

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Located at the nexus of Interstate 95/Route 128 and the terminus of the MBTA Green Line at Riverside, the 9.4-acre site at The Station at Riverside offers an excellent opportunity for creating a model transit-oriented development, where those who work, live and visit the site can travel there by bus, car, bike, train, or on foot. The compactness and variety of uses proposed on this site aim to spark a synergy that will sustain proposed retail/commercial, office, and residential uses, serve the needs of those who frequent the site, while reducing infrastructure needs and costs ~ all of which are the hallmarks of smart growth and transit-oriented development.

Consistent with the Mixed Use 3/Transit-Oriented District (MU3/TOD), three buildings are proposed to incorporate office, residential, and retail commercial uses not to exceed 580,000 square feet of floor area, including 290 apartments totaling 331,000 square feet with 44 affordable units; 225,000 square foot office building; 20,000 square feet of retail/commercial space, some of which is located in the residential building; and an 8,000 square foot community use facility. These buildings are proposed to be LEED-certified at Silver level and will employ best practices in sustainable construction and design features.

Three beneficial open space areas provide a variety of different outdoor experiences: a woodland garden with benches under flowering trees and larger canopy trees for passive use; a plaza near the retail and community space, which features a splash pad where children can play in warm months and all can enjoy native plants and rain gardens that are not only attractive, but will filter run-off back into the ground, thus reducing loads to the City system; a community garden near the residences for those who wish to tend crops with neighbors. Accessible pathways connect the buildings and open spaces and also lead to an overlook at the Charles River. The overlook is adjacent to informal trails that lead to the Charles River and Auburndale, and a rail bed that leads to Lower Falls and Wellesley; although no direct connections or improvements to these routes are currently proposed, the overlook is well placed to allow for future connections to these areas.

The City will benefit from several improvements to local infrastructure associated with this project. Nearly 1,000 parking spaces that occupy the parking lot that covers most of the development parcel will be consolidated into a parking structure and Intermodal Commuter Facility that will include drop-off and pick-up areas for train and bus travelers. Access to the site is provided from a Collector-Distributor Road (C-D Road) that runs parallel to the highway and will encourage drivers to enter from the west, thus minimizing traffic on Grove Street. The use of roundabouts at the highway off-ramps, as well as within the development parcel will calm traffic and ensure continuous movement of vehicles, albeit slow moving. On Grove Street, a new traffic signal and dedicated turning lanes at the entrance are proposed, along with landscaped medians to mirror those in front of the Riverside Business Center to the east. Painted shoulders for bikers along the street and bridge over Routes 95/128, and numerous covered bike racks placed around the site will facilitate biking. Upgrades to the City's water and sewer system will not only address new demands of the proposed development, but are expected to improve areas prone to flooding and sewer backups. After considering the municipal service costs and revenues, the Economic and Fiscal Impacts Study estimates net

revenue to the City to be around \$780,000, not including CPA funds. One-time buildings fees of approximately \$3.5 million also are anticipated. For the short-term, the Report projects 1,297 direct and 1,225 indirect jobs as a result of the construction; long-term employment is projected to create 935 direct and 1,158 indirect jobs. A peer review of this report is pending.

Numerous community meetings have been held over the last few years as the design of this project has evolved. Well-organized neighbors have coordinated communications through the Riverside Station Neighborhood Coalition (RSNC), and City Commissions, Committees, advisory groups, and technical experts all have contributed their thoughts. Peer reviews of the Traffic Impact and Access Study (TIAS) and the Stormwater Management Report have been completed. Peer reviews for the Shared Parking Study and the Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis are underway, and will be available prior to working sessions on these topics. These and other topics in this report will be discussed in greater detail in upcoming working sessions. In the meantime, staff offers the following general comments for Committee consideration:

- Vehicular access by way of the C-D Road appears to be the most direct and easy route to The Station for traffic coming off of the highway; however, the peer reviewer expressed concern that cars turning left from the site onto the C-D Road may have difficulties seeing cars coming from Grove Street, and recommends that a plan be put in place to assure good visibility at all times. He also noted the roundabouts proposed should function well, but that their design should be fine-tuned to ensure sufficient deflection to slow cars exiting the highway to protect pedestrians and bikers on Grove Street. Continuous bike lanes along Grove Street, if possible, would further complement the roadway design.
- The combination of uses on the site will play an important role in its vitality. The outdoor spaces provide interest for people of all ages. Similarly, retail/commercial businesses should also offer goods and services that satisfy a variety of needs for those who live, work and visit the site. The MU3/TOD zone allows up to 10% flexibility in square footage for the three major categories of uses (e.g., housing, commercial/retail, and office). Since the project overall is slightly less in floor area than the 580,000 square feet allowed, another 2,000 square feet of retail/commercial space could be added to that mix, if desired, to further enhance retail opportunities.
- The parking needs of The Station, as well as parking needs at the Hotel Indigo may have some beneficial overlaps. The Shared Parking Study provides good base information about existing and future conditions, but should incorporate this into a parking management plan that demonstrates how the parking for all users can be successfully implemented so as to maximize the use of parking spaces at all times of the day, week and year and avoid spillover onto the adjacent neighborhoods. A Transportation Demand Management Plan that effectively encourages use of alternative modes of transportation and, thus, reduces parking demand would complement a Parking Management Plan.
- Undergrounding of overhead wires would add value to this scenic way and it would be timely to coordinate with other work in the roadways.