

October 16, 2024

Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust
c/o Chris Cotter, Director of Housing
City of Cambridge Housing Department
344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: Final Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Design Consultation Procedure Compliance Certification
21 Walden Square Road, Cambridge, MA – Response to Comments

Dear Chris,

Enclosed in this memo, please find the responses from WinnDevelopment Company LP (WinnDevelopment) with respect to the “Suggestions for Further Study” section of the Final Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Design Consultation Procedure Compliance Certification dated July 22, 2024. In responding to these comments, our team met several times with City staff, including representatives from the Community Development Department, the Housing Department, the Department of Public Works, and the Parking & Transportation Department. As a second part to this memo, we respond to further comments received from City staff subsequent to the issuance of the July 22, 2024 Final Report.

As you know, WinnDevelopment has been working closely with City staff to continue to advance the overall site and project design for the Walden 2 project. We have engaged in numerous virtual meetings with city staff and have tried to be responsive to design comments wherever possible. We feel that the changes that have been made to the site design, namely around circulation and landscaping have resulted in significant improvements that have so far been well received by City staff. We look forward to the ongoing conversation around the development of our project and to continuing to work with your team to bring this project to fruition.

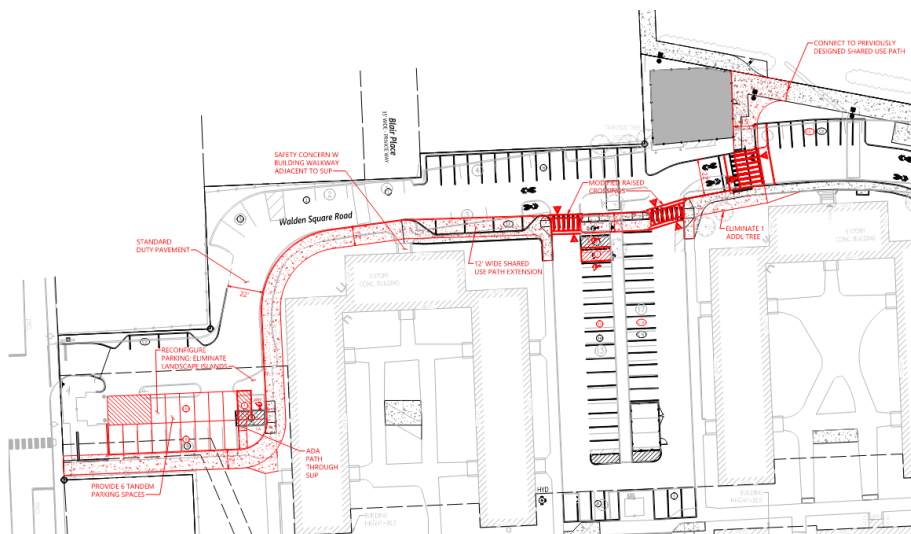
For clarity, comments received from the City are numbered and unbolded in the sections below and responses from WinnDevelopment and its design professionals are in **bold** in line with the numbered comments.

Part I: Suggestions for Further Study from the Final Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Design Consultation Procedure Compliance Certification dated July 22, 2024

East/west circulation around and through Building A

1. Staff recommends that further study be given to the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connectivity to and through the site. The intended routes for pedestrians and bicyclists should be intuitively clear, not dependent on signage.
 - a. Clarify the preferred route for east-bound people walking or bicycling from the western part of Walden Square Road to the Yerxa Road Underpass. A smoother and more visually apparent connection to the new path on the north side of Building A should be investigated.

The preferred route for peds & bikes from the western part of Walden Square Road to the Yerxa underpass has been revised to include a shared use path extension along the south side of Walden Square Road as discussed with Planning staff. The revised site plan detailing the shared use path is included as Enclosure 1 to this memo.

