

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD
CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

October 3, 2000

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Subject: Loose, et al Petition to impose a moratorium on non residential construction in an area bounded generally by Banks Street, River Street, Memorial Drive, De Wolfe Street and Mt. Auburn Street.

Recommendation The Planning Board does not recommend adoption of the Petition.

Findings

1. It is the Planning Board's view that, in general, imposition of a building moratorium should be a zoning tool that is used sparingly, and only when specific circumstances exist: (a) the area encompassed by the moratorium is inappropriately zoned, (b) a substantial planning study is needed to determine the alternate kinds of future development that might be acceptable, and (c) significant amounts of new development can be anticipated that would preclude implementation of any conclusions resulting from the study effort. The Board finds that these circumstances do not apply in the Loose Petition area.

* Much of the petition area is fully developed and not likely to see increased development in the future, e.g. the Harvard University dormitory sites, the power plant and office buildings south of Western Avenue. The Putnam Avenue/Blackstone Street block was recently rezoned to the low density Residence C-1 district; as a result no additional development is possible on the sites within that block.

* For some areas, the potential zoning alternative is fairly clear, e.g. Residence C-1 for the Hingham Street/Elmer Street blocks within the petition area and along lower Western Avenue adjacent to the petition area, as proposed by the Planning Board about a year ago.

2. Two areas have been clearly identified as likely sites for future development: the two city blocks along Memorial Drive currently used for retail nursery sales, and a series of parking lots interwoven with residential dwellings west of Banks Street and north of Cowperwaithe Street. The two areas are relatively discrete geographically and constitute only a small portion of the entire moratorium area.

* These areas are not subject to imminent development. The owner of all of them, Harvard University, has suggested the expected long-term program for the redevelopment of these

parcels and has initiated public participation to review those future possibilities. Near-term construction on these sites will not occur.

* The Citywide Growth Management Advisory Committee planning effort has identified both areas as needing the development of new transition zoning regulations. The community processes to develop recommendations for these transition areas have begun with the participation of the property owner, the Community Development Department and the community.

* The Citywide Rezoning Proposal, should its provisions be adopted, would likely require either a special permit traffic review or mandatory urban design review of any project proposed for these areas, depending on the scale and nature of the final development plans.

3. The community is legitimately concerned about the future character of any new building that will occur on these two sites in the future; many issues need to be explored and appropriate responses developed. It is the Board's view that that objective can best be achieved by focusing discussion on the two limited areas likely to change in the future and by not burdening property owners with a moratorium that serves no real purpose. Processes have already begun to facilitate the necessary discussions on the critical sites.

Attached is an informational memorandum provided to the Planning Board from the Community Development Department summarizing the efforts that have been undertaken to date to address the long-standing concerns of Riverside residents for the future of land use in the moratorium area.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,


Larissa Brown, Chair

Attachment:

CDD Memorandum, 9/12/2000



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

BETH RUBENSTEIN
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

MALAINA BOWKER
Deputy Director for
Community Development

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: September 12, 2000

RE: Background Report on Riverside Zoning Issues

The purpose of this memo is to provide background information useful to the Board's deliberations on the Loose Petition.

1. The Riverside Neighborhood Study, 1990 (Pages 51, 91-92 attached)

This was a joint report of the Riverside Neighborhood Study Committee and the Community Development Department, following a year-long planning process. The following recommendations (see attached text) are especially relevant to the current Loose Petition deliberations:

Urban Design

- Strengthen the connection of Riverside to the Charles River

Zoning

Residence C-2 (along lower Western Avenue)

- Consider new zoning which would limit the height of new residential structures to match the existing structures along Western Avenue.
- Consider new zoning which would accommodate neighborhood businesses, yet limit the size (in square footage) of such uses.

Office 3 (along Memorial Drive)

- Consider new zoning which would:
 - a. Limit the overall heights allowed in the district, as well as limit scale and density;
 - b. Permit mixed residential, commercial and office uses; and
 - c. Especially encourage residential use along the neighborhood edge.

City Hall Annex
57 Inman Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
Voice: 617 349-4600
Fax: 617 349-4669
TTY: 617 349-4621

Harvard University

- Establish development standards and guidelines which would apply to potential development sites including:
 - a. Mahoney's Market site (870-886 Memorial Drive);
 - b. Cowperthwaithe parking lot (1-13 Cowperthwaithe Street);
 - c. Grant and Banks Streets parking lot (3-15 Grant Street and 37-39 Banks Street);
 - d. Elmer Street lot (27-29 Elmer Street).

