

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date:	May 10, 2011
Subject:	Novartis Zoning Petition
Recommendation:	The Planning Board recommends ADOPTION of the petition, with suggested changes.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

The Planning Board supports adoption of the petition by Novartis Institutes of Biomedical Research to create a new Special District 15 on the site bounded by Massachusetts Avenue, Albany Street, Osborn Street, State Street, and Windsor Street. The adoption of this petition will allow for development that will appropriately support the City's economic development goals and will contribute positively to the character of this transitional section of Mass Ave.

The suggested additions to the zoning language are intended to address a few of the Planning Board's specific concerns, and have been made in consultation with the Petitioner, Community Development Department staff, and the City's planning consultants for the Kendall Square / Central Square Study. The first suggested addition is a statement of purpose to explain the intent of creating the new Special District.

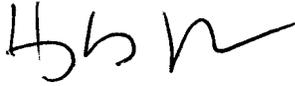
Secondly, criteria have been included to provide guidance to the Planning Board in approving building heights greater than 120 feet. They specify that heights up to 140 feet will only occur over less than one third of the site, heights will be reduced along Mass Ave to be consistent with allowed heights on nearby sections of the avenue, and additional height will be complemented by open space, landscaping, and pathways at the ground level.

Thirdly, in order to control the potential traffic impacts of additional floor area, a maximum off-street parking ratio of 0.9 spaces per 1,000 Gross Square Feet is proposed for non-residential uses. By allowing the Planning Board to approve a lesser amount of off-street parking through the special permit review process, after considering Traffic Impact Studies and other required materials, a developer has the opportunity to further reduce the provided parking and demonstrate an even greater commitment to non-auto modes of transportation.

Finally, a set of design guidelines are suggested to provide additional direction to the Planning Board when hearing a Project Review Special Permit Application for the new district. These guidelines address issues specific to the site and to the City's goals for the area, and would be considered in addition to the Citywide Urban Design Objectives that are considered in all Project Review Special Permit cases.

The proposed Special Permit 15 zoning language is included below, with recommended additions highlighted.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,



Hugh Russell, Chair

17.600 **SPECIAL DISTRICT 15**

17.601 *Scope.* This Section 17.600 regulates development within the Special District 15 as shown on the Zoning Map of the City of Cambridge, as amended. Except as herein provided in this Section 17.600, all requirements of and regulations applicable to the Industrial B District shall apply equally to the Special District 15.

17.602 *Purpose.* It is the intent of Special District 15 to provide for the creation of a high quality general and technical office environment which enhances the Massachusetts Avenue street front in this area by promoting active uses at the street level, encouraging building heights and massing that are appropriately scaled within the context of surrounding structures, and creating an improved pedestrian environment through the introduction of open space, the creation of pedestrian connections that enhance links between Kendall and Central Squares and the nearby residential neighborhood, and the elimination of surface parking lots.

17.603 *Permitted Uses.* Uses permitted in the Industry B District shall be equally allowed in Special District 15.

17.604 *Dimensional Regulations*

17.604.1 *Maximum FAR.* The maximum FAR for any lot in the district shall be 3.5.

17.604.2 *Additional Height.* The maximum height permitted in the district may be increased to one hundred forty (140) feet by special permit from the Planning Board.

17.605 *Criteria for Granting Special Permit.* In granting a Special Permit for additional height above one hundred twenty (120) feet, the Planning Board shall give consideration to the following:

1. Only a portion of the building, not to exceed more than thirty percent (30%) of the district, will extend to one hundred forty (140) feet.
2. Portions of the building along Massachusetts Avenue will not exceed 85 feet in height.
3. The additional height will allow for greater opportunities for open space on the site, including plazas, landscaped areas, and pedestrian pathways.

17.606 *Parking.* Notwithstanding the requirements of Article 6.000, the maximum ratio of off-street parking for all non-residential uses shall be 0.90 spaces per 1,000 square feet of Gross Floor Area. Parking that exceeds this ratio shall require a waiver under the general provisions of Article 6.000.

For any project seeking a special permit from the Planning Board, the Planning Board in its discretion, after review and analysis of Transportation Impact Studies and other relevant information on parking demand provided in application documents, and with the guidance of City agencies, may approve a request for reduction in off-street parking that it deems appropriate without requiring a waiver under Article 6.000.

17.607 *Design Guidelines.* In accordance with the provisions of Section 19.22, any new building construction in this Special District that exceeds the Land Use Thresholds set forth in Section 19.23 is required to obtain a Project Review Special Permit. In addition to the Citywide Urban Design Objectives enumerated in Section 19.30, the Planning Board shall, when making a determination on an application for a Project Review Special Permit in Special District 15, consider the following Design Guidelines:

1. Parking should be located below grade where possible.
2. Vehicular access/egress should not be located on Massachusetts Avenue or Albany Street.
3. Public pedestrian connections are encouraged through the site.
4. Open space in the form of plazas, landscaped areas and pedestrian pathways should be integrated into the site plan so as to benefit building users and the general public.

5. To the extent possible, active uses and transparency is encouraged on the ground floor of new buildings. The ground floor building frontage along Massachusetts Avenue shall create an active street presence with a particular emphasis on retail uses and shall be generally 50% transparent.
6. The applicant should indicate how a proposed building would relate physically to the most current design plans developed by the MBTA for implementation of the Urban Ring transportation project.
7. Attention should be given to walkability, with appropriate sidewalk widths, maintenance of street trees, and other pedestrian friendly amenities.
8. The site massing should include a variety of heights to provide visual interest and break-up building mass.