

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CATERRISES. ASSOCIATION

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case Number:		323			
Address:		850 Cambridge Street			
Zoning:		Residence C-1 (C-1)			
Applicant:		City of Cambridge 795 Massachusetts Avenue Cambridge, MA 02139			
Owner:	\	City of Cambridge 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139			
Application I	Date:	December 19, 2016			
Date of Planning Board Public Hearing:		January 31, 2017			
Date of Plann	ning Board Decision:	January 31, 2017			
Date of Filing	g Planning Board Decision:	March 29, 2017			
Application:	Special Permits to locate a local government administrative office in Residence C-1 District (Section 4.56), to increase building height over 45 feet and waive the front yard setback for a municipal K-8 school (Section 5.54.2), and to use tandem parking spaces (Section 6.43.5) in order to construct new buildings to house the King Open and Cambridge Street Upper Schools, the Valente Branch Library and Gold Star Mother's Pool on their current location as well as provide new offices for the city's public school administration, with off-street parking for 105 cars in a below-grade garage, 92 long-term bicycle spaces, 118 short term bicycle spaces, and 2 loading bays.				
Decision:	GRANTED, with Conditions.				

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative of the Planning Board: Swaathi Joseph

For further information concerning this decision, please contact Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, or lpaden@cambridgema.gov.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Application Documents and Supporting Material

- 1. Special Permit Application dated 12/19/2016, containing the Special Permit Cover Sheet, Dimensional Form, Ownership Certificate, Community Outreach Summary, Tree Report prepared by Barrett Trees Service East Inc., Project Narrative, Plan Set prepared by William Rawn Associates dated 12/19/2016, and Green Building Support Documentation prepared by Soden Sustainability Consulting.
- 2. Graphic materials presented to the Planning Board at its public hearing on 1/31/2017.

City of Cambridge Documents

- 3. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Community Development Department staff, dated 1/26/2017.
- 4. Memorandum to the Planning Board from Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department staff, dated 1/30/2017.

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APPLICATION SUMMARY

The Applicant proposes to reconstruct pre-existing public facilities on the site including the elementary and grade 6-8 schools, library and public pool, while retaining the youth center in its existing building and maintaining the existing playing fields. A portion of the proposed new building will contain administrative offices for the Cambridge Public School Department which are being moved from their current location in an adjacent neighborhood, where they currently occupy rented space. The site is located in the Residence C-1 District (C-1), in which the project is subject to the Institutional Use Regulations of Section 4.50, and the project is also subject to the Special Regulations for Municipal Elementary and Middle (K-8) schools in Section 5.54. The project will also require variances from the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA) for the height and setbacks of the school administrative offices, since a local government administrative office is not subject to the dimensional regulations of Section 5.54. The requested special permits are discussed in detail in the Findings below.

FINDINGS

After review of the Application Documents and other documents submitted to the Planning Board, testimony given at the public hearing, and review and consideration of the applicable requirements and criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance with regard to the relief being sought, the Planning Board makes the following Findings:

1. Special Permit to locate a local government administrative office in Residence C-1 District (Section 4.56)

(4.57) Special Permit Criteria. The Board of Zoning Appeal shall grant a special permit for a use in Subsection 4.56 only if it determines that the benefits of the proposed use at that location will outweigh it detriments. In addition to any particular determinations which must be made under footnotes 4, 5, or 6 of said Subsection and Subsection 10.43, "Special Permit Criteria", the Board shall consider and address the following factors as appropriate:

Benefits

- 1. The building design or site plan would be compatible with the neighborhood.
- 2. The institution would be accessible to or primarily oriented toward neighborhood residents.
- 3. The institution would fulfill an identified neighborhood need.
- 4. The institution would fulfill an identified citywide need.
- 5. Institutional use would be particularly appropriate on the lot given previous use of the lot.
- 6. Institutional use would be particularly appropriate on the lot given institutional use of adjacent or nearby lots.
- 7. Residential development would not be feasible or reasonably practical on the site.

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- 8. The proposed institutional use would create a stronger buffer or a more gentle transition between residential and nonresidential areas.
- 9. The proposed institutional use would result in a net improvement to the neighborhood by being more compatible than the previous use of the lot.

