



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

BETH RUBENSTEIN

*Assistant City Manager for
Community Development*

SUSAN M. GLAZER

*Deputy Director for
Community Development*

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: Beth Rubenstein, Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Date: December 3, 2002

RE: Calendar Item #1 dated November 4, 2002: Implement the land use and zoning recommendations of the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study and a timetable for drafting appropriate amendments to the zoning ordinances.

In response to the above referenced order, we report the following.

The Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study made zoning recommendations in six general areas:

1. Zone city parks to the Open Space zoning designation.
2. Reinforce and support existing clusters of retail activity within the residential neighborhood.
3. Create Overlay Districts along Memorial Drive and River Street to control the scale of development and ensure public notice of significant new construction.
4. Review the appropriateness of modifications to the Office 3 District at Memorial Drive.
5. Manage transitions between zoning districts of differing heights and use characteristics
6. Mandate the distribution of affordable units in all housing developments at University Park.

In each of these areas substantial progress has been made either officially through recent, often citywide, zoning initiatives or as a result of new building construction that is consistent with those objectives and effectively precludes further inappropriate development. The following narrative summarizes the progress to date on each recommendation and the Department's suggestion for additional actions that will complete the implementation of all of the Study's zoning recommendations.

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1. Designate City Parks in Cambridgeport as Open Space on the Zoning Map

PROPOSED ACTION: Submit implementing zoning language to the City Council in February 2003.

2. Neighborhood Retail Areas

The Study noted how small corner stores added to the neighborly quality of life in Cambridgeport. While some of those retail stores are located within existing retail zoning districts on the Zoning Map, others are isolated, non-conforming operations within the prevailing neighborhood Residence C zoning district. The study recommended making the operation of these small stores easier by placing them in an appropriate zoning district that would render them conforming.

The opportunity for advancing the objective has been enhanced by the consideration of a new neighborhood business (NB) district category by the City Council and the Planning Board. The new district, which would allow small retail establishments only on the ground floor of residential buildings, adds a valuable option when consideration is being given to allowing retail uses at locations in a neighborhood that is currently zoned exclusively for residential uses.

That proposed new NB district, if adopted by the City Council, would be added to the existing neighborhood business district options already available in the Zoning Ordinance: The Business A, Business A-1 and Business A-2 districts. In addition, the Business A district has been made more useful as a regulatory tool within the Study's planning context since a citywide change in 1997 reduced the allowed height for housing from eighty-five feet to forty-five feet.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Citywide reduction in the permitted residential height limit from 85 feet to 45 feet in all Business A Districts.
- Proposed new neighborhood business zoning district under consideration by the City Council and the Planning Board.

The Neighborhood Study called out the following areas for review:

- a. Brookline Street at Putnam Avenue. The commercial establishments in this area are already located within a Business A-1 district.

PROPOSED ACTION: No further action is recommended at this location.

b. Pearl Street between William and Lopez Streets. There do exist retail establishments here, located in the Residence C district. Analysis of current land use conditions and outreach to potentially affected property owners is needed to determine which of the retail district options, if any, would be most appropriate to serve the Study's objective of supporting neighborhood stores while protecting the predominately residential character of the area.

PROPOSED ACTION: Submit implementing zoning language to the City Council, after appropriate outreach, by the end of the Fiscal Year 03.

c. Pearl Street at Putnam Avenue. Existing commercial activities are located in a Business A-1 district.

PROPOSED ACTION: No further action is recommended at this location.

d. Lower Cambridgeport between Brookline and Sidney Streets. The area is zoned as a Residence C or Residence C-1 district and is entirely residential.

PROPOSED ACTION: No further action is recommended at this location.

e. River Street. This area is currently zoned as a Business A district. While hosting a scattering of retail stores, the area is principally residential in character. To preserve that residential character, which the Business A zone could put at risk, while also allowing small Mom and Pop neighborhood stores, the new neighborhood business district is under consideration by the City Council and the Planning Board.

PROPOSED ACTION: This zone change is now under consideration by the City Council and Planning Board.

f. Magazine Street. Existing commercial activities are scattered along the street. All are non-conforming within the applicable Residence C district. Analysis of current land use conditions and outreach to potentially affected property owners is needed to determine which of the retail district options, if any, would be most appropriate to serve the Study's objective of supporting neighborhood stores while protecting the predominately residential character of the area.

PROPOSED ACTION: Submit implementing zoning language to the City Council, after appropriate outreach, by the end of the Fiscal Year 03.

3 & 4. Memorial Drive and River Street Overlay Districts and the Office 3 District

New construction in the area and citywide zoning changes have dramatically altered the physical and/or regulatory environment here since the Committee made its recommendations. The Bread and Circus retail complex at River Street and the office and housing development along Putnam Avenue and Pleasant Street at the former Polaroid site have essentially fixed the development pattern for almost this entire block for the foreseeable future. Many of the Committee's use and transition concerns for this area have been met in fact with this recent construction. What remains from a regulatory perspective is to acknowledge these physical and use changes with appropriate, companion changes to the Office 3 zoning district to reflect the new reality.

In the adjacent Business A district, at the former Stop and Shop site, the reduction in the height premium for housing in that district from eighty-five feet to forty-five feet has effectively implemented a large portion of the Study's transition goals for that area.

