



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Community Development Department

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

To: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager

From: Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Date: July 27, 2016

Re: Awaiting Reports No. 16-46 and No. 16-59 regarding the Grand Junction Greenway, including the status of construction, developer contributions, and the zoning overlay

Overview

The Grand Junction Greenway is proposed to run in a shared-use Grand Junction corridor alongside the existing rail tracks from the Boston University Bridge to the Somerville Community Path at North Point. The vision of the Grand Junction corridor with a multi-use path alongside the existing tracks was first formally envisioned by the 2000 Cambridge Green Ribbon Open Space Committee in its study of possible new parks and open space in the city and was identified as a top priority. The first segment of the path opened in 2016 as part of the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority's (CRA) Grand Junction Park. In addition, the City has allocated \$10 million for the design and construction of a path that works with future transit options and includes roadway crossing designs from Mass. Ave north to the Somerville line. Design review will be coordinated with MassDOT and MBTA, which own and operate trains in the right of way.

The following is an update on the long-term planning, construction projects, developer contributions, and the zoning overlay that relate to the Grand Junction Greenway.

Construction Projects

Grand Junction Park (Main Street to Broadway)

Status: Complete

This component was initially proposed as part of the Innovation Boulevard project close to a decade ago and funded by the CRA and a \$500,000 contribution by MIT required through the 2013 PUD-5 rezoning process. The CRA hosted a grand opening and ribbon cutting on this first section of the Grand Junction Greenway, located between Main Street and Broadway along Galileo Galilei Way. City staff, city councilors and community members contributed to the project and attended the ribbon cutting. While this 14' path and park project is a short section of the Greenway, it is in a complex area of underground utilities, and it is anticipated that this first implementation section will

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help the project gain momentum as a whole. In addition to staff time, the CRA contributed more than \$300,000 to this project.

Binney Street Park Parcel (Broadway to Binney Street)

Status: Under design

The City is working with Stoss Landscape Urbanism and the community to develop a design for Binney Street Park, located between Broadway and Binney Street, and along Galileo Galilei Way. The site, currently controlled by the CRA, will be transferred to the City as a part of a 2012 rezoning agreement with Boston Properties.

This agreement was reached between Boston Properties and the City to modify the open space covenants applicable in the Kendall Square/Cambridge Center area. As part of the agreement, Boston Properties (in letter dated March 12, 2012) committed that the parcel along the Grand Junction corridor between Broadway and Binney Street (sometimes called the “porkchop”) would be transferred from the CRA to the City for open space use, and that Boston Properties would provide \$2,000,000 toward the design and construction of that future park.

The park will be located on the block north of the recently-completed segment of the Grand Junction Greenway, and the pathway will be included as a part of this open space project. A public meeting was held in June to review initial design concepts, and a subsequent public meeting will be scheduled this fall to review a more detailed design. The construction of the open space is anticipated to begin in 2017.

Development Projects Along the Grand Junction Greenway

The following is a list of special permit projects that contain provisions related to the planned creation of the Grand Junction Greenway.

PB #150, One Kendall Square (Amgen Building)

Status: Special permit granted 1999, project completed 2002.

This project was a new lab building built on a site abutting the western edge of the Grand Junction Rail corridor. The building was designed to allow space for the future creation of a pathway, and the special permit includes the following text:

[Condition 3, Paragraph h.] The permittee will work with the Community Development Department and the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority to assist in the planning and development of the proposed bicycle and pedestrian path along the easterly side of the railroad right of way; as part of the project, the permittee will create a landscape buffer between the project site and the

railroad tracks; and at the appropriate time the permittee will, at its expense, construct the portion of such path adjacent to the project site.

In addition the permittee shall cooperate with the Community Development Department, the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority and other property owners in the planning and development of improvements to Parcel 7 as a publicly accessible and inviting open space asset for the district. Parcel 7 is owned by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority and is within the Kendall Square Urban Renewal Area.

PB #181, 43 Vassar Street (MIT Brain and Cognitive Science Center)

Status: Special permit granted 2002, project completed 2004.

This project was designed to span the Grand Junction Rail corridor, and included additional space beneath the building to allow for both rail passage – including a transit line if it were established in the future – as well as a future multiuse pathway.

The following text is included in the conditions of the special permit:

[Condition #3] The building shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department. Particular attention shall be paid to the design details of the transportation corridor under the building to ensure that it is both a safe and pleasant space for the bicyclists and pedestrians to be in and traverse. The final design of this space shall be reviewed by the Community Development staff. The staff shall present the final plan to the Planning Board before issuance of the building permit and the required Community Development Department certification.

PB #182, 1 Hampshire Street (Draper Laboratory Expansion)

Status: Special permit granted 2002, project completed 2008

This project was an expansion to an office/lab building first constructed in 1984. The special permit incorporates, as conditions, the recommendations included in a memo from the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department, which includes the following text:

We recommend that the proponent should work with the Community Development Department and the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority to assist in the planning and development of the proposed bicycle and pedestrian path along the easterly side of the Grand Junction Railroad right of way. At the

appropriate time, the proponent should construct the portion of such path and any appropriate landscaping adjacent to the project site.