Detriments

- 1. Development of the institutional use would substantially contravene the objectives of the Cambridge Institutional Growth Management Plan.
- 2. The intensity of the institutional use would be substantially greater than the use intensity of residences in the neighborhood, including traffic, building bulk, parking demands, etc.
- 3. The activity patterns, including pedestrian and vehicle travel to and from the institution would differ from existing neighborhood activity patterns so as to adversely impact the neighborhood.
- 4. Development of an institutional use would eliminate existing dwelling units.
- 5. Development of an institutional use would eliminate nonresidential services or activities which are beneficial to the neighborhood.

Pursuant to Section 10.45, as this project is also subject to special permits within the purview of the Planning Board, the Planning Board may grant special permits that would otherwise be granted by the Board of Zoning Appeal.

The proposed institutional use is a local government administrative office, specifically for the Cambridge Public School Department. The Planning Board considered the long term use of the site for educational use and understands the need for associated administrative offices to support public school uses in general, even though the offices will not exclusively serve the school functions at this site. No residential uses will be eliminated and no neighborhood services or amenities will be removed; on the contrary, existing public facilities will be preserved and enhanced. Considering the history of education and open space use of the site, residential use would not be reasonably expected to be located on this site. The addition of a use that is ancillary to the existing and proposed school uses will not substantially impact the neighborhood. The scale of the new buildings is similar to the scale of existing buildings around the site, , the new administrative offices only occupy a small portion of the site and will not substantially increase the intensity of use, and open space will be enlarged and enhanced on the site. Therefore, the Board finds that the benefits of the proposed project outweigh the potential detriments of the institutional use.

2. Special Permits to increase building height over 45 feet and waive the front yard setback for a municipal K-8 school (Section 5.54.2)

According to the Application Documents, the proposed building will conform to the as-of-right dimensional allowances for a municipal K-8 school as set forth in Section 5.54.1 of the Zoning Ordinance, with the exception of a small portion of the front yard along Cambridge

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Street which is less than the ten-foot minimum setback, and some portions of the building that exceed the 45-foot height limit. Therefore, special permits are sought pursuant to the provisions of Section 5.54.2.

The Board finds that the dimensional limitations of Section 5.54.2 are met, as set forth below.

- 5.54.2 Where it is proposed to reconstruct, alter or expand an existing municipal K-8 school use, any dimensional, parking or other zoning requirements, including those set forth in Section 5.54.1 above, may be waived upon the granting of a special permit by the Planning Board, subject to the conditions and limitations set forth below.
- (a) The Floor Area Ratio on the lot shall not exceed the existing Floor Area Ratio on the lot, except that the Planning Board may approve an increase in Floor Area Ratio to 1.25 for any portion of the lot located within a residential zoning district (but excluding portions of the lot located within an Open Space zoning district).
 - The floor are ratio of the proposed project does not exceed the floor area ratio allowed under base zoning requirements for the lot, which is also less than 1.25.
- (b) For portions of a lot located within an Open Space zoning district, the minimum yard requirements in the base zoning district shall continue to apply to any new buildings or additions to buildings.
 - No new buildings or additions to buildings are proposed for portions of the lot within Open Space zoning district.
- (c) In a residential zoning district, the maximum height of any new building or addition to a building shall not exceed fifty-five (55) feet, except that the Planning Board may approve heights of up to sixty-five (65) feet for portions of a building located at least fifty (50) feet from any lot line. In an Open Space zoning district, the height of any new building or addition to a building shall not exceed the maximum height allowed in the base zoning district.
 - The maximum height of the proposed buildings is fifty-six (56) feet, and all portions of the building that exceed 55 feet are located over fifty (50) feet from the property boundaries.
- (d) The minimum off-street parking requirement shall not be waived except upon issuance of a special permit for Reduction in Required Parking under Section 6.35.1. The Planning Board may approve a reduction in the number of required loading bays upon finding that the proposed loading bays are sufficient to serve the school use. New parking spaces and loading bays shall conform to the location, design and layout requirements of Article 6.000.

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The proposed project is not seeking reduction in required off-street parking and loading, but is seeking a special permit to use tandem parking spaces, as discussed below in these Findings.

(e) The net area of Public Recreational Open Space on the lot, as defined in Subsection 5.54.1, Paragraph (g) above, shall not be reduced by more than ten percent (10%) of the existing area. In approving any net reduction in Public Recreational Open Space, the Planning Board shall make a determination that the proposed Public Recreational Open Space shall provide benefits to the general public that are at least commensurate with the existing Public Open Space on the lot.

The proposed project will result in an increase of the net area of public recreational open space on the lot.