Structure such standards and guidelines to:

- a. Insure that edges of any proposed development projects are in keeping with the height and scale of the abutting residential neighborhood, and have appropriate setbacks thus proving a smooth and visually unobtrusive transition between the institutional and residential districts;
- b. Encourage neighborhood connection and access to the river, both by car and on foot;
- c. Mix institutional and noninstitutional uses, especially appropriate neighborhood uses, such as residential and small retail;
- d. Screen and landscape all parking sites to buffer the abutters; and
- e. Place unsightly elements of development, away from the neighborhood, or screen them sufficiently so that they are not a visual intrusion into the neighborhood.

2. Citywide Rezoning Bulletin, Vol. II, November, 1998 (Attached)

The Citywide Growth Management Advisory Committee initially identified areas within the Riverside Neighborhood as priority transition locations. (See D, E, on map) These locations are areas where low-density districts abut zoning districts that allow significantly taller buildings.

Institutional to Lower Scale Residential (Map location D)

- Banks Street: Residence C3-to Residence C1. Harvard owns properties in the Residence C3 zone (120 foot height limit) along the western side of Banks Street. Across the street are predominately 2- and 3-family wood structures in the Residence C1 district (35 foot height limit).

High Scale Residential to Lower Scale Residential (Map location E)

- Western Avenue in Riverside: Residence C2 to Residence C1. The Residence C2 zone would allow multifamily structures at 85 feet. The adjacent Residence C1 (height limit of 35 feet) neighborhood is typified by a mix of 2- and 3-family wood frame structures..

3. Memo to Planning Board, April 21, 1999 (Attached)

Following discussions with CGMAC, CDD staff prepared a memorandum suggesting rezoning in Riverside to address some of the longstanding concerns. In August 1999, the Planning Board reviewed the memorandum, and asked staff to meet with the property owners and residents to get their reactions to the proposals:

- Rezoning Residence C-2 to Residence C-1 in Riverside (along Western Avenue)
- Rezoning Residence C-3 to Residence C-1 in Riverside (at Putnam Avenue, Western Avenue, Banks Street, Hingham Street and Elmer Street)

4. Meetings with the Riverside Neighbors

As the Department began to meet with the community early this year, Harvard also made known their intention to develop a museum on the Mahoney's site in the C3 zone. A series of meetings were held to discuss the City's proposals and to review Harvard's preliminary plans:

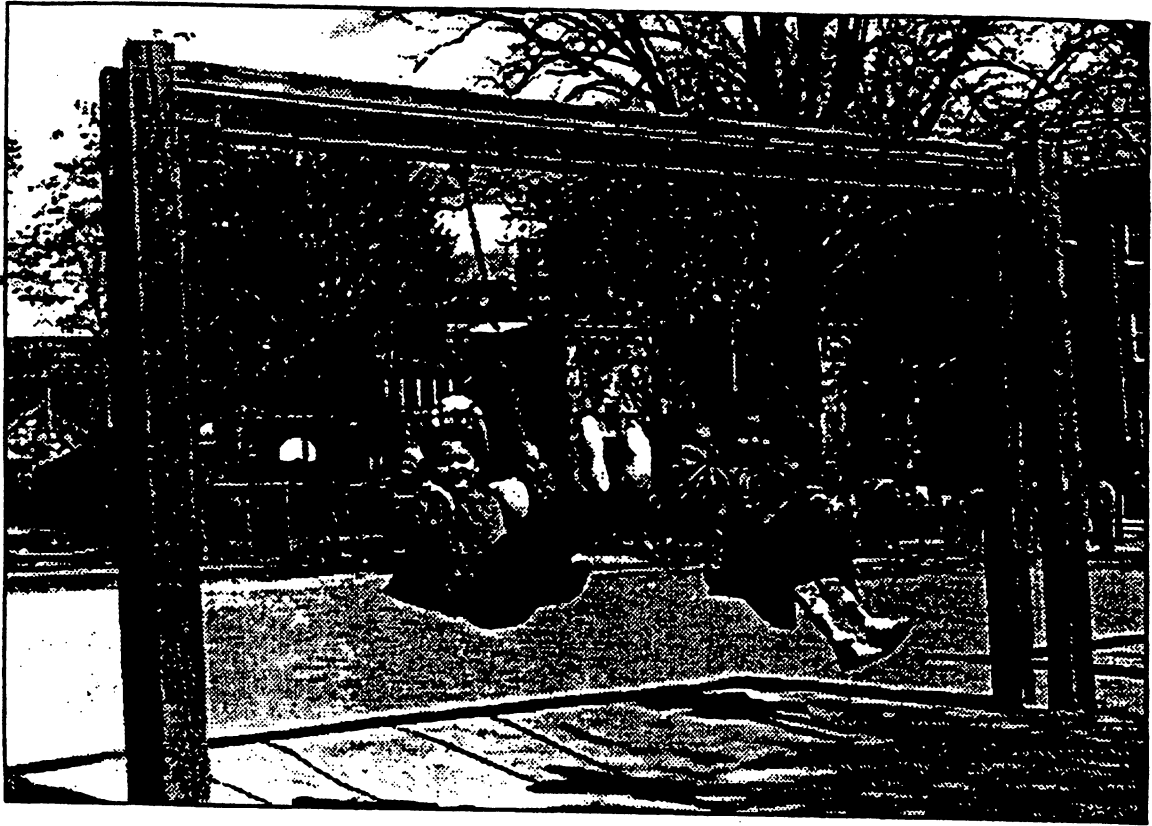
- March 2, 2000 Community Development Department-General Public
- May 10, 2000 Harvard University sponsored meeting on their proposal
- May 16, 2000 Neighborhood sponsored meeting-CDD in attendance
- June 6, 2000 Neighborhood sponsored meeting-CDD in attendance
- June 21, 2000 Harvard University sponsored meeting on their proposal
- June 13, 2000 Neighborhood sponsored meeting-CDD in attendance

