

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: August 9, 2023 PLACE: City Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Public Hearing

PRESENT: Janet Buck, Chair; Payson Whitney; Jason Cohen (Remote); Abigail Hammett; Rachael Sack; Sameena Pirani, Clerk to the ZBA; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner; Larry Field, Senior Planner

PUBLIC HEARING –

550 Arsenal St (and 446, 458, 500 and 550 Arsenal St) - Alexandria Real Estate Equities, Inc (ARE); Master Plan Special Permit with Site Plan Review for the “Watertown Mall Transformation Project.”

Chair Janet Buck stated that there would be two separate presentations, one for the 550 Arsenal St which would include 446, 458, 500 and 550 Arsenal St for a master plan special permit with site plan review and the other for 480 Arsenal Way to replace the surface parking lot with a 6-level parking garage for the existing office/lab R & D building on site and for the adjacent Watertown Transformation Project.

Staff clarified that the applicant was presenting the projects together as a master plan. However, they would be considered as two separate applications, with separate legal notices and decisions. The Planning Board would be the permit granting authority for the Mall Project. They would provide an advisory recommendation for the garage project, as the Zoning Board of Appeals was the permit granting authority for it. Furthermore, public comments would be common to both projects as it would be hard to separate them.

Chair Janet Buck further added that the master plan was not for specific buildings. What they would review tonight would be limited to the location of the buildings and the different amenities on site. For each building there would be a separate hearing to allow a more detailed review.

Member Payson Whitney stated that he lived across the street from this location. Under the state ethics laws, he had financial interest in it. This had been disclosed to the city and based on its determination, he was allowed to participate in this hearing.

Rickie Golden, Vice President of Real Estate Development in Greater Boston at Alexandria Real Estate, thanked the community members who had helped shape this project with their valuable input on what was important to the neighborhood of Watertown in terms of open space, trees, activated landscape, connectivity to bike paths and the river, sustainability, and reduction in surface parking. She also thanked the DCDP staff for their guidance for the success of this project and its positive impact on Watertown as well as the talented, creative, and committed team members, several of whom lived and worked in Watertown.

After presenting the agenda and introducing the consultants, she provided a brief overview of the project. The applicant proposed a mixed-use research and development campus comprising over 32 acres. This included nearly 9 acres of publicly accessible open space, a 62% increase from the existing conditions, 43% increase in tree quantity, LEED Gold certification and the goal to transition to all-electric buildings as well as many advanced neighborhood amenities.

Rickie Golden also summarized the many city and community engagement meetings, site walks and tours that had been undertaken as part of the development process.

Upon the conclusion of her presentation, Rickie Golden invited Adrian Nial from Reed Hilderbrand to provide site context with three parcels along Arsenal Street and one along the Watertown-Cambridge Greenway, in effect creating an interesting dynamic with urban conditions on one side and more natural condition on the other side. Also in close proximity to the site was Arsenal Yards and Arsenal Park and other Alexandria properties including Arsenal on the Charles and the recently acquired 99 Coolidge Ave. Additionally, highlighted in the presentation was the small sliver of land connecting the Greenway to Arsenal St, maintained by DCR, and owned by the city of Cambridge which had one of their aqueducts running under the path. The proposed project had entailed significant coordination with the two entities.

Describing the site development plan, Adrian Nial clarified that the existing Target building and 480 Arsenal Way would remain. The design and organization of the proposed buildings would contribute towards transforming Arsenal Street into an active and vibrant corridor with new connections to the Greenway.

The building massing diagram also provided an overview of the uses of the various buildings. At the core of the project would be 4 office and laboratory buildings, a new retail building along with the existing Target building, parking structures and two amenity buildings.

Also detailed in the presentation were the proposed landscape and open space improvements. Along Arsenal St there would be a 12-foot multiuse trail that would be separated from the street by landscaping. Besides rows of trees along this trail, there would also be amenities along the sidewalk such as seating, bike parking, bus stops, blue bike stations and access to the open space. Investment in special structural soil would allow roots to grow under the sidewalk. This, along with improvements in irrigation methods, would allow the trees to mature and flourish under difficult urban conditions over the long term. In addition, there would be a central open lawn amidst the central plaza, with east-west promenades connecting the laboratory buildings, and reaching towards the retail to create dynamic landscape spaces.

Improvements would be made to the DCR path, levelling the grade, and improving the paving to allow access to the path.