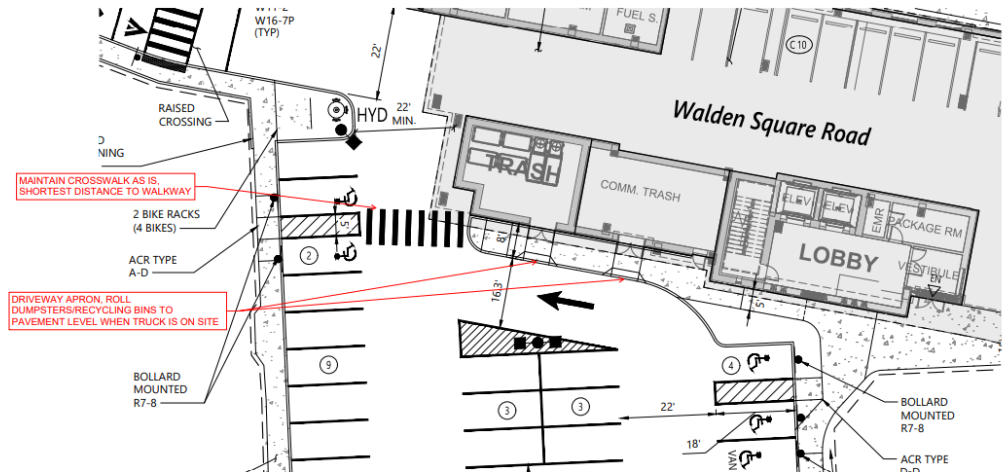


- b. Clarify the preferred route for east-bound people walking or cycling from the western part of Walden Square Road towards Raymond Street or to the bicycle storage room at the east end of Building A. Is it meant to be the new path along the north side of Building A, the tunnel through the building, or the new path along the buildings south side?

The preferred route is for bicyclists and pedestrians to use the shared use path extension as noted above, cross Walden Square Road at the raised crossing west of Building A and continue on the shared use path to the bike room. The pedestrian path south of Building A would be a secondary route.

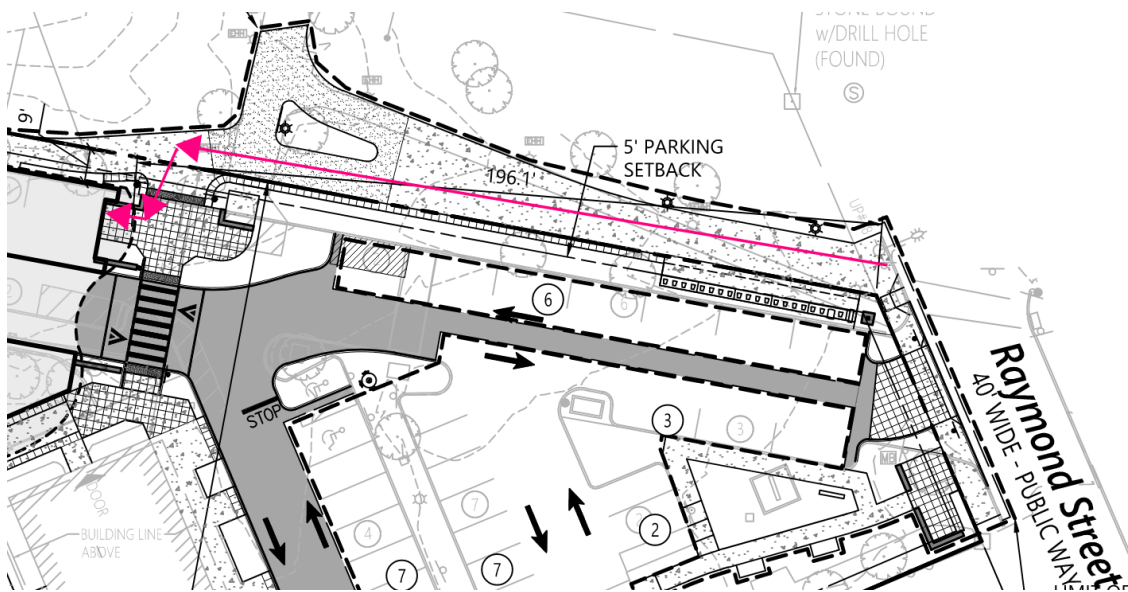
- c. The new pedestrian path along the south side of Building A is indicated only by painted markings. A raised sidewalk, separate from the parking lot and with a curb cut to the trash room would be preferable. In addition, it would be preferable to create a more direct route to this path for east-bound pedestrians coming from the sidewalk on the south side of the western part of Walden Square Road.

