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MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Planning Board
From: Joseph E. Barr, Director 
Date: October 20, 2017
Re: 55 Wheeler Street Residential Project (PB#330)

The Cambridge Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TP&T) provided a memo dated August 29, 2017 to the Planning Board with our initial comments on the proposed 55 Wheeler Street Residential project by 55-9 Wheel Owner, LLC. TP&T attended the project's first Planning Board hearing on September 5, 2017 and heard the comments from the Planning Board and the public. Since the September 5 Planning Board hearing, TP&T in coordination with the Community Development Department (CDD) and Department of Public Works (DPW), have been working with the applicant on the project. We have also reviewed the project's Supplemental Materials dated October 6, 2017, and we offer the Planning Board members the following additional comments on this project.

Street Design. The project's site plan has been revised to add three on-street parking spaces on Wheeler Street in front of Building 1. TP&T supports the three new on-street parking spaces because it addresses a concern we raised in our August 29 Planning Board memo about vehicles stopping and blocking the bike lane in front of the Building 1 lobby. We expect that we will determine how to best regulate the on-street parking spaces before the project is occupied, which may be for loading/deliveries/drop-offs, resident parking, time-limited parking, or another appropriate curb use.

As we stated in our August 29 Planning Board memo, overall TP&T supports the Wheeler Street layout design which is a complete street and includes sidewalks and bicycle lanes, a raised pedestrian crossing, on-street parking and a "chicane" or curb extensions that slightly curve the street to limit vehicle speeds. The Wheeler Street connection to Fawcett Street will greatly improve connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles within the Quadrangle. The final street layout design will be approved by City staff through the building permit design review process. After constructed, the Wheeler Street extension is also expected to be conveyed to the City. Regarding the circulation patterns on Wheeler Street, such as prohibiting left-turns from and to Concord Avenue or having Wheeler Street be one-way to or from Concord Avenue, TP&T expects to monitor the street and determine the most appropriate changes (if any) as the project is completed or at some point thereafter.

One critical element of the success of this project is improving connections to Alewife MBTA Station for all users, including pedestrians, bicycles, and shuttle buses. Based on comments made by members of the public and the Planning Board, we are suggesting that the mitigation program for this project include

a financial commitment towards creating improved connection between the project site and Alewife MBTA Station. This contribution could be used to advance the planning and design of Terminal Road (which has been the topic of many recent discussions about improving access to the Alewife Quadrangle), improving the accessibility of existing connections, or creating new connections.

Loading and Service Road. Based on comments from the Planning Board, the service road located to the west of Building 2 and 3 was widened from 12 to 18 feet and now includes a truck turnaround area. TP&T supports this change because it will allow the service road to be more functional by being able to accommodate more than one truck and enable trucks to enter and exit the service road head first which is safer than backing in or backing out. This will also make it safer for cyclists using this road to access the bicycle parking.

As stated in our August 29, 2017 Planning Board memo, TP&T supports the Planning Board Special Permit request for an approximately 43 foot wide curb-cut so it can be used to access both the service road and the parking garage driveway. The final curb cut and service road design should be approved by TP&T through the building permit design review. The service road should also be designed to fit in with the landscaping plan, include providing as much permeable surface as possible, along with a smooth, accessible surface that is lighted and maintained clear of snow and ice in the winter (particularly for bicyclists that will use the service road).

Bike Parking. The project will provide 555 secure, covered, and weather-protected long-term bicycle parking spaces spread out among the three buildings and on the ground level. TP&T believes that the locations for the long-term bike parking are appropriate and will be functional with direct access to the street or service road. Residents will be able to choose the location to store their bike(s) that best meets their needs. Furthermore, locating the bike parking on the ground-level instead of in the below-grade parking garage is convenient for transporting a bicycle in and out of the building. TP&T will continue to work with the applicant on both the long-term and short-term bike parking plan through the building permit design review process.

