

A joint venture of  
Asian Community Development Corporation and  
New Boston Fund, Inc.



December 22, 2010

Mr. John F. Palmieri, Director  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
One City Hall Square  
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Parcel 24 Project - Notice of Project Change

Dear Mr. Palmieri:

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 80A-6 of the Boston Zoning Code (the "Zoning Code"), Parcel 24, LLC (the "Proponent") is submitting this Notice of Project Change ("NPC") to inform you of proposed changes to the BRA-approved project for "Parcel 24" in Chinatown (the "Parcel 24 Project" or the "Project"). We respectfully request confirmation by the Boston Redevelopment Authority ("BRA") that these changes will not increase the impacts of the Project and as a consequence, no further review is required under Article 80B of the Zoning Code (Large Project Review).

A summary of public benefits of the Parcel 24 Project is attached as Attachment A, a site plan and updated design plans for the Project are attached as Attachment B, and updated shadow studies are attached as Attachment C.

**A. Project Background**

The subject property, known as Parcel 24, is located on Hudson Street in the Chinatown neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts, and is bounded by Albany Street to the east and Kneeland Street to the north, adjacent to the terminus of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway. In the 1950's and 1960's, homes and businesses on the east side of Hudson Street were taken by eminent domain to allow construction of a highway ramp. This ramp was demolished as part of the Central Artery Tunnel highway project, leaving the site a vacant lot that is no longer needed for highway purposes. In 2006, following a Request for Proposals process, the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (now the Massachusetts Department of Transportation) designated Parcel 24, LLC, a joint venture of affiliates of Asian Community Development Corporation ("ACDC") and New Boston Fund, Inc. ("New Boston"), as the developer of Parcel 24.

On February 19, 2008, the Proponent filed an Article 80B Project Notification Form ("PNF") with the BRA for the Parcel 24 Project. On April 16, 2008, the BRA issued a Scoping Determination requesting a Draft Project Impact Report ("DPIR") for the Proposed Project in response to comments of City agencies and community on the PNF. On August 4, 2008, the Proponent filed the DPIR with the BRA, and on August 26, 2008 the Proponent filed a

Development Plan for Planned Development Area No. 73 (the "PDA Plan") with the BRA to provide the zoning parameters for the Project. On October 16, 2008, the BRA Board voted to authorize the issuance of a Preliminary Adequacy Determination waiving further review pursuant to Section 80B-5.4(c)(iv) of the Zoning Code, and to petition the Boston Zoning Commission ("Zoning Commission") to approve the PDA Plan as well as certain zoning changes related to the Project. On November 5, 2008, the Zoning Commission approved the PDA Plan, as well as text and map amendments to the Zoning Code and Boston Zoning Map, respectively. On November 7, 2008 the BRA issued its Preliminary Adequacy Determination waiving further review with respect to the DPIR. The approved Parcel 24 Project was to comprise the new construction of an approximately 435,400 square foot mixed-use development containing approximately three hundred twenty-five (325) residential units that would be a mix of market-rate and affordable units, with market-rate condominium units as the primary residential component.

These approvals coincided with the turmoil in the national capital markets and the onset of a national recession. Due to the steep decline in housing prices and sales activity, there has been a lack of debt and equity financing for market-rate condominium projects. As a consequence, the residential program for the Parcel 24 project that was approved in 2008 is no longer viable in the current marketplace. More recently, however, there have been notable signs of rejuvenation in the capital markets, and the demand for and availability of financing for rental housing (both market-rate and affordable) in this downtown location remains strong. Additionally, demand for affordable homeownership opportunities continues to exist, particularly in a desirable downtown Boston location that is next to the Rose Kennedy Greenway and convenient to jobs, services, and transportation.

Over the past year, the Proponent has been working with its consultants to evaluate changes in the residential market and the capital/investor markets, and to formulate revisions to the Parcel 24 Project that would take into account current economic realities. These revisions are summarized below.

