



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

LOUIS A. DePASQUALE
City Manager

March 7, 2022

To the Honorable, the City Council:

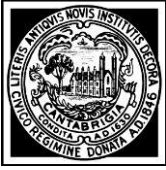
I am writing to ask the City Council to approve the disposition of property located at 35 Cherry Street (the “Property”) to the Affordable Housing Trust to facilitate the development of affordable housing. As set out in the Memo provided herewith from Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (“MIT”) committed to convey the Property to the City in connection with a zoning petition. The conveyance was to be done subject to a community process to be conducted by the City to determine the best use of the Property. I support that request and recommend that the Council vote to approve the disposition of the Property to the Affordable Housing Trust.

By way of background, in 2013, MIT filed a zoning petition seeking amended zoning for the PUD-5 Zoning District, and in connection with that petition, MIT committed to convey the Property to the City for a use that directly benefits residents in The Port neighborhood and surrounding communities, after completion of a public process to determine that use. CDD has now completed that public process and the result was a consensus that the Property be used for new affordable housing building(s) that fit the scale of the neighboring homes. To accomplish this, CDD recommends that the Property be transferred to the Affordable Housing Trust. This transfer would not be subject to the City’s disposition ordinance. I support this request and recommend that the Council vote to authorize me to transfer the Property to the Affordable Housing Trust upon receipt of the deed conveying the property from MIT to the City.

Very truly yours,

Louis A. DePasquale
City Manager





CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Community Development Department

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

KHALIL MOGASSABI
Deputy Director
Chief Planner

To: Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager

From: Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Date: March 1, 2022

Re: 35 Cherry Street

In November 2020, the City Council issued a policy order requesting that the Community Development Department (CDD) start a public process to plan the future use of 35 Cherry Street for affordable housing. The following memo summarizes the community engagement process, recommendations on the type and scale of affordable housing, and next steps.

Public process

Starting in June 2021, the City's Community Development Department (CDD) hosted a series of public meetings and focus groups to understand the community's vision and priorities for the development of affordable housing at 35 Cherry Street (the "Property").

CDD held two community meetings and six focus groups. The community meetings were open to the public, and the focus groups were held with Spanish-speaking, Haitian, and American-born Black Cambridge residents. The public engagement process was organized into two rounds.

During the first round of public engagement, CDD presented background on the Property and introduced different affordable housing options. The participants discussed levels of affordability, tenure, massing, amenities, and communities to serve (senior housing, LGBTQ+ friendly housing, etc.). CDD staff presented applicable financial and operating considerations to allow participants to make informed decisions about their affordable housing priorities. During the second round of public engagement, CDD presented what they heard from the preceding public engagement events. CDD confirmed and refined what the consensus was on shared priorities for the development of affordable housing at the Property.

What we heard

The community engagement process aimed to establish shared agreement between community members. Most of the project goals and design principles garnered broad consensus; however, there were some varied preferences heard among the community. There was strong consensus that any new building(s) at 35 Cherry Street fit the scale and size of neighboring homes, which are primarily three- to four-stories tall. While the community agreed on the scale of the project, there were differing preferences on

344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139
Voice: 617 349-4600
Fax: 617 349-4669
TTY: 617 349-4621
www.cambridgema.gov

housing tenure. There was a slight preference expressed in the focus groups for affordable rental units, while attendees at the public meetings overwhelmingly preferred affordable homeownership. The meeting notes from each public engagement activity are available at cambridgema.gov/cherrystreet.

Recommendation

Given the size of the lot, an affordable rental development would need to be significantly larger than desired by the community to be feasible. Given the strong consensus for the new affordable housing building(s) to fit the scale of the neighboring homes, and mixed preference for either homeownership or rental, CDD has concluded that affordable homeownership at 35 Cherry Street would better meet the articulated community goals for this project. The City recognizes the ongoing need for affordable rental housing, however, and is consistently working to identify opportunities for the development of new affordable rental housing across the City.

Through the conversations with the community about the Property about its development for use as affordable housing, CDD identified the following shared project goals and design principles to guide the size, scale, and quality of the development of the Property in a way that best supports the community.

Affordable Housing Goals:

- Use 100% of units on-site for affordable housing.
- On-site housing units should provide affordable homeownership opportunities.
- Include maximum number of family-sized (3-4 bedroom) units as financially viable.
- Provide high quality private open space for children to play and residents to gather and build community.
- Prioritize current Cambridge residents when identifying residents for the new affordable units to the extent allowable under fair housing law.
- Provide access to on-site parking based on anticipated demand.

