

## ADVANCING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY (AHA) ZONING PETITION

**WHEREAS:** Cambridge is a unique historic city, founded in 1630, and decades of growth and more recent explosive commercial development have made Cambridge one of the densest cities per square mile in the U.S., Cambridge's diverse neighborhoods include a broad array of architecturally beautiful and historic housing which most residents feel is essential to preserve, Cambridge's diverse neighborhoods strike a unique and delicate balance between architectural density and green space that is the envy of many other cities, Climate Change makes it imperative to preserve mature trees, green spaces, and open spaces between buildings, and

**WHEREAS:** Cambridge is facing unique and massive development pressures (including \$4.6 billion life science investment) (Boston Globe 5.26.21).

**WHEREAS:** Cambridge is a wealthy city with a progressive citizenry committed to maintaining its historic diversity, but the cost of creating each new unit of tax-funded affordable housing is extremely high, and Cambridge is one of the only cities in Massachusetts currently meeting state standards for affordable housing, but the local and area waiting list for our affordable housing is extremely long, and anyone in the U.S. is eligible to apply, so very few people will live in the new affordable units and the vast majority of our residents in need of lower-rent housing will not be helped, and

**WHEREAS:** Cambridge already has a large existing housing supply of smaller units within our existing housing infrastructure both in compliance with and not in compliance with all applicable zoning and building codes, and

**WHEREAS:** Many single-family and multi-family homes can be adapted to create a new supply of residential units such as studios, one-bedrooms, and smaller two-bedroom units, as well as single-room-occupancy communities and cooperatives with shared living spaces, which will enable individuals and households seeking lower rents to move in, increasing supply of various unit sizes, helping reduce average rents citywide, and

**WHEREAS:** for purposes of equity it is time to end zoning for exclusively single family housing throughout the city, and do so in a way that will not exacerbate housing costs by substantially increasing property values, or destroying the rich array of sustainable historic housing, or adding to environmental problems by tearing down and building new larger more expensive housing, and

**WHEREAS:** the Cambridge Envision Report Housing Goals explicitly promote: 1) Affordable Housing; 2) Housing Diversity; 3) Livable Communities; 4) Housing Stability; 5) Market Affordability; and 6) Opportunity Neighborhoods (near transportation, services, and employment); 7) retaining and increasing green spaces, and.

**WHEREAS:** City housing needs will vary over time; while the housing concerns now are REAL and severe, over the next 10-15 years a massive decline in housing needs due to demographic and other factors is expected according to a recent Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies Report. COVID may also bring more changes.

**THEREFORE:** We, the undersigned ten or more Cambridge residents and registered voters, hereby petition the City Council to integrate all zoning amendments specified of this petition as new zoning law and implementing its other recommendations as Policy Orders to the City Manager in order to:

**ENACT** The Following NEW ZONING AMENDMENTS to Increase Housing, Enhance Housing Affordability, Promote Equity, Accountability and Environmental Sustainability

**Modify Cambridge Zoning Ordinance Section 4.31 as follows:**

## AHA THREE PART PETITION

- I. **Modify Single-and-Two Family Zoning to allow more units within existing structures**
- II. **Modify on site open yard residential parking to require rain permeable materials**
- III. **Engage an area-wide solution to Housing, Transportation, Parking, and Infrastructure**

### PART I: MODIFY SINGLE-AND-TWO FAMILY ZONING TO ALLOW MORE UNITS

**Goal:** allow more units within existing structures while making necessary relatively minor changes in a way that will retain street facing facades, and, if adding three or more units, one must be affordable, and an extra bonus is provided for this. This would allow reuse of homes in ways that will help seniors and others. While units may be as small as 500 SF (the size of a modest one-bedroom apartment) the units also can be much larger. By special permit additional exterior changes can be made.

**4.31 Current language:** Detached dwelling occupied by not more than one family [Res A-1&2, Res B, Res C, C-1, C-1A, 2, 2A, 2B, 3, 3A, 3B] YES.