5. Current Deliberations

As the Board considers the Loose petition, the citizens involved in putting forth the petition are meeting to develop community goals for the future of their neighborhood. Also, Harvard is continuing to schedule meetings to review the museum proposal. Staff recommends the proposal of April 21, 1999 as a good starting point for considering more detailed zoning changes in the area.

- 1. THE RIVERSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY**
- 2. CITYWIDE REZONING BULLETIN, VOL. II NOVEMBER 8,
1998**
- 3. MEMO TO PLANNING BOARD, APRIL 21, 1999**
- 4. LOOSE PETITION**

RIVERSIDE
NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY



A JOINT REPORT OF THE

RIVERSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY COMMITTEE AND THE

CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Neighborhood Business

1. Support pro-active strategies to bring businesses to the neighborhood by:
 - a. capitalizing on the ethnic and racial diversity of the neighborhood to draw businesses into the neighborhood;
 - b. promoting the location of small businesses, minority-owned businesses and women-owned businesses into the neighborhood;
 - c. restructuring the existing zoning regulations along the major streets in the neighborhood to allow small neighborhood-based and pedestrian-oriented businesses to relocate there.

Employment

1. Support the Cambridge Youth Employment Program.
2. Support the Cambridge Employment Program.
3. Support the continued development of employment programs with Harvard University.

LAND USE, ZONING AND URBAN DESIGN

Urban Design

1. Strengthen the connection of Riverside to the Charles River.
2. Create a "gateway" to Cambridge on River Street.
3. Maintain scale, density, and pattern of development appropriate to a site, especially in or bordering residential areas.
4. Promote the creation of a "greenbelt" to connect the neighborhood's green spaces, including the improvement of Peabody Terrace walkway to make it more inviting.
5. Increase and maintain street trees.

Zoning

Residence C-2 (at Central Square)

1. Maintain mixed commercial and residential uses allowed under current zoning.
2. Retain existing zoning to avoid making newer buildings non conforming; however, consider limiting

the overall heights of buildings to provide a smooth transition between this district and abutting residential district.

3. Create an urban design plan for the area to give it a cohesive visual identity.

Business A (River and Western)

1. Retain the existing scale, height, density and development patterns along River Street and Western Avenue.
2. Consider new zoning which would limit the height of new residential structures to match the existing structures.
3. Consider new zoning which would accommodate neighborhood businesses, yet limit the size (in square footage) of such uses.

Residence C-2 (along lower Western Avenue)

1. Consider new zoning which would limit the height of new residential structures to match the existing structures along Western Avenue.
2. Consider new zoning which would accommodate neighborhood businesses, yet limit the size (in square footage) of such uses.

Office 3 (Massachusetts Avenue)

1. Consider new zoning which would limit the overall height of new construction and provide a smooth transition between Massachusetts Avenue and the abutting residential neighborhood.

