



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

To: The Honorable, The City Council:

Subject: Laverty Rezoning Petition (North Massachusetts Avenue)

The Petition

The petition would comprehensively rezone the area abutting northern Massachusetts Avenue from the Cambridge Common to near the Arlington town line by creating new zoning districts, modifying the provisions of existing districts and rezoning areas to more appropriate existing districts.

Recommendation

The Planning Board recommends adoption of the petition. The Board however does recommend the following amendments to the petition which will strengthen the intent of the rezoning, clarify provisions that may be unclear, or correct inadvertent conflicts.

Amendment 1

In Section A-3, paragraph b of the petition a phrase should be added to the proposed new footnote (h) to clarify the intent of the FAR limitation proposed in the new Business A-2 District. The footnote should be amended to read as follows (with the new language underlined).

- (h) Of the total FAR permitted on the lot the maximum ratio of floor area to lot area for permitted principal uses other than residential uses specified in Section 4.31 shall be 1.0 (additional gross floor area on the lot up to the maximum FAR of 1.75 permitted on the lot must be devoted to residential uses).

Amendment 2.

In Section A-3, paragraph b of the petition the new footnote identified as "n" was mislabeled and should be footnote "m".

Amendment 3

A major thrust of the Laverty Petition is to ensure that housing is not placed at a disadvantage when competing with alternate uses in business districts. To that end in the Business C District in Porter Square the Laverty Petition amended the regulations to permit housing to be constructed at the same FAR (2.0) as was always permitted for office and retail uses. However, the petition failed to eliminate the special permit provision for housing which is required for housing in the existing BC district (as one means of discouraging housing construction). Therefore the following amendment would eliminate the special permit requirement for housing in the revised Business C district, and thus treat the two competing uses equally.

In Section A-5 of the petition insert a new paragraph (c) as follows and redesignate the current paragraph (c) as paragraph (d).

- (c) In Section 4.26 - Multifamily Special Permit Applicability and in Section 11.10 - Townhouse Development, delete all reference to Business C; in Section 4.30 - Table of Use Regulations, delete all references to footnotes 3 and 5 in the column headed "Bus C".

Amendment 4

A similar circumstance applies in the new Business C-1 district proposed for the area surrounding the Trackless Trolley yards. In order to protect dwellings in the residential districts closely abutting the new district a side yard requirement is imposed on residential structures (which are allowed to be constructed at higher densities than commercial structures). However, the requirement applies everywhere even where side yards abut commercially zoned properties, again providing a significant disadvantage to residential uses where they compete with commercial uses. The Board therefore recommends that the side yard requirement only apply where the commercially zoned lot abuts a residentially used lot in a residential district. The following amendment is proposed with new language underlined).

In Section A-5, paragraph (b) of the petition footnote (c) should read as follows.

- (c) H+L for all buildings having 50% or more of their gross
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floor area devoted to residential uses specified in
Section 4.31 where the side lot line abuts a lot
residentially used, the majority of which lies in a
residential zoning district.

Findings

The Lavery Petition is a comprehensive document which makes many detailed changes in the zoning regulations along Massachusetts Avenue. Its basic objectives however seem clear and reflect a reasonable compromise between the desires of the closely abutting neighborhoods to minimize the negative impacts of additional development along the Avenue and the objectives of property owners to achieve a reasonable level of development and economic return on their property.

In general, the new districts proposed and the changes to existing districts made provide incentives, or at least eliminate the built in penalties, for the construction of housing as well as retail and office uses along the Avenue.

At the same time other changes establish height limits, setback requirements or in one district reduction in allowable building bulk to ensure that new development does not overwhelm the adjacent small scale residential areas. Nevertheless, there remains for all property in the corridor reasonable development potential that is consistent with the overall public good.

In general, the proposal will continue to allow the Avenue to evolve, change and grow but it will be at a more modest scale, and through the Overlay District standards, in a manner that better serves the long term interests of the whole North Cambridge community, both property owner and resident.

Respectfully Submitted
for the Planning Board,

Paul Dietrich LB

Paul Dietrich,
Chairman

PD/LB/jac



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
TEL. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

October 6, 1986

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I transmit herewith report received from the Planning Board relative to the Lavery Rezoning Petition (North Massachusetts Avenue).

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/b

Re: Planning Board recommendations on the petition of Charles R. Lavery, Jr. & the North Mass. Ave. Advisory Committee to rezone North Mass. Ave.

In City Council,

October 6, 1986

*Referred to the
Petition*