



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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

(617) 876-6800
EXTENSION 344

April 13, 1973

The Honorable, The City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

SUBJECT: Petition to Rezone Land off Aberdeen Avenue

Dear Councillors:

In accordance with Chapter 40A of the General Laws, the Planning Board held a public hearing on March 6, 1973, on a petition brought by the Planning Board to rezone land relative to premises situated in an area generally bounded by the Watertown Branch of the Fitchburg Railroad, a line 100 feet back from and parallel to the western street line of Aberdeen Avenue and an area at the end of Homer Avenue from Business B to Residence B.

On the basis of testimony presented at the public hearing, and further information provided by the owner, the Planning Board voted unanimously to amend its petition to permit a rezoning to Business A (instead of Residence B). The Planning Board recommends that the amended petition be APPROVED.

1. The Inappropriateness of Business B

The area proposed to be rezoned is presently a Business B district. The Business B district permits residential use in accordance with C-3 requirements at a density of 145 units per acre with no height limit. Business B districts permit general commercial activities at a floor area ratio of 4.0 with no parking requirements for non-residential uses and no yard requirements. The inappropriateness of Business B is emphasized by the character of the abutting neighborhoods -- the area is surrounded by Residence B and Business A zones. In addition, the property does not abut a public street and is accessible only through a Residential district.

The City's Zoning Ordinance does not afford adjoining residential streets adequate protection from abutting Business B districts. Residential districts must be protected from this kind of potential high density business encroachment.

The requirements and provisions of the Business B district are of great concern to the abutting residents. Business B permits intensive development adjacent to a low density residential area. For business uses, no setbacks for buildings are required, which could result in office or commercial structures built to the lot lines, and literally on top of residential buildings. There is no parking requirement for business uses in a Business B district, so parking for any business development would probably spill over into the residential streets.

2. The Logic of Business A

The Business A district allows the City the benefits of business development while protecting the immediate abutters and residential areas. As indicated at the public hearing, Work Wear, the owner of the Aberdeen Avenue property in which its subsidiary Gordon Services, Inc. now operates, intends to sell the property to Sasaki, Dawson, DeMay Assoc. for conversion to an office building to be used as headquarters for this nationally known landscape architecture firm. The proposed renovation of the existing structure appears to be attractive and could be considered a great improvement to the present structure which houses the non-conforming industrial laundry use. The Work Wear Corporation, owners of the property, favors the Business A designation.

The Planning Board feels that the proposed upgrading of the property as a result of the sale is beneficial to the City as well as responsive to desirable restrictions needed by the abutting residential neighborhood. Under Business A regulations, the proposed office development would be limited in height to 35 feet and would provide parking, (which the developer has agreed to landscape appropriately and attractively).

3. Zoning and Protection of Family Environment

To the extent that zoning affects the frequency, distribution, and intensity of land uses throughout the City, zoning interacts with the needs of families. In Cambridge zoning has a critical impact on the suitability of a family environment and the protection of it. In the last decade pressures have grown to the extent that both the physical and sociological characteristics of many family-type neighborhoods have already been altered considerably and their suitability as family environments has been threatened with extinction. In several neighborhoods zoning has contributed to this situation by implicitly encouraging pressures for redevelopment and conversion to higher densities. In areas where

densities permitted by the Zoning Ordinance are substantially higher than existing densities (as in the present case) such pressures are inevitable. This petition attempts to subdue these pressures in order to protect the abutting residential areas.

4. The Property Value Issue

A complex issue in any "down zoning" is the impact on property values. Some owners may argue that loss of development potential will reduce property value. On the other hand, the protection afforded a residential neighborhood by zoning that preserves existing character is also translatable into "property value." 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.

5. Recommendation

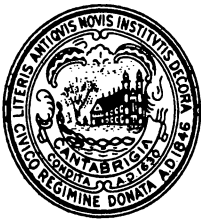
The Planning Board feels that this area must be protected from intense commercial development. The Business A district will allow some new development but will also protect the abutting residential neighborhoods by means of its restrictive regulations.

Very truly yours,

FOR THE CAMBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD



Arthur C. Parris
Chairman



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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel, 876-6800

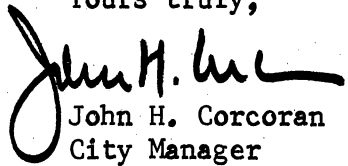
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
JOHN H. CORCORAN
City Manager

April 23, 1973

To the Honorable, the City Council,

I transmit herewith for your information, self-explanatory communication from Arthur C. Parris, Chairman of the Planning Board relative to a Petition to Rezone Land Off Aberdeen Avenue, Cambridge.

Yours truly,


John H. Corcoran
City Manager

JHC/m

Agenda # 17

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Communication from John H. Corcoran, City Manager transmitting one from Arthur C. Parris, Chairman of Planning Board relative to a petition to rezone land off Aberdeen Ave.

In City Council,

April 23, 1973

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4/23/73
Reported to the Council
on Ordinances Forest
Hearing