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OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

348 Franklin Street  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139  
Telephone 491-7181  
July 28, 1982

JUL 29 10 22 AM '82

To the Honorable, the Cambridge City Council:

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

The City Council could remedy a lot of needless confusion on the part of concerned citizens and of the city's professional staff if it would update the dimensional tables of the zoning ordinance.

People are confused about maximum dimensions permitted under the zoning ordinance. They assume that the most obvious parts of it, the dimensional tables, have meaning. That is a serious mistake since these apparently definitive provisions are overruled by much less obvious special permits, P.U.D.'s and many other provisions.

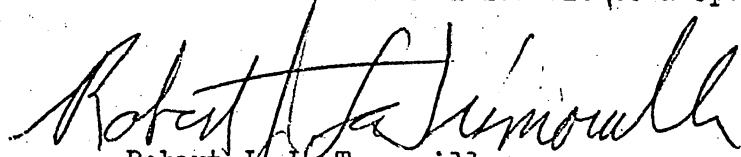
The most confusion is shown by city experts when they discuss Residence C-1 limits. These experts repeatedly seem unaware that C-1 bulk limits were increased from 0.75 F.A.R. to 0.9 by the townhouse ordinance. Most recently the planning board described building sizes to the city council on Bigelow, Clinton, Lee and Inman Streets. Their table did not even break out buildings with bulk larger than 0.9, but their letter claimed to be showing which buildings are non-conforming under C-1. Similar confusion occurs when city experts explain P.U.D. districts to the city council or to citizen groups. The experts emphasize base zoning limitations which are meaningless legal fictions. They deemphasize the real limits, the much more generous P.U.D. figures.

City ordinances should communicate their requirements to ordinary citizens. If that is not possible, city ordinances should at least be organized so that they do not confuse the city's professional employees.

Confusion in the zoning ordinance can be minimized by making the dimensional tables the principle dimensional regulations in the ordinance. This can be done by updating the tables to include the following:

1. Base zoning requirements;
2. The most generous dimensions permitted in each district, whether the district is called a zoning district or a P.U.D. district;
3. Cross references showing ordinance sections which permit more generous dimensions than the base zoning;
4. A requirement that the dimensional tables govern over provisions not included in the tables.

Such an updating would take a lot of time and effort. It is unfortunate that the staff is so confused. Should the council so wish, I would be pleased to do the legal drafting. I would then consider it an honor should the council see fit to adopt my work into the ordinance.

  
Robert J. La Tremouille

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Comm. from Paul E. Healy, City Clerk, transmitting comm. from Robert J. LaTremouille Re: updating of dimensional tables of the Zoning Ordinances of the City of Cambridge.

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*copy sent to Community Development 8/5/82 mlh*

In City Council,  
August 2, 1982

*Referred to the  
Community Development  
Dept.*