Also proposed was the development of several Miyawaki forests, lessons being learned from Danehy Park in Cambridge. Other landscape improvements included pollinator gardens as well as improvements to the Greenway.

Upon conclusion of his presentation, Adrial Nial invited Julie Janiski from Buro Happold to describe sustainability and energy planning.

In addition to aligning the project with the current sustainability goals of the city, the project would also ensure that future goals and plans were understood and maintained. Efforts had been made to understand not just operational carbon in the form of energy use, but also embodied carbon in the form of material selection, extraction, manufacturing etc. ARE had manifested their commitment to understand not only commonly used options and scenarios but also the more innovative technologies that were becoming available. In the natural resources section, the applicants were committed to conserving natural resources, capturing, and reusing rainwater inside the buildings and treating stormwater on site to prevent runoff and use it as a resource for the project. Other sustainability goals included waste reduction in terms of construction and operations, and health and wellbeing for tenants and the public.

Also highlighted was the project's commitment to maximize the use of solar PV on parking garages and rooftops, consistent with the ordinance. ARE had recently agreed to a very high-quality power purchase agreement in the area to be able to provide all renewable source.

Jeffrey Dirk (participating remotely) from VAI, transportation consultants for the project, provided the transportation summary stating that they had provided a comprehensive transportation assessment that included the full build out of the campus as well as the garage on Arsenal Way. The critical intersections along Arsenal Street, Elm Street and Arlington St, as well as driveways into the campus had been studied in terms of traffic flows and traffic conditions to gain an understanding of existing conditions, available modes of transportation, the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure connected to it and the potential to expand on it.

Accounting for the existing uses on site, any additions, and subtractions of these uses and the traffic associated with them, Jeffrey Dirk reported that there would be a 40% reduction in Saturday midday peak hour traffic volumes (because of the reduction in retail use) with modest increase during the weekday AM peak-hour and a slight decrease during the weekday PM peak hour. The accessibility of public transportation with respect to these sites, was a major factor in these favorable traffic predictions. Membership in the Watertown Transportation Management Association, AREs own shuttle service currently serving Arsenal on the Charles campus with its other campuses in the greater Boston area were other services that would be utilized to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips associated with the project.

Included in the transportation summary were the following: Provision of electric vehicle charging stations, enhanced and expanded connections to existing bicycle infrastructure and pathways to make them safe and inviting for both customers of retail and employees, secure, weather protected bicycle parking and exterior bicycle racks throughout the campus, comprehensive Transportation Improvement Program coupled with a trip reduction program (TDM) for the overall campus. These measures were proposed to ensure that no more than 60% of the employees arrived by means of a single occupancy vehicle. All this would be backstopped by a robust traffic and parking monitoring program where

performance would be checked against benchmarks and then measures taken to bring performance in line with them. Finally, pedestrian connections between the campus and adjacent pedestrian corridors would be improved.

Rich Hollworth from VHB provided an overview of the site circulation plan and parking elements of the project. Two parking garages and some pockets of subsurface parking mostly near the existing Target building and around 480 Arsenal Way were part of the project. Much of the subsurface parking had been removed to accommodate the new open space features. The circulation plan was designed to enhance connectivity to the surrounding uses. The central parking facility would be adjacent to the Target building and would have shared and complementary parking use within the limits of the parking garage. Any parking displaced as a result of the proposed project that might have served the previous retail buildings or the Target building would overflow into the garage.

There would be a significant reduction in the curb cuts along Arsenal St to reduce conflict points between pedestrians that cross the sidewalks and vehicles, allowing the traffic to become a more traditional block pattern.

Also detailed was the bicycle circulation, parking plan and the pedestrian circulation plan. Multiple parking facilities would be available on site for both visitors and patrons with a net increase of about 72% over what was required under the ordinance. Improvements along Arsenal St would include a dedicated bike lane as well as enhancements to the Watertown-Cambridge Greenway. Along Arsenal Way there would be a shared use Bicycle/Pedestrian path.

Victor Pechaty architect and design director with Gensler shared the building design plans. Included in his presentation was a diagram with the relative heights of the buildings; 35 feet for the amenity building, mixed use retail/office building at 60 feet, parking garages at about 57 and 70 feet, office/lab buildings at or just below 79 feet. These were compared with some of the existing buildings on site. A summary of each of the buildings on site was provided, with perspectives of the proposed buildings. The architect admitted that the building designs were conceptual and were shown to provide a sense of the general character of the site and how buildings might relate to the landscape. Some of the proposed buildings would have glassy features, one of the buildings would have a winter garden at the top bringing into the building the benefits of biophilic environments. Also described was the 6-level parking garage structure with 1180 parking stalls and the 480 Arsenal Way parking garage, listing the buildings that each parking structure would serve.

