



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

June 24, 1998

To the Honorable, the City Council:

SUBJECT: Planning Board recommendation on the Petition of the City Council to rezone the existing Business C-1 district on Massachusetts Avenue to a Business A-2 district designation.

Recommendation: The Planning Board recommends adoption of the petition as filed.

Findings The Planning Board held a public hearing on the above referenced petition; at that time the Board discussed its recommendation on the same zone change previously considered by the Council, dated November 12, 1997. The Board did not find that any new facts were presented to show that the affected sites should not be zoned the same as the rest of the business district along North Massachusetts Avenue, i.e. as a Business A-2 district as proposed in the current petition. Therefore the Board recommends adoption of the current petition; the previous Planning Board recommendation has been attached for review by City Council, as the findings incorporated in that document continue to apply.

Respectfully Submitted for the Planning Board,

Paul Dietrich
Paul Dietrich, Chair



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD

HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

November 12, 1997

To the Honorable, the City Council:

SUBJECT: Planning Board recommendation on the Petition of the City Council to rezone the existing Business C-1 district on Massachusetts Avenue to a Business A-2 district designation.

Recommendation. The Planning Board recommends adoption of the petition as filed.

Findings

1. There is nothing about the current development of the lots affected by this petition that would suggest the appropriateness of a zoning designation different from that which prevails along Massachusetts Avenue from just north of Porter Square to within two blocks of the Arlington town line, i.e. a Business A-2 zoning designation, extending for a distance of nearly one mile of uniform business zoning, with the exception of this single Business C-1 zone.
2. This is the only Business C-1 zone designated on the zoning map and encompasses little more than 12,000 square feet of land area. The district abuts a Business A-2 district on all sides, up and down and across Massachusetts Avenue, with the exception of the Residence B zone to the northeast.
3. The principal lot within the current Business C-1 district is developed to commercial use (restaurant); it is a one story building at about 15 feet in height generally with some higher elements, but in any case less than 35 feet; and the gross floor area, at about 10,000 square feet, is well below the circa 16,000 square feet that would be permitted in the proposed Business A-2 district if the entire lot on which it sits were zoned Business A-2. The site is developed in a manner consistent with, and within the dimensional limits imposed by, the Business A-2 district.
4. The development on the affected lots has not changed substantially in character since 1991 when most of the larger area formerly zoned Business C-1, of which the Business C-1 zone currently the subject of this rezoning petition was a part, was rezoned to a Business A-2 district. In 1991, as now, it has been the view of the Planning Board that this area is appropriately zoned Business A-2, a zoning designation consistent with the pattern of development now present on the lots affected by this petition, consistent with the City's objectives with regard to development all along Massachusetts Avenue in

North Cambridge, and consistent with the current zoning designation for most of Massachusetts Avenue in North Cambridge.

5. The Planning Board has favored rezoning this area to Business A-2, as proposed in the current petition, since 1991 when the entire original Business C-1 district, created on the Zoning Map in 1986 (Lavery Petition), was proposed to be rezoned to Business A-2 in two companion zoning petitions (Herman, et al and Sheketoff, et al). There has been nothing in the intervening years, in terms of new development changing the character of the area, altered public policy with regard to the planning objectives for this section of Massachusetts Avenue, or any other new information, to suggest the Business A-2 designation, as proposed, is not appropriate.

6. The designation of Trolley Square, that general area at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Cameron Avenue, as a Business C-1 district in 1986, rather than the Business A-2 district applied to Massachusetts Avenue beyond Trolley Square, was a compromise with property owners in the affected area by the city/resident/property owner Zoning Committee created to develop a rezoning proposal for all of Massachusetts Avenue from the Cambridge Common north; the Committee recommendation was ultimately adopted by the City Council as the Lavery Petition. The compromises reached that resulted in the creation of the Business C-1 district and its application to the Trolley Square area on the Zoning Map were acceptable to the Planning Board; nevertheless, the Board at that time did consider the Business A-2 district the better planning choice for the Trolley Square area.

