



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

PLANNING BOARD

OFFICE OF CITY CLERK
CITY HALL ANNEX, 97 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 39

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Comm. from the Planning Board relative to
the petition to rezone Mt. Auburn St./
Aberdeen Ave. Office District.

In City Council,

Oct. 6, 1975

*Copies sent
10/8/75 CS
10/12/75*

*Referred to Com. on
Ordinances*