Also included in the presentation were renderings of the safety enhancement features proposed where the Watertown Cambridge Greenway crossed over Arsenal Way.

Rickie Golden concluded the presentation listing the benefits of the project to Watertown especially in the areas of sustainability and resiliency, open space, public realm and habitat enhancements, civic benefits, public transit, transportation and pedestrian safety.

Upon request from the Chair Janet Buck, staff confirmed that no staff report had been produced as the city was still in the process of reviewing some components of the application. Since this was a public

hearing, this would be a good opportunity to receive feedback and comments from the board and public. They hoped to have a report available at the next meeting. The proponents had agreed to a continuance to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Chair Janet Buck opened the discussion to the public.

Paul Pavone, Business Manager for the Laborers International Union of North America located at 681 Main Street, Waltham stated that he represented about 800 construction workers, many of whom were from the Waltham and Watertown area. He thanked the developers for the work they were doing across the street from this project. They had many members working there, some who were also Watertown residents. If they hired the same type of contractor he would be able to take in more Watertown apprentices and put them through the program.

Jeanne Trubek, co-chair of the Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee, asked several questions:

- Were the Open Spaces open to the public or limited to employees. Rickie Golden clarified that all the open spaces were publicly accessible. Of the amenity buildings, one of the buildings (A1) would be tenant specific. The other amenity building would have a mix of private and public components-the food and beverage component would be open to public as well as some other sections of it.
- Were there any paths dedicated to pedestrians along Arsenal St, recognizing that paths shared by pedestrians and bicyclists can be risky from a safety perspective. Staff confirmed that it would be a 12-foot-wide multi-use path, as opposed to a sidewalk.
- In the beginning, would the buildings be net-zero as was required by the Specialized Stretch Code. Julie Janiski (Buro Happold) who had helped Department of Energy Resources for Massachusetts develop the version of the specialized stretch code confirmed that the code for labs did not require them to be net-zero from day one. It was hoped that those goals would be pursued in the future by Watertown.
- Given the reports from the traffic study about the reduction in automobile traffic why was it necessary to build two parking garages. Providing parking options would likely increase automobile traffic, contrary to the goal of reducing traffic by 50% by 2050. Instead of two, they would like to see one parking garage as part of the plan. Rickie Golden added that the proposed ratio of parking spaces was below what was desired by tenants. Further reductions in this ratio would discourage potential tenants. Additionally, the proposed garage allowed reduction of surface parking, which in turn allowed the expansion of open space. Jeff Dirk confirmed that they were below the city's requirement for life science uses. While they were above the count for the retail parking, much of this related to the existing tenants and could not be altered legally at this point. Furthermore, under the TDM plan, all the proposed strategies for traffic and parking reduction would be monitored and checked against benchmarks for maximizing efficiency.

Stephen Steadman, 91 Common St, member of Watertown Faces Climate Change, asked if the parking garages in Arsenal Yards, which were typically not filled in the daytime, and were conveniently located from the site could be drawn on and used in their parking calculations to reduce the quantity of proposed parking spaces. He also suggested the addition of more bicycle parking as they looked ahead to the future needs. Rickie Golden thanked him for the suggestions related to the utilization of parking spaces in Arsenal Yards, recognizing the security challenges that this might present for their retail tenants. However, this would be investigated and explored further. They would also investigate the suggestion for additional bike parking.

Susan Ladue, participating remotely, stated that she was pleased to hear that Alexandria had reviewed their climate goals and was represented on their Climate Action Team. With the amount of parking proposed in this project, it was unlikely that their goals for traffic reduction would be met. Tenants were likely to ask for convenient parking for their employees. She said that it should be the responsibility of the developers to provide shuttles services to the site, to discourage employees from driving to work. She also noted that while the applicants had used words such as “all electric,” “sustainability” and “innovative technologies” in their presentation, there had been no commitment to implement those technologies. Instead, they were adding to the emissions.

