



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: September 6, 2023

Re: **PB-368 Amendment 3 (Minor), Volpe**

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Overview

Submission Type: Request for Minor Amendment to PUD Special Permit

Applicant: Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

Zoning District(s): Business A (BA); Residence C-2B (C-2B); Office 2 (O-2); PUD-KS;
PUD-7

Proposal Summary: Modification of the Innovation Space requirement to remove minimum requirement of the space when required to be distributed in more than one building; extend the lease of agreement of the space; increase single occupancy area of business entities in that space; and allow access to shared resources in that space to all tenants of the space, where the shared resources are at least 10% of the Innovation Space in each building.

Other City Permits Needed: None

Planning Board Action: Approval of Minor Amendment with possible conditions

Memo Contents: CDD Zoning Report

Other Staff Reports: None

Background

The Planning Board first approved the Volpe Redevelopment Special Permit (PB-368) in 2021, which includes approximately 3.2 million square feet of residential and non-residential uses in nine buildings, along with new public open spaces and private ways in Kendall Square.

The PUD has been amended twice in order to modify the approved phasing plan and extend the date by which construction must commence by one year.

MITIMCo (the “Applicant”) is requesting a minor amendment to modify the requirements related to the Project’s Innovation Space requirement. The concept of Innovation Space emerged from the City’s area planning over the past several years, such as the [Kendall Square K2 Study \(2013\)](#); and was later discussed as part of the [Volpe Working Group](#) process in 2016 and ultimately was made part of the [Volpe \(PUD-7\)](#) rezoning in 2017. The purpose of the Innovation Space was to allow for a business environment that would support fledgling start-ups and provide them space to incubate and grow in the Kendall Square area. The environment would be characterized by smaller footprints, shorter leases, and shared amenities between start-ups.

Volpe (PUD-7) is required to provide a minimum of 5% of the total GFA dedicated to Office Uses as Innovation Space. The Special Permit Decision, Condition #10 requires that a plan be submitted to the Planning Board prior to the issuance of a Building Permit for the first non-residential building.

Requested Amendments

The Applicant seeks to modify the Innovation Space Requirements as set forth in Section 13.96.3, PUD-7 District zoning. The Applicant proposes the following modifications:

a. Overall Innovation Space Requirement modifications-

- Remove the minimum area requirement of each unit of Innovation Space to be at least 20,000 square feet when the Innovation Space is required to be distributed in more than one building if the Innovation Space provided is more than 40,000 square feet (Section 13.96.3.a.2).

b. Characteristics of Innovation Space modifications-

- Extend the lease agreement duration (or other similar occupancy agreements) with individual businesses from approximately one month to up to five years in lieu of the current maximum term length of one month lease (Section 13.96.3.b.1).
- Increase the occupancy space of single business entity to up to 35,000 square feet from the existing 2,000 square feet or ten percent of the entire Innovation space required to be provided in PUD-7, whichever is greater (Section 13.96.3.b.2).
- Remove minimum area required by tenants of Innovation Space to use the shared resources (i.e., co-working areas, conference space, office equipment, supplies and kitchens) and provide shared resources that amount to 10 percent of the Innovation Space in each building (Section 13.96.3.b.3).

The Application notes that the idea of Innovation Space has evolved from its initial conception 10-12 years ago, which was originally meant to serve seed-stage start-ups of 1-5 people. The Applicant notes

that the current market has sufficient space for these seed-stage start-ups, but no place to house them once they “graduate”; causing them to leave Cambridge altogether in favor of space in surrounding communities. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to be able to better capture demand from the next stage of a company’s evolution, which would result in slightly larger spaces and longer leases than what was contemplated in the current zoning.

Criteria for Granting Minor Amendments

Per the general PUD provisions in Section 12.37 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (CZO), the Planning Board determines whether changes to the Final Development Plan may be approved as minor amendments. The following guidance is provided in zoning:

(12.37.2) Minor amendments are changes which do not alter the concept of the PUD in terms of density, floor area ratio, land usage, height, provision of open space, or the physical relationship of elements of the development. Minor amendments shall include, but not be limited to, small changes in the location of buildings, open space, or parking; or realignment of minor streets.

Per the PUD -7 District provisions in Section 13.96.3 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (CZO), the Planning Board may allow variations in the Innovative Space requirement. The following guidance is provided in zoning:

(13.96.3 (C)) Variations. In approving a Final Development Plan or a Minor Amendment to a Final Development Plan, the Planning Board may allow variations in the specific standards and characteristics set forth in this Section 13.96.3, if the Planning Board finds that the Innovation Space, as proposed, will be consistent with the purposes of these standards and characteristics.

The Board may approve a minor amendment on the affirmative vote of five Planning Board members.

Zoning Comments on Proposed Amendment

Section 13.96.3.c states that the Planning Board may allow variations in the specific standards and characteristics of Innovation Space as part of a Minor Amendment to the Final Development Plan. In approving such a minor amendment, the Planning Board must find that the Innovation Space, as proposed, will be consistent with the purposes of these standards and characteristics.

Conditions

If the Planning Board approves the change as a Minor Amendment, the following conditions of the Special Permit (PB-368) would need to be modified to accommodate the requested change:

- Condition #2.b.iii: This requirement establishes the development of Innovation Space as part of the Project. This condition would be updated to specifically note the characteristics of Innovation Space that are approved and deviate from the standards set forth in Section 13.96.3 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- Condition #10: Similar to the above, this condition notes the amount of Innovation Space in the Final Development Plan, as well as location requirements and timing for submitting a plan for the site’s Innovation Space. This condition would be reviewed and updated to match the Board’s approval of the proposed minor amendment.