The pedestrian path has been revised to note a raised sidewalk with a driveway apron along the location of the doors to the trash and recycling rooms/enclosures. The proposed path provides the shortest distance to the adjacent sidewalk to the west of Building A and provides clearer site lines at the intersection. We will proceed with this approach pending final review by the Cambridge Fire Department.



- d. Clarify the route for people bicycling west-bound on Walden Square Road from Raymond Street to the bicycle storage room at the east end of Building A. The configuration of the paved area and planting outside the bike room seems to not address this desire line.

The preferred route is to utilize the shared use path from Raymond Street to the bike room at the east end of Building A. The plaza is intended to give both pedestrians and cyclists additional room to maneuver based on the proximity to the different paths connecting the site.



- e. Clarify the preferred route for people bicycling west-bound on Walden Square Road from Raymond Street toward Sherman Street. Are they meant to continue on Walden Square Road through the Building A tunnel, or use the new path on the building's north side, or the new path on the building's south side? The configuration of the plaza and crosswalk area at the east end of Building A seems to prioritize the route through the tunnel.

The preferred route from Raymond Street to Sherman Street is the shared use path extension, crossing at the raised crosswalk at the basketball court, and continuing down the shared use path north of Building A towards Sherman Street.

- 2. At the east end of Building A, a pedestrian crosswalk across Walden Square Road connects the path from the Yerxa Underpass to the east/west path on the south side of Building A and to the sidewalk on the east side of Building 21. Consideration could be given adjusting the designs of the crosswalk and the associated areas of pedestrian pavement to more strongly prioritize pedestrians over vehicular traffic and to create a more direct connection to the Yerxa underpass.

Pedestrian movements across this location are prioritized through the use of the wide raised crossing, along with the rapid rectangular flashing beacon (RRFB) signage and lights at the crossing. The offset of the crossing to the Yerxa underpass is preferred so that bicyclists coming south down the Yerxa Underpass are slowed down as they approach the shared use path and crosswalk. Additionally, realigning the crosswalk would impact existing non-conforming parking that is outside the scope of this project.

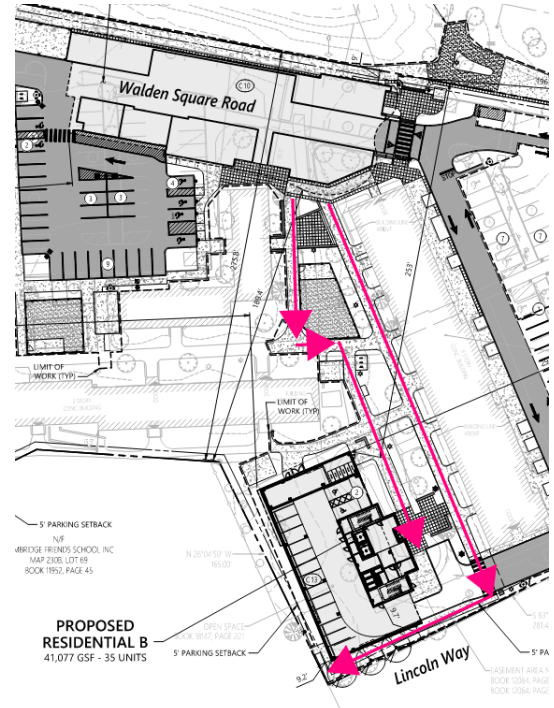
- 3. Wayfinding signage, pavement materials, and pavement markings should be further considered to make the intended use of the tunnel through Building A clearer to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Wayfinding signage at each of the crosswalks has been proposed to clearly delineate the intended pathways, along with providing sufficient, wide, clearly marked pathways for both pedestrians and bicyclists to connect to and around the site.

North/south circulation between Building A, Building B, and Building 21:

4. Adjust the north/south path along the west side of the tree-lined pedestrian mall between these buildings to create a smoother north/south pedestrian route, a route more congruent with the linear character of the space.

