

The following comments are made in response to the Zoning Amendment known as the PUD-5 Overlay District submitted by the MIT Investment Management Company on December 13, 2012 and recommended by the Cambridge Planning Board on March 5, 2013:

In the mid sixties, with roughly \$6.5 million dollars of in kind contributions from MIT and no local taxpayers money, the City of Cambridge received a multi-million dollar grant from the US Government to redevelop Kendall Square.

The City, along with MIT promised the US Government that the land south of Main Street would be used for institutional and residential purposes. The current zoning and development reflects this promise and allows only residential and institutional use, with minor amounts of ancillary commercial and retail use. The proposed zoning supports substantial commercial development and treats institutional and residential use as rewards for more commercial square footage.

I recognized that the money from commercial development are essential for the health of the City and MIT. But these returns cannot become an addiction, a money high at any cost.

You need only look at MIT and Kendall Square on the ground or in the air to understand that an emphasis on academic/institutional development results in a different urban form than an emphasis on commercial development. I think it is possible to craft zoning rules and design guidelines which reconciles these two visions. I do not think the proposed amendment accomplishes that goal yet. MIT and Volpe Campus in red. Recent academic development in green. PUD5 in blue.



Here are specific areas of design where institutional and commercial diverge, along with specific guidelines for emphasizing the positive aspects institutional urban form and use:

1) Institutional development contains over 50% connected open space:

The underlying C3 Residential Zoning requires 10%, but that figure is deceiving. Setbacks, FAR restrictions, and minimum dimensions of the open space result in a higher actual number and MIT's past design practice, dating back to the design of the Great Court result in a much higher actual figure.

The main campus Open Space percentages are in excess of 60%. Two of the most recently developed areas of East Campus, the Whittaker/Media Lab Block bounded by Ames/Amherst/Carleton and the Sloan/Eastgate campus are around 50%. Even the surface parking lots at the Sloan School are beautifully landscaped and pedestrian friendly.

The proposed figure of 15% "Publicly Beneficial Open Space" is too low and will be met by just the open space in either of the parcels mentioned above. The very definition of "Publicly Beneficial Open Space" is oxymoronic, as it allows all of it to be private and physically inaccessible to the public.

I suggest a better definition of Open Space, and an overall percentage of 40% for the PUD 5 District.

2) Institutional Space is 100% Innovation Space:

The institutional nature MIT is an essential part of the success of Kendall Square. MIT should be allowed to benefit from that success, but the possibility of commercial development overwhelming the institutional foundation of Kendall Square should be discouraged.

Section 13.89.3.1 describes something called "Innovation Space", but with multiple complex clauses, makes a simple concept much too complicated and potentially meaningless. It does contain a good definition of Innovation Space (Section 13.89.3.2(e)): "Individual entities occupying Innovation Office Space may include small business incubators, small research laboratories, office space for investors and entrepreneurs, facilities for teaching and for theoretical, basic and applied research, product development and testing and prototype fabrication or production of experimental products."

Simplify the requirement that any new commercial space contain a certain percentage of "Innovation Space", I suggest at least 50%, which is in keeping with the institutional nature of the MIT campus. Keep the definition direct and simple. Allow more "innovative" forms than the current wording allows.

3) Student Housing is part of an Institutional Campus:

I ask that the provisions for as graduate student housing be required, and that a certain percentage of it be located in the PUD 5 district. Up to 5,000 units of student housing are needed because of the massive increase in the graduate student population since the 1980's and the effect this has on the Cambridge Real Estate prices.

Some of this housing should be located nearby, because residential uses invigorate the whole neighborhood and will further support new retail ventures in the area.

The K2 Advisory Committee was told by its consultant, Goody Clancy, that an "ideal" proportion of gross square footages in a vibrant urban area was approximately 73% Commercial/25% Residential/2% retail. It is currently 85/14/1. This means that, in order to get a healthy mix, all new development should contain a 55% Commercial/41% Residential/4% Retail Mix.

In other words, 1 million square feet of commercial development should be mixed with over 700,000 square feet of residential development. This translates into at least 700-1000 new units, even more if they are "micro-units". If some of that is graduate student housing, all the better, as it will help moderate Cambridge rental prices.

Increase the residential use requirement and encourage graduate student housing both in the neighborhood (700-1000 units) and overall (5,000 units).

4) Institutional forms are Human-scaled, and Institutional High-rises are Special:

Human scale building are 4-6 stories tall. MIT has four skyscrapers, two clustered in West Campus, one in mid-campus, one in East Campus.

Two new skyscrapers in East Campus south of Main Street is one too many. The current height restrictions could result in deep dark canyons of uniform height in the PUD 5 district. I do not object to any height, as long as it is seasoned with building elements that are human scaled. I also think a landmark worthy high rise would be a positive addition to the area, just as an original Kendall developer put in a high-rise clock tower to announce a new era.

In addition, tools now exist to model the shadow impacts of a development with specific requirements for sunlight in an overall plan. I ask that the Ordinance include specific requirements for sunlight at ground level during a reasonable time period during a sunny day at all times of the year.

5) How Much Pay to Play:

I am leery of using absolute dollar amounts in the body of a document which will last for many years. I ask that the \$10 "Community Fund Contribution" amount be justified and reworded to adapt to changing values of money.

I also thank that the term "Publicly Beneficial Open Space" means something different than what it says (see comment #1) and should be changed to mean truly public open space.

I am also concerned that the fund may be co-mingled with money spent on providing required open space for the development.

Rewording is needed to address these concerns.

Thank You,

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