## **B. Proposed Project Changes**

### **1. Residential Program Changes**

Due to the market and financial constraints described above, the Proponent has revised the residential program so that market-rate rental apartments, instead of market-rate condominiums, would be the primary residential component of the Project.

The following is a comparison of the proposed revised program:

<u>2008 Approvals</u>	<u>Proposed Revised Program</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 156-189 market rate condominiums</li><li>• 70+/- affordable (Low-Income Housing Tax Credit-financed) rental apartments</li><li>• 66-99 affordable condominiums</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 200+/- market rate rentals</li><li>• 95+/- affordable (LIHTC) rental apartments</li><li>• 50+/- affordable condominiums</li></ul>

The number of units would increase about 6% to approximately 345 from the originally estimated approximately 325 units. The project would remain an important addition to Chinatown's affordable housing stock, with 145 new housing units that would be affordable to low and moderate income households. The Proponent estimates that the 50 new affordable condominiums would double the affordable homeownership opportunities in the neighborhood, which has one of the lowest homeownership rates in the City. (The most recent affordable homeownership units in the neighborhood were opened for occupancy over five years ago.)

## **2. Massing Changes**

Certain adjustments in the building design and massing have been made to accommodate the changes to the residential program described above. The approved project included North and South Building components, located on either side of the project's central open space area. Changes to each of these components are described below.

North Building. The North Building was expected to contain approximately 280 residential units and was approved with a height of 18 stories/230± feet at the intersection of Hudson and Kneeland Streets, stepping up on the eastern side (facing Albany Street) to 20 stories/225± feet, then stepping down to 10 stories/114± feet as the building extended south along Hudson Street, and rising to 13 stories/147± feet at the end of the building adjacent to the open space area to be created as part of the Project. The new design for the North Building is expected to contain approximately 295 residential units and the massing follows the general pattern of the prior design but with minor adjustments: it has a height of 20 stories/229± feet at the intersection of Hudson and Kneeland Streets, stepping down to 10 stories/ 113± feet as the building extends south along Hudson Street, terminating at the new open space area. There is no longer a 13 story component of the building adjacent to the new open space. The North Building design is also expected to contain a roof deck above the shorter portion of the building, and terraces located off certain residential units in the taller portion of the building.

South Building. The South Building was expected to contain approximately forty-five (45) residential units. The building was approved with a height of 7 stories/81± feet next to the new open space area, stepping down to town home-style residences of 4 stories/48± feet high towards the southern end of Hudson Street. The South Building as redesigned is expected to contain approximately fifty (50) residential condominiums and would have a height of 6 stories/66± feet throughout.

The revised building massing is shown on the plans included within Attachment B.

The DPIR filed by the Proponent in August 2008 demonstrated that the Project's shadow and wind impacts are limited. The modest adjustments to building massing proposed in this NPC will result in environmental effects that are approximately the same as those set forth in the DPIR. The new project architect (ADD Inc.) has produced shadow studies which show that the new massing of the Project will not materially increase the shadow impacts of the Project, and in fact the reduction in building height of the South Building will be beneficial, by increasing the amount of sunlight flowing into the new central open space area. The revised shadow studies are included in Attachment C.

### **3. Increase in Central Open Space Area.**

As originally designed, the Project was to include an approximately 10,000 s.f. new central open space area that is open to the public. This open space was designed to provide a pedestrian connection from Albany Street to Harvard Street, and also bridge the substantial change of grade (approximately 24 feet at the midpoint of the site) across the Project site. This grade change, together with the elongated site shape, the major utility lines traversing the site, and the site's proximity to the Albany Street ramp, present significant challenges that must be – and are – addressed by the Project design. The original design placed the open space on top of the Project's garage structure, above Hudson Street, which presented further design challenges.

