

FAQs – Vol. 3

HIGHLAND INNOVATION CENTER

557 Highland Avenue
Needham Heights, MA 02494

On December 15, 2021, 557 Highland, LLC, an affiliate of The Bulfinch Companies, Inc., (“Bulfinch”) purchased the property at 557 Highland Avenue formerly owned by the Muzi auto dealership and carwash. Bulfinch completed the demolition of all of the former Muzi buildings in February 2022. Bulfinch now proposes to redevelop the property by building approximately 500,000 square feet of office/laboratory/R&D space in two new buildings, with approximately 10,000 square feet of retail/restaurant/amenity space, and a standalone parking garage (the “Project”). This is the third volume of FAQs providing answers to questions that have been asked of the Project team during the course of introducing this Project to town officials, neighbors, the community at large, in particular during the fifth public (Zoom) meeting, on Thursday, May 19, 2022.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION QUESTIONS

1. ***How will Needham residents learn who your tenants are when you start signing up tenants?***

At present, we have no idea who the Project’s tenants will be, either for the principal buildings or for the retail/restaurant space. Generally, discussions between a landlord and prospective tenant are a private business matter. Bulfinch will publicly announce and share on the Project’s website (www.557Highland.com) tenant identities as leases are finalized.

Many life sciences companies include members of the public on their biosafety committees. Needham residents interested in becoming members of tenant biosafety committees are invited to let us know so we can pass their contact information along to future life sciences tenants.

Any life science tenant working with Recombinant DNA (rDNA) will need to register with the Needham Board of Health and to update that registration annually. These registrations are publicly available information.

2. ***Could you provide an elevation showing the buildings from the perspective of the intersection of David and Sachem Roads with Hunting Road?***

Absolutely. We will include that image in our presentation to the Planning Board, which will be posted on www.557Highland.com.

3. ***Will the trees, shrubs, and flowers you plant be native species?***

The Project’s trees, shrubs, and other plantings will be primarily native species or hybrids derived from native species. Potential tree species include Pin Oak,

Armstrong Red Maple, Canadian Hemlock, and White Spruce. Ornamental trees may include Whitespire Birch, Dwarf Beech, Kousa Dogwood, and Sweetbay Magnolia.

The selection of trees and large shrubs has proven to be more complicated than expected. Some people have asked that we cluster trees of a single species together, so that one area of landscaping might be predominantly Pin Oak trees, while another might be planted with White Spruce trees, creating the feeling of groves. Other people have asked that we intermingle species, so that if an arboreal disease or pest that targets a particular species, e.g., Dutch Elm disease, were to befall the landscaping its effects would be scattered rather than wiping out everything in a particular area.

We are selecting trees, shrubs, and smaller plants that flower at different times of the year, to provide elements of color throughout the growing season.

4. ***Could you provide an elevation showing the buildings from the perspective of the intersection of Gould Street and Highland Avenue?***

Absolutely. We will include that image in our presentation to the Planning Board, which will be posted on www.557Highland.com.

5. ***What are the darker rectangular areas shown on the ground floor level of the facades facing Gould Street?***

Those represent the loading dock doors. The buildings are designed to have all significant loading, *i.e.*, other than FedEx or UPS type deliveries or pickups, occur within enclosed loading bays. The rectangles represent doors to those areas. If a single tenant occupies both buildings, it should be possible to eliminate or at least significantly reduce the size of one or both of the loading bays. Until the tenant(s) are known, maximum flexibility is being maintained by providing for a loading area in each building. Additionally, the loading area in the South Building will serve that building's retail and restaurant tenant space. Bulfinch's architects are working on adding texture, color, or other detailing to soften the appearance of the loading area doors.

6. ***While the inset terraces do break it up in the middle, the facade along Highland Avenue still is rather long. Could you make it more "human scale" with further articulation, material changes between the east and west volumes, or other design elements?***

Yes. That is a good suggestion. The Project's architects will explore options for increasing the human scale of that facade.

7. ***Would you consider opening up the Gould Street/Highland Avenue corner by making the Gould Street facade of the South Building less rounded, more perpendicular to the Highland Avenue facade?***

We will look into that.

8. ***What information is available to residents about the site's environmental history?***

Bulfinch has provided copies of all of the environmental reports and related documents to the Town. Environmental history documents also are available from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's database of known sites where oil or hazardous materials have been released into the environment. Each release is assigned a Release Tracking Number (RTN). The former Muzi site has three RTNS:

3-0036733, opened March 11, 2021, closed August 9, 2021, for soil contamination found in connection with the replacement of a 6,000 gallon underground storage tank (UST) associated with the former carwash;

3-0037285, opened January 21, 2022, for gasoline-related materials found in the soil in excess of reportable concentrations during the removal of a 6,000 gallon UST used by the Muzi operations. The contaminated soil was removed and sent offsite to a batch asphalt plant for reuse; and

3-0037373, opened April 6, 2022, for additional materials found in the soil in excess of reportable concentrations during post-acquisition environmental investigations.