**Insert New Footnote.** Provided that the street-facing exterior design of the structure is not changed, and minimal changes are made on the sides, a maximum of three dwelling units may occupy a single structure in what is currently a single-family home; four dwelling units may occupy a current two-family home.

1. All alterations to create these units shall be made within the existing building envelope, without altering the exterior appearance, except for essential minor alterations at the building rear and rear half of the building sides. These essential alterations may include, specifically, new entries/means of egress, window wells, dormers, and similar relatively minor changes. Special permitting will be allowed for other exterior changes.

**Rationale:** Increase available housing while preserving building facades and neighborhood sustainable homes while providing a means to update and legalize illegal City rental units not allowed in some districts.

**5.16 [General Regulations section to apply to all districts].**

**Insert New Footnotes:**

- i. Any new structure with more than three residential units shall include one unit that meets current affordability guidelines, proportionally increased as the numbers of units increase.
- ii. New residential structures replacing current three family or larger residential structures shall include at least one affordable unit except by special permit from the Planning Board.
- iii. Within an existing single- or two-family home or affiliated Auxiliary Dwelling Unit (ADU), if the principal residence is owner-occupied and at least one of the units is affordable, the number of dwelling units permitted may be increased by thirty percent (30%) and the additional Gross Floor Area permitted in the ADU may be increased by thirty percent (30%) to a maximum of .50 FAR if the property retains current zoning compliance and as long as units meet City affordability requirements. New or existing dwelling unit sizes may be 500 SF or above.
- iv. If an existing single or two family home is demolished, the replacement structure does not need to meet affordability requirements unless it exceeds the current building's height or footprint.

**Rationale:** To provide more affordable housing while retaining existing green spaces.

## **PART II**

### **MODIFY RESIDENTIAL ON-SITE OPEN PARKING FOR RAIN PERMIABLE MATERIALS**

**Goal: to address current and ongoing climate, require new on-site residential outdoor parking to be made of rain permeable materials now readily available for purchase.**

**6.22 [off street parking regulations]. Current language: All accessory off street parking facilities shall be located in accordance with the provisions of subsections 6.22.1, 6.22.2 and 6.22.3.**

**New Footnote: All new residential parking provided in accordance with this Article not located within a structure shall be of permeable construction to absorb rainwater and minimize runoff.**

**6.45 [Parking] Drainage, Surfacing, and Maintenance. [Current language]: All sections of off street parking facilities which are not landscaped according to the requirements of Subsection 6.48 shall be graded, surfaced (preferably with durable pervious paving materials such as modular paving blocks, bricks or similar materials), and maintained....**

**New Footnote: All new residential parking provided in accordance with this Article shall be surfaced with pervious paving materials that absorb rain water and minimize runoff and maintained....**

## PART III

### AREA-WIDE PROPOSAL FOR HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, PARKING, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Goal:** The need and desire for housing in Cambridge is infinite and it is clearly not an issue that Cambridge alone can solve. This part of the petition draws on the model of the current the PTDM (Parking, Transportation, Demand Ordinance – now over 20 years old), and calls on our major employers to individually and together provide an area plan to cover 85% of their employees and affiliates by the year 2040 with annual reviews similar to the current Town Gown Reports which are provided to the City and discussed by the Planning Board annually. This plan can include related data on percentages working from home, new policies such as shared parking (for fees) with neighbors during off hours, resources for private transportation to supplement mass transit, aide to home ownership in the area for low-middle income employees, land acquisition and land trusts for this purpose.

#### **SECTION 20.2000 Citywide Commercial, Institutional, and Public Property Overlay District**

**Rationale:** The 20.2000 ordinance will require all employers of more than 100 persons to provide area plans and annual reports for housing, transportation, parking, and infrastructure for 85% of its full-time employees, students, and affiliates by the year 2040. These plans will be reviewed and approved by CDD staff, irrespective of when affiliated properties have been or will be constructed or renovated. A continuing enforcement mechanism for compliance including approval of future building plans and/or other mechanisms including fees, special permit requirements or other means consistent with 20.2000 can be used.