There is a clear north/south connection between Building A and B along Building 21 to provide access to both the new plaza and playground amenities in this location, maintain the existing routes and connections to entrances in this location, and provide a defined connection to the Friends School to the west of Building B as highlighted here. These pathways are a minimum of 8' wide to provide sufficient walkways for pedestrians. We looked at the City's suggestion to further widen those paths to at least 10' wide; however, doing so would impact existing mature trees which would have to be removed to accommodate the wider sidewalk. We have opted to leave the sidewalk design at 8' to accommodate those existing mature trees, as we understand preservation of existing mature trees wherever possible has been a strong desire of the surrounding community.



North/south circulation to the Lincoln Way housing complex:

5. If possible, create a formal pedestrian connection to the Lincoln Way residential complex.

Discussions with the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA), owner of the Lincoln Way residential complex, are ongoing. A design proposal to create a sidewalk connection to their property has been developed by our team and is under review by the CHA. Should an agreement be reached, the sidewalk design will be incorporated into the overall project plan.

Site mounted electrical, mechanical, and plumbing equipment:

6. If possible, relocate as much as possible of the "MEP" equipment in the screened enclosure at the west end of Building A to the building's ground floor. Design any remaining screening to be compatible with the building facades.

The design team has based the design of the MEP equipment based on recent Eversource design requirements for electrical capacity for similarly scaled projects in Cambridge. We will continue to work with Eversource to ensure appropriate design of any needed electrical infrastructure, and to the extent the quantity or size of that equipment can be reduced, the screened area will similarly be reduced. Screening is designed to be compatible with the building facades. The size and required clearances for the MEP equipment is dictated by the utility providers based on the need for the proposed use.

Plantings:

7. Shade the paths and open spaces throughout the complex with more large-growth-habit canopy trees.

- a. Prioritize planting new canopy trees instead of the ornamental trees indicated in many places on the site plan.

Additional canopy trees are proposed in the updated Tree Plan, included here as Enclosure 2. The updated Tree Plan includes an increase of 19 4" caliper deciduous shade trees relative to what was previously submitted to the planning board.

- b. Provide additional canopy shade trees inside and to the east, west, and south of the play areas.

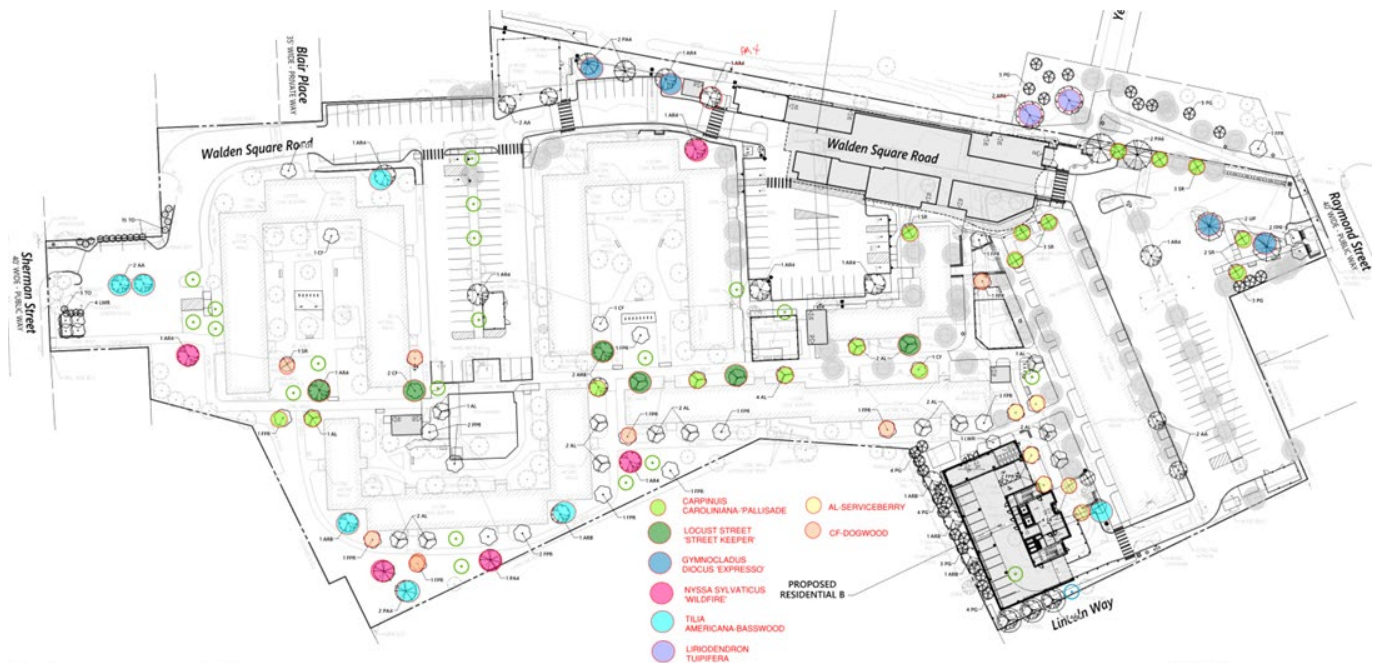
Existing mature shade trees have been retained within or proximate to the proposed and enlarged play areas. New shade trees were added at the play area furthest West on the plan to add additional shade at that play area.