Documents relating to these RTNS are available from MassDEP's on-line database: <https://eeaonline.eea.state.ma.us/portal#!/search/wastesite>.

9. ***The walking path between the South Building and Highland Avenue seems awfully close to the road in places, which may not make for the most pleasant walking experience. Could you slide the entire project to the north to make more room for the path?***

The building setbacks and other dimensional constraints imposed by the recent rezoning do not allow the Project to be simply "slid to the north." The current design of the perimeter fitness path has evolved over time. Originally, we proposed a much narrower path, which would have been able to "meander" more through the perimeter landscaping. The Needham Fire Department asked us to widen the path to 10 feet, to accommodate a fire truck. We agreed. Later, the Needham Fire Department asked us to further widen the path, to 20 feet, to provide support for the outriggers of a ladder truck or water pumper truck. We agreed. As the path grew wider, its articulations necessarily decreased. We are investigating bringing the path closer to the South Building and further straightening it along Highland Avenue. This will provide room for denser landscaping between the path and Highland Avenue. We are working on plans to increase the amount and density of landscaping along Highland Avenue. We do not think the landscaping should completely screen the path from Highland Avenue, because that could make the path feel like a less inviting tunnel.

PROJECT OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS**10. *Have you considered moving the loading docks around to the side of the North Building facing the parking garage?***

We did, but that would not work. The recent rezoning imposes a set of dimensional constraints. The zoning requires that the parking garage be where it is. Building height limits, required setbacks from Highland Avenue and Gould Street, etc. define the Project's building envelope. MassDOT will not allow access to the property from the Route 128/I-95 ramp to the east or from Highland Avenue to the south. Providing primary access to loading docks from TV Place would conflict with the parking garage's required location. The consequence of these various constraints is that primary access for loading needs to come off Gould Street and there is no good way to route truck traffic between there and the north side of the North Building. And loading docks on the north side of the North Building would not serve the South Building or the retail/restaurant tenants.

The loading areas will have rollup doors, which will be closed except when trucks are arriving or departing. Deliveries will be limited to between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. Office/lab buildings are lightly occupied outside regular business hours, and retail or restaurant operations want their deliveries in the morning, so there should not be a demand for deliveries outside business hours.

11. *What kinds of things will be delivered via the loading docks?*

For the most part, typical office supplies. The loading docks also will be used for collection of trash, probably twice a week, and of materials for recycling as needed. The South Building's loading dock also will be used to deliver food and other supplies to the restaurant(s) and goods to the retail store(s). Laboratory supplies typically are shipped in small quantities via FedEx, UPS, or another delivery company and would be delivered directly to the buildings. Occasional, larger shipments of laboratory supplies would use the loading docks.

12. *Where will materials awaiting recycling be kept?*

One of the prerequisites for LEED certification is the separation, storage, and collection of materials for recycling including, at a minimum, paper, corrugated cardboard, glass, plastics, metals, batteries, and mercury-containing products and devices. Each building will have a dedicated room for storing materials for recycling. Periodically, these materials will be moved to a loading bay for collection by a recycling company. All collection and storage of materials for recycling will occur completely inside the buildings.

LIFE SCIENCES USER QUESTIONS

13. ***Can you assure us that there will be no Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) research?***

Yes. Although we would have preferred to preserve the ability to accommodate a future tenant needing a very small BSL-3 facility, e.g., to develop new vaccines against COVID-19 or another pandemic virus, we have heard the strong opposition by some to allowing any BSL-3 work anywhere in Needham. In light of those concerns, we have agreed to limit life sciences tenants to BSL-1 and BSL-2 research.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING QUESTIONS

14. ***Will public parking spaces be available for visitors to the retail/restaurant spaces?***

Yes. The surface parking lot adjacent to Gould Street is meant to be used primarily by visitors to those businesses. Retail/restaurant tenants' employees who commute by private motor vehicle will park in the garage, access to which ordinarily will be controlled by key card or other means. During periods of heavy snowfall or other serious inclement weather, Bulfinch plans to allow area residents who wish to do so to park their vehicles in the garage for the duration of the event.

15. ***Do you have pre-COVID-19 traffic data for the Muzi dealership, car wash, service center, etc. as a baseline comparison for the Project's anticipated traffic?***

Partially. Consistent with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's Guidance on Traffic Count Data, issued in April 2020, the Project's traffic engineers, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) used 2019 traffic data to represent the "current conditions" where that data is available. Where historic data is not available, current traffic counts were obtained and extrapolated to be consistent with historic data from nearby intersections.

