



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
CAMBRIDGE CITY HALL, 795 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

2023 JAN -4 AM 11:37

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE:

Douglas Brown hereby petitions the City Council of the City of Cambridge to amend the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge, as amended, as follows:

- ☐ Amend the Zoning Map in the area(s) set forth in the attached text description(s) and map(s) by
- ☐ changing the base Zoning District(s) from \_\_\_\_\_ to a new zoning designation(s) of \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ creating a new Overlay Zoning District(s) entitled \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ deleting or amending the boundaries of the current Overlay Zoning District(s) entitled \_\_\_\_\_

- ☒ Amend the text of the Zoning Ordinance as set forth in the attached text by
- ☐ inserting a new Article(s) and/or section(s) numbered and entitled \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ deleting the current Article(s) and/or section(s) numbered and entitled \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☒ amending the current Article(s) and/or section(s) numbered and entitled Articles 4, 5, and 8

with the intent of Incrementally modernizing residential zoning standards

Contact Person: Douglas Brown  
Street Address: 35 Standish Street  
Telephone Number: 617-699-1326  
E-mail Address: douglas\_p\_brown@yahoo.com

Attach the following materials:

- ☐ Signatures of 10 or more Cambridge residents registered to vote in Cambridge (if applicable – see attached page template)
- ☐ Map Amendments: a map and text description describing the exact boundaries of the area to be rezoned
- ☒ Text Amendments: a document providing the exact wording of all inserted, deleted, or amended sections (also provide in a word processing format to [cityclerk@cambridgema.gov](mailto:cityclerk@cambridgema.gov))

FOR CITY CLERK USE ONLY – Zoning Petition Number: \_\_\_\_\_


Submission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Submission Date: 1/4/2023

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Petition to Amend the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge with the intent of:

Incrementally modernizing residential zoning standards

	Signature	Name	Address	Date
1		Douglas P Brown	35 Standish St.	12/16/22
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FOR CITY CLERK USE ONLY – Zoning Petition Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## A Plan for the Incremental Modernization of Residential Zoning

**WHEREAS** Cambridge continues to struggle with housing availability and affordability; and

**WHEREAS** the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance contains many legacy issues that artificially limit residents' ability to make basic upgrades to their homes or add new housing units without a special permit or variance, even when additional floor area is available to them as-of-right; and

**WHEREAS** the current FAR restriction in the Residential B zoning district does not accurately reflect the average FAR of this district, and therefore has created an extremely large number of non-conforming properties; and

**WHEREAS** an incremental approach to modernizing the Zoning Ordinance will allow more residents to make small but important improvements to their homes, or to add new dwelling units as they see fit; and

**WHEREAS** such incremental changes have the potential to unlock thousands of new dwelling units, all of which are located within existing neighborhoods that are already well provided with transit connections, retail opportunities, and public parks and open space; and

**WHEREAS** such an incremental approach avoids the extreme unpredictability associated with large increases in height or density, or large decreases in open space, setbacks, and parking requirements, within existing residential neighborhoods;

**NOW THEREFORE** I, the Undersigned individual owning land to be affected by said changes or adoption, respectfully petition the honorable City Council of the City of Cambridge to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in the following ways, as **italicized and highlighted in red** below:

**1) ARTICLE 4-** Modify the Table of Uses to allow all residential uses in all residential districts and eliminate the footnotes prohibiting exterior changes in Res A districts:

[illegible]



[illegible]

**2) ARTICLE 4-** Eliminate the Accessory Dwelling Unit requirement that a building containing an accessory apartment be built prior to 2/1/2019:

4.22.1 In all districts the Board of Zoning Appeal may grant a special permit for the alteration of an existing single-family detached dwelling, two-family dwelling, or accessory building on the same lot as a single-family or two-family dwelling to provide one accessory apartment if the following conditions are met:

~~1. The building containing the accessory apartment has been in existence since on or before February 1, 2019.~~

**3) ARTICLE 5-** Modify the Table of Dimensional Requirements to reduce the Minimum Lot Size, Lot Area per Dwelling Unit, and Minimum Lot Width requirements in Residence A-1 & A-2 districts to match the Residence B district:

	(1) Max. Ratio of Floor Area to Lot Area	(2) Minimum Lot Size in Sq. Ft.	(3) Min. Lot Area for Each D.U. in Sq. Ft.	(4) Minimum Lot Width in Feet	(5) Minimum Yard in Feet			(6) Maximum Height in Feet	(7) Min. Ratio of Private Op. Sp. to Lot Area
					Front	Side	Rear		
Res. A-1	0.5	<del>8,000</del> 5,000	<del>6,000</del> 2,500	<del>80</del> 50	25	15 (sum of 35)	25 (c)	35	50%
Res. A-2	0.5	<del>6,000</del> 5,000	<del>4,500</del> 2,500	<del>65</del> 50	20	10 (sum of 25)	25 (c)	35	50%

**4) ARTICLE 5-** Modify the Table of Dimensional Requirements to increase the Res B FAR limit and decrease the Lot Area per Dwelling Unit requirement. Eliminate the footnote introduced in 1996 that unnecessarily restricts FAR and Minimum Lot Area for lots larger than 5000 square feet:

	(1) Max. Ratio of Floor Area to Lot Area	(2) Minimum Lot Size in Sq. Ft.	(3) Min. Lot Area for Each D.U. in Sq. Ft.	(4) Minimum Lot Width in Feet	(5) Minimum Yard in Feet			(6) Maximum Height in Feet	(7) Min. Ratio of Private Op. Sp. to Lot Area
					Front	Side	Rear		
