

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The Site

The development site consists of land on two lots: 335 Grove Street (also sometimes known as 327 Grove Street) and 399 Grove Street. 335 Grove Street is an approximately 22-acre lot owned by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and is the current site of the Riverside T Station (the “MBTA parcel”). 399 Grove Street is a 121,700 square foot lot in a BU-5 zoning district and is the current site of the Hotel Indigo (the “Hotel Indigo parcel”). The development parcel would encompass a portion of the MBTA parcel and the Hotel Indigo parcel, a total of 14.4 acres.

Site History

By way of background, in 2009 the MBTA Board of Directors authorized an 88-year lease of a 9.4 acre portion of 335 Grove Street to BH Normandy Riverside LLC (“Normandy”). In 2013, the then Board of Aldermen granted Normandy a special permit to construct a mixed use development on that site consisting of 225,000 square feet of office space, 290 residential units, 20,000 square feet of retail space, and an 8,000 square foot community center (Board Order #258-12(2)). The development parcel was also rezoned from Public Use to MU-3 in Board Orders #258-12 and #272-12(2) (Ordinances No. A-27 and A-28).

For a variety of reasons, Normandy did not proceed to build the project. In 2016, Normandy partnered with Mark Development, LLC to create a new vision for the site.

Zone Change and Text Amendments

As a threshold matter, the applicant is seeking to change the zoning for the Hotel Indigo parcel and another portion of the MBTA parcel that was not previously rezoned to MU-3. The new development parcel would also include the land previously changed to MU-3 as noted above.

The project, as proposed, does not meet the current requirements of the MU-3 zoning district. As such, the applicant is also seeking to amend certain provisions of the same.

Specifically the applicant is seeking to:

1. decrease the lot area per unit requirement from 1,200 square feet to 850 square feet;
2. increase the maximum development size from 580,000 square feet to 1,520,000 square feet, which includes 51,600 square feet of unoccupied mechanical space, but excludes parking structures¹;

¹ The Newton Zoning Ordinance includes mechanical penthouses in calculating square footage. Thus, of the 1,518,653 square feet the applicant proposes, 1,467,053 square feet is usable, and 51,600 square feet is dedicated to mechanical penthouses.

3. increase the maximum square footage for Category A uses (i.e., office, including research and development, business incubator, medical office, and other similar uses) to 650,000 square feet;
4. increase the maximum square footage for Category B uses (i.e., retail sales, personal services, restaurants, banking, health club, place of entertainment or assembly, theater, lodging, hotel, and motel) to 200,000 square feet;
5. increase the maximum square footage for Category C uses (i.e., multi-family, live/work space, single room occupancy, single person occupancy, assisted living nursing home) to 750,000 square feet;
6. eliminate parking structures from the calculation of FAR;
7. eliminate the ½ building height front, side, and rear yard setback requirements, and establish a 15' setback requirement along Grove Street;
8. increase the maximum building height allowed by special permit to 230 feet; and
9. decrease the minimum required beneficial open space to 10%.

The analysis below anticipates that the City Council approves the above amendments.

Proposed Project

The applicant is proposing a new mixed use development consisting of ten buildings that are designed to maximize the principle of walkability on site and to create a vibrant, transit-oriented hub. These buildings would incorporate 611,437 square feet of office space, 675 residential units, 64,655 square feet of retail space, and a 194-key hotel. The applicant will comply with the inclusionary zoning requirement of Section 5.11 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Design and Dimensional Characteristics

The proposed buildings range in height from 64.1 feet to 227.1 feet, and from 6 stories to 18 stories. The proposed FAR for the project (excluding parking structures) is 2.4. The development parcel would provide 2.22 acres of beneficial open space (15.4%).² Details on each of the proposed buildings follows:

Building 1

Building 1 consists of a 14-story office building and a detached 8-story garage. The office building would be 217.3 feet high³ and would contain 445,724 square feet of office

² These numbers are based on the size of the development parcel after the removal of approximately 1.4 acres for use as the access parcel to the site.

³ Approximately 20 feet of this height would be a mechanical penthouse.

space. The garage is 86.7 feet high and would contain 9,394 square feet of office space on the ground floor. Both the office building and the garage would require special permit relief for building height.

Building 2

Building 2 is an 18-story, 229.4-foot-high⁴ building containing a 194-key hotel and residential units. The hotel would occupy 9 stories of the building and residential units would occupy the other 9 stories. There would also be one level of underground parking. It requires special permit relief for building height and hotel use.

Buildings 3 and 4

Buildings 3 and 4 are attached to each other. Building 3 is 6 stories and 111.0 feet high,⁵ and Building 4 is 6 stories and 70.6 feet high. Building 3 would contain five levels of office space and three levels of parking. The first three floors of Building 4 would contain both residential units and parking. The remaining four floors contain residential units. Buildings 3 and 4 would require special permit relief for building height.

Building 5

Building 5 consists of a 6-story, 64.1-foot-high building with five levels of residential units and one level of parking. It would require special permit relief for building height.

Building 6

Building 6 consists of a 6-story, 78.7-foot-high building containing one level of retail space and five levels of residential units. It would require special permit relief for building height.

Building 7

Building 7 consists of a 6-story, 77.2-foot-high building containing one level of retail space and five levels of residential units. It would require special permit relief for building height.

Building 8

Building 8 consists of a 7-story, 88.3-foot-high building containing one level of retail space and six levels of residential units. It would require special permit relief for building height.

⁴ Approximately 20 feet of this height would be a mechanical penthouse.

⁵ Approximately 20 feet of this height would be a mechanical penthouse.

Buildings 9 and 10

Buildings 9 and 10 are attached to each other and are each 8 stories and 85.5 feet high. Building 9 would contain one level of retail space and seven levels of parking. The first seven floors of Building 10 would contain both residential units and parking. The eighth level of Building 10 would only contain parking. Buildings 9 and 10 would require special permit relief for building height.

Uses

Although the identity of future tenants is not known at this time, to afford flexibility with respect to the leasing of office and retail space, the applicant, pursuant to Section 4.4.1, will request special permit relief with regard to the following:

1. office use on the ground floor;
2. animal services use;
3. laboratory and research use;
4. retail and personal service establishments of more than 5,000 square feet;
5. restaurants of more than 50 seats;
6. bank, up to and over 5,000 square feet;
7. for-profit educational use;
8. theatre, hall;
9. place of amusement;
10. hotel; and
11. health club on the ground floor.

Parking

A total of 2,924 parking stalls will be provided on site. 958 of these will be reserved for MBTA commuters. The remaining 1,96 will be available for residents, employees, and visitors to the site.

2,866 of the parking stalls for the project will be in parking garages. The remaining 58 parking stalls are at the surface and are located throughout the site. These stalls are parallel to, and on both sides of, Main Street, the internal road that divides the development parcel. To the extent that the City determines that this internal road is a parking facility of over 20 stalls, the applicant will be seeking waivers for the design, landscaping, lighting, surfacing, and maintenance requirements for the same.