16. ***Have you discussed the Project with Wingate management? Their planned renovations may double the number of cars accessing their property, and we already have had problems with elderly drivers nearly causing accidents when exiting from Wingate.***

Yes, we have discussed the Project with Wingate's management and, in particular, sought their input on traffic issues and the redesign of the intersection that the Project's west entrance will share with Wingate's connection to Gould Street. Signalizing that intersection should create better opportunities for drivers exiting or arriving at Wingate—whether elderly or not—to do so more safely. Our renovations to this intersection will include new crosswalks that are raised or texturally different (using bricks, patterned

asphalt, or some other approach acceptable to Needham DPW), which will make drivers more aware of the crosswalks and the intersection.

17. ***Will the additional traffic signals on Gould Street, at the project site and at the intersection with Central Avenue, encourage rush hour cut through traffic on streets other than Noanett Road, e.g., Arnold and Beech Streets?***

Unlikely. The traffic flow improvement measures proposed for Gould Street are expected to reduce congestion on that road, thereby reducing the incentive for drivers to seek alternate, cut through routes. The addition of a traffic signal at the intersection of Gould Street and Central Avenue will improve traffic flow on Central Avenue, decreasing the length of time northbound traffic will wait on Gould Street to clear the intersection and providing breaks in traffic for westbound traffic on Central Avenue to turn left onto Gould Street. This should reduce the incentives for traffic to use Arnold or Beech Street to avoid that intersection.

18. ***Widening Gould Street to five lanes at the intersection with Highland Avenue will create a lot of lanes for young families to navigate across to access the Project's community amenities/restaurant, Mills Field, Eliot Elementary School, the possible future rail-trail connection, etc.***

Widening Gould Street to five lanes was first recommended by the Town's traffic consultant, Greenman-Pederson, Inc. ("GPI"), during the rezoning process, and is necessary to address longstanding deficiencies at this intersection. The reconfigured intersection of Highland and Gould will have crosswalks and dedicated pedestrian signals to cross all approaches to the intersection. The new Gould Street signal at the Site driveway across from Wingate also will have crosswalks and dedicated pedestrian signals for all approaches. The pedestrian crossing signals will be programmed to provide ample time for crossing, taking into consideration the additional time that may be required by families with young children or the elderly. The proposed improvements along Gould Street also include dedicated bicycle lanes and new sidewalks along the Site frontage.

The recently adopted rezoning that created the Highway Commercial 1 district in which the site is located contemplates the redevelopment of the adjacent Channel 5 properties into as much as 400,000 square feet of commercial space. Knowing this, Bulfinch proposes to implement all the mitigation measures suggested by GPI for the full redevelopment of the entire district. This will avoid the need for a second reconstruction of Gould Street to accommodate future redevelopment of the remainder of the district.

19. ***Comparisons of projected vehicle trips to vehicle trip numbers during Muzi's operation of the site are confusing; what will be the total number of vehicle trips, without taking credit for what was existing?***

The Project will generate approximately 644 vehicle trips in the morning peak hour (552 entering the Site and 92 exiting the Site) and approximately 651 vehicle trips in the evening peak hour (121 entering the Site and 530 exiting the Site).

These trip volumes are based on national data from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). ITE numbers are very conservative; the actual Site-generated traffic is likely to be lower. ITE estimates assume that 100% of the employees will commute using single occupancy vehicles and that all employees will commute to work five days a week. In reality, the Project's numbers are likely to be lower as some employees will commute by transit (including a shuttle service the Proponent will provide) or by walking/biking. And in a post-COVID world it is likely that some employees will continue work from home at least a few days a week. ITE numbers also do not consider the existing trips that the Site generated when the Muzi dealership and the car wash were in operation, *i.e.*, suggest that the Project's estimated vehicle trips represent a net increase in the number of vehicles on the roads. The Project's proposed roadway improvements were designed based on the conservative ITE trip volumes to address a "worse case" scenario.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACTS QUESTIONS

20. ***Will the Gould Street tennis courts be adversely impacted by the Project?***

Unlikely. The improvements to Gould Street, *e.g.*, adding additional lanes at the intersection with Highland Avenue, signaling the site intersection across from the Wingate complex and the intersection of Gould and Central Streets, will improve traffic flow on Gould Street, reducing delays for vehicles traveling in either direction. Given how long it would take to change into tennis gear, play a game of tennis or even to have a beneficial practice session, shower, and change back into work clothes, it seems unlikely that employees of the Project's tenants would interrupt their workdays to use the tennis courts.

