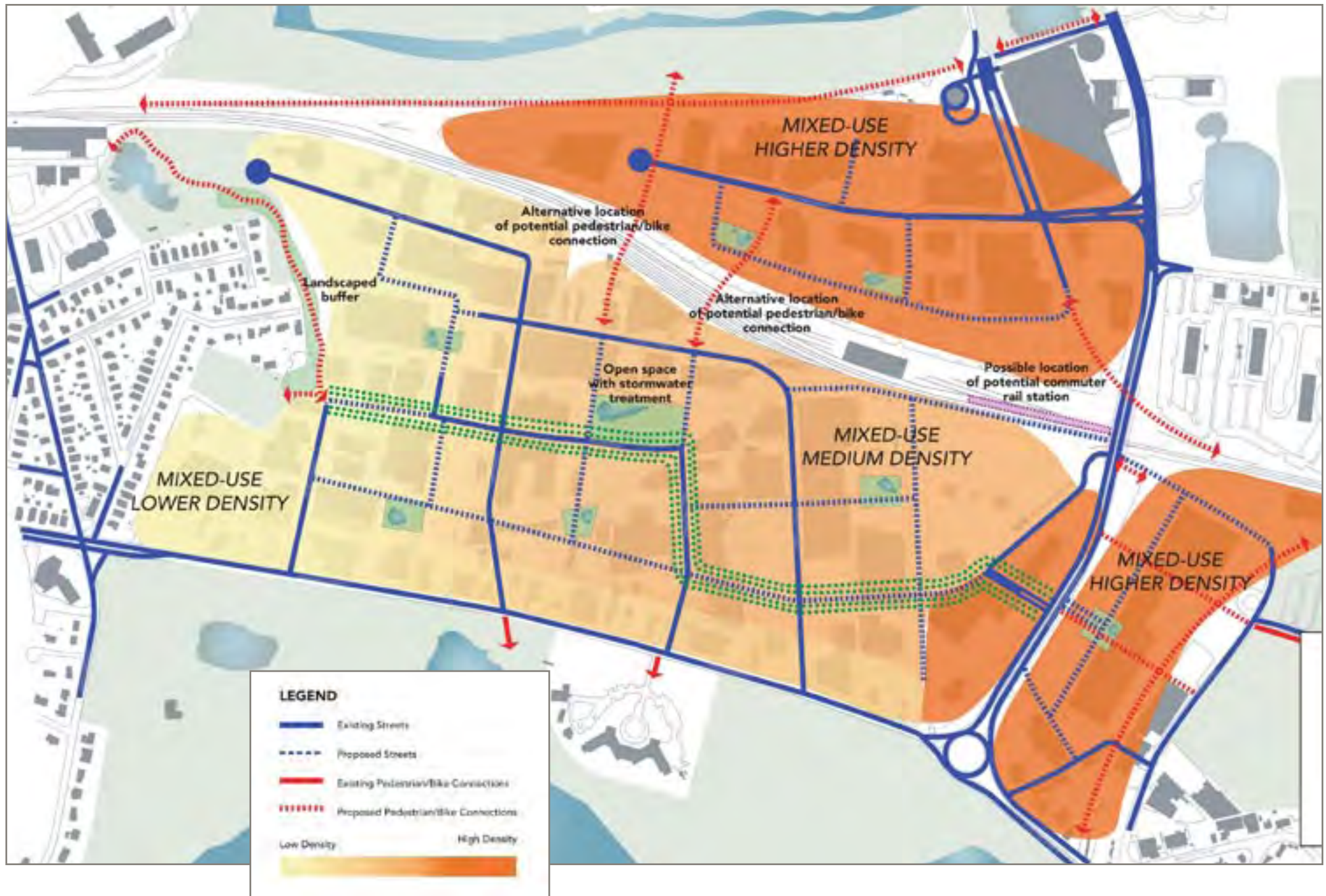
19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]

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

STUDY AREA -



10 CONCEPT PLAN -



Goals: Areawide

Land Use and Density

- Support mixed-use development throughout the Study Area to create a vibrant urban environment.
- Encourage development that responds to transit proximity by allowing higher densities and taller heights closer to Alewife Station.
- Create incentives for cooperation among property owners to meet study goals, especially stormwater management and infrastructure goals.
- Create urban design guidelines that encourage future development and create a sense of place for Concord-Alewife.
- Create guidelines that encourage future development to be responsive to stormwater, open space, and transportation goals for the Study Area.