In response to earlier comments by Jeanne Trubek, Julie Janiski described the compliance pathways of the specialized stretch code. One of the pathways, the mixed-fuel pathway for new construction, would additionally require buildings to have 100% electric infrastructure to be able to transition to all electric. There were also other prescriptive energy efficiency requirements that would significantly reduce energy use. In response to Susan Ladue’s comments, she also stated that ARE had made commitments to significantly reduce or nearly eliminate emissions that would be created by the project. They were also proposing to have in place the infrastructure to be able to meet the heating demands through all-electric equipment.

Jocelyn Tager echoed what Jeanne Trubek and Susan Ladue had said earlier. Watertown was the first city in New England to have a solar ordinance, first in Massachusetts to have two net zero schools and the first to adopt the specialized stretch code. They had a very robust climate and energy plan, requiring all buildings to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. It was therefore important for Alexandria to report energy data (carbon analysis) and make it public. Also, if Alexandria chose to follow the mixed-fuel pathway, they would like to see the percentages for mixed fuel, as well as their plans for transitioning to non-fossil fuels. She also asked if Alexandria could give Watertown LEED Platinum buildings like they were doing in Cambridge on Binney St.

Julie Janiski stated that she was excited about the Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance (BEUDO). She listed the obstacles that were preventing them from attaining LEED Platinum and agreed to continue the discussion and search for this. Also, they would follow up with ARE about transparency of data of their energy models.

Qibin Ye (attending remotely) asked the following: if there were any new traffic lights proposed; the existing and proposed space for retail; if the R1 building would have office or retail space on the second

and third floor; if there could be more retail on the first floor of the buildings facing Arsenal St. Jeffry Dirk stated that there would be a new traffic light on Elm St but not part of this project. The traffic signal would be modified to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and for truck turns. Other than that, the number of signals would remain the same, although they would be upgraded. There would also be a reduction in the curb cuts associated with this property. This would reduce the number of conflict points with pedestrians and bicyclists along the frontage.

Al Lanzo, Dexter Avenue, stated that the 5-story building did not seem right for the area.

Joan Gumbleton, 32 Falmouth Road asked if the proposed 12-foot walkway would reduce the width of Arsenal St, or would it be part of the new development. It was confirmed that the size of Arsenal St would not be reduced.

Joan Gumbleton also expressed her concern about the fires associated with electric vehicles. Huge quantities of water were required to put out these fires. She hoped that there were enough fire hydrants and access to the garages. Also concerned about the weight of the lithium batteries, she hoped that the garages would accommodate the weight. Rickie Golden confirmed that the plans had been reviewed by the fire department and they would continue to work with them. Gumbleton also hoped that there would be adequate security to cover the site both during the day and night. Member Payson Whitney confirmed that they had roaming security 24 hours a day. In response to the question regarding the number of parking spaces, it was confirmed that there were 2,530 parking spaces.

Another remote attendee, Patrick Stony, (770 Washington Ave, Revere) facilities manager at 490 Arsenal Way, asked if an increase in vehicular circulation was expected up to that point as the path was a public way. Staff clarified that there was no vehicular traffic on Arsenal Way past their property.

Ellen Rothman, (attending remotely) 14 Derby Avenue, asked two questions. Firstly, if the applicants had commitments from any of the existing retail tenants other than Target. Rickie Golden stated that as far as they knew Target planned to remain. While, they hoped to retain the Registry of Motor Vehicles and Best Buy, no commitments from them had been made to date. Secondly, she expressed her appreciation for their efforts toward energy efficiency, urging them to do even better.

Brian Hebeisen, (attending remotely) 170 Worcester St, stated that he was also a member of the Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee. He commended the team for their presentation, for referencing the Climate and Energy Plan. He was aware that some members of ARE were also members of the community who had worked on the plan. It was important that the buildings were as energy efficient as possible, not just buying clean energy but also having the most energy efficient building on site, given the lack of renewable energy in the future. For the information and understanding of the public he also wanted to state that once built it would be very difficult to improve the efficiency of the buildings easily. More discussion on the supply side would be continued with members of the Energy Committee given their interest in understanding this further.

Brian Hebeisen also asked about the number of EV chargers. With many manufacturers planning to go a hundred percent electric in the next ten years or so, he anticipated a significant increase in the demand

for the chargers. He was told that this discussion could continue offline. He asked if the developers could do better than meeting the ordinances minimum requirements for solar on rooftops and garages. He suggested learning lessons from work done by Clark University and what was planned for Watertown High School, covering 100% of the building with PV, placing the solar panels over the equipment on top of the building. Julie Janiski agreed to look at these models at the same time expressing concern over air circulation issues. These could be discussed further offline.