The design adjustments to the North and South Buildings, along with certain adjustments to the layout of the parking garage (see Section B.4 below), allow the Proponent to create a central open space that is approximately 36% larger than the original design and contains approximately 13,600 s.f. The elimination of the garage structure beneath the open space means that the new open space will sit closer to the sidewalk elevation along Hudson Street and provide better visual and pedestrian access for the residents of the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, the placement of the open space area on *terra firma*, rather than a garage structure, means the options for and quality of plantings in the open space will be greatly enhanced.

The open space design will still provide a pedestrian link between Albany and Hudson streets, bridging the 24'± grade change with a "meandering walk" that connects the various levels of the open space area. An entry patio at Albany Street will relate to the pedestrian crosswalk across Albany Street and the Albany Street entrance to the Project's community space, which will be entirely located in the North Building. A wood deck at the mid-level will be created for community use and will also be a resource for the adjacent community space. At the Hudson Street level, there will be a defined edge to the space to provide a sense of entry, leading to a large lawn area. Details of the revised layout for the open space are included in Attachment B. The Proponent will host a workshop for the Chinatown community to review the design improvements to the open space area in January 2011.

### **4. Parking.**

The private parking garage has been redesigned to accommodate approximately 125 spaces within 4 levels (3 levels below grade and 1 level at grade) located at the North Building, as compared to 175 spaces within 2 levels that spanned the entire site in the original Project design. The change in garage configuration is based on a refinement of the building's foundation design and responds to site constraints presented by utilities and other infrastructure running through the site. The redesign maintains and consolidates garage access to a single location on Hudson Street, near the Kneeland Street intersection, and eliminates the second entrance/exit that was located at the southern end of the site on Hudson Street near the intersection of Hudson and Tai Tung Streets. Thus, this garage redesign will decrease traffic effects on the Project's Hudson Street residential neighbors.

The reduction in the number of parking spaces is consistent with the change in residential program from primarily condominiums to primarily rental apartments, because the market demand for off-street parking is lower for renters than for condominium owners. The

revised parking ratio will be a minimum of 0.36 for the overall project, as compared to 0.5 for the overall project described in the PDA Plan, which included up to 189 market rate condominiums.

The increase in the number of residential units will lead to a minimal increase in the number of vehicular trips generated by the Project. For example, there will be a total of six (6) additional new vehicular trips each day during the peak morning hours, and a total of five (5) additional new vehicular trips each day during the peak evening hours. The total number of walk trips and transit trips generated by the new residential program outweigh the number of additional vehicular trips generated, and it supports the City's goals of encouraging public transit use. The Project's proximity to a major transportation hub at South Station, as well as other nearby MBTA transit lines (Green Line, Silver Line and Orange Line), and ready access to car-sharing services (e.g., Zipcar at The Metropolitan and on Lincoln Street in the Leather District) support the proposed change in the parking/unit ratio at the Project.

**C. Summary of Major Project Elements Not Changed**

Notwithstanding the changes summarized above, the other major elements of the Parcel 24 Project will remain the same:

- The maximum FAR for the revised Project will be consistent with the PDA Plan requirement of a maximum 7.0 floor area ratio ("FAR"). The revised design has an FAR of 6.06. The total gross square footage of the North and South Buildings will be approximately 396,750 s.f., which is less than the 435,400 s.f. building size approved in the original PDA Plan. This decrease in total square footage is due to the reduction in the number of condominiums in the new Project design. While the total square footage in the Project may change during the design review process, it will not exceed the maximum FAR of 7.0;
- The Project will continue to contain approximately 6,000 s.f. of community space and approximately 5,500 s.f. of commercial/retail space as described in the original PDA Plan. The Project will also contain office space for on-site management and leasing operations;
- While the mix of affordable units has changed, the percentage of affordable units will be 42%, consistent with the original PDA Plan requirement of at least 40% affordable units;
- The large open space area that has been carefully planned in design meetings involving the community, the Proponent and BRA staff, remains a key component of the Parcel 24 Project and will be consistent with the requirements set forth in the PDA Plan; and
- The Proponent remains committed to an environmentally-friendly, well-designed project substantially similar to that originally proposed – one that is sensitive to its neighborhood context and, will serve as an appropriate "beacon" and end point of the Rose Kennedy Greenway.