Office 3 (along Memorial Drive)

1. Consider new zoning which would:
 - a. limit the overall heights allowed in the district, as well as limit scale and density;
 - b. permit mixed residential, commercial and office uses; and
 - c. especially encourage residential uses along the neighborhood edge.
2. Create an urban design plan to accompany any new zoning which would:

-
- a. place buildings with greater density and massing, and higher heights nearer to the Charles River/Memorial Drive side of the zoning district and away from the neighborhood, thus providing a smooth transition between this district and the abutting residential area;
 - b. limit heights along the edge of the residential neighborhood to match those of the neighborhood;

- c. provide adequate set backs to reduce shadows and to protect the Charles River bank from inappropriate visual intrusions.

Memorial Drive

1. Consider the establishment of a parkway overlay district to protect the Charles River bank from inappropriate visual intrusions.

2. Encourage stronger direct support of the Riverside neighborhood, especially by having a Harvard representative sit on the Board of the Cambridge Community Center.

Peter Armstrong from Harvard's Office of Government, Community, and Public Affairs now sits on the Community Center's Board.

Development

1. Establish development standards and guidelines which would apply to potential development sites including:
 - a. Grower's Market site (870-886 Memorial Drive);
 - b. Cowperthwaite parking lot (1-13 Cowperthwaite Street);
 - c. Grant and Banks Streets parking lot (3-15 Grant Street and 37-39 Banks Street);
 - and
 - d. Elmer Street lot (27-29 Elmer Street).
2. Structure such standards and guidelines to:
 - a. insure that the edges of any proposed development projects are in keeping with the height and scale of the abutting residential neighborhood, and have appropriate setbacks thus providing a smooth and visually unobtrusive transition between the institutional and residential districts;
 - b. encourage neighborhood connection and access to the river, both by car and on foot;
 - c. mix institutional and noninstitutional uses, especially appropriate neighborhood uses, such as residential and small retail;
 - d. screen and landscape all parking sites to buffer the abutters; and
 - e. place unsightly elements of development, including dumpsters, cooling units, exhaust fans, transformers, large blank walls, loading docks, and fences with dangerous spikes away from the residential neighborhood, or screen them sufficiently so that they are not a visual intrusion into the neighborhood.

The Committee proposes that the best way to approach this recommendation is to form a working group comprising Riverside residents, City officials, and representatives from

Harvard University. The working group would develop the specifics of the standards and guidelines delineated in this section.

3. Construct structured parking within the campus and not in or directly next to the residential neighborhood.
4. Examine and address traffic and parking issues as a result of new construction.
5. The Study Committee supports residential uses for available development sites.
6. The Study Committee supports retail use at 8-10 Mt. Auburn Street.
7. The Study Committee supports housing or a community garden at Elmer Street.

Housing

1. Maintain the on going dialogue regarding university housing policies with the Riverside community through a neighborhood association;
2. Work with the City to find ways of accommodating growth without displacing local residents.
3. Work with the Riverside community and the City to include housing and provide some mixed income component in any future redevelopment of the Grower's Market at 807 Memorial Drive.

Policy

In general, Harvard should examine its policies as related to neighborhood issues for all facilities, especially parking and housing, and specifically:

1. Meet with abutters and a Riverside neighborhood organization to review any proposed development projects.
2. Investigate whether the informal Harvard "Red Line" policy should be expanded, formalized or altered.
3. Develop a master plan for future Harvard growth (Project 2000), recognizing and considering the input of neighborhood groups.

Harvard University urges the Riverside neighborhood to organize an ongoing citizens' association as a vehicle for future dialogue and communication between the university and the Riverside community.

Priority Areas? These are the Committee's ideas . . . What are yours?

Transition Locations:

The Committee initially identified the following priority transition locations. Each of these locations is an area where low density districts abut zoning districts which allow significantly taller buildings.

Commercial to Lower Scale Residential

A *Putnam Avenue and Pleasant Street in Riverside and Cambridgeport: Office 3 to Residence C.* This residential area is characterized by a mix of 2- and 3-family wood frame structures with a few masonry multi-family buildings; the Residence C height limit is 35 feet. The Office 3 district includes the Polaroid property, which has a very large development potential. Heights have recently been capped at 120 feet, but there is no transition requirement that heights be lower near the residential district boundary.