Amy Plovnick, attending remotely, 29 Ashland St, stated that she supported the Watertown Mall Transformation Project. It would be one of the first projects to support the linkage fee going towards affordable housing. She also thought that the project would improve bicycle and pedestrian access to and from the Greenway. However, she was opposed to the necessity of the parking garage on 480 Arsenal Way and hoped that the request would be denied by the Planning Board. Providing over 2,500 parking spaces would be an inappropriate use of resources and contrary to the city's climate and transportation goals. Providing all these parking spaces would prevent the city from reaching their climate goal of reducing car trips by 50%. Instead of building the garage, the city should invest in transit, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and use the existing underutilized parking nearby. The number of cars going into the garage would take away from the sustainability and climate goals that the project claimed to have. She was particularly concerned about the large number of cars entering the garage and crossing the bike path at Arsenal Way, despite the raised crosswalk.

Addressing these concerns, Jeff Dirk described the "robust measures" to address safety concerns. In addition to raising the crossing, there would be other enhancements to make it safer. This would include giving it a different texture and color to make it more visible, having a push button rectangular rapid flashing beacon – possibly a radar type of actuation system that was reactive to pedestrians, as well as improvements to signage and site lines.

Rich Hollworth clarified the parking numbers. The central parking garage would house a total of 1,180 parking spaces. P2 parking garage which would displace surface parking associated with the existing 480 Arsenal Way would be a total of 700 parking spaces. This would be 488 net new spaces. In addition to this there would be subsurface parking to serve Target as well as some limited around the edges of 480 Arsenal Way. In response to Member Payson Whitneys question, he later clarified that of the 1,555 surface parking spaces, 660 would remain. He also added that there had been a significant cost and investment in trying to replicate the parking and parking structure which in turn had created opportunity for open space. A lot of thought and energy had been put into optimizing the location of the garages for the distribution associated with the buildings, making it walkable and complementing some of the existing resources.

Kevin Kelly representing the North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenter stated that he could not be more pleased with the relationship they have had with ARE. He was pleased to be part of the extensive life science construction that has taken place in the community. They had committed significant financial resources to keep their workforce trained. He appreciated the opportunity to continue this work and hoped that the project would work out well at every level.

Kelly Kurlbaum, 152 Fayette St, also serving on the School Building Committee, expressed her concern about the overdevelopment of life science projects in Watertown and the decline in tenants occupying these buildings. A lot of available real estate had come up in other areas like Lexington, Waltham, Cambridge and even downtown Boston and there was concern about buildings in the industry not being fully occupied from the start. Responding to these concerns, Rickie Golden expressed her confidence in the market. In addition to phasing the project, they were relying on their strong tenant base over the past 25 years to make this project a success. Referring to the renderings shown, Kelly Kurlbaum also noted the lack of retail on the ground floor of most of the buildings that would draw people through the courtyard. She stated that there was little point in having the open space for the public if it was not going to invite people to walk through it to get to an ultimate destination. Also, given that about only 65% of Bostonians were going back into the office, they were not going to see that many people on any given day unless there was something purposefully built within the campus to bring people to it. Responding to these concerns, Rickie Golden stated that they were planning for food and beverage that would be open to the public in A2.

Kelly Kurlbaum appreciated the generational planting discussed earlier. In addition, she hoped to gain a detailed understanding of what plantings the residents would see on day one, the actual caliper of the trees to be planted and their growth potential over time. Additionally, there would need to be discussion about the height of the buildings, mechanicals and screenings on them and their setbacks to ensure that there was not only no overdevelopment but also no oversizing of these buildings.

Adrian Nial recognized the challenges of presenting the landscape renderings stating that the trees shown are likely to be 12-to-14-inch caliper and when installed would be 4 to 5 inch caliper. The views shown were about ten years after installation.

Commenting on the scale of the buildings, Kelly Kurlbaum stated that the parking garage looked a lot bigger than some of the retail and adjacent buildings. She also did not “love the idea” of the large ARE logo on the garage and suggested bringing in Watertown Arts and Culture. She also expressed concern over the safety of the pedestrians at the crossover of the Greenway to the P2 Parking Garage, suggesting the placement of stop signs.

