

January 24, 2015

Dear Mayor Maher and Cambridge City Councilors,

We are writing to raise concerns about the proposed zoning changes to PUD-KS, the 14 acre Volpe parcel.

First, we feel that CDD and Volpe/GSA officials should meet with the Area 4/Port Coalition before drafting zoning changes to an area near our neighborhood that will affect us. Also, since Area 3, Wellington-Harrington, has not had an active neighborhood group for some time, we have welcomed Area 3 residents at our meetings.

Throughout the draft zoning, the CDD proposal assumes that the draft K2 zoning is a good approach. However, like C2, K2 was never publically agreed to, nor was there real public discussion. So the city should not assume that K2 is a satisfactory basis for changing the zoning in the Volpe parcel. In general, we feel the zoning that resulted from the 2001 ECAPS plan is preferable to the proposed upzoning.

The ECAPS plan required that tall buildings up to 250' be located on the north side of Broadway, with the heights stepping down to 65' along Binney St. We think the proposed height increases are far too high. The current Volpe building is 13 floors. The existing office buildings on Broadway going west toward Central Sq. and Inman Sq. range from about 4 to 9 floors. The housing on Third St. that is surrounded by the Volpe land is roughly 8 floors. Also, allowing 120' on the northwest corner makes it hard to have a public park there. Instead, there should be a height step down on the northern side so that the south-facing Archstone apartments will be protected from new shadowing.

As members of the Planning Board said, any increased height should result in a lot more affordable housing than currently proposed. The PUD as a total should result in affordable (under 80% of median income) housing that is at least 25% of the total Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and middle income (80-120% of median income) housing that is at least 5% of the total FAR of the site. Affordable and middle income housing should be mostly 2-3 BR.

We also want the proportion of housing to office space to be higher than the proposed 40% housing. The planning study recently done by ECPT called for more housing. The Area 4 Coalition previously stated its preference for more housing in response to the MIT upzoning. The federal building, retail, and innovation office space should not be exempt from the calculation of the housing to non-housing ratio. If all of the new Volpe building is excluded, that encourages a huge federal building AND other tall buildings, and less affordable housing and other desired benefits will result. Buildings should be broken up: we prefer no huge long buildings like those at Third St. and Potter St. As with MIT, there should be a low limit on the number of very tall buildings.

Our city remains without an overall goal for housing citywide that states how much of what kind is needed and where. So ideas about combos of middle-income housing and micro-units on this site are again being discussed in a vacuum. We have a housing problem that needs concrete goals so each piece fits into the larger puzzle. Even without an updated comprehensive plan for the city, we could have an updated housing plan.

Public open space is very important. We strongly do not want the public open space reduced from 7.5 acres to 2.5 acres as proposed- that would be unacceptable. This land was promised in all of the earlier meetings to plan the sharply increased density of Kendall Sq. "Publically beneficial open space," which is not fully usable by the public should not substitute for or count toward the open space. The public open space should be owned by the city, as required in current zoning. There should be strong rooftop noise mitigation, especially near the park and residential buildings.

The proposed community benefits of \$10 SF (for new non-residential Ground Floor Area above base zoning limitations) are too small. MIT agreed to \$10 + \$4 SF. \$4 went to non-profits; \$10 went to transit and open space. It would be better to set the community benefit rate after the reports on increasing the inclusionary and incentive rates are received.

The community benefit funds should go to the three adjacent neighborhood groups who can give away the funds for projects; the funds should be proportionate to the population. The Area 4 Coalition had asked MIT to pay at least \$15 SF into a fund that benefits the neighborhoods nearest the development, since they will be the most affected, and asked the developer to thereafter make a payment of \$1/square foot for 20 years. Alternatively, our second choice is allocating \$4 SF to a fund that non-profit organizations in Cambridge can apply to.

If the community benefit funds are not changed as proposed above, the community benefit funds must be used for transit and for public open space, not for publically beneficial open space. The decision-making committee must include some representatives selected by neighborhood groups, not just any resident from a nearby neighborhood selected by the Manager.

Specific community benefits we would like are:

- 20 paid internships annually at the Volpe Center for Area 4 high school students; and
- Space within the area of the petition for up to 5 retail pushcarts operated by Area 4 residents, and a nearby place to store the pushcarts overnight;

We look forward to working with city staff and Volpe officials to develop a good plan for the Volpe parcel of land.

Sincerely,

The Area 4/Port Coalition