The Board also finds that the criteria for granting a special permit under Section 5.54.2 are met, as set forth below. The criteria in Section 10.43 and urban design guidelines in Section 19.30 are discussed further below.

- (f) In addition to the General Special Permit Criteria set forth in Section 10.43 and the Citywide Urban Design Guidelines set forth in Section 19.30, the Planning Board shall make a determination that the proposed changes to the lot have been designed to minimize or mitigate adverse impacts on neighboring residential properties. In making this finding, the Planning Board shall consider the following:
 - (i) Arrangement of building height and bulk within the lot.
 - The Board finds that the scale of the building is similar to the buildings in the vicinity. The increase in allowed height is a modest increase that will not have adverse impacts on the neighborhood scale because of the project's massing arrangement, which includes the highest portions of the buildings being set back appropriately from abutting the streets to minimize the visual impact on neighboring properties. The proposed reduction in front yard setback is to accommodate a small projection along the main frontage of the building, which enhances the architectural elegance of the building and provides a positive interface between the building frontage and the public sidewalk.
 - (ii) Access and egress for pedestrians, bicycles and motor vehicles, including pick-up and drop-off areas for buses and cars.

A communication from TP&T dated January 30, 2017 indicates that the proposed project will improve the community facilities while improving the pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation in and around the site. The location of the driveway to access the garage and loading area does not conflict with pedestrian access to the site. Implementation of the traffic management and operations plan will safely support

pick-up and drop-off activities and implementation of a loading dock plan by a delivery manager will accommodate service and delivery needs appropriately.

(iii) Location and screening of functions such as parking, loading, trash handling and mechanical equipment.

All parking, trash handling, and mechanical equipment are located inside the building. The loading area along Berkshire Street is strategically aligned with Marcella Street and sufficiently screened with landscape from the direct view of the residential buildings on Berkshire Street.

(iv) Current impact of existing buildings and existing patterns of use on the site.

While the project proposes an increase in height and size of the pre-existing building, it will not significantly alter the character or intensity of use on the site and will not impact the surrounding area in any greater way. Moreover, the Board finds that the quality of the design and the arrangement of public uses will likely have a positive impact on the area.

3. Special Permit for use of tandem parking spaces (Section 6.43.5)

- 6.43.5 The Board of Zoning Appeal may grant a special permit modifying the provisions of this subsections 6.43 in accordance with the following conditions:
- (a) The provisions for layout of parking spaces in paragraph 6.43.2 may be modified where there is a valet parking arrangement for an off street parking facility.

Pursuant to Section 10.45, as this project is also subject to special permits within the purview of the Planning Board, the Planning Board may grant special permits that would otherwise be granted by the Board of Zoning Appeal.

The proposal explains that parking will be centrally managed in a way that allows for cars to be moved at any time as needed. The Board received a communication from TP&T dated January 30, 2017, indicating that the system of tandem parking is expected to be functional based on the successful operation and management of tandem parking at other municipal schools. While the proposal is not a traditional valet parking arrangement, it does provide the same operational benefits given the use as a school facility, where staff schedules are generally predictable and staff can be reliably contacted to move cars as needed. Therefore, based on the proposed management plan and endorsement by TP&T, the Board approves the modification to allow the proposed tandem parking in the garage upon finding that the proposed system meets the function and intent of a valet parking arrangement.

4. General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit (Section 10.43)

The Planning Board finds that the project meets the General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit, as set forth below.

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 ...

Upon granting of the requested special permits, it appears that the requirements of the Ordinance will be met.

(b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or ...

The proposed reconstruction of the pre-existing educational facility and community facilities, along with the addition of public administrative offices of a modest scale, are not anticipated to cause particular congestion or hazard. A communication from TP&T dated January 30, 2017 indicates that the project is expected to result in only minor vehicle traffic impact in the neighborhood.

(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 ...

The proposed use is already existing except for the addition of the administrative offices within a relatively small portion of the building, and hence will not adversely affect adjacent uses that exist or are anticipated in the future. The proposed project will increase the public open space and improve the streetscape with landscape improvements.

(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 ...

The proposed uses will not create nuisance or hazard, and all development activity will adhere to applicable health and safety regulations.

(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 ...

The proposed redevelopment is encouraged by City plans for the area and the Zoning Ordinance, which was amended in 2012 to facilitate restoration of municipal K-8 school buildings. The neighborhood is characterized by residential uses and some ground-floor

commercial use, and the proposed redevelopment is appropriate to this existing pattern of development.

