

SCHLESINGER AND BUCHBINDER, LLP
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

STEPHEN J. BUCHBINDER
ALAN J. SCHLESINGER
LEONARD M. DAVIDSON
A MIRIAM JAFFE
SHERMAN H. STARR, JR.
JUDITH L. MELIDEO-PREBLE
BARBARA D. DALLIS
JULIE B. ROSS
KATHRYN K. WINTERS
KATHERINE BRAUCHER ADAMS
FRANKLIN J. SCHWARZER
RACHAEL C. CARVER
ADAM M. SCHECTER

1200 Walnut Street
Newton, Massachusetts 02461-1267
Telephone (617) 965-3500

www.sab-law.com
Email: sjbuchbinder@sab-law.com

March 11, 2021

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Ms. Nadia Khan
Chief Committee Clerk
Newton City Council
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459-1449

Re: Riverside Station/355 Grove Street and 399 Grove Street

Dear Ms. Khan,

Enclosed please find a revised project narrative relative to the above matter. Kindly substitute this version for that which was submitted with the special permit application and related materials on March 8, 2021.

Please note the minor change in the table on page 2 which clarifies that the proposed heights on Buildings 1 and 2 include the penthouse space (approximately 35 feet).

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions respecting the foregoing.

Very truly yours,

Stephen J. Buchbinder

Stephen J. Buchbinder

SJB/mer
enclosures
cc: (By Email, w/enclosures)
Mr. Neil Cronin
Ms. Jennifer Caira
Mr. John Daghlian
Jonah Temple, Esquire
Deputy Chief Israel Jimenez
(By Email, w/out enclosures)
Mr. Robert Korff
Mr. Damien Chaviano
Mr. David Roache
Mr. Scott Lombardi

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The Site

The development site consists of land on two lots: 355 Grove Street and 399 Grove Street. 355 Grove Street is the current site of the Riverside MBTA Station. 399 Grove Street is the current site of the Hotel Indigo. The development site encompasses a portion of the 355 Grove Street lot and 399 Grove Street, a total of 13.05 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 355 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 at the site (Board Order #258-12(2), the “2013 Board Order”) and authorized the rezoning of the boundaries of that development parcel from Public Use to Mixed Use 3 (“MU-3”) (Ordinances No. A-27 and A-28). Pursuant to Condition 2 (a) of the 2013 Board Order, the zone change vested upon the relocation of the water line crossing the site. That work commenced in December 2014. For a variety of reasons, Normandy was not able to build the project.

In 2016, Normandy partnered with Mark Development, LLC to create a new vision for the site, and in 2020, the City Council granted a special permit (Council Order #27-20, the “2020 Council Order”) for a new mixed use development there. The approved development consisted of ten buildings that incorporate approximately 254,120 square feet of office space, 582 residential units, a 150-key hotel, 39,014 square feet of retail space, and accessory parking facilities. The City Council also authorized a change of zone for 399 Grove Street and for additional portions of the development site that had not previously been rezoned in 2013 to MU-3 (Council Order #26-20).

Proposed Project

The applicant is proposing to amend the 2020 Council Order to allow changes to the height, density, and footprint of several buildings in the development. These buildings, as modified, would consist of 369,735 square feet of laboratory/research and/or office uses (of which 7,500 square feet will be used by the MBTA), 550 residential units, and 21,981 square feet of retail and related commercial uses. A summary of the program changes are described below.

1. Uses

The approved development includes an approximately 150-key hotel. The revised program eliminates the hotel use and incorporates 362,235 square feet of laboratory/research use into Buildings 1 and Building 2 instead. The applicant also proposes to: 1) eliminate office space except for the 7,500 square feet which will be used by the MBTA and will be nested within the parking garage behind Building 10; 2) reduce retail and other commercial uses from 39,014

square feet to 21,981 square feet; and 3) reduce the number of residential units from 582 units to 550 units. The approved development includes 17.5% of the units as affordable. The applicant is proposing to increase the percentage of affordable units from 17.5% to 20% as part of the amended Special Permit request.

2. Design and Dimensional Characteristics

The revised development includes a mixture of footprint, height, and density changes to the approved buildings and redesigned public plazas. The table below summarizes the dimensional changes to the buildings.

	Approved Height/Stories	Proposed Height / Stories	Approved Square Ft	Proposed Square Ft	Result
Building 1	169.3 / 10	143.3 (including penthouse) / 7 stories	254,120	184,911	height, stories, and sf change
Building 2	66.3 / 6	123.5 ¹ (including penthouse) / 6 stories	77,300	177,324	height, stories, and sf change
Building 3	62.8 / 7	57.5 / 5	154,009	113,519	height, stories, and sf change
Building 4	60.5 / 6	61.7 / 5	124,989	120,276	height, stories, and sf change
Building 5	45.4 / 4	45.4 / 4	57,200	47,147	sf change
Building 6	54.5 / 4	54.5 / 4	72,020	72,009	sf change
Building 7	64.2 / 5	66.7 / 5	60,024	61,209	height and sf change
Building 8	70 / 6	72.3 / 6	65,425	59,567	height and sf change
Building 9	82.8 / 8	69.9 / 6	63,784	66,574	height, stories, and sf change (height previously included garage)
Building 10	82.8 / 8	66.7 / 6	96,129	114,964	height, stories, and sf change (height previously included garage)
Garage	82.8 / 8	87.8 / 8	Not Included in Calculation	7,500	height change and sf change (MBTA Office now included)
Total	-	-	1,025,000	1,025,000	

¹ A text amendment to Section 4.2.4.A.2 is required to increase the maximum height of buildings in Area F above 70'.

In terms of setbacks, there are no changes to any of the approved setbacks for the buildings that front on Grove Street, and there are no other setback requirements in the MU-3 Zone.

As revised, the development parcel would provide 2.07 acres of beneficial open space (15.8%) of which 1.21 acres (9.3%) would be open to the public. This is greater than what the Zoning Ordinance requires. The proposed FAR remains at 1.8, and is still less than the 2.5 authorized by the Council Order. Thus, no further relief is required for beneficial open space or for FAR.

3. Parking

A total of 2,171 parking stalls will be provided on site. 1,000 of these will be reserved for the MBTA and commuters. The remaining 1,171 will be available for residents, employees, and visitors to the site. 2,135 of the parking stalls for the project will be in parking garage. The remaining 36 parking stalls are at the surface and are located throughout the site.

The Council Order authorized a parking waiver of up to 725 stalls for the development, and the revised program for the development would actually decrease the requirement for parking at the site. As the new mix of uses does not increase the demand for parking at the site, no additional relief is required.

A parking calculation is included herewith for reference.

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