7. A number of building proposals were advanced in the Trolley Square Business C-1 district after its adoption in 1986: at 2441, 2440, 2465, and 2456 Massachusetts Avenues. With the exception of the apartment building at 2456 Massachusetts Avenue, no construction resulted from the special permits granted by the Planning Board and required by the zoning regulations. Each project was residential in use and proposed to make use of the full development potential authorized in the Business C-1 district. The proposals illustrated both to the Planning Board and the neighboring community the extent to which the character of Trolley Square would be transformed should all lots in the Business C-1 district be developed to the full potential allowed under the applicable zoning regulations.

8. The Trolley Square area has been differently, and more densely, zoned from the rest of Massachusetts Avenue since at least 1943. In 1943, that different designation could be justified because a commuter rail line crossed Massachusetts Avenue at that location with the logical implication that somewhat more development might be accommodated there. With the abandonment of that rail line, the planning rationale for treating Trolley Square differently from the rest of Massachusetts Avenue disappeared as well. The persistence of the higher zoning designation into the 1980's was more an accident of history and inertia than planning choice. More recently with a changed, and more active, development climate, the city has chosen, progressively through two zoning changes in 1986 and 1991, to bring the zoning in Trolley Square up to date to reflect a changed

physical environment and different policy objectives. This proposed rezoning would complete that task.

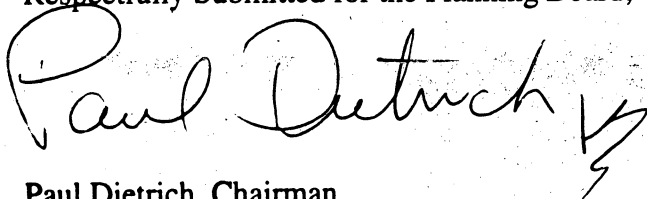
9. A number of policy and planning documents have been published or completed that have relevance to the Board's recommendation on this petition.

a. **Toward a Sustainable Future: Cambridge Growth Policy Document.** This policy document, published in 1993, sets forth seventy land use policies for Cambridge on a wide range of functional areas. Policies relevant to this recommendation suggest that development patterns already clearly established should be reinforced, that expansion of commercial districts is not encouraged, that the present character of commercial areas be strengthened rather than changed, and that the highest density of development be encouraged where there is the most available public transit. In combination, such policies support this proposed change.

b. **North Cambridge Neighborhood Study.** A study undertaken jointly by the North Cambridge community and the Community Development Department; published in 1990 from work undertaken in 1988 and early 1989. The report states strong objections to the Business C-1 district and recommends its elimination. Concerns for the amount of traffic along the Massachusetts Avenue corridor, and the additional traffic new development would generate, were strongly expressed.

c. **DJK Associates Traffic Study, 1989.** Undertaken in response to the concerns expressed in the neighborhood with regard to the traffic consequences of additional development along the Massachusetts Avenue corridor in North Cambridge. Significant additional commercial development in Trolley Square was anticipated to result in reduced functioning of important intersections and the need for physical modifications of roadways if the level of service is to be maintained at acceptable levels.

Respectfully Submitted for the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Dietrich". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Dietrich, Chairman

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WASH BUCKLE

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SOLD 5/10

BA-2

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 349-4300
FAX. 349-4307



EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

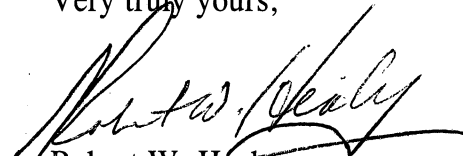
RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

July 27, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached for your consideration a Planning Board recommendation on the Petition of the City Council to rezone the existing Business C-1 district on Massachusetts Avenue to a Business A-2 district designation.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #7

4935

Relative to a PB recommendation
on the Peitition of the City Council
to rezone the existing Business C-1
district on No. Mass Ave to a Buseinss
A-2 district designation.

In City Council July 27, 1998

Referred to
Calendar # 116