Design Principles and Guidelines:

I. Neighborhood Context

Size and scale of new building(s) should fit within the existing neighborhood context. For example:

- Limit the building to four stories; consider a step-back or gabled top floor
- Articulate top floors articulated with dormers, terraces, sloped roofs, etc.
- Use colors and materials that complement the surroundings
- Include multiple entrances and architectural detail to activate the public realm

II. Site Amenities and Environmental Comfort

- Maximize the amount of street trees along both Cherry St and School St
- Provide amenities, such as stoops, porches, seating, etc.
- Provide small, landscaped areas and open space that can serve as gathering spaces for residents
- Treat driveways as paved courtyards
- Consider balconies and/or upper-level decks
- Visually screen parking to limit visibility from the public way. Avoid street facing garage entries.

III. Building Amenities

- Provide in-unit laundry equipment
- Provide large storage spaces
- Provide large windows for interior daylighting

IV. Prioritize Sustainability & Resilience

- Design for energy efficiency and natural ventilation
- Design for flood protection
- Minimize the urban heat island effect with high albedo roofs or green roofs, and canopy trees
- Consider photovoltaics

Next Steps

Now that the public process is complete, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) will convey the Property to the City pursuant to its Letter of Commitment it submitted to the City in connection with the amended zoning for the PUD-5 Zoning District. We recommend that the City transfer the Property to the Affordable Housing Trust for the development of affordable housing, and that the City works with the Affordable Housing Trust to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select an affordable housing developer for the Property. The community-generated affordable housing goals and design principles, described above, will be included in the RFP.

Accordingly, for the above reasons, we request that the City Council approve the disposition of the Property to the Affordable Housing Trust to facilitate the development of affordable housing as set forth above.



City of Cambridge

Agenda Item Number 14
IN CITY COUNCIL
 March 7, 2022

- WHEREAS: There continues to be a severe shortage of decent housing affordable to low- and moderate-income residents in the city; and
- WHEREAS: The City Council desires to increase the supply of affordable housing, now and in the future, for low- and moderate-income Cambridge residents to reside in decent, affordable housing; and
- WHEREAS: In its Letter of Commitment dated April 8, 2013 in connection with the City Council's adoption of amendments to Section 13.80 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology ("MIT") committed to convey property located at 35 Cherry Street, Assessor's Lot 75-118 (the "Property") to the City or third party designated by the City for uses to benefit the community as determined through a public process conducted by the Community Development Department; and
- WHEREAS: MIT has agreed to convey the Property to the City and to record a deed evidencing said conveyance of the Property to the City shortly; and
- WHEREAS: On November 9, 2020, the City Council adopted an order requesting that the City Manager direct the Community Development Department to commence the public process with the Port neighborhood and surrounding communities to determine the future use of the Property for affordable housing, and in conjunction with the community, determine the type of housing that would meet the most pressing needs in the area; and
- WHEREAS: The Community Development Department conducted a public process which included two community meetings which were open to anyone, and six focus groups with Spanish-speaking, Haitian, and American-born Black Cambridge residents to discuss ideas and options for how the Property could be developed as affordable housing; and

- WHEREAS: The Community Development Department has provided a report to the City Council on this community process which includes recommendations for developing the Property as affordable housing, including:
- Use of 100% of units on-site for affordable housing;
 - On-site housing units should provide affordable homeownership opportunities;
 - Include maximum number of family-sized (3-4 bedroom) units as financially viable;
 - Provide high quality private open space for children to play and residents to gather and build community;
 - Prioritize current Cambridge residents when identifying residents for the new affordable units to the extent allowable under fair housing law;
 - Provide access to on-site parking based on anticipated demand; and
- WHEREAS: The City Manager has further recommended that the City Council approve the disposition of the Property to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust to initiate the process to develop the Property as affordable housing pursuant to the recommendations from the community process; and
- WHEREAS: Pursuant to Section 15A of Chapter 40 of the General Laws, as amended and accepted by the City Council on November 26, 1990, the City Council may, by a majority vote, transfer municipal land to another board or officer of the City for the purpose of constructing affordable housing; now therefore be it
- ORDERED: That upon receipt of the deed conveying the property from MIT to the City, the City Manager is authorized to transfer the Property to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust for the development of affordable homeownership housing for low- and moderate- residents as described above; and be it further
- ORDERED: That the City Manager is hereby authorized to execute and deliver to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust, in the name of and on behalf of the City of Cambridge in such form as the City Manager shall approve (such approval to be evidenced by such execution and delivery) such documents, instruments, agreements, deeds, licenses, warranties, indemnifications, releases or certificates, or amendments thereto, required by the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust to develop the Property as affordable housing; and be it further
- ORDERED: That the City Manager is hereby authorized to execute, accept, and deliver such supplemental or ancillary documents as are reasonable necessary to implement the intent of this Order and to execute, accept and deliver amendments thereto.