- 8. The proposed decorative low-growth-habit tree species are good choices as understory trees below and near taller canopy trees.

Proposed decorative trees are proposed in gaps in the shade canopy which are otherwise insufficient to incorporate additional large shade trees. Proposed decorative trees are concentrated in areas with existing significant shade tree coverage and are intended to provide visual interest during Spring and Fall along the existing heavily landscaped allays through the site.

- 9. A greater variety of shade tree species would be preferable, including replacing some of the several varieties of red maples with oaks.

The Tree Plan has been updated to include six new native tree species including Basswood (cyan), Tulip (purple) Tupelo (pink), Kentucky Coffee (blue), Locusts (dark green) and Hornbeam (light green). Additional Locust trees were added along the central pedestrian corridor to continue and reinforce the existing theme already established on site. Hornbeams were also added to create and understory canopy while also reinforcing the visual appeal of the central corridor. All Tree Lilacs have been removed from the plan. Dwarf Redbuds were reduce in quantity while Serviceberry (yellow) and white Dogwoods (light orange) were increased slightly in quantity.



Play Areas:

10. Staff understand that the play areas have already been improved. But note that it appears that additional play equipment could be provided in the spaces allocated, for instance in the "Courtyard C" play area.

WinnDevelopment has engaged a firm that specializes in playground design to advance the play areas. The updates site plan and tree plan show a reconfiguration to the play areas to incorporate existing mature trees into the play area to provide added shade within those play areas. WinnDevelopment will hold resident meetings to solicit feedback on proposed playground design once the playground designer has put preliminary options together. WinnDevelopment will share playground designs with City staff once they are further advanced and after incorporating resident feedback into the proposed playground designs.

Building Facades:

11. Continue to develop the building facades to complement the form and character of the adjoining open spaces, considering the use of planar repetitive facades vs. facades articulated into smaller scaled elements, and façade elements that relate to the heights of nearby buildings.

Potential areas of focus include:

- a. The south side of Building A, in response to the height of the existing buildings around the parking lot south of Building A.

In order to give the appearance of stepping back the top floor, we have minimized the cornice at the high parapet and enlarged the cornice above the clapboard siding to make the building appear less imposing on all facades. Please see Enclosure 3 showing updated building perspective views that incorporate this change.

- b. The end facades of Building A relative to Walden Square Road and the building's massing.

See above

- c. The west façade of Building B facing the playfields vs. its east façade facing the tree lined space between Building B and Building 21.

Building B will be updated similarly to have a larger cornice at the top of the clapboarding. We have broken up the east façade to articulate where the garage entry is located, the main entry and the bike room/back of house area.

12. Consider using a lighter color instead of the dark gray proposed for the upper portions of the buildings.

We have lightened up the dark gray panels and are considering using a blueish gray. Final color decisions will be reviewed on site in a physical mockup.