Automobile Parking. The project proposes 448 parking spaces (0.85 spaces per unit), including 384 spaces in the below-grade parking garage, 42 at-grade spaces under Building 1, and a 22 spaces in a surface parking lot. There is no change in the number of spaces proposed from the first Planning Board hearing on September 5, 2017, although as noted above three additional on-street parking spaces have been added. Visitor parking and other short-term parkers (i.e., maintenance workers) are expected to be accommodated in the project's 22 space parking lot, however, the applicant confirmed that visitors and maintenance workers will also be allowed to park in the garage as needed (i.e., if the surface lot is full and there are unused spaces available in the garage).

The applicant has also requested the ability in the future to eliminate (or not build) the 22 space parking lot, which would lower their parking ratios to 0.81 spaces per unit. TP&T believes that the 0.81 and 0.85 parking ratios are within the appropriate range for this project and its location, and we support the option to reduce 22 spaces or 5% of the total spaces without needing a Special Permit amendment, but rather based on demonstrating to TP&T that that the project is meeting their parking demands.

Transportation Mitigation. TP&T has been working productively with the applicant on a transportation mitigation program for the project and recommend the measures described in the table below. These transportation infrastructure improvements and Transportation Demand Management Measures (TDM) are needed to minimize the project's traffic impacts and create a safe, connected, and sustainable project.

55 Wheeler Street Residential Project – PB#330

Mitigation	Phasing/Completion
<p>Hubway Station. Finance the purchase and installation of one (1) full-size (23 dock) Hubway station in a publicly visible/accessible location. The City and applicant shall identify a mutually acceptable locations for the Hubway station on the property site.</p>	<p>Initial payment for equipment to be made to the City before the first Building Permit.</p>
<p>Ongoing Hubway Support: To support the Hubway bike share system, which will provide a sustainable mode of public transportation for residents and their guests, the Permittee shall pay an annual fee to support the operations and maintenance of the Hubway system-to the City to support the Hubway bikesharing system (a 23 dock station). However, this requirement may be reduced or eliminated upon approval by the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department, and the Community Development Department, based on an assessment of the utilization of the Hubway bikesharing system by the residents of the Project. The assessment will include information such as, Resident’s Hubway membership levels, mode share, surveys of residents Hubway use, Hubway station use, or other information as determined by the City. The earliest that the Permittee may apply for an assessment to reduce or eliminate this requirement is three (3) years after the issuance of the Project’s final Occupancy Permit</p>	<p>To be paid to the City before June 1st in the year the Hubway Station is expected to be installed, and ongoing before June 1st annually.</p>
<p>Contribute \$250,000 towards the planning, design, and/or installation of improved transportation connections between the project site and Alewife MBTA Station. This could include further development of the Terminal Road connection to Wheeler Street, improving bicycle, pedestrian, and shuttle access across the MBTA rail line, and/or other enhancements that improve connection between the Alewife Quadrangle and Alewife MBTA Station.</p>	<p>Prior to issuance of the first Building Permit.</p>
<p>Design and construct Wheeler Street as approved by the City to include sidewalks and bicycle lanes, raised pedestrian crossings, on-street parking and a “chicane” or curb bulbs that slightly curve the street to keep vehicle speeds low.</p>	<p>The Street should be completed or substantially completed, as approved by TP&T, prior to issuance of the first Occupancy Permit. The street should be conveyed to the City when completed</p>
<p>Install a new traffic signal at the Concord Avenue/Fawcett Street intersection including real-time traffic and bike count station. The signal shall be coordinated with existing signal equipment at other signals along Concord Avenue, as feasible.</p>	<p>Prior to issuance of the first Occupancy Permit</p>
<p>Guarantee Public access for pedestrians and bicyclists through the proposed “mews” connection by means of a permanent easement, covenant, conservation restriction, or other similar legal device acceptable to the City. The Permittee shall also enter into an agreement, easement or instrument approved by the City for the approximately 30,000 sf open space, and its design and maintenance by the Permittee. The design of the park should also include bicycle parking. There shall also be public access for pedestrians and bicyclists to a potential future landing site for a pedestrian and bicycle bridge over the railroad tracks.</p>	<p>To be completed prior to the issuance of the final Occupancy Permit for the project and ongoing.</p>