Libby Shaw, 73 Templeton Parkway, President of Tree for Watertown thanked ARE for giving them the opportunity to communicate their interests and concerns about this property and if all the green space proposed were to take place it would be a huge improvement to East Watertown. There was a lot to love about the plan in terms of green space. There had been concern about the preservation of some trees-not all of which had been mentioned this evening. It would be appreciated if they could get a reading of those numbers. She also expressed concern about bird strikes against the tall glassy buildings, given the number of windows facing the river, a natural highway for migrating birds.

Marcia Ciro, (attending remotely) 13 Bay St, asked if thought had been put into how people would cross over Arsenal Street to access the shopping area and other retail.

Staff stated that from the city side they were in the process of improving the Arsenal Street with many updates. These included new and updated signals, ADA accessible and pedestrian friendly crossings, as well as lighting and bus amenities. These safety improvements were elaborated upon by Jeff Dirk.

Sam Ghilardi, attending remotely, 17 Derby Road stated that he worked at Arsenal on the Charles, another ARE property. He wished to express his support for the project. He appreciated the large amount of money going towards the linkage fee. If he could have his way, he would make the buildings even bigger to get as much affordable housing as they could. He questioned the need for the second parking garage, given the underutilization of existing garages. While it might be a little inconvenient to walk from the central garage to Buildings OL3 and OL4, the shuttle service could be used. The money saved on the second garage could be put towards bus amenities etc. More parking would encourage more traffic and increasing the intensity of the vehicles would also jeopardize the safety of the pedestrians.

Kathy Breen, attending remotely, stated that she was overall impressed with the development. As someone who lived close to the site, she looked forward to the plaza and green space along Arsenal St. She along with other residents believed that the biotech labs had been a benefit to the community. She had confidence in ARE's decision to pursue biotech projects such as this one. As one who had been in the industry for the past twenty years, she strongly believed that it had a bright future. While others had voiced concerns about the number of parking spaces, she anticipated the need for these spaces, given that not everyone would want or be able to bike or take the bus.

Joan Gumbleton raised concerns about market conditions for biotech. She had read articles that several companies were pulling out of projects due to uncertainty about the future trends. She was particularly concerned about the concentration of one industry—Watertown needed to diversify its industries and bring in a variety of jobs for a variety of people at different levels.

Responding to Joan Gumbleton's question about the phasing plan for the buildings, Rickie Golden explained that the plan was to build and occupy, before moving to the next phase. Staff stated that the phasing plan had yet to be completed and would be discussed at the next meeting. It was also clarified that the phasing would not necessarily be about one building—it could be more complex than that and could change based on their site plan review approval requests.

Jocelyn Tager suggested the possibility of a pedestrian/bike bridge across Arsenal Street instead of a parking garage. Supporting Julie and Brian she also clarified that when talking about lead platinum she was referring to the core of the building, that they were built well.

Staff summarized two letters received from the public. One of the letters submitted by a group of residents argued against the 480 Arsenal Way garage and discussed three of the four special permit criteria. The other, sent by Debie Helie, appreciated the pass through from Cypress Street and asked if there could be some mechanism to keep the wildlife from coming through. She also suggested using the garage for resident parking during the months of the parking ban. In addition, there was a letter from the Bike Ped Committee. All of these would be in the record.

Chair Janet Buck closed the public testimony for the evening and opened discussion to the Board.

Member Payson Whitney acknowledged the need for housing in the City and the opportunity for a housing component on the site, especially given the success of Arsenal Yards which had been fully leased for several years; He also raised concerns about the building heights, proposing the use of step backs on Arsenal St which would also create opportunity to add outdoor space. He asked if Buildings OL1, OL4 and OL3 could be reduced in height while OL2 increased as it was at the back of the site. Given that Arsenal Way was a 90 degree turn from Arsenal St, he believed that cars were likely to slow down. He questioned the size of Garage P2 suggesting that more levels could be added if and when demand for parking increased over time. In terms of the building design, he hoped that they would have a campus feel. Also, that if there could be more activation, perhaps with more ground floor retail, to draw people to the area.

Chair Janet Buck expressed her appreciation for the project, recognizing that it was a vast improvement from the existing. She described the site along with Arsenal Yards across the street as the gateway from Boston. She hoped that the southeast corner would be improved given the extensive space devoted to parking. Other concerns raised included the removal of trees, suggesting pushing back OL3 to preserve the trees; She hoped to learn lessons from the proposed parking study mentioned at the State of the City address this evening and would like to postpone any parking related comments and decisions. In response to her question about the winter garden, Rickie Golden stated that it would be private and limited to tenant usage.