**D. Proposed Amended and Restated PDA Plan.**

The Proponent is filing with this NPC, a proposed Amended and Restated PDA Plan to reflect the changes in program uses, building massing and parking arrangements, and the enhanced open space at the Project as discussed in this NPC. The Proponent is requesting concurrent BRA review of this NPC and the Amended and Restated PDA Plan, and therefore is amenable to extending the comment period for this NPC to coincide with completion of the required 45-day public comment period for the PDA Plan. Although the revised Project design is within the PDA-approved height limit of 230 feet, the Proponent is requesting a Text Amendment to Article 43 of the Zoning Code to increase the maximum height under the Amended and Restated PDA Plan to 235+ feet, in order to accommodate potential design changes during the public agency design review process, and contractor variations.

**E. Community Process and Schedule.**

The Proponent continues to work in close collaboration with commenting agencies and community leaders, members, and organizations to meet the spirit of the community vision that has helped guide the Parcel 24 Project. Beginning in Spring 2010, when the Proponent recognized that a programming change was necessary to move the Project forward, the Proponent, through ACDC, actively solicited feedback from the community to help inform those changes. ACDC, a community-based organization and a member of the Proponent entity, has met with all of the key stakeholders in Chinatown regarding the proposed Project changes, including the Chinatown Coalition, the Chinatown Neighborhood Council, the Safety Committee of the Chinatown Neighborhood Council, the Chinatown Residents Association, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, the owners of the adjacent 75 Kneeland Street building, and various City Councilors, and the Proponent will continue to update them throughout the Project's development. ACDC has proactively engaged the aforementioned stakeholders in multiple, ongoing discussions about the Parcel 24 Project to best ensure that the current proposed program remains responsive to the Community Vision created by the Hudson Street for Chinatown coalition. Additionally, ACDC was involved with the 2010 Chinatown Master Plan process and understands the needs and goals of the Chinatown community. The Proponent recognizes that affordable housing remains a priority of the community and the Parcel 24 Project as revised maintains a high number of affordable units with deep levels of affordability.

The Proponent is also moving forward with related approvals; for example, the Proponent has executed an amendment to its Development Agreement with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to allow time to complete the necessary pre-development work for the Project, including BRA approval of this NPC and the Amended PDA Plan. The Project has equity committed through New Boston's Urban Strategy America Fund, is working with MassHousing to obtain construction and permanent financing commitments, and has active applications for City and State financing for the affordable housing components. The Proponent is ready to break ground within 12 months of receiving its affordable housing financing commitments, which the Proponent expects to be able to achieve in the second quarter of 2011, thus allowing a Spring 2012 construction start. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Project may be completed in multiple phases depending upon market conditions and financing availability.

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**F. Conclusion.**

The Proponent respectfully requests the BRA's confirmation that the changes outlined in this NPC do not significantly increase the impact of the Project, or require any further review pursuant to Article 80B of the Zoning Code related to Large Project Review. We appreciate the BRA's continued guidance and support for the Parcel 24 Project and look forward to working together to move this project to a construction start.

If you or the BRA staff have any questions about this NPC or the Parcel 24 Project, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kirk Sykes  
Senior Vice President, New Boston Fund, Inc.  
President, Urban Strategy America Fund

cc: Heather Campisano  
Tai Lim  
Eliza Datta  
Janelle Chan  
Rebecca A. Lee, Esq

## **Attachment A – Public Benefits**

The Parcel 24 Project is expected to provide the following public benefits:

- Return this important site in Chinatown to “24/7” use with new housing, commercial space and community space;
- Create a smart-growth, transit-oriented, mixed-use development that includes residential and commercial/retail uses close to centers of employment and public transportation, including the MBTA Red, Green, Orange, and Silver Lines and the bus terminal and Amtrak at South Station;
- Promote housing opportunities and choice through the creation of approximately 345 units of much needed community housing, including a total of 95 affordable rental units and an additional 50 affordable homeownership opportunities;
- Create approximately 700 annual full-time equivalent (a daily average of approximately 250-350) construction period jobs, as well as an estimated 27 permanent jobs at the Project, for both the commercial/retail component and the completed building;
- Enhance the City of Boston’s real estate tax base, based upon the post-completion value of the property;
- Establish a sensitive and sustainable design that responds to the surrounding context and restores Hudson Street to a vibrant residential community and two-sided pedestrian street with landscaped sidewalks;
- Provide active ground floor uses, including (i) commercial uses along Kneeland Street, one of twelve Crossroads identified in the Boston Crossroads Initiative, and (ii) community uses that are located to activate the central open space;
- Add approximately 13,600 sf of new open space that provides new access between Hudson and Albany Streets and also enhances the civic space of Chinatown;
- Create an attractive termination to the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway and enhanced entrance to the City of Boston from the Albany Street exit of the Massachusetts Turnpike;
- Replace a vacant parcel remaining after the demolition of a highway ramp with a well-designed, primarily residential building;
- Encourage non-vehicular transit by improving pedestrian access between Chinatown and South Station; and
- Maintain community long-term investment and control in the property and the management of the affordable rental units through Asian Community Development Corporation, a community-based organization serving the needs and interests of Chinatown;
- Create connections from Chinatown to other areas of the city, including the South Station area, the Leather District, and the Financial District;

