

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
City Hall Annex - Inman & Broadway - Cambridge, Mass. 02139

498-9034

To: Robert W. Healy  
City Manager

From: Michael H. Rosenberg *MHR*  
Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Re: Comprehensive Rezoning

Date: September 22, 1988

This memo will expand upon the ideas presented in my memo of June 22, 1988 which outlined a general framework for a comprehensive rezoning. Since June, progress has been made in several planning activities which address the key issues to be considered by a comprehensive rezoning. This has enabled us to develop a proposed strategy and timeframe for a rezoning effort centered around the major concerns about development in the city.

Issues/Concerns

We have identified four primary areas of concern which raise the need for a comprehensive look at the city's zoning regulations: the complexity of the existing ordinance; environmental impacts of development, including traffic and urban design considerations; neighborhood based development issues, including in-fill residential density, parking demands and the need for neighborhood plans; and the future of the city's remaining development districts. These areas raise questions and problems which require a varied strategy to find the best solution. While rezoning of certain specific geographic areas is needed, we believe a parcel by parcel assessment is not required immediately. Rather, we believe a mix of citywide growth controls combined with rezoning of targeted areas is the best approach for resolving the planning and development issues currently facing the city.

Comprehensive Rezoning Program

The Department has developed a four point strategy for a comprehensive rezoning plan. This strategy and a proposed timeframe is outlined on the attached chart and discussed below.

## I. Review and Restructuring of the Existing Zoning Ordinance

Over the past ten years the complexity of the City's zoning ordinance has increased substantially. A review of the ordinance, with an eye toward clarification, simplification and other possible changes, would assist both citizens and professionals in using the code to guide future development. This effort would begin in January, 1989 in order to consider the impact of several citywide initiatives which will be introduced this fall. It is expected that this effort would be complete by early 1990.

## II. Environmental Review

Concerns about the citywide impacts of development including traffic, height, bulk and other aspects of the built environment, have been raised by both citizens and city officials over the last few years. Efforts currently underway, including a trip generation study, traffic mitigation zoning and more comprehensive urban design requirements, will result in citywide zoning proposals for both traffic mitigation and design review. Zoning petitions are anticipated for November, 1988.

## III. Neighborhoods

In addition to citywide environmental concerns, each of the city's thirteen neighborhoods has a range of zoning concerns which need to be studied and addressed. Some of these impact all neighborhoods, such as residential parking requirements and the townhouse bonus provision, while others are neighborhood specific. Analysis of the parking and townhouse provisions are underway and a petition proposing revisions to the existing regulations is anticipated for November, 1988.

Additionally, the Department's Neighborhood Planning staff is nearing completion of the East and North Cambridge neighborhood studies. These studies will suggest zoning recommendations in the context of a comprehensive plan for the neighborhood. Specific zoning analyses leading to rezoning petitions will occur after completion of each plan. Preparations are now being made for telephone surveys of the Cambridgeport and Riverside neighborhoods, to obtain demographic and community opinion information central to the neighborhood planning process. The Department has established a five year goal for completion of the remaining eleven neighborhood plans.

## IV. Development Districts

Several major studies focusing on the City's development districts are also underway including North Point, Central Square, Cambridgeport and the industrial districts. These studies, which have varying timeframes extending over the next twelve months, will analyze existing land uses, heights and densities to develop

proposals which will permit balanced, controlled growth. Although major restudy of other development districts which have more recently undergone rezoning is not proposed, the Department will continue to monitor the progress of development activity in these areas and will make recommendations for rezoning as necessary.

The Department is also building a land-use data base, focusing initially on higher density, non-residential areas. This database, which eventually will be expanded to include residential areas, will enable the department to better assess development potential throughout the city and respond accordingly.

### Resources

Additional staff resources will be required for the Department to successfully implement the comprehensive rezoning plan. The Department's FY'89 budget includes a position for an economic development planner to assist in development district studies. You have also recently approved the addition of a land use planner who will assist in reviewing the zoning ordinance and will follow-up on the neighborhood based zoning recommendations. We hope to fill these positions by December, 1988.

Further resources may also be required to build the department's data and analytic capabilities. We expect to employ a graduate student intern to assist in developing the land use data base. In addition, we will explore the usefulness and feasibility of acquiring a Computer-Aided Design System (CAD) to analyze density alternatives for sites and zoning districts. This will provide the City with a visual, three-dimensional tool to assess zoning alternatives. It would also aid in presentation of rezoning and design proposals to the community.

Over the next few months, we will consult with other cities and organizations using CAD for mapping and graphic presentation. This will enable us to learn more about the capabilities and costs of such a system.

We are currently reviewing the Department's FY'89 budget to determine if any funds are available for these activities. As decisions and progress are made, we will confer with you to determine what additional funds, if any, will be needed both now and in the FY'90 budget.

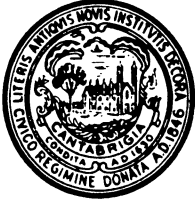
### Summary

The comprehensive zoning plan outlined in this memo will address the major development issues currently facing the City. We believe it provides a balanced, manageable approach that will enable these issues to be studied in a comprehensive way, allowing for full participation by the various sectors of the Cambridge community. To ensure that these efforts are truly coordinated and comprehensive, taking the

impact of each on the other into account, I have established an in-house comprehensive rezoning review committee comprised of department staff involved in the individual rezoning efforts. Regular, ongoing communication among these individuals will ensure consistency in the various elements of the overall plan.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss the proposal with you and the City Council at the September 26th public hearing.





**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

**CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139  
TEL. 498-9011**

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
ROBERT W. HEALY  
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI  
Deputy City Manager

September 26, 1988

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Enclosed please find copy of a communication from Michael H. Rosenberg, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, relative to a comprehensive rezoning for the City of Cambridge.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy  
City Manager

RWH/mbf  
Enc.

Agenda Item No. 7 *0-56*

Re: enclosed comm. from Michael H. Rosenberg,  
Asst. City Manager for Community Development  
Re: a comprehensive rezoning for the City of  
Cambridge.

In City Council,

September 26, 1988

*Referred to the Hearing  
Hearing Held*