Industrial to Lower Scale Residential

B *Main Street to Medeiros Way in Neighborhoods 3 and 4: Industry B to Residence C1.* The Industry B district, which allows up to 120 feet in height, is located across the street from residential structures at Washington Elms and Newtowne Court along Main Street, and across from wood frame 2- and 3-family structures along Medeiros Way, in a C1 district with 35 foot height limits. There is currently no transition requirement.

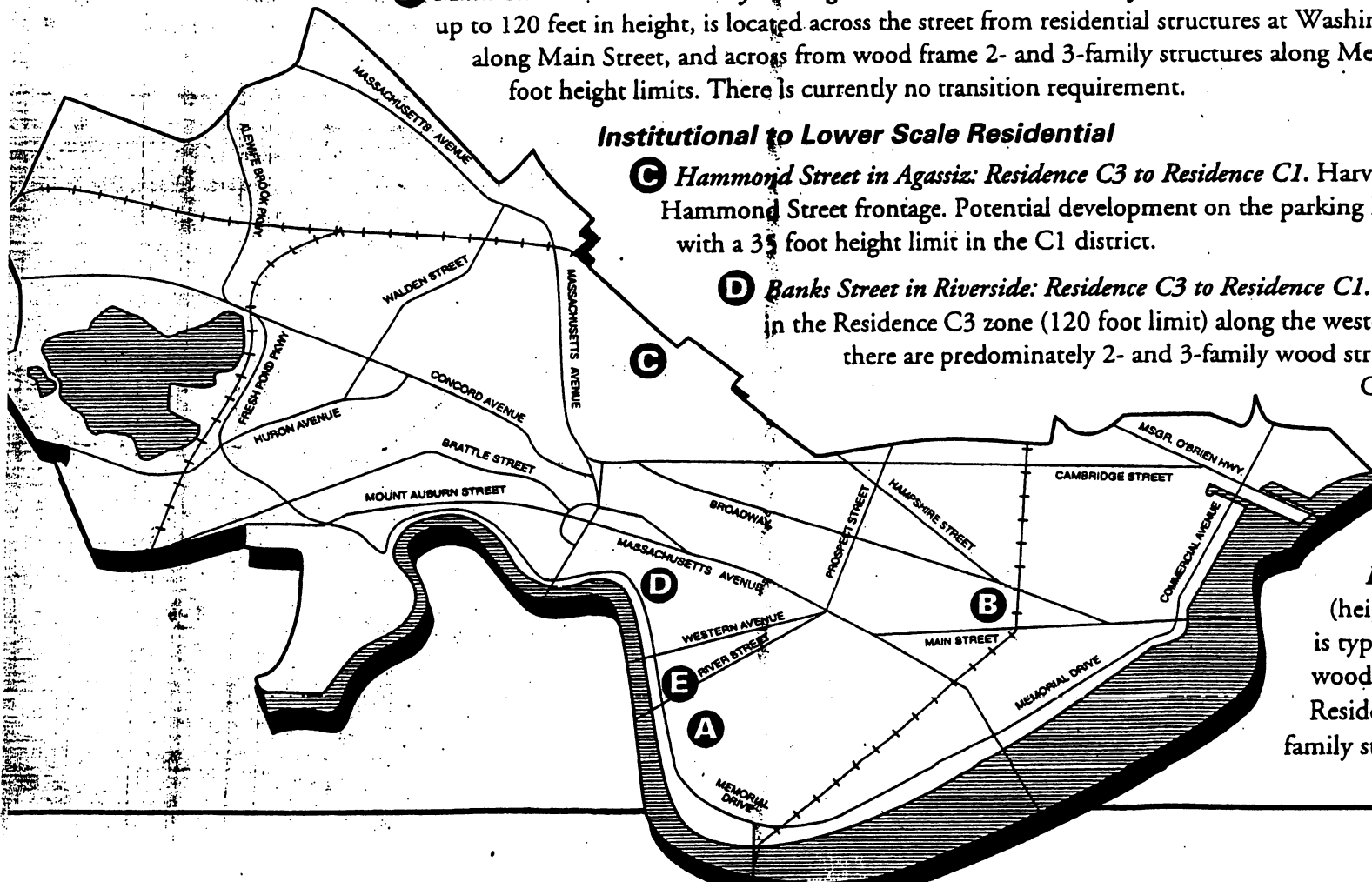
Institutional to Lower Scale Residential

C *Hammond Street in Agassiz: Residence C3 to Residence C1.* Harvard has a large parking lot along its Hammond Street frontage. Potential development on the parking lot is capped at 120 feet, compared with a 35 foot height limit in the C1 district.