13. Consider the use of more substantial exterior cladding material for the upper portions of the buildings instead of the proposed thin cementitious panel and aluminum reglet system.

We have seen Hardie panels detailed and installed well. It's a material that meets the project budget and is durable. Please see Enclosure 4 documenting the successful installation of Hardie panel at several recent PCA projects, where the panel system is effective at conveying the intended design and looks clean and

well-installed. Please note any change to the cladding material from Hardie would add costs to the project budget.

Building Plans

14. Consider moving the lobby of Building A to the east, so that it provides an active interior space at the north end of the tree-lined pedestrian mall and play area between Building 21, Building B, and the easternmost of the existing three-floor-tall buildings.

This alternative has been examined, and WinnDevelopment has prioritized the entrance to the new management office at the northern end of the tree-lined pedestrian mall to emphasize this space, which serves all new and existing residents of Walden Square alike, as a central and important feature for the site.

Bicycle Parking

15. Consideration should be given to providing more long-term bicycle parking spaces for Walden Square as a whole, including storage areas for e-bikes and cargo bikes.

Long-term bicycle parking is provided as part of this project, and will be located throughout the apartment complex, and not limited to the new buildings. The bike room in Building A has a capacity of 20 bikes, and the bike room in Building B has a capacity of 12 bikes. The remaining four long-term bike shelters are proposed throughout the site, and provide capacity for a range of 6-16 bikes.

16. Long-term bicycle parking spaces should be weather protected.

Long-term bicycle parking spaces are weather protected as detailed in the plans submitted to CDD.

Part 2: Responses to Comments received from City Staff subsequent to issuance of the Final Report of Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Design Consultation Procedure Compliance Certification dated July 22, 2024

Pedestrian and bicycle circulation

1. The shared lane markings in-road could be eliminated if the path design is finalized, and if it is intended to provide the bicycle connection.

Shared use path extension has been integrated into design, and shared lane markings (“sharrows”) have been removed in Walden Square Drive.

2. We suggest making a 2ft buffer along the curbline with some sort of change in material or color, with an asphalt path with concrete or brick edge or similar. It would help better define the path/discourage folks from jumping the curb and parking on it.

To help delineate, a 2’ buffer of pavers/stamped concrete have been noted on the curb/drive aisle side of the shared use path. Landscape buffer dimensions on the far side of the shared use path have been noted on the plan.

3. The path should be fully, or as near fully as feasible, raised at driveway aisles and flush with the path - similar to how all driveways curb cuts at sidewalks are treated in the city to help signal that people on the path have priority.

Modified raised crossings have been proposed at the side entrances to parking areas. Standard raised crossings are proposed at each crossing of Walden Square drive.

4. We would recommend also that the driveway apron on Sherman St be reconstructed to use the standard curb-cut detail (continuous sidewalk at a minimum). If not, maybe a raised side street crossing detail.

This has been revised and a new driveway apron has been shown at the Sherman Street entrance.

5. With the addition of the tandem spaces, is this adding to the overall parking count since it seems like fewer spaces are being lost in putting in the path than being added?

Due to the extension of the shared use path and widening on sidewalks, the 6 parking spaces that were impacted by this change were replaced with the addition of the 6 tandem spaces. There is no change to the overall parking count. It is anticipated that tandem spaces will be allocated to households with 2 cars to ease site management of those spaces.

6. A full 6” curb should be used to separate the any parking and the path to discourage cars hopping onto the path for any reason

The shared use path is designed such that there is a full 6” curb reveal from the drive aisle, with the previously noted 2’ buffer strip on the curb edge.

7. Could there be an opportunity pick up any green space on the curve by changing the 3 angled spaces to parallel to match the others along the bend or to redesign those spaces for added safety?

These are existing parking spaces. We looked at reconfiguring those spaces, but could not do so without reducing the overall number of parking spaces, which has been a priority for residents on site. In our updated site plan, we are removing bike traffic from this driveway, and so the area should be safer even with leaving these spaces as head-in spaces. We are utilizing the space provided by the oddly shaped landscaping areas to add shade trees in a way that does not obstruct site lines.

