



# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

## Housing Department

Christopher Cotter  
Director of Housing

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust  
**From:** Christopher Cotter, Housing Director  
Cassie Arnaud, Senior Manager for Housing Development  
**Date:** October 24, 2024  
**Re:** Follow-up on Planning Board Report of 21 Walden Square Road/Walden Square II

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We are sharing an update regarding the Walden Square II Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) project. As you recall, when discussing Planning Board's Final Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Design Consultation at our August meeting, the Trust asked that staff work with Winn and report back on how Winn planned to address comments shared in the Planning Board's report. In response to this request, Winn has provided the enclosed materials, including a memo and supporting documentation, which provide an overview of the design changes they will be making to the Walden Square II development in response to the comments included in the Planning Board's report.

#### Background

Winn's proposal for Walden Square II consists of the new construction of two buildings, consisting of a total of 95 affordable rental units, on portions of the existing Walden Square campus. All 95 units will be affordable to households earning at or below 80% of area median income (AMI), of which 44 units are anticipated to be affordable to those earning below 60% AMI and 24 of which are anticipated to be affordable to those earning under 30% AMI. Winn is pursuing the project under the AHO, and completed the AHO review process in July 2024.

At the June 27, 2024 meeting, the Trust approved funding for this development, which was made contingent on the Trust's receipt and review of the Planning Board's final advisory design consultation report. At the August 1, 2024 meeting, we transmitted a copy of the Planning Board's Final Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Design Consultation. The AHO requires that the results of the design review process be shared with the Affordable Housing Trust.

In our memo transmitting the report, we noted that while the Planning Board expressed its support for creating affordable housing at this location and acknowledged that Winn had made positive changes between the first Planning Board meeting and the second Planning Board meeting, the Board felt that the project could benefit from continued design consultation with CDD and other City staff regarding certain aspects of the proposed development. The Planning Board's final report contained comments and recommendations which fell into three broad categories:

- circulation through the site, particularly by pedestrians and cyclists

- canopy tree planting/landscape design
- exterior façade design

### Design Updates

Over the last few months, Winn has worked to update and refine its plans for Walden Square II in response to the comments in the Planning Board report. City staff from the Community Development Department (CDD), Housing Department, Department of Public Works (DPW), and Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TPT) met with Winn and their development team several times to discuss opportunities for design improvements, to review proposed updates, and to work collaboratively with Winn on developing the current set of design changes outlined in detail in the attached materials.

- Landscape Plan: The updated landscape plan was developed with input from staff from both CDD and DPW, including the urban forestry and landscape design staff. The attached materials describe the series of specific changes Winn has made to address Planning Board and City staff comments regarding the location and number of canopy trees, tree species and other landscape improvements.
- Facades: the updated elevations and designs were developed with input from CDD design staff who met several times with Winn and their architect team to review the design comments in the Planning Board report, discuss potential opportunities for improvements to the buildings' exteriors, to assist Winn in developing the set of designs, including façade improvements, described in the attached materials.
- Site Circulation: Finally, the updated site circulation plan was developed with input from City transportation staff from CDD, TPT and DPW and has been substantially improved. Winn worked with City staff to refine their plan and to identify effective ways to address the range of transportation-related comments. The final plan, described and shown in the attached materials, represents a significant improvement to the existing site as it is today and will be a benefit to Walden Square residents as well as the surrounding community who will be able to more easily and safely navigate through and around the site.

### Housing Department recommendation:

Housing Staff participated in many of these meetings and have also reviewed Winn's revised plans for Walden Square II to address the comments and concerns outlined in the final advisory design review report. While there are a few things which will continue to be discussed as the project moves forward, such as playground designs, Winn has been successful in incorporating changes which address the bulk of the recommendations, comments and feedback. Housing staff have confirmed that City staff have found Winn's changes to have addressed the noted concerns.

The Trust's approval for funding of Walden Square II was made contingent on review and acceptance of the Planning Board's final advisory design consultation report. At the August 1, 2024 Trust meeting, the Trust elected, at Staff's recommendation, to postpone acceptance of the report

(and the release of the funding contingency) while Winn’s work with staff to identify ways to address comments in the design report. With that work now complete and reviewed by City staff with expertise in those areas, we now recommend that the Trust accept the Planning Board report and confirm that the condition of the Trust’s funding approval has been satisfied.