D *Banks Street in Riverside: Residence C3 to Residence C1.* Harvard University owns properties in the Residence C3 zone (120 foot limit) along the western side of Banks Street, on which there are predominately 2- and 3-family wood structures in the abutting Residence C1 district (35 foot limit).

Higher Scale Residential to Lower Scale Residential

E *Western Avenue in Riverside: Residence C2 to Residence C1.* The Residence C1 (height limit of 35 feet) neighborhood is typified by a mix of 2- and 3-family wood frame structures. The adjacent Residence C2 zone would allow multi-family structures at 85 feet.



3.

2. Residence C-2 to Residence C-1 in Riverside (along Western Avenue)

Amend the Zoning Map of the City of Cambridge by striking the existing designation Residence C-2 (C-2) and substituting therefor the designation Residence C-1 (C-1) for that entire area currently designated C-2 on the Zoning Map bounded by the centerline of Putnam Avenue, the centerline of Howard Street, a line 100 feet distant from and parallel to the southern sideline of Western Avenue (but excluding all portions of lot 157 which shall remain within an Open Space district: the western side of Gilmore Street, northerly to the northerly lot line of Lot #157 to the easterly side line of Montague Street, and then to the line 100 feet parallel to the southern side line of Western Avenue), and a line 100 feet distant from and parallel to the northern sideline of Western Avenue.

1.00 Said area includes all or parts of the following parcels of land:

1.01 Premises shown on Assessor's Plat #126

Lots # 126, 127, 79, 78, 125, 124, 123, 118, 63, 62, 61, 60, 59, 132, 133, 129, 128, 122, 121, 58, 57, 4, 3, 2, 1, 9;

Inclusive of addresses 218-338 Western Avenue, 210-214 Putnam Avenue, 25-27 Howard Street, 10-12 Gilmore Street, 25-27 Montague Street.

1.02 Premises shown on Assessor's Plat #122

Lots # 172, 173, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 24, 25, 26, 22, 174, 175, 169, 14, 15, 10, 11, 12, 13, 197, 196, 195, 194, 176;

Inclusive of addresses 217-337 Western Avenue, 172-174 Putnam Avenue, 9-17 Hews Street, 7-11 Dodge Street, 10-20 Dodge Street, 28-30 Callender Street, 29-35 Howard Street.

3. Residence C-3 to Residence C-1 in Riverside (at Putnam Avenue, Western Avenue, Banks Street, Hingham Street and Elmer Street)

Amend the Zoning Map of the City of Cambridge by striking the existing designation Residence C-3 (C-3) and substituting therefor the designation Residence C-1 (C-1) for two areas:

(a) that area bounded by the southerly sidelines of lots #103 and #106 and their extensions to the centerlines of Western Avenue and Hingham Street, and the centerlines of Western Avenue, Putnam Avenue, and Hingham Street, and

(b) that area bounded by the centerlines of Banks Street, Hingham Street, and Putnam Avenue and:

A line beginning at a point, said point being the centerline of Putnam Avenue and the easterly extension of the northerly sideline of Lot #128;

Thence proceeding in a westerly direction along the northerly sideline of Lot #128 to its intersection with the centerline of Elmer Street, a distance of approximately 150 feet;

Thence turning and proceeding in a southerly direction along the centerline of Elmer street to its intersection with the easterly extension of the northerly sideline of Lot #60, a distance of approximately 35 feet;

Thence turning and proceeding in a westerly direction along the northerly sideline of Lot #60 and its extension to its intersection with the easterly sideline of Lot #115, a distance of approximately 75 feet;

Thence turning and proceeding in a northerly direction along the easterly sideline of Lot #115 to its intersection with the northerly sideline of Lot #115, a distance of approximately 15 feet;