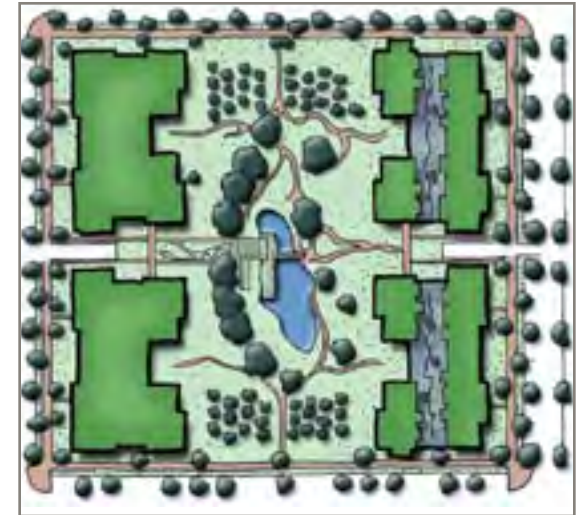
Infrastructure, Stormwater Management, and Open Space

- Encourage creation of some combination of large open spaces, smaller retention ponds, and neighborhood squares; use parks, street plantings, parking lots, and other open space to enhance stormwater retention and treatment.

- Ensure that new development and redevelopment increases permeability and utilizes principles of low-impact development to improve runoff quality and reduce runoff quantity.
- Apply best management practices and low impact development strategies to mitigate stormwater runoff.
- Improve connections between open space resources in and adjacent to the Study Area.

Traffic and Transportation

- Reduce anticipated auto-trip growth as compared to what is allowed under current zoning.
- Reduce auto mode share by employing measures such as:
 - improving access to transit,
 - designing a walkable and bike-friendly community,
 - improving the pedestrian environment, and
 - balancing provision of parking with transportation-demand management (TDM) goals.



Encourage site planning that incorporates low-impact development strategies to improve stormwater management in future development.

GOALS: AREAWIDE [continued] -

- Address safety issues on the periphery of the Study Area as well as within its interior.
- Provide for the possibility of consolidating existing surface parking into a structure as part of overall site improvements.

Housing

- Create a variety of housing opportunities that serve a diverse population of varying incomes, ages, and household sizes.
- Provide a mix of ownership and rental housing at all income levels.



These renderings and photos illustrate the desired future character of the mixed-use area.

Goals: The Quadrangle

- Encourage creation of housing along Concord Avenue.
- Introduce neighborhood-focused retail to form a mixed-use core near the Alewife Brook Parkway edge of the Quadrangle.
- Continue to allow light industrial uses closer to the railroad tracks.
- Create appropriate transitions between the Highlands and nonresidential uses in the Quadrangle by introducing a green buffer and allowing lower densities and heights near the Highlands.
- Create a public space that serves a stormwater function as well as being an open space resource.
- Increase the amount of permeable surface in the Quadrangle as the area redevelops.
- Encourage future development to respond to stormwater goals for the area.
- Create a hierarchy of boulevards, avenues, streets, and pathways.
- Enhance the character of Concord Avenue by improving its streetscape.
- Design new public spaces and places that support a range of community-focused activities.



- Improve traffic circulation within the Quadrangle by enhancing existing roads and adding new ones—without creating a direct vehicular connection to the Highlands.
- Improve the streetscape within the Quadrangle to enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment.
- Strengthen pedestrian/bicycle access to Alewife Station to improve connections to transit and to the Minuteman Path and Linear Park.
- Improve the pedestrian environment along Concord Avenue and provide safe crossings.
- Continue to encourage residential use along Concord Avenue.
- Encourage housing development within the Quadrangle, particularly close to the Highlands.



Two development concepts for the Quadrangle: Above, residential development along Concord Avenue with views to Fresh Pond; at left, a passive park that incorporates stormwater-management features.



11 PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE -



12 ADDITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE -



- Proposed
 - ▭ Alternative Right-of-Way
 - ▭ Other Proposed Roads
 - ▭ Proposed Road Realignment
 - Proposed Ped / Bike Connections
 - ▭ Potential Commuter Rail Station
- Existing
 - ▭ Existing Roadway
 - ▭ Existing Ped / Bike Connections

D

Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines

These urban design guidelines are recommended to guide the character of future development in the Concord-Alewife Study Area.