**20.2001 Purpose.** It is the purpose of the Commercial, Institutional, and Public Property Overlay District, to promote an area-wide solution to local Cambridge residential, transportation, and infrastructure needs.

**20.2002 Establishment and Scope.** There is hereby established the Commercial, Institutional, and Public Property Overlay District. It is the intent of this Section that these regulations will apply to properties within the City of Cambridge owned or leased by employers of more than 100 full-time persons, students or affiliates. This requirement applies to the employer or lease holder identified with the Cambridge property and applies to existing employers as well as new companies or institutions seeking to establish here.

**20.2003 Stipulations.** The Commercial, Institutional and Public employers meeting 20.2000 criteria of 100 or more full time employees, students, or affiliates shall provide a regional plan that sets out how it will meet housing, parking, transportation and infrastructure needs for 85% of its full-time employees and affiliates (the latter including students, post-doctoral students and research associates) by the year 2040. These employers will also provide Annual Reports on how and where the specific housing, parking, transportation, and infrastructure goals will be met in both Cambridge and in other area communities. Annual reports shall be submitted to the City Manager who will determine if compliance goals have been reached; the City of Cambridge will report its compliance with its designated goals for its own employees in an Annual Report to the City Council. Employers who decrease employee numbers to 20% below 100 employees are excluded; those attaining the 100 employee threshold shall come into 20.2000 compliance.

**20.2003.a** Each institution's or employer's 2040 Goals and Annual Reports shall include a time line as well as plans, and both achieved and proposed outcomes for housing, transportation, parking, and infrastructure needs for 85% of its employees, students, and affiliates in both Cambridge and outlying communities as established in 20.2000. While all employers and institutions may not be asked to acquire the requisite housing, transportation, parking, or essential infrastructure themselves, they will be required to show that they have successfully met the goals on their own or in collaboration with other Cambridge or area institutions and/or employers.

**20.2003.b** Plans for employees to work from home, telecommunicating certain days of the week, should be incorporated into such reports. A reporting means similar to the current Cambridge Parking and Transportation Demand Management Plan, but also including Housing and infrastructure may be set up for this purpose with a time line addressing specific goals to meet the 2040 commitment. Examples of parking plans include that created by MIT for where their non-Cambridge resident employees will park:  
<http://web.mit.edu/facilities/transportation/index.html> Employers may rent parking spaces not in use in company parking structures to local residents who meet certain income criteria to offset some parking requirements. Employers may create plans to provide home down payments for low-and-middle income employees to offset some housing requirements. The City itself may choose to meet its own annual housing goal by acquiring or building on its own land to prioritize key groups, for example, employees such as teachers, social workers, and fire fighters.

**20.2003.c** Plans for new residential and commercial structures shall include early and ongoing plans that safeguard or move existing mature trees, and otherwise comply with the City's tree ordinance. These plans shall be included and presented in subsequent public meetings. New plans for larger residential and commercial projects (FAR 1.5 and higher) shall include and present at public meetings CAD drawings and viewshed analyses of neighborhood impacts. All open space requirements shall be met using rain permeable surfaces.

**20.2004** Letter of Commitment. Issuance of a base building permit or certificate of occupancy for any new building approved pursuant to a Special Permit granted under the above Section 20.2000 shall be conditioned on certification by all relevant departments of the City to the Superintendent of Buildings that the reports are accurate and goals are being met in accordance with the initial Letter of Commitment, and Annual Reports.

**20.2005** Project Review. In granting approval for a building or buildings under this article, the Planning Board may approve commercial, institutional, and public area plans, subject to later review and approval by the Planning Board upon finding that the interim and final plan is consistent with the meeting of annual goals under Section 20.2000. Construction, use and development under this Section shall be authorized by Special Permit granted by the Planning Board. In granting a Special Permit under this Section 20.2000, the Planning Board shall find that the intent of this Section has been satisfied if yearly housing, transportation, and other goals toward reaching 85% of employees by 2040 have been met and find that provisions have been made for the conveyance to the City, or a designee thereof, by fee or easement, of interests in properties herein.