21. ***Won't creating pickleball courts on your property eliminate parking spaces? Why not instead build them down by the tennis courts at Mills Park to create a family-friendly recreation destination?***

Increasing the number of pickleball courts will decrease the number of surface parking spaces near the atrium and the retail/ restaurant spaces, but we can make up for this by increasing the number of spaces in the garage or under the buildings. How many pickleball courts we will build is in flux. Originally, we proposed a single court. When asked, we increased this to three courts. Some people then said that would be too many, that they would prefer more landscaped open space and fewer courts. Others asked for a fourth court.

Having listened to various stakeholders, we now think that one or two pickleball courts with more open space is probably the best solution.

22. ***An unscientific poll of neighbors suggests that very few of them would welcome a brewery or brewpub, that a family-style restaurant that had an ice cream window and that did not stay open too late would be preferred.***

A brewpub would provide an excellent opportunity for tenants' employees, other people working in the area, or area residents to gather after work. Brewpubs often offer trivia nights and other community-building activities. On the other hand, brewpubs usually are open later into the evening and can have unwanted effects on neighbors. We are working to reconcile diverging viewpoints on what type of restaurant(s) would be preferred. Perhaps a more family oriented restaurant with a beer and wine license would satisfy more people? Bulfinch will be looking to the Planning Board for guidance on this issue during the public hearing process.

23. ***Will noise from traffic on Highland Avenue or nearby Route 128/I-95 echoing off the building facade facing Highland Avenue be audible to residential neighbors on the south side of Highland Avenue?***

Unlikely. The Project includes extensive landscaping of the area between the South Building and Highland Avenue, landscaping that we have agreed to increase in response to several comments received during our public discussions with residents and others. That landscaping will include trees and shrubs, much of which will be evergreen, which will (i) absorb or dampen road noise before it reaches the building and (ii) absorb or dampen sound echoes off the building facade. And noise from traffic on Highland Avenue will drown out echoes of that traffic off the South Building. Nonetheless, we will have an acoustical model of the area prepared and will share the results.

24. ***Could speed bumps be added to area side streets to slow down traffic?***

We will look into this and will work with the Town of Needham to identify appropriate mitigation measures, which could include speed bumps on some side streets to calm traffic. Ultimately, the decision will be made by the Needham Department of Public Works in consultation with other town departments.

PUBLIC BENEFITS QUESTIONS

25. ***Will you provide year round staff to maintain, schedule, and otherwise support community use of the public recreation areas?***

Yes.

SUSTAINABILITY / CLIMATE CHANGE QUESTIONS

26. ***Could you include ground source heat pumps or other geothermal energy to further reduce the project's carbon footprint?***

Unfortunately, no. Soil borings for the preliminary geotechnical analysis of the site found bedrock at depths of ~15-22 feet below the surface under some portions of the Property. Other areas have a deeper fill layer above the bedrock. Drilling into bedrock to support ground source heat pumps or another geothermal energy system would be very costly. Most of the site will be covered by buildings, a modest parking lot, and internal drives and sidewalks. Placing borings beneath these areas would complicate or even preclude future maintenance of the borings.

27. ***Will the building achieve net zero carbon emissions? If not, why not***

That will depend on the tenant mix, but probably not. Laboratory/ life science buildings have energy demands three to five times greater than those of similar sized office or residential buildings, which makes it exceedingly difficult to achieve net zero carbon emissions for them.

The buildings will have high performance building envelopes and mechanical systems. A hybrid electric heating system—prioritizing air source heat pumps and electric heating, with natural gas used only during the coldest times—will reduce emissions by approximately 80% for the non-laboratory spaces. Solar panels on portions of the roof will provide 500 kW of electricity (enough to power approximately 78 homes). All of the buildings' HVAC and refrigeration systems will undergo LEED commissioning before occupancy, to ensure that they are operating as designed. This will be reverified after a year of use. The buildings are being designed to comply with the Massachusetts Stretch Energy Building Code standards.

28. ***Will the EV charging stations be free to the general public?***

No. We plan to provide level 2 charging stations for approximately a third of the parking spaces. The electricity for these stations will need to come from the utility grid, not from rooftop solar, to ensure that the peak electrical loads for charging can be satisfied. Opening the stations to the general public would bring unwanted traffic onto Gould Street and onto the Project's internal roadways. The charging station providers with whom we have been talking all charge at least the "fair market rate" for electricity.

These additional FAQs are meant to provide general answers to some of the more frequently asked questions about the Project, and to provide a brief overview of what is being proposed. Any further questions or comments not adequately addressed above can be directed to questions@557highland.com. If you would prefer to speak directly to any of our team members or have questions relative to the various disciplines, please let us know and we would be happy to arrange for a one-on-one discussion.