



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone
(617) 796-1120
Telefax
(617) 796-1142
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
www.newtonma.gov

Barney Heath
Director

STAFF MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: **Wednesday, February 2, 2022**

DATE: January 28, 2022

TO: Subcommittee for Riverside Design Consistency Review

FROM: Shubee Sikka, Urban Designer

SUBJECT: Additional Review Information

At its regularly scheduled meeting on January 12, 2022, Urban Design Commission appointed a **Subcommittee for Riverside Design and Plan Consistency Review**. The Subcommittee will make a recommendation to the full Urban Design Commission for final Determination.

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the members of the Subcommittee and the public with technical information and planning analysis which may be useful in the review and decision-making process of the Subcommittee. The Department of Planning and Development's intention is to provide a balanced view of the issues with the information it has at the time of the application's review. Additional information may be presented at the meeting that the Subcommittee can take into consideration when discussing Riverside Design Consistency.

Dear Subcommittee Members,

The following is a brief discussion of the Riverside Design and Plan Consistency Review of Schematic Plans.

I. Roll Call

II. Regular Agenda

Riverside Design Consistency Review of Schematic Plans

Council Order Background

On September 9, 2021, City Council approved the Riverside Project. A new mixed-use development consisting of not more than 1,025,000 square feet of gross floor area (as such term is defined in Section 4.2.4.G.3) in ten buildings that are designed to maximize the principle of walkability and to create a vibrant, transit-oriented hub.

These buildings incorporate approximately 362,235 square feet of office and/or laboratory/research and development (i.e., life science) space, approximately 550 dwelling units, approximately 21,852 square feet of ground floor commercial space, accessory surface parking, and a multi-level parking facility in Buildings 9 and 10 that will provide parking for MBTA patrons and parking for the Project (the "Parking Garage").

Per the Board Order #27-20(2), general condition #9:

"All buildings, other than the Parking Garage, shall undergo a two- or three-step process set forth in Conditions #9 through 13 for review of each building to ensure the Project is constructed in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance, this Amended and Restated Special Permit/Site Plan Approval, and the Design Guidelines.

9. Submission and Review of Schematic Plans

- a. *At the schematic design stage, the Petitioner shall file the following with the Director of Planning and Development and its consultants, the City of Newton's Urban Design Commission (the "UDC"), and the Liaison Committee:*
 - i. *individual building plans consisting of exterior renderings, preliminary building elevations, building footprints, and representative wall sections showing consistency with the Special Permit Plan Set and the Design Guidelines (the "Schematic Plans"); and*
 - ii. *a signed certificate from the Petitioner's architect and/or civil engineer certifying that the Schematic Plans are consistent with the Special Permit Plan Set.*
- b. *Within thirty (30) days of receipt of a complete submission of the materials set forth in Condition #9(a), the Director of Planning and Development will review and provide an opinion as to whether the Schematic Plans are in full compliance with the Special Permit Plan Set and consistent with the Design Guidelines. If the Director of Planning and Development's review requires the input or assistance from a peer review consultant, the Petitioner shall pay the reasonable fees for such peer review. The Director of Planning and Development's opinion shall be submitted in writing to the Petitioner, the Commissioner of Inspectional Services, the City Council, and the Liaison Committee. If it is the Director's opinion that the Schematic Plans are not compliant with the Special Permit Plan Set or inconsistent with the Design Guidelines, such inconsistencies shall be expressly identified.*
- c. *Within thirty (30) days of receipt of a complete submission of the materials set forth in*

Condition #9(a) (and concurrent with the review of the Director of Planning and Development), the UDC, after review of such submission at a public meeting, will provide an opinion as to whether the Schematic Plans are in full compliance with the Special Permit Plan Set and consistent with the Design Guidelines. The Petitioner shall provide the Liaison Committee and the Ward 4 City Councilors with notice of the date of the UDC's public meeting at least 14 days in advance and the UDC should make all efforts to take public comment. The UDC's opinion shall be submitted in writing to the Petitioner, the Commissioner of Inspectional Services, the City Council, and the Liaison Committee. If it is the UDC's opinion that the Schematic Plans are inconsistent with either the Special Permit Plan Set or the Design Guidelines, such inconsistencies shall be expressly identified.

- d. *Upon receipt of the written consistency opinions referenced in Condition #9(b) and (c) above, the Petitioner may proceed to the design development stage. If either the UDC or the Director of Planning issues an opinion that the Schematic Plans are inconsistent with either the Zoning Ordinance, the Special Permit Plan Set, or the Design Guidelines, the Petitioner must submit revised Schematic Plans in accordance with Condition #9(a)."*

Buildings 1-4 Design Consistency Review

The applicant has submitted Schematic Plans for review. The UDC, after review of such submission at a public meeting, is required to provide an opinion as to whether the Schematic Plans are in full compliance with the Special Permit Plan Set and consistent with the Design Guidelines.

The Director of Planning and Development has requested input/assistance from peer review consultant, Form + Place. Please refer to Form + Place's memorandum (**Attachment A**) which provides a high-level commentary on the "consistency" of the project. Staff agrees with Form + Place's comments and recommendations regarding buildings 1-4.

In summary, buildings 1-4 appear to be consistent with the Riverside Special Permit Plan Set and additional design development (as noted in Form + Place's memo) will address specific criteria in the Design Guidelines. The one aspect that does not appear to be consistent is integration of the grand stairway into building 4. Staff seeks recommendation from the Subcommittee regarding buildings 1-4 and the redesigned stair and open space that connects Grove Street to Research Square.

On January 26th, applicant submitted an updated presentation for Buildings 1 and 2 that incorporates minor revisions to what was previously submitted. Specifically, the presentation has slightly adjusted the rendered height of Building 3 as shown in comparison with Buildings 1 and 2 and shows proposed exhaust fan stacks for the buildings on the elevations and renderings. Staff is reviewing the updates and will provide comments on the updates at the meeting on February 2nd. The updated plans can be found at this link:

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/80201/637788028803330000>

Documents/Submissions:

All the documents previously submitted about this project can be found at the following link:

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/development-review/high-interest-projects/riverside-special-permit-2020>

The agenda, staff memo, and packet documents for February 2 and all upcoming Subcommittee meetings will be posted at the above link as well.

Buildings 1 and 2 submissions

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/79835/637782846258070000>

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/79839/637782846625270000>

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/79841/637782846780270000>

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/79837/637782846447930000>

Buildings 3 and 4 submissions

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/79879/637782847559530000>

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/79877/637782847400600000>

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/79873/637782847056530000>

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/79875/637782847229670000>

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/79881/637782847720670000>

Council Approved Documents

Council Order

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/80101/637787158811970000>

Approved Design Guidelines

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/80111/637787159126670000>

Approved Architectural Plans

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/80105/637787158934470000>

Approved Civil Plan Set

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/80107/637787159002270000>

Attachments:

Attachment A: Form + Place Memorandum