

# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

City Hall Annex - Inman & Broadway - Cambridge, Mass. 02139

498-9034

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: *KAS* Kathy A. Spiegelman, Assistant City  
Manager for Community Development

Subject: Harvard Square Overlay District

Date: June 18, 1985

Attached is information on proposed zoning changes for Harvard Square. The City Council has requested that the Community Development Department move as quickly as possible on our initiative to revise the Harvard Square Overlay District. This work effort has been in process for almost two years and is near but not at completion. Meanwhile, controversy surrounding Harvard University's proposal for development at 8-10 Mount Auburn Street led to zoning petitions which propose to amend one of the provisions of the overlay district.

Under current zoning, setback requirements may be waived within the Harvard Square Overlay District. The intent of this component of the 1980 Overlay District is to maintain existing streetwalls and to encourage design flexibility. The proposed zoning petitions seek to restore these setback requirements in all cases.

The Department's draft proposal for revision of Harvard Square zoning suggests that the relaxation of yard setbacks be used to encourage building preservation and be conditioned upon special permit review which considers the design review guidelines in the area. It does not support the elimination of the flexibility altogether as this discriminates against residential development in the Business B zone and would mandate setbacks in areas along Massachusetts Avenue and the north side of Mount Auburn Street where building towards the street edge is frequently desirable and compatible with the older structures.

We are working with the Planning Board on a zoning petition which reflects this and other development features. We have provided a

(2)

summary and maps to property owners and the community participants in our work group. It is anticipated that a petition will be filed mid-summer allowing for hearings in September.

I would appreciate it if you would share this correspondence with the City Council before the last Council meeting on June 24th. I have attached the materials which we have distributed in the Harvard Square community for Council's information as well.

KAS/tm

Attachments

# SUMMARY OF DRAFT REVISION TO THE HARVARD SQUARE OVERLAY DISTRICT

## I. KEY GOALS

- a. Rationalize the development review process, providing for early public input.
- b. Recognize the heterogeneity of Harvard Square.
- c. Encourage preservation of existing buildings which contribute to the Square's character.

## II. SUMMARY OF MODIFICATIONS TO THE HARVARD SQUARE OVERLAY DISTRICT

- a. Create an Official Development Review Committee - Section 11.541

### EXISTING PROVISIONS

Advisory review by Community Development and ad hoc citizen group.

### BASIC PROVISIONS

A seven member board with business, resident, institutional and design professional representatives.

### PURPOSE

Formalize public review of the development process. Avoid back-door design review which depends upon requests for zoning relief.

- b. Modify Height Provisions - Section 11.542

### EXISTING PROVISIONS

60' as of right  
80' as of right with provision of specified amenities  
110' by special permit

### BASIC PROVISIONS

55' as of right  
90' by special permit.

### PURPOSE

To provide a consistent relationship to building construction technology and to other district height requirements in the zoning ordinance.

- c. Allow Retail Uses in Office and Residential Districts - Section 11.543

### EXISTING PROVISIONS

None

### BASIC PROVISIONS

By special permit if historic structure or important open space is preserved and basic appearance of building is not changed.

### PURPOSE

Assist fragile retail uses to survive and preserve important historic and open space features.

- d. Exempt Uses on Small Lots and in Buildings Pre-1940 from Parking and Loading Requirements - Section 11.544

### EXISTING PROVISIONS

Parking and loading required for all new uses; special permit required by Article 6.000 to reduce required parking.

### BASIC PROVISIONS

\* Exempt all uses in pre-1940 buildings.

\* Exempt uses in new buildings on lots of 10,000 sq. ft. or less provided no important building is destroyed and the floor area of the building is less than 80% of the maximum allowed.

### PURPOSE

\* Encourage smaller scale new buildings.

\* Provide an incentive for not assembling large parcels.

\* Provide an incentive to save preferably preserved buildings.

- e. Exempt Existing Buildings from Base District Setback Requirements (where present) and Allow Exemption by Special Permit for New Buildings Which do not Destroy Preferably Preserved Structures - Section 11.545

**EXISTING PROVISIONS**

Setback exemption in the Overlay District; a current proposal to reinstate setback requirements.

**BASIC PROVISIONS**

- \* Exempt all buildings extant as of July 1, 1985.
- \* Exempt by special permit new buildings where no preferably preserved building is significantly altered or destroyed.

**PURPOSE**

- \* Provide an incentive to reuse existing structures or an incentive to retain existing structures in new developments.
- \* Provide flexibility for new construction to allow it to reflect and support existing development patterns in their vicinity.
- \* Assure design review in exchange for relaxation of setback requirements.

- f. Establish a Set of Design Review Criteria (to be found in a HARVARD SQUARE DEVELOPMENT PLAN) - Section 11.56

**EXISTING PROVISIONS**

A limited number of amenities (commercial arcades, retail frontage, parking and open space) are rewarded.

**BASIC PROVISIONS**

Guidelines are established for development in six distinct sub-districts in the Square for both public and private development actions.

**PURPOSE**

To establish a framework within which public review can take place and to define for private interests public policy as it relates to design and development issues in Harvard Square's varied sub-districts.