MIT Kendall Square (PUD-5) Rezoning

Status: Zoning adopted in 2013, special permits granted in 2016, construction yet to commence.

This rezoning incorporated a letter of commitment, accepted by the City Council, in which MIT committed not only to funding the construction of the Grand Junction Park built on CRA property, but also to *"jointly and in conjunction with the City, complete a study of all parcels that it owns adjacent to the portion of the Grand Junction railroad branch situated between Main Street and Memorial Drive, in order to consider the feasibility of granting the City of Cambridge easements for the construction, now or in the future, of off-road bicycle and pedestrian facilities adjacent to the railroad line."* MIT completed and submitted a feasibility study in 2015, and construction of the segment of the Grand Junction Greenway between Broadway and Main Street was recently completed in 2016.

PB #310, 399 Binney Street

Status: Special permit granted in 2016, construction yet to commence.

This special permit allows construction of a new commercial office/lab building that would replace part of the One Kendall Square complex, and would be undertaken along with changes to the in/out circulation patterns of the One Kendall Square garage and improvements to the garage façade. The new building will not directly impact the Grand Junction Corridor, but the changes to the garage circulation have been designed to accommodate space for a future pathway.

The applicant, DivcoWest, proposed to donate to the city a narrow strip of land that it owns along the western edge of the Grand Junction corridor. The following language is included as a condition of the special permit, which is binding on the Permittee, even if the site changes ownership in the future:

[Condition 8, Paragraph a.] Prior to issuance of a Building Permit, the Permittee shall commit to conveying (in fee or easement, in a manner agreeable to the applicant and the City) the strip of land along the Grand Junction rail line indicated in the Application Documents for future public use as the Grand Junction multi-use path at a mutually acceptable time following the contemplated expansion of the TDR donating district to include the subject land;

however, refusal or delay by the City in reaching an agreement shall not prevent or delay the development authorized by this Special Permit.

PB #313, 135 Fulkerson Street

Status: Proposed project; special permit hearing to be held July 26, 2016 by the Planning Board.

This application proposes construction of 40 units of housing on the current one-story commercial garage building on the west side of Fulkerson Street. While the site is near the Grand Junction corridor, it does not directly abut the corridor because it is separated by a portion of the abutting Metropolitan Pipe site. Nevertheless, the application proposes the creation of a pedestrian/bicycle connection along the northern edge of the site, to provide a partial future public connection to the Grand Junction Greenway. The feasibility of such a connection will depend on the exact future location of the multiuse path, the future status of the rail line, and the portion of the Metropolitan Pipe site that separates the proposed Fulkerson Street connection from the Grand Junction corridor.

345 Vassar Street, MIT Theater Arts

Status: BZA approvals granted and construction commenced in 2016.

This project, which received dimensional variances from the Board of Zoning Appeal, is the adaptive reuse of an existing industrial building adjacent to the southern edge of the Grand Junction corridor, to accommodate the relocation of some of MIT's educational facilities from Kendall Square. Because it retains the existing building footprint, it will not result in any positive or negative impact on the future creation of a multiuse path.

MIT Central Utilities Plant

Status: MEPA has issued a Single Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) Certificate

MIT proposes to expand the Central Utilities Plant (CUP) to meet future energy demand, increase reliability and resilience, and meet energy efficiency and carbon emissions reductions goals. The proposed project includes expanding Building 42 (near Albany and Vassar Street) as well as an overhead structure across the Grand Junction right-of-way. In the submitted SEIR MIT has worked to reduce the building footprint from the EENF and will reserve a 40-ft wide pedestrian path along the north side of the building to connect Albany Street to the Grand Junction right-of-way. The project proposes to continue the adjacent constrained cross section at the existing CUP building (24'), which would constrain the path if adjacent to a service drive, but is proposed to be shared only with emergency access vehicles (rather than service vehicles).

Status of the Zoning Overlay District Proposal

The creation of a zoning overlay district is one of the implementation strategies identified in the City's 2007 feasibility study for a Grand Junction "Rail-With-Trail" multi-use path (called the Grand Junction Greenway). While a zoning strategy would not directly create a multiuse path, it would advance the goals in the following ways:

- Designate a corridor that would accommodate a future multi-use (pedestrian/bicycle) path, providing for its safe operation alongside the existing active rail line.
- Prevent future development that would obstruct the creation of a pathway in this corridor.
- Provide development incentives to encourage property owners to dedicate portions of the corridor to the City for use as a pathway.

CDD staff have been developing a map change and a set of proposed zoning regulations that would create a Grand Junction Pathway Overlay District by designating a corridor with a typical width of about 80 feet (in some areas as narrow as 60 feet or as wide as 100 feet) to provide for a multi-use pathway on either side of the existing rail line. This summer and fall, CDD will begin to reach out to stakeholder groups (such as the East Cambridge Planning Team) and property owners to set up meetings to discuss the proposal and its potential impacts. Based on these meetings, CDD staff will further refine the proposal before it is submitted as a zoning petition for consideration by the City Council.