8. Please add shared lane markings on two-way side road toward bike storage

Sharrows have been added to the drive aisle east of Building 21 to guide bicyclists down to the Building B bike storage area

9. Can you make it possible for cyclists to ride to bike parking/storage either through idea of widening walkway from 8' to 10' to allow easier bicycle access to parking in parts or on whole path, avoiding trees? If not, please post signs asking users to share the walkway.

Expanding the walkways from 8' to 10' in this area would have detrimental impacts on existing mature trees. Signage indicating that it is a shared pathway between pedestrians and bicyclists have been added throughout the pathways. Please see revised plan.

10. Please evaluate lighting in covered driveway ('tunnel') to make sure it is designed for safety.

The proposed lighting plan is Enclosure 5 and details a denser clustering of light fixture at either end of the tunnel to help with the visual adjustment as drivers move in and out of the tunnel space.

11. Confirm specs of enclosed bike shelters (should be mostly enclosed and protected on three sides but doesn't need to be fully weatherproof).

The proposed specification for the bike shelter, which fully complies with the City's dimensional and weather proofing requirements for bike shelters, is included as Enclosure 6

12. Please shift the location of bike repair station near Building A farther west, closer to the bike shelter, for safety.

The bike repair station has been shifted adjacent to bike shelter 1 (see attached plan) with a small concrete pad area to allow for cyclists to safely fully pull off the shared use path for repairs.

13. Is there an opportunity to look at bike parking for larger bikes, including E-bikes or bikes with carriages?

We will continue exploring this as the building design is further developed and may increase the size of bike parking spaces to accommodate this.

Trees & Plantings

1. Many locations where understory trees are proposed could easily accommodate canopy trees.

Additional shade canopy trees, including species recommended by City arborists, are proposed in the updated Tree Plan, included here as Enclosure 2. The updated Tree Plan includes an increase of 19 4" caliper deciduous shade trees relative to what was previously submitted to the planning board.

- a. Canopy trees could be planted in and around the playground areas, including the one where very large existing tree is proposed to be removed. It is common in City play areas to also have trees inside the play fence, located outside of any equipment fall zones to try and get shade where the children need it most. (Sennott Park and Rafferty Park are good examples)

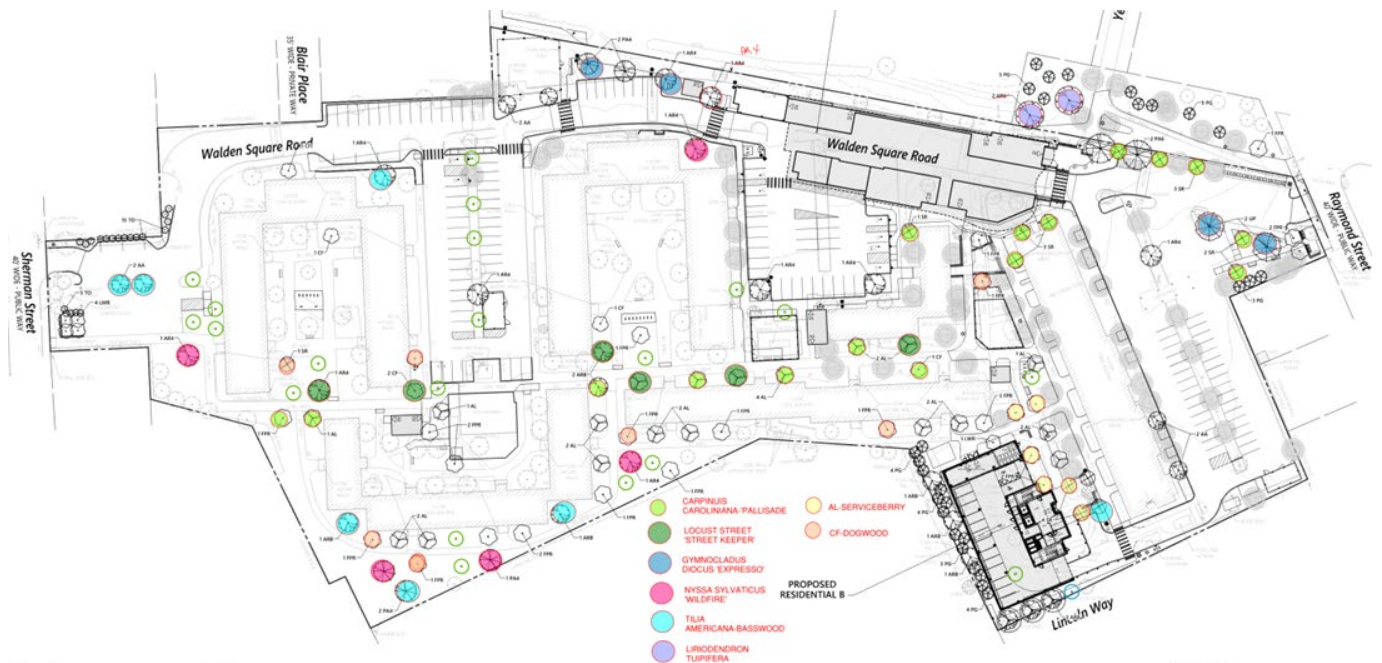
The updated tree plan and site plan show the retention of existing mature trees within or proximate to the proposed play areas to provide more shade to the playground areas.