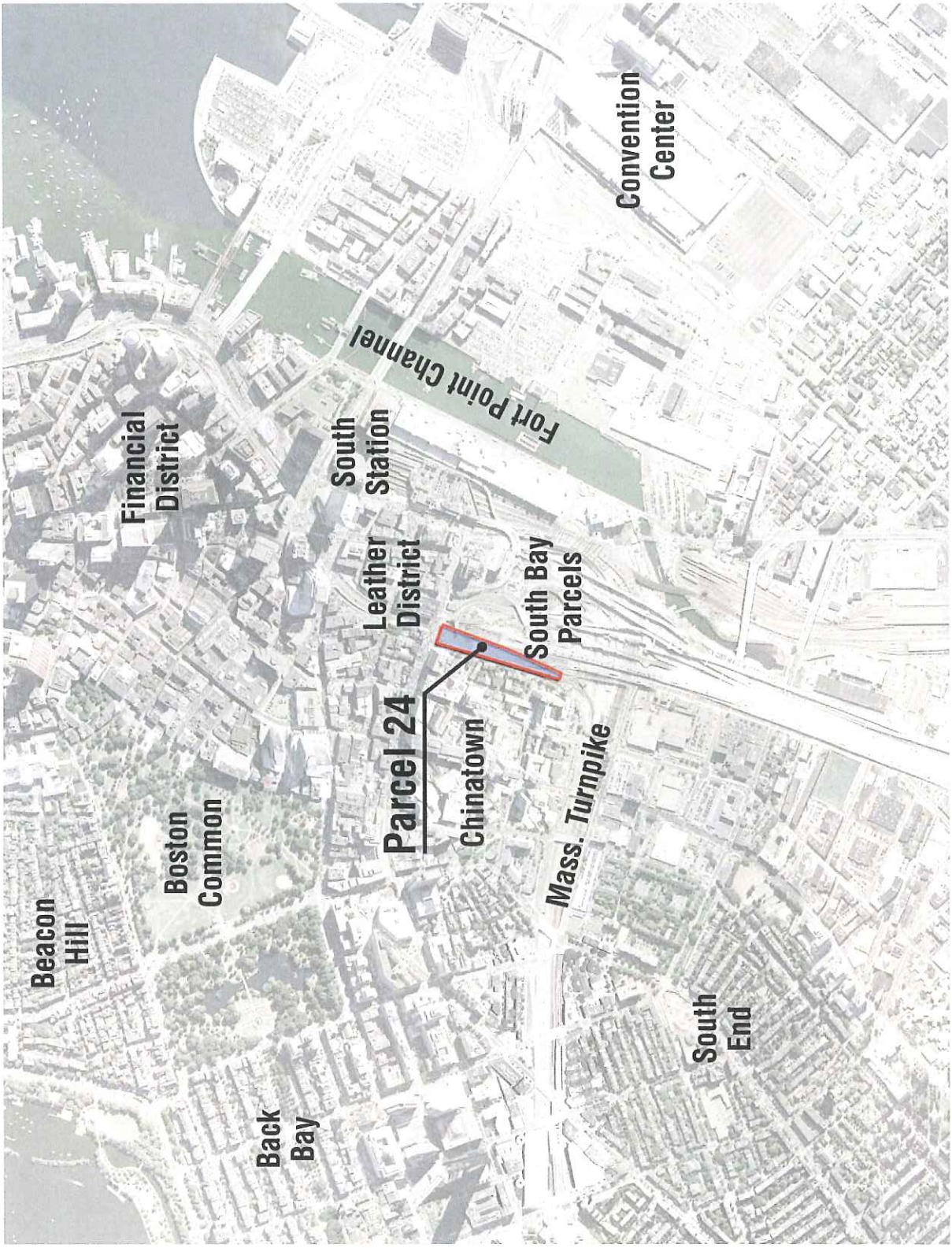


- Support future development along the Albany Street corridor with new landscaped sidewalks; and
- Contain sustainable design features that minimize environmental impacts.

Attachment B

Site Plan and Design Plans

[See attached]