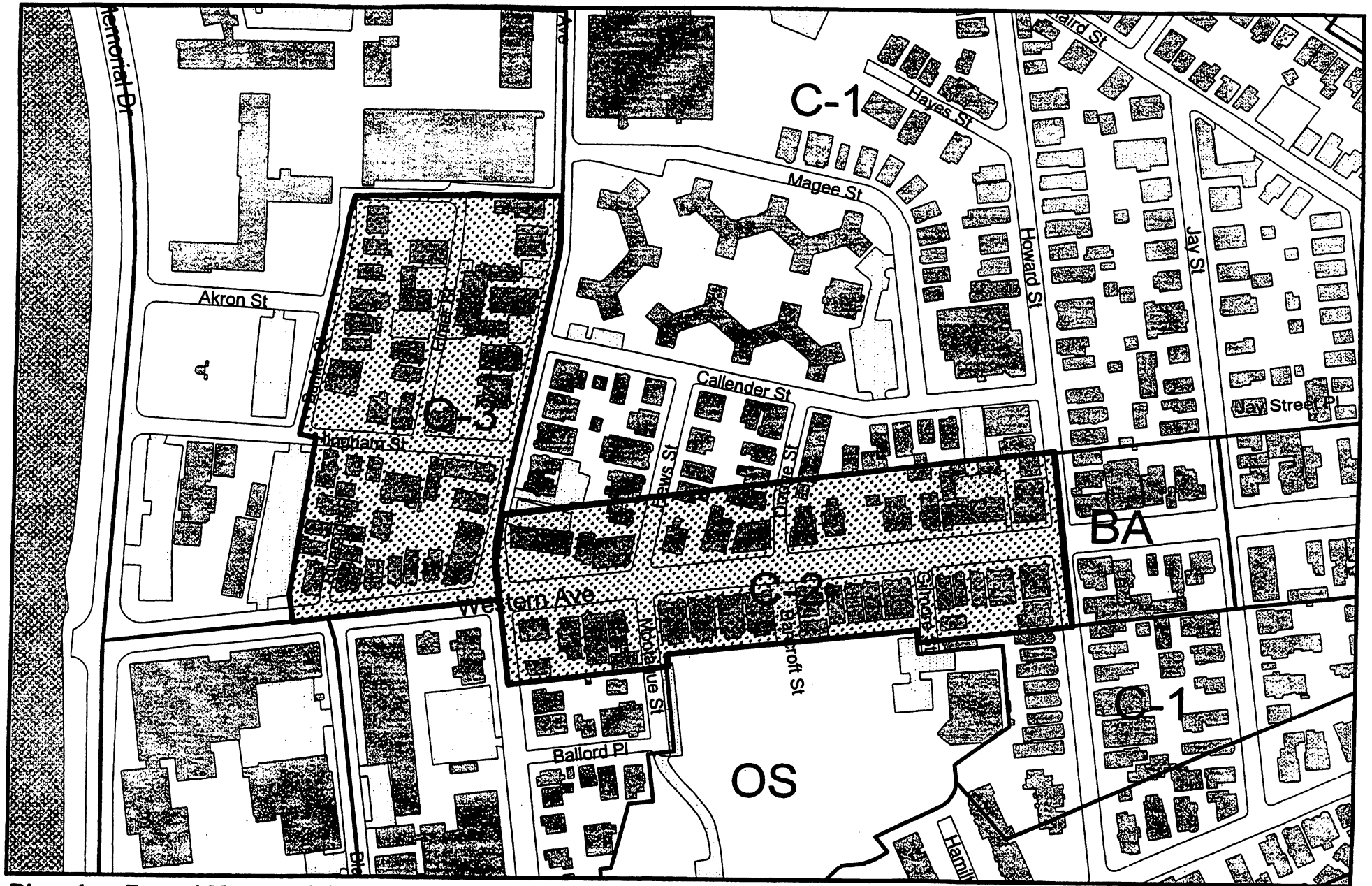
Thence turning and proceeding in a westerly direction along the northerly sideline of Lot #155 and its extension to the centerline of Banks Street, a distance of approximately 90 feet.

1.00 Said area includes all or parts of the following parcels of land:

1.01 Premises shown on Assessor's Plat #130.

Lots # 113, 109, 108, 52, 51, 50, 49, 135, 136, 137, 68, 67, 66, 65, 64, 63, 62, 61, 60, 128, 100, 99, 97, 98, 123, 74, 73, 146, 71, 145, 122, 129, 3, 4, 5, 6, 19, 18, 17, 7, 8, 9, 124, 125, 16, 126, 127, 15, 11, 12, 13, 14;

Inclusive of addresses 343-383 Western Avenue, 131-189 Putnam Avenue, 2-26 Hingham Street, 9-27 Hingham Street, 200-232 Banks Street, 5-29 Elmer Street, 4-36 Elmer Street.