With the adoption of the citywide, Article 19.000 procedures for review of developments of 25,000 square feet or more in all commercial and high-density residential districts, any significant land use changes in this area will trigger the application of urban design standards or full public review through a special permit process at the Planning Board.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Citywide reduction in the permitted residential height limit from 85 feet to 45 feet in all Business A Districts.
- Citywide reduction in the permitted non-residential FAR from 3.0 to 2.0 in the Office 3 district; reduction in the permitted non-residential height in the district from 120 feet to 90 feet.
- Citywide requirement for special permit review of all development of 50,000 square feet or more in all non-residential districts, including the Office 3 district and Business A districts.
- Citywide requirement for conformance to building and site plan standards for all development of 25,000 square feet or more in all non-residential districts, including the Office 3 and Business A districts.

The following actions are appropriate in this area to complete a response to the Study's recommendations:

- a. Memorial Drive Overlay District. Application of design standards (e.g. landscaping, location of parking, building character, etc.) for development abutting Memorial Drive from Magazine Street to River Street, through an overlay district, would ensure that small changes in the future conformed to a consistent design vision for Memorial Drive, much as the City has attempted to accomplish in Alewife

through the Parkway Overlay District. A similar proposal is under consideration for the portion of Memorial Drive between River Street and JFK Street.

PROPOSED ACTION: Submit implementing zoning language to the City Council, after appropriate outreach, in Fiscal Year 04.

b. Replacement of the Office 3 District. Given the recent pattern of new development in the Office 3 zone between River and Pleasant Streets, some of which is permitted in an Office 3 district while other development was allowed by variance, that district's provisions no longer reflect the use and dimensional character that has been established. That character is likely to persist for decades to come. Alternate districts could confirm what is already present while eliminating any possibility, still present in the Office 3 district's dimensional limits, for substantially more development at a greater scale in the future on already-developed sites.

Among the alternate districts that might be considered for specific areas are: a Business A designation (FAR of 1.0 commercial/1.75 for housing and a height of 35 feet commercial/45 feet for housing) or A-2 designation (FAR of 1.0/1.75 and a height of 45 feet) for the retail development at Putnam Avenue and River Street; a Residence C-3 designation (FAR of 3.0 and a height of 120 feet) for the 808 Memorial Drive residential tower; an Office 2 designation (FAR of 1.50/2.0 and a height of 70/85 feet) for the office portion of the recent Polaroid site development; and a Residence C-1A designation (FAR of 1.25 and a height of 45 feet) or Residence C-2B designation (FAR of 1.75 and a height of 45 feet) for Polaroid's residential component.

PROPOSED ACTION: Submit implementing zoning language to the City Council, after appropriate outreach, in Fiscal Year 04.

River Street Overlay District

The Study recommends an overlay district along River Street out of concern that the then applicable provisions of the Business A district could allow substantial development that would transform the area, without adequate public review. In the interim, as previously noted, the height premium previously allowed for residential development in the Business A district was eliminated in a citywide change to that district's provisions. In addition, potential zoning changes now before the City Council and the Planning Board regarding River Street would substantially reduce the density of development allowed, essentially precluding the kind of large scale, disruptive development that was of such concern to the Cambridgeport Study Committee. Adoption of the proposed new neighborhood business district along River Street, in combination with already-adopted citywide project review provisions, would accomplish all of the objectives the Study's overlay district recommendation was meant to address.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Citywide reduction in the permitted residential height limit from 85 feet to 45 feet in all Business A Districts.
- Proposed new neighborhood business zoning district under consideration at the City Council and the Planning Board.

PROPOSED ACTION: No further action is recommended at this location.

5. Transitions

Changes to the zoning regulations since formulation of the Study's recommendations, physical changes as a result of recent construction in Riverside, and action on the items outlined above will result in full implementation of the Committee's recommendations on transition issues in the Neighborhood.

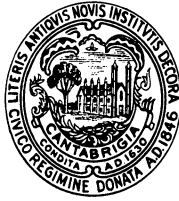
PROPOSED ACTION: No further action is recommended.

6. Affordable Housing at University Park

University Park, operating under the provisions of Article 15.000 of the Zoning Ordinance, has fully complied with its housing obligations with the construction of more than 400 units of housing with about 30% of them affordable to low and moderate-income households. Because the Cambridgeport Revitalization Development District has a more extensive affordable housing requirement than the subsequently-adopted Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, Section 11.200 was not made applicable to University Park when the requirement was adopted citywide. The Study recommended that the 15% inclusionary housing requirement be applied to each individual residential building constructed at University Park, a requirement not imposed by Article 15.000 (CRDD District).

As the City chose on two occasions to exempt University Park from any further affordable housing requirements, i.e. at the time of adoption of Section 11.200 citywide and during consideration of zoning changes to all of the city's non-residential districts during the Citywide Rezoning planning process, the Community Development Department does not recommend any further action on this Study recommendation.

PROPOSED ACTION: No further action is recommended.



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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

December 9, 2002

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 02-99, regarding a report on the implementation of the land use and zoning recommendations of the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study and a timetable for drafting appropriate amendments to the zoning ordinances, received from Assistant City Manager for Community Development Beth Rubenstein.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

S-362

Consent Agenda #19

Awaiting Report Item

Number 02-99, regarding a report on the implementation of the land use and zoning recommendations of the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Study and a timetable for drafting appropriate amendments to the zoning ordinances.

In City Council December 9, 2002

**PLACED ON FILE.
REFERRED ENTIRE
PACKAGE TO
NEIGHBORHOOD LONG
TERM COMMITTEE ON
MOTION OF COUNCILLOR
REEVES.**

**REFERRED SECTIONS
RELATED TO THE
RIVERFRONT TO HEALTH
AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE ON MOTION OF
VICE MAYOR DAVIS.**