2. In many locations along building facades, where there is a line of existing canopy trees, to keep the design cadence similar, new canopy trees instead of understory trees would help keep continuity through the whole property.

Additional shade canopy trees have been added within the line of existing tree canopies where existing gaps in canopy coverage allow for the growth of a mature shade tree.

3. Currently, many of the proposed trees are Red Maples. We suggested the following species be considered for more diversity:
 - i. Carpinus
 - ii. Celtis
 - iii. Liquidambar
 - iv. Nyssa
 - v. Quercus

The Tree Plan has been updated to include six new native tree species including Basswood (cyan), Tulip (purple) Tupelo (pink), Kentucky Coffee (blue), Locusts (dark green) and Hornbeam (light green). Additional Locust trees were added along the central pedestrian corridor to continue and reinforce the existing theme already established on site. Hornbeams were also added to create an understory canopy while also reinforcing the visual appeal of the central corridor. All Tree Lilacs have been removed from the



plan. Dwarf Redbuds were reduce in quantity while Serviceberry (yellow) and white Dogwoods (light orange) were increased slightly in quantity.

4. The existing site is full of Ash Trees – is there a strategy or plan in place to deal with Emerald Ash Boring Beetle?

We will work with a qualified arborist to develop a plan to deal with Emerald Ash Boring Beetles for the population of existing ash trees. No new ash trees are proposed.

5. Can trees be planted along the path on the north side of Building A.

The full width north of Building A is needed to allow for the proposed shared use path, which extends to the northern property line.

Building Façade

1. We recognize that Hardie panel is a cost effective material but would like to recommend that if it is used, great care be taken in its installation and in the preparation of its substructure.

We agree that great care must be taken during the installation and will make sure to thoroughly vet the subcontractor selected to install the materials, and will regularly monitor the installation for high quality workmanship during that portion of the work.

2. On the east façade of building A, would it be possible to align the width of the light-colored siding-clad elements with the jambs of the opening to the "tunnel"?

Please see updated view of the eastern facade of Building A, which now accomplishes that.

3. On the south side of Building A, could more detail be provided at the three doorways to the trash rooms, etc? Extend them upward by providing recessed panels, as was done with the doors and windows in the Lobby and Office area at the east end of the building?

Yes, please see updated view of the southern facade, showing the doors to those back of house spaces. Recessed panels above the doors have been added to match the scale of the lobby and office areas.

Enclosures:

1. Updated Site Plan, showing changes & extension to the shared use path connecting to Sherman Street, along with further changes and improvements to overall pedestrian and bicycle circulation
2. Updated Tree Plans, showing an increase to the overall number of canopy shade trees proposed and incorporation of a greater variety of species
3. Updated Building A perspectives responding to city comments on façade design
4. Examples of Architect PCA's past project showing successful installation of Hardie panels
5. Proposed Building A Reflected Ceiling Plan
6. Proposed Bike Shelter Specification