Planning Board Memo of April 21, 1999

Residence C-2 to Residence C-1 - Western Avenue in Riverside

Residence C-3 to Residence C-1 - Putnam Avenue, Western Avenue, Banks Street, Hingham Street and Elmer Street in Riverside

Cambridge Community Development

Map Prepared September 2000

Zoning Amended March 2000

Residential District – Zoning Summary

	C 3	C 2B	C 2	C 1
FAR	3.0	1.75	1.75	.75
HT	120'	45'	85'	35'
USES	Housing (Townhouses, Multifamily 1 and 2 Family) Institutional	Housing (Townhouses, Multifamily 1 and 2 Family) Institutional	Housing (Townhouses, Multifamily 1 and 2 Family) Institutional	Housing (Townhouses, Multifamily 1 and 2 Family)

Residential Districts

The **Residence C** districts are multifamily housing districts. These districts may allow anything from a single family house to a high rise building containing more than one hundred dwelling units depending on the size of the lot and district's dimensional limitations. Residence C districts permit more types of land uses than Residence A and B districts, including transient residential uses (such as hotels) and institutional uses (schools and hospitals). The Residence C-3 district also allows a limited amount of office space in residential buildings.

Townhouse Zoning

Townhouse Zoning is an option which developers may exercise in the Residence B and C, Office, Business and Industry A-1 districts enabling the construction of one and two family row houses. This zoning allows more flexible dimensional requirements permitting the creation of lots without side yards. In addition, the townhouse regulations provide for a height bonus. However, the overall density of a townhouse development (number of units per acre) is the same as other dwellings in the district in which it is located. Larger townhouse projects in Residence B and C districts require a special permit from the Planning Board.

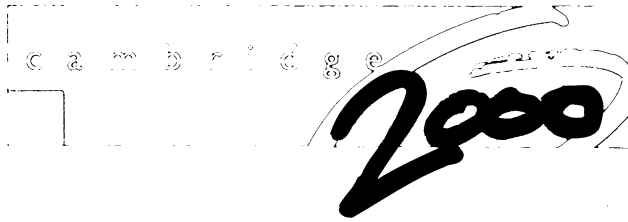
THE LOOSE MORATORIUM

Honorable Council, this petition represents a request for a building Moratorium, for the duration of 18 months, for the area bordered by Memorial Drive, DeWolfe Street, Mount Auburn Street, Putnam Avenue, and River Street.

Those signing this petition appreciate the fact that time is needed for all Residents of the Riverside Neighborhood to study the impact of further development that is allowed under current zoning in the Moratorium Area. This impact includes: increased vehicular traffic with its ensuing congestion and residential parking difficulties, noise, water and air pollution, building heights, density, and open space.

We share the utmost concern regarding what we perceive as the steady encroachment of institutional and commercial development into the residential sections of our neighborhood. The river environment is particularly sensitive here, already overbuilt on the residential fringe, and must be protected at all costs. The current stable fabric of our neighborhood needs to remain intact. This review is essential to ensure a sound and comprehensive planning process to protect the Moratorium Area from additional and potentially harmful development.

The undersigned residents of the City of Cambridge hereby petition the Cambridge City Council to grant a Temporary Development Moratorium, for a period of 18 months, for all commercial, industrial, and institutional development over 10,000 square feet, in the area of land circumscribed by a line beginning at a point, said point being the intersection of the centerlines of Memorial Drive and River Street, proceeding in a northerly direction along the centerline of Memorial Drive, thence turning on DeWolfe Street and proceeding in an easterly direction, thence turning on Mount Auburn Street and proceeding in a southeasterly direction along the centerline, thence turning on Putnam Avenue and proceeding in a southerly direction along the centerline, thence turning and proceeding in a westerly direction along the centerline on River Street to the point of origin, the intersection of the centerlines of River Street and Memorial Drive. Please refer to the attached map.



2.

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

October 16, 2000

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached for your consideration, a Planning Board recommendation on the Loose, et al Petition to impose a moratorium on non-residential construction in an area bounded generally by Banks Street, River Street, Memorial Drive, DeWolfe Street and Mt. Auburn Street.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment



2000 Things 2 Do in 2000

Consent Agenda #2

S 321

Relative to a Planning Board recommendation on the loose, et al Petition to a moratorium on non-residential construction in an area bounded generally by Banks Street, River Street, Memorial Drive, DeWolfe Street and Mt. Auburn Street

In City Council October 16, 2000

PLACED ON FILE