Site Context Plan

Figure 1



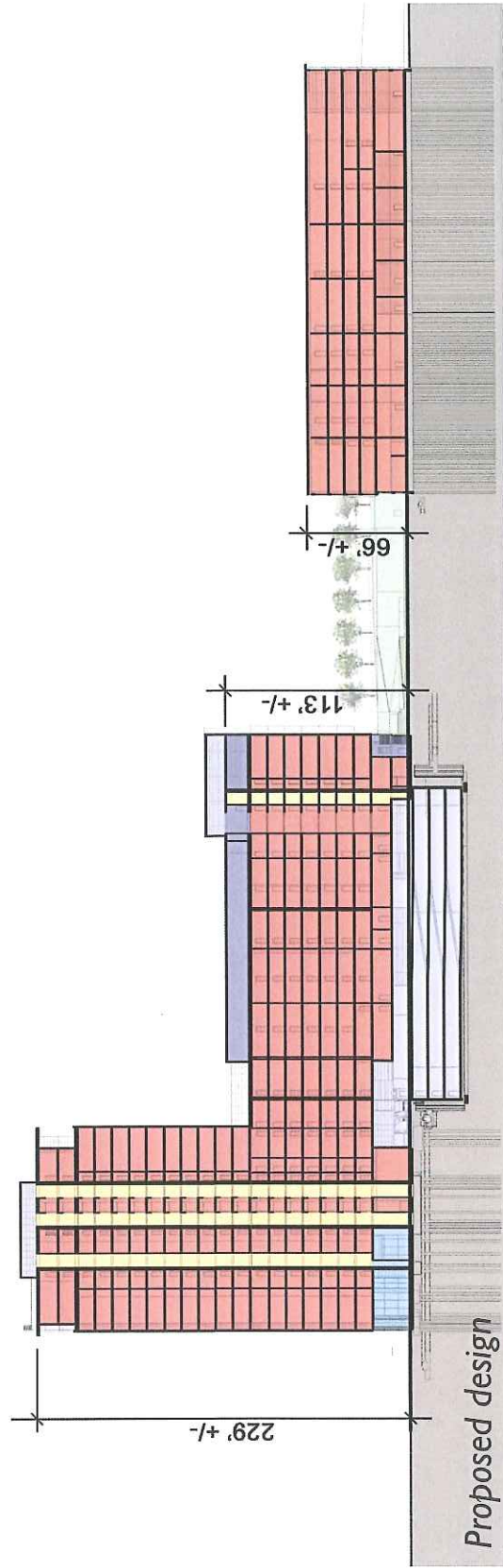
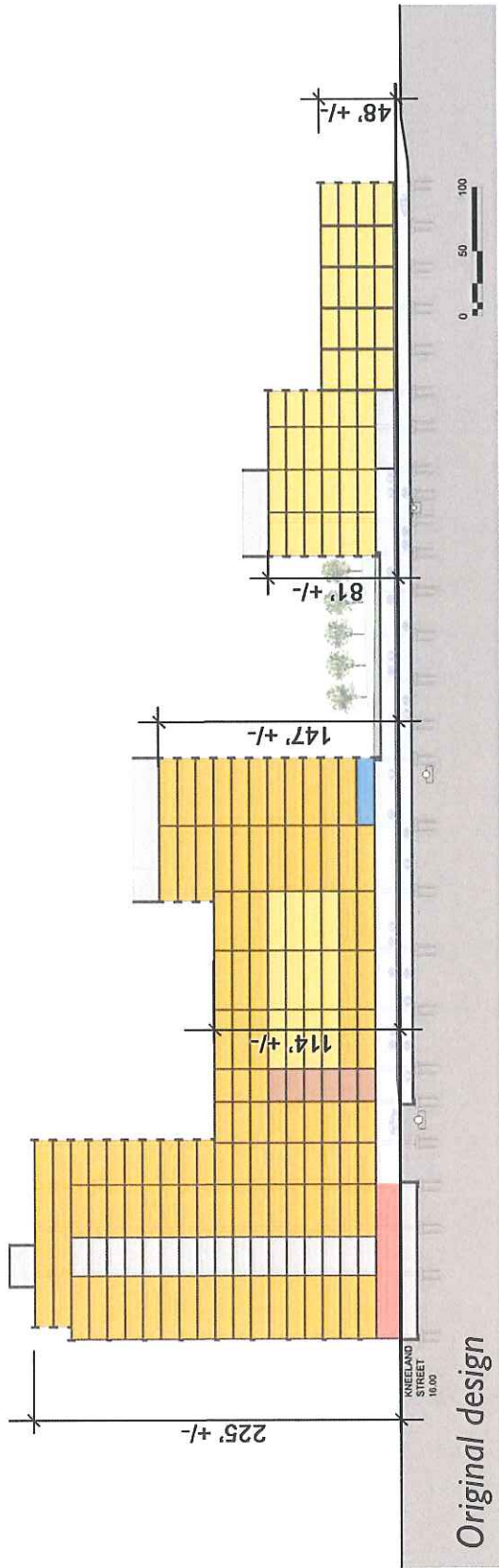
Site Plan