Mitigation	Phasing/Completion
<p>The Permittee shall be obligated to work cooperatively with the City on any efforts to connect Wheeler Street to Terminal Road and for the potential future pedestrian and bicycle bridge.</p>	
<p>Residential Transportation Demand Management Measures (TDM).</p>	<p>Prior to the issuance of the first Occupancy Permit, the project should demonstrate that the TDM measures will be implemented and how.</p>
<p>A. Make available up to 2 publicly available carsharing parking spaces for a vehicle-sharing company on the project site. As demand dictates additional carsharing vehicles should be added over time.</p>	<p>Ongoing after issuance of the first Occupancy Permit.</p>
<p>B. To establish the habit of using public transportation, advertise and offer each adult member of each household (up to 2) upon move-in a Charlie Card valued at the cost of 50% of a monthly MBTA Link Pass (currently \$84.50/month subject to fare increases,) for 3 consecutive months. This requirement renews each time a new household moves in to incentivize new households to use public transit. For condominium units, the requirement shall apply to only the first initial condominium owners (up to 2 per unit) but not be required if individual owners subsequently sell their unit.</p>	<p>Ongoing after issuance of the first Occupancy Permit.</p>
<p>D. Join the Alewife Transportation Management Association (TMA) to provide benefits to residents including shuttle bus access for residents.</p>	<p>Prior to issuance of first Occupancy Permit and ongoing.</p>
<p>E. Provide shuttle bus service to the Alewife MBTA station through the Alewife TMA or equivalent service as approved by the City that provides a minimum 30 minute headway during morning and afternoon peak hours. The shuttle bus schedule should also be increased as demand dictates based on residents' requests, ridership and surveys conducted as part of the transportation monitoring and reporting program.</p>	<p>Ongoing after issuance of the first Occupancy Permit.</p>
<p>F. Install a real-time multimodal transportation display screen to help people decide which mode to choose for each trip and/or post materials at a transportation information center in building lobbies including information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Available pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the vicinity of the site o MBTA maps, schedules, and fares o Area shuttle map and schedule, if one exists o "Getting Around in Cambridge" map and other CitySmart materials (available at the Cambridge Community Development office) o Location of bicycle parking o Hubway regional bikeshare system o Carsharing o Ride-matching o Other pertinent transportation information 	<p>Ongoing after issuance of the first Occupancy Permit.</p>

Mitigation	Phasing/Completion
<p>G. Designate a transportation coordinator (TC) for the site to manage the TDM programs including, compiling and distributing New Resident Packet about transportation options in the area. The TC will also oversee the marketing and promotion of transportation options to all residents at the site in a variety of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Posting information in a prominent location in the building and on the Project’s website, social media, and property newsletters. o Responding to individual requests for information in person and via phone and email o Performing annual transportation surveys. <p>Require that the TC will be on-site during a minimum of 2 hours per week and will be available during other times to residents via email and telephone. Email and phone information for the TC will be posted in the transportation information center.</p>	<p>Ongoing after issuance of the first Occupancy Permit</p>
<p>H. Provide a minimum of two Level 2 DC fast charge electric vehicle charging stations serving four designated parking spaces.</p>	<p>Ongoing after issuance of the first Occupancy Permit.</p>
<p>I. Provide bike repair areas, including air pumps and other bike repair tools, in the bicycle storage areas.</p>	<p>Ongoing after issuance of the first Occupancy Permit.</p>
<p>J. Do not charge residents additional fees for bicycle parking.</p>	<p>Ongoing after issuance of the first Occupancy Permit.</p>
<p>K. Charge fees for automobile parking separately from the rent to remind residents of the cost of owning a vehicle. The Permittee shall provide the summary of on-site parking fees to the TP&T.</p>	<p>Ongoing after issuance of the first Occupancy Permit.</p>
<p>Transportation Monitoring. The Permittee shall implement a transportation monitoring program as approved by the City to include monitoring of mode split, counts of auto and bike parking space utilization, and auto ownership.</p>	<p>Transportation monitoring program to be every year for the 1st 5 years and then every three (3) years afterwards.</p>