Member Abigail Hammett's comments built on what had been stated by others. She recognized that there was a lot to like about the project. Most of her comments had been covered by the public. Based on this she wanted to focus on the changes she would like to see. She questioned the status of the proposal as a mixed-use. She recognized that the project was a huge portion of the RMUD. As per the ordinance, the goal of development in this area was to promote a mix of larger and smaller scale retail, office, hospitality, and multi-family residential and research and development uses. This project seemed to fall short of those goals. While it addressed the research and development and large-scale retail uses, it did not touch on other uses. She would like to see the commercial side of it expand to qualify the development as mixed-use. She was happy to learn that the amenity building would be a retail building, hopefully food and beverage, that was open to the public. She would like to see more retail uses extended throughout that portion of the site. She admitted that while there was significant publicly accessible landscape, there was not a lot of reason to draw people to that. She appreciated the micro forest but felt that it was hidden behind one of the lab buildings and fronted by all-private tenant amenity. She added that A1 and the space noted as the lodge in OL2 would benefit from being a combination of private tenant amenity and publicly accessible space, as this would likely draw people to the micro forest. Overall, she agreed with the comment made by Chair Janet Buck about reassessing the corner of Arsenal and Elm. She suggested either adding more retail space or publicly accessible open space in that corner.

Summing up her comments, Member Abigail Hammett suggested the need to find a way to extend the public realm more into the site than was currently proposed. This would be consistent with the goals of

the Design Guidelines which proposed having many entries off the street and in the public way. She also added that while the new Comprehensive Plan was yet to be adopted, it supported the diversification of the economic base. Along those lines, she hoped to see more smaller, restaurant-type retail than big box retailers. She also asked if the petitioner could provide some phase renderings of the trees and forest to give people a more honest picture of what it would look like at the start. She also proposed developing more landscape at the ground plane as it appeared very “tree-dependent” and in need of more time to mature. She reiterated the safety concerns for the pedestrians along the Greenway which were raised by members of the board and public. Given these concerns, she hoped that the phasing plan would put P2 towards the end. She proposed building P1 first, assessing needs and then coming back for approval of P2, given the concerns around it.

Rickie Golden clarified that A2 would have both public food and beverage as well as space for private tenant amenity. Member Abigail Hammett suggested making this clearer at the next presentation.

Member Rachael Sack suggested getting space utilization numbers from neighboring garages to assess the need for parking. Data could also be collected for the current surface lot that P2 would be replacing. She reiterated the comments and concerns of other board members. These included prioritizing other buildings before P2, both from a use and safety perspective, finding ways to attract public to the open space, and offering more retail use. She appreciated the significant improvements proposed for the site and looked forward to the incorporation of all the feedback and comments made at this meeting.

Member Jason Cohen participating remotely stated that he would like to see more pedestrian activation along Arsenal St. Currently only A2 seemed to be available to the public. Similar to other members of the Board, he wished to see more ground level retail.

In response to questions regarding R1, Rickie Golden confirmed that they were planning for it to be Best Buy. She explained that this would be the second to last phase of the development, recognizing that the signing of retail tenants so far into the future could be challenging.

Member Jason Cohen also suggested opening up the space at the north side of Arsenal St, bounded by OL3 and OL2 to make it more welcoming to the public as opposed to it being an amenity for the tenants of this area. He raised concerns about the bio retention area in front of R1 getting filled with trash and presenting a maintenance issue and wondered if thought had been given to preventing that from happening.

Member Jason Cohen also confirmed that A1 was an amenity building for the tenants of the buildings and not retail or restaurant for the public.

Member Jason Cohen suggested studying the use of the surplus space on the east garage of Arsenal on the Charles, also owned by ARE, for parking. Also, to consider the possibility of P2 being the last phase of the development. He also pointed out that besides LEEDs, there were other programs and measures that would be worth considering, recognizing the limitations of the site to achieve LEED platinum certification.

Motion to continue the meeting to September 13, 2023 was made by Member Payson Whitney, seconded by Member Abigail Hammett. Motion was approved unanimously by roll call vote (5-0).

After updates on the Comprehensive Plan, Open Space and recreation Plan and Watertown Square Area Plan, meeting was adjourned.

Minutes Approved: _____

