



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
P L A N N I N G B O A R D

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 39

September 23, 1975

The Honorable, the City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

SUBJECT: Petition to Rezone Mt. Auburn Street/Aberdeen Avenue
Office District

Dear Councillors:

In accordance with Chapter 40A of the General Laws, the Planning Board held a public hearing on May 6, 1975 on a petition by the Planning Board to rezone land generally bounded by a line 100 feet from and parallel to the northern streetline of Mt. Auburn Street, by the eastern lot line of lot 255 of Assessors' Plat #251, by the southern streetline of Mt. Auburn Street, and by the centerline of Aberdeen Avenue.

On the basis of the testimony presented at the public hearing and information provided by the Community Development Department staff, the Planning Board recommends that this petition be APPROVED.

The Character of the Aberdeen Avenue Neighborhood

In this low density neighborhood (one and two family dwelling units predominating) the residents are primarily families with children. The neighborhood is bounded by Huron Avenue and Mt. Auburn Street and bisected by Aberdeen Avenue. These streets all carry major traffic flows and all carry mass transit lines. Ease of access plus nearby consumer amenities make this area desirable for residential development.

The present Office district contains 95,545 square feet. If developed at its potential 144 units per acre density, the parcel could contain 318 units with no height limit. This is hardly in keeping with the residential densities of the two abutting zones (Residence A-2, 9 units per acre; and Residence B, 18 units per acre, both with 35 foot height limits). A Business A-1 designation, on the other hand, would allow residential development at Residence C-1 density (36 units per acre and a 35 foot height limit) while allowing both office and retail business uses.

The Property Value Issue

A complex issue in any "down-zoning" is the impact on property values. Some owners will argue that the loss of development potential will reduce property value -- meaning the value of the land for redevelop-

ment is adversely affected. On the other hand, the protection afforded a residential neighborhood by zoning that preserves existing character is also translatable into "property value" -- particularly in Cambridge where speculative, redevelopment pressures are at work in many neighborhoods. The Board feels that these forces will tend to cancel out one another; in other words, property values will not be substantially affected in either direction. The other issues involved in the proposed zoning change are, in the Planning Board's mind, more significant.

Recommendation

The Planning Board feels that the principal objective of the City of Cambridge should be the protection of family environments. In this case, a neighborhood is threatened by the proximity of a zone with a very high permitted density and no height limit. The neighborhood feels that initial development in this zone, at a detrimental density, can lead to encroachment into the neighborhood itself. This would exacerbate an already troublesome traffic and parking problem. In order to give the neighborhood a say in decisions affecting them and to protect established neighborhoods as proper family environments, the Planning Board recommends that this petition be APPROVED.

Respectfully submitted for
the Cambridge Planning Board

Arthur C. Parris, Chairman



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
P L A N N I N G B O A R D

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 39

December 17, 1975

The Honorable, the City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Councillors:

SUBJECT: An initiative petition to amend the text of the Zoning Ordinance by setting height and bulk limits.

In accordance with Chapter 40A of the General Laws, the Planning Board held a public hearing on October 29, 1974 on a petition by Rona Kifner et al. to amend the text of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge by setting height and bulk limits which could only be exceeded by special permit.

Background: The Planning Board held its hearing on this petition in October of 1974. The delay in reporting to the Council has been an effort to reach an agreement as to what projects would require review, who would perform the review function and criteria for evaluating any proposed development. This compromise effort, which has involved the original petitioners, the Chamber of Commerce and the Planning Board, will continue. The Planning Board has recently filed a city-wide height limit petition which attempts on an interim basis to deal with one of the issues addressed in this petition. However, the Board feels that it is unduly restrictive to leave a petition outstanding while revisions are being considered.

THE INITIATIVE PETITION

While the Planning Board fully understands the concern of the City's neighborhoods in regard to height and density of new development, the Board feels that the mechanism proposed in this petition to counter these effects is too cumbersome to be effective. The mechanism consists of the following structure and procedures:

- The City Council would be the granting authority for all Special Permits under this amendment.
- All applications to the City Council would have to be accompanied by maps and plans for the proposal, a community impact report evaluating the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed structure, an Environmental Assessment to conform with State requirements, and a written statement from the Planning Board attesting that

the above-mentioned requirements have been met.

- Prior to a City Council decision, the Planning Board would be required to convene a Citizen Review Board consisting of nine members. This Board would be chosen from the Citizen Review Board pool, consisting of no more than 165 members elected at each municipal election. There would be three members from each of 55 precincts of the city. Members of the pool could not be City employees, members of the Planning Board or the Board of Zoning Appeal. The Citizen Review Board would make a written report to the City Council **containing** a recommendation on the special permit application. This would be in addition to the Planning Board's recommendation.
- Special Permits could be granted by a six member vote of the City Council. Appeals of City Council decisions would be made to the Superior Court of Middlesex County.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the sense of the Planning Board that the process as set forth in the Initiative Petition is too cumbersome to effectively review development and is so complex as to discourage responsible developers who wish to attempt development of a desirable nature. The Planning Board recommends that this petition be DENIED.

Respectfully submitted,

For the Planning Board

Alfred Cohn

Alfred Cohn,
Vice Chairman

AC/jf1



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 39

DEC 18 11 30 AM '75

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

December 17, 1975

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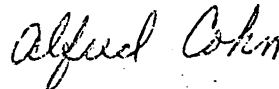
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For the Planning Board



Alfred Cohn,
Vice Chairman

AC/jf1

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Comm. from the Planning Board re: to an initiative petition to amend the text of the Zoning Ordinance by setting height and bulk limits.

In City Council,

Dec. 29, 1975

*Referred to Ordinance
Committee*

Copies sent 11/30/75 es