Figure 2



Open Space Plan

Figure 3



Summary of Massing Changes

Figure 4



*Proposed Elevation along Hudson Street*

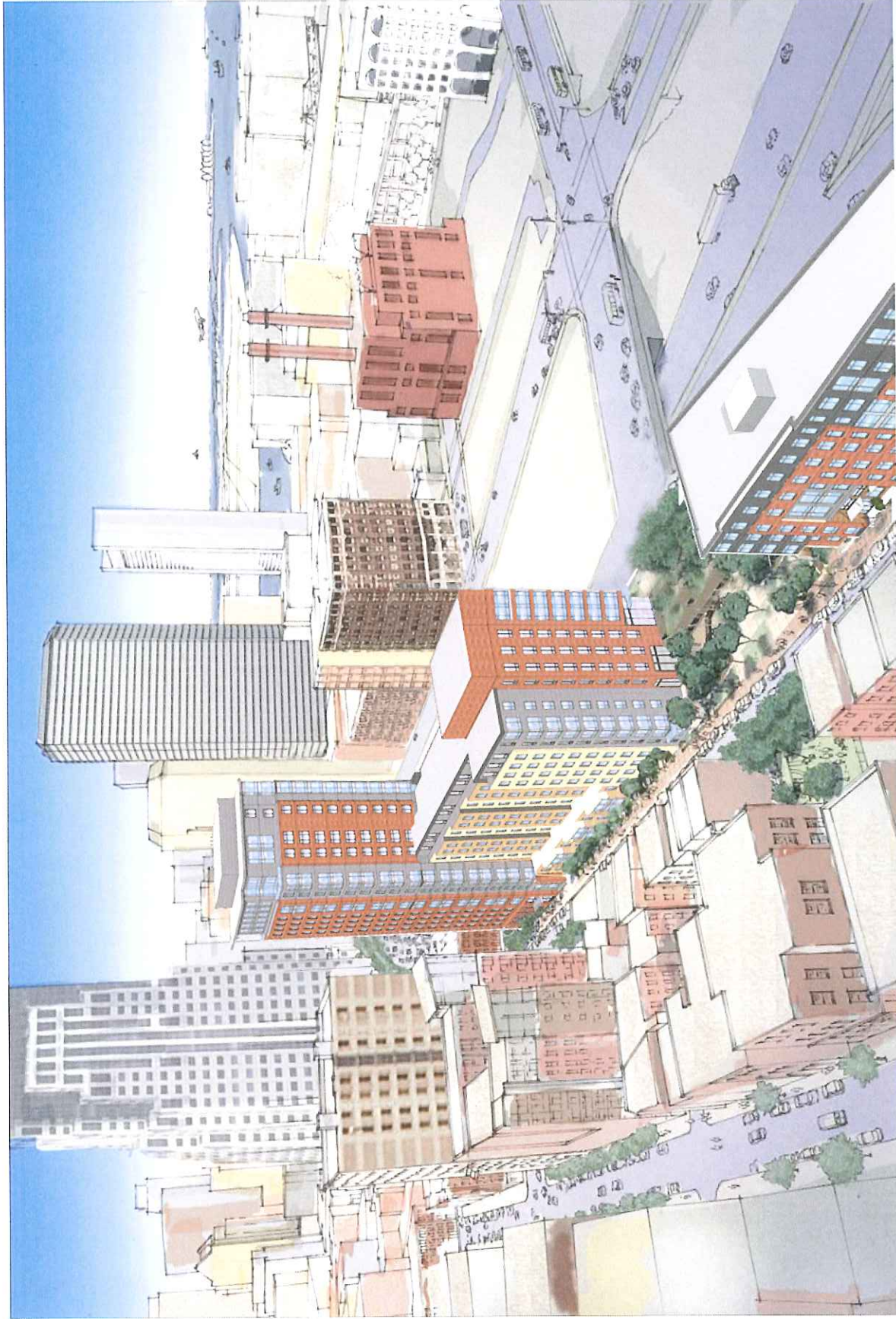
*Figure 5*



Proposed Street Level View Looking South

Figure 6





Proposed View from Southwest

Figure 7

Attachment C  
Shadow Studies

[See attached]

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE ●
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24 ■
- NEW SHADOW ■
- EXISTING SHADOW ■



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24 [Orange Box]
- NEW SHADOW [Dark Grey Box]
- EXISTING SHADOW [Light Grey Box]



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24 ■
- NEW SHADOW ■
- EXISTING SHADOW ■



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24



NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24 [Orange square]
- NEW SHADOW [Black square]
- EXISTING SHADOW [Grey square]



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE ●
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24

NO BUILD  
(EXISTING CONDITIONS)



PARCEL 24 BUILD



- BUILDING ENTRANCE •
- BUS STOP ○
- PARCEL 24
- NEW SHADOW
- EXISTING SHADOW



PARCEL 24