AREAWIDE GUIDELINES

- Break large blocks into smaller blocks, of sizes similar to those in surrounding Cambridge neighborhoods, to improve circulation and to be compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.
- Vary the design of individual buildings to create an architecturally diverse district.
- Street-level facades should include active uses such as frequent residential entrances, with setbacks for stoops and porches; neighborhood-serving retail including shops, restaurants, cafés; services for the public or for commercial offices such as fitness centers, cafeterias, day care centers; community spaces such as exhibition or meeting spaces; and commercial lobbies and front entrances.
- Encourage awnings/canopies to provide shelter and enliven ground-floor façades.
- Design residential buildings with individual units and front doors facing street, including row-house units on the lower levels of multifamily residences.
- Encourage sustainable and green building design and site planning.
- Use low-impact-development principles in building and site design as a way to meet city, state, and federal stormwater requirements. Examples of low-impact development strategies include green roofs, bioswales, filter strips, and retention/detention ponds. For additional detail refer to “Low Impact Development in Cambridge: Concepts and Criteria” (currently under development by the DPW). As an additional benefit, reducing impermeable surfaces in the area would lessen the urban heat-island effect.
- Use site design that preserves future rights-of-way identified in the Circulation Concept Plan.
- Improve existing streets to meet City standards, including streetscape improvements.
- Strengthen bicycle and pedestrian links to adjacent areas. Provide links that strengthen physical and visual connections to open space resources.
- Screen service areas from major streets.
- Parking below grade is preferred. If above-grade parking is to be provided, design it so it is not visible from nearby residential neighborhoods, from public streets, or from pathways. Line above-ground structured parking with active uses (shops, cafés, lobbies) along important public ways; use parking structures to provide visual and acoustical screening between the railroad tracks and the rest of the area.
- Design and locate lighting and signage to support the district’s pedestrian-friendly quality.

LOCATION-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

SHOPPING CENTER (AOD-5)

- Provide pedestrian links to create strong physical and visual connections to Danehy Park.

CONCORD-ALEWIFE DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Improve the pedestrian connection to Alewife Station and to North Cambridge.
- Create a new street network, including a north-south main street.
- Ensure that a significant number of entrances for building(s) face Alewife Brook Parkway and/or new main street.
- Create a strong pedestrian link across the Alewife Brook Parkway to connect the east and west parts of the Study Area.
- Create building height/façade setbacks between 55' and 85'.

TRIANGLE (AOD-6)

- Create a pedestrian-friendly environment along CambridgePark Drive.
- Provide small setbacks (5' to 15') from the right-of-way for café seating, benches, or small open spaces.
- Screen service areas from CambridgePark Drive.
- Provide pedestrian links that strengthen physical connections to Alewife Reservation, consistent with its master plan.
- Create building height/façade setbacks between 85' and 105'.

- Locate new development to preserve right-of-way for future crossing of the railroad tracks to connect the Triangle and Quadrangle.

QUADRANGLE (AOD-1, 2, 3, 4)

- Scale and use in areas adjacent to Cambridge Highlands should be compatible with the residential neighborhood and serve as a transition between the Highlands and the rest of the Quadrangle.
- Use streetscape and other improvements to define Wilson Road as part of a major east-west connection through the Quadrangle.
- Develop a vegetated buffer between the Highlands and Quadrangle that also provides a north/south link to adjacent open spaces.
- Create an open-space system characterized by parks and green spaces of varying scales and uses.
- Use pooled resources to create a new central public open space in the Quadrangle that incorporates stormwater management.

- Locate active uses around the future open space to create a safe and active environment throughout the day and evening.
- Provide pedestrian links to strengthen physical connections to the shopping center.
- Create building height/façade setbacks between 85' and 105'.
- Create a consistent edge along Concord Avenue, with a combination of residential and retail uses.
- Use streetscape and other improvements to define Smith Place and Spinelli Place as major north-south entries into the Quadrangle, and to establish Concord Avenue as a major gateway.
- Provide pedestrian links to strengthen connections to Fresh Pond Reservation, consistent with the Fresh Pond Master Plan.
- Strengthen the streetscape and other improvements to define Concord Avenue.
- Locate new development to allow for a future above-grade crossing between the Triangle and the Quadrangle.