(f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

The Board finds no inconsistency with the citywide urban design objectives, as discussed in more detail below. The urban design objectives are generally supported in the proposal through improved streetscape appearance and pedestrian amenity, consistency with the pattern of development in the area, minimal environmental impacts on abutters and minimal impact on City infrastructure.

5. Citywide Urban Design Objectives (Section 19.30)

The Board finds that the proposal is in general conformance with the citywide urban design guidelines, as set forth below.

(19.31) New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development....

The existing pattern of development in the area is enhanced by the physical and visual permeability of the project, establishing a strong civic presence within the neighborhood while offering an inviting façade to the community with a series of new playgrounds, open spaces with sitting areas and recreation facilities. The proposal complies with the requirements of the base zoning, supports community services, and promotes neighborhood walkability and livability with enhanced pedestrian and cyclist connections and improved access choices. The project's overall massing and scale fit well within the existing context, providing appropriate blending with the neighborhood built character. The project is further enhanced by the improvements to the streetscape and landscape treatments. The siting and orientation of the buildings are consistent with existing streetscape patterns in the area.

(19.32) Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings. . . .

The project enhances the pedestrian and bicycle activity in the immediate area. Entries and windows are oriented toward anticipated routes of pedestrian and bicycle movement, and the pedestrian experience along Cambridge Street is improved by the prominent main entrance and landscape treatment, which promote an engaging and active street edge. Further, the project prioritizes pedestrian access and bicycle access to the proposed buildings through site design with the intent to rectify the existing pedestrian, vehicular and bicyclist conflicts associated with school pick-up and drop-off on Cambridge Street. The project will be coordinated with the redesign of Cambridge Street, which will include a raised, separated bicycle lane adjacent to the sidewalk. The proposed design provides open space and

landscaping that enhance the visual and environmental quality of the area, while improving the connection between Cambridge Street and Donnelly Field. Short-term and long-term bicycle parking is also provided per zoning requirements.

(19.33) The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors. . . .

Building mechanicals are proposed to either be internally located or in sunken wells, as the entire roof will hold an array of solar panels. Throughout the review process, significant attention was given to the treatment of façades, architectural details, and landscape areas to make these details more attractive to passersby, and to respond well to the adjoining residential neighborhood. The specific material treatments will be subject to ongoing review by City staff. Trash and other service functions are housed internally and serviced through the service area along Berkshire Street. The electrical transformer equipment will be located within the building as well. With the proposed massing, the Board finds no major shadow impacts on neighboring lots. The sustainable design goals of the project are extraordinary, with an aim toward net zero greenhouse gas emissions through maximizing efficiency in building performance, significant on-site renewable energy production, and purchase of offsets.

(19.34) Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system. . . .

While a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) was not required, TP&T reviewed a transportation analysis for the project. Commentary provided by TP&T in a memo dated January 30, 2017 indicate that the proposed project will not have a substantial adverse impact on neighborhood traffic conditions with sufficient transportation demand management (TDM) measures to minimize the project's traffic impacts. The project will be designed to meet all applicable Department of Public Works (DPW) utility standards, including stormwater management. Open space permeability will increase as a result of the development, which will assist in minimizing stormwater run-off from the site. Roof runoff and ground runoff will be collected and appropriately treated before being discharged into the municipal system. There are no anticipated impacts on water supply. The project will meet the Green Building Requirements set forth in Section 22.20 of the Zoning Ordinance.

(19.35) New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically. . . .

The project will improve the built environment and open space on the site, resulting in the creation of a more pleasant and lively pedestrian environment while retaining the historic use of the site. Each building edge has been carefully considered in response to its immediate context and open space amenities are being enhanced on each public interface. The design and use of the new buildings will strengthen the existing character of the neighborhood, which includes housing, a commercial corridor, open space, and a diverse mix of uses in buildings of different scales, ages and styles.

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(19.36) Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged. . . .

The project does not include any residential development as it is reconstruction of the buildings for the existing municipal uses. The increase in the public recreational open space and the improved community areas will be beneficial to the surrounding residential neighborhood.

(19.37) Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city. . . .

The project enhances the streetscape along all streets abutting the site and the open space with increased landscaped areas and recreational areas, thereby enhancing the public amenities in the area.

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DECISION

Based on a review of the Application Documents, testimony given at the public hearing, and the above Findings, the Planning Board hereby GRANTS the requested Special Permits subject to the following conditions and limitations. Hereinafter, for purposes of this Decision, the Permittee shall mean the Applicant for the requested Special Permits and any successor or successors in interest.

- 1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the Application Documents and other supporting materials submitted to the Planning Board, and the additional Conditions of this Special Permit Decision. The project plans hereby approved by the Planning Board are plans prepared by William Rawn Associates dated 12/19/2016. Appendix I summarizes the dimensional features of the project as approved.
- 2. The project shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department ("CDD"). Before issuance of each Building Permit for the project, CDD shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the final plans submitted to secure the Building Permit are consistent with and meet all conditions of this Decision. As part of CDD's administrative review of the project, and prior to any certification to the Superintendent of Buildings, CDD may present any design changes made subsequent to this Decision to the Planning Board for its review and comment.
- 3. The Permittee shall address the following design comments through the continuing design review process set forth above. Each of the below items shall be subject to CDD review and approval of the final design details:
 - a. Selection of all exterior materials, colors, and details.
 - b. The landscape details, particularly associated with plantings, edge treatments, fences, and hardscape design and materials.
 - c. The final design of the sidewalk along Cambridge Street, bicycle parking, and parking facility, which shall also be reviewed and approved by Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TP&T) Department staff.
 - d. The final stormwater management plan shall be reviewed and approved by Department of Public Works (DPW) staff.
- 4. All authorized development shall abide by all applicable City of Cambridge Ordinances, including the Noise Ordinance (Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code).
- 5. The Permittee shall be required to implement the following as recommended by TP&T staff:
 - a. The Permittee shall develop a traffic management and operations plan.

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- b. The Permittee shall develop an engineered signage and pavement marking plan prior to issuance of Building Occupancy Permit.
- c. The Permittee shall develop an outreach and marketing plan to educate parents and other school complex users on the protocols for morning student drop-off and afternoon student pick-ups.

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Voting in the affirmative to approve the requested special permits were Planning Board Members Louis Bacci, Jr., Steven Cohen, Mary Flynn, Hugh Russell and Associate Members Thacher Tiffany and Ahmed Nur, appointed by the Acting Chair, constituting at least two thirds of the members of the Board, necessary to grant a special permit.

For the Planning Board,

Hugh Russell, Acting Chair.

A copy of this decision PB #323 shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

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ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on March 29, 2017, by Swaathi Joseph, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the City Clerk on said date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of the decision. No appeal has been filed.

DATE:

City Clerk of Cambridge

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Appendix I: Approved Dimensional Chart

	Existing	Allowed or Required	Proposed	Permitted	
Lot Area (sq ft)	527,492	5,000	No Change	No Change	
Lot Width (ft)	514.8	50	No Change	No Change	
Total GFA (sq ft)	116,082	234,751	233,862	233,862	
Residential Base	n/a	n/a	n/a	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning	
Non-Residential Base	n/a	n/a	n/a		
Inclusionary Bonus	n/a	n/a	n/a	requirements	
Total FAR	0.26	0.48	0.47	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning requirements	
Residential Base	n/a	n/a	n/a		
Non-Residential Base	0.26	0.48	0.47		
Inclusionary Bonus	n/a	n/a	n/a		
Total Dwelling Units	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	
Base Units	n/a	n/a	n/a	Consistent with	
Inclusionary Bonus Units	n/a	n/a	n/a	Application Documents	
Base Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	n/a	n/a	n/a	and applicable zoning	
Total Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)	n/a	n/a	n/a	requirements	
Height (ft)	47	45	56¹		
Front Setback (ft) (Cambridge St.)	7.6	10	13.8	Consistent with Application Documents and applicable zoning	
Front Setback (ft) (Willow St.)	17.5	10	11.6		
Front Setback (ft) (Berkshire St.)	23	10	21.6	requirements	
Front Setback (ft) (York St.)	632	10	628		
Open Space (% of Lot Area)	73	73	75	Consistent with	
Private Open Space	n/a	n/a	n/a	Application Documents and applicable zoning	
Permeable Open Space	n/a	n/a	n/a		
Public Recreational Open Space (sq ft)	366,958	366,958	388,374	requirements	
Off-Street Parking Spaces	55	82	105 ²	105	
Long-Term Bicycle Parking	0	27	92	Consistent with	
Short-Term Bicycle Parking	0	113	118	Application Documents and applicable zoning	
Loading Bays	1	1	2	requirements	

¹ With Planning Board Special Permit.

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² 25 complying and 80 tandem with Planning Board Special Permit.