- g. Alterations in the Boundaries of the Overlay District (see enclosed map)

**BASIC PROVISIONS**

- \* Extension of the District east beyond Trowbridge Street by about 100 feet.
- \* Extension of the District south of Mount Auburn Street to include portions of Winthrop and South Streets.
- \* Deletion of the area below Bennett Street.

**PURPOSE**

- \* To incorporate peripheral areas which have a functional or visual relationship to the existing District
- \* To delete those areas which are adequately regulated through other provisions of the zoning ordinance.

**III. SUMMARY OF MODIFICATIONS TO THE BASE ZONING DISTRICTS (see enclosed maps).**

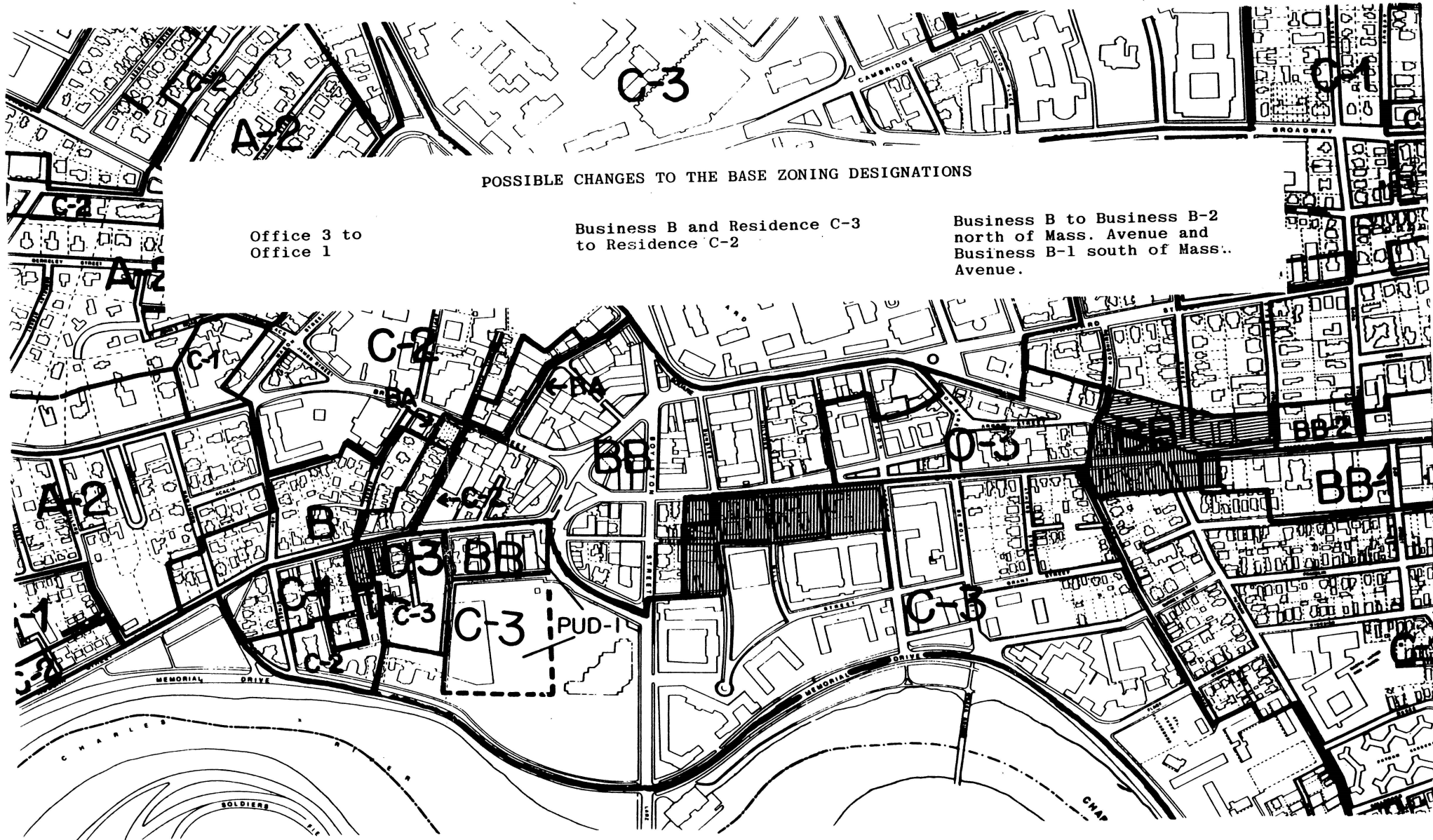
**EXISTING PROVISIONS**

<u>Zoning Districts</u>	<u>FAR</u>	<u>Height*</u>	<u>Setbacks</u>
Bus. B	(Comm) 4.0 (Hous) 3.0	None	Only for housing
Res. C-3	3.0	None	For all uses
Office 3	3.0	None	For all uses

**BASIC PROVISIONS**

<u>Zoning Districts</u>	<u>FAR</u>	<u>Height*</u>	<u>Setbacks</u>
Bus. B-1 (formerly Bus.B)	(Comm) 3.0 (Hous) 3.25	90'	Abutting residential districts
Bus. B-2 (formerly Bus.B)	3.0	90'	Abutting residential districts
Res. C-2 (formerly C-3)	1.75	85'	For all uses
Office 1 (formerly Off.3)	.75	35'	For all uses

\* Modified where the district lies within the Overlay District

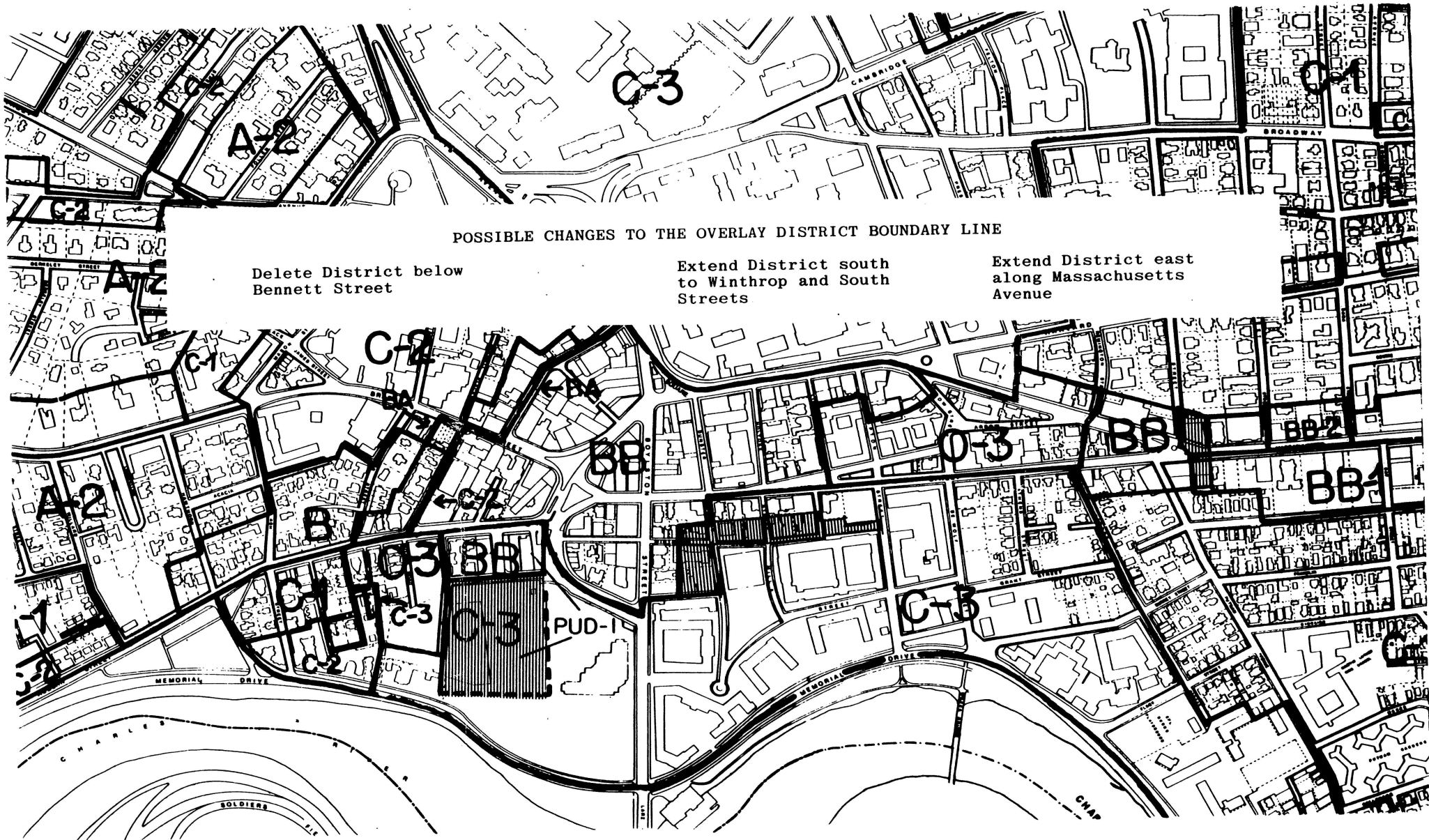


POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE BASE ZONING DESIGNATIONS

Office 3 to  
Office 1

Business B and Residence C-3  
to Residence C-2

Business B to Business B-2  
north of Mass. Avenue and  
Business B-1 south of Mass.  
Avenue.



POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE OVERLAY DISTRICT BOUNDARY LINE

Delete District below  
Bennett Street

Extend District south  
to Winthrop and South  
Streets

Extend District east  
along Massachusetts  
Avenue

24.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139  
TEL. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
ROBERT W. HEALY  
City Manager

June 24, 1985

RICHARD C. ROSSI  
DEPUTY CITY MANAGER

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I transmit herewith communication received from Kathy A. Spiegelman, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, relative to the Harvard Square Overlay District.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy  
City Manager

RWH/b

Re: enclosed comm. from the Community Development Dept. on the Harvard Square Overlay District.

In City Council,

June 24, 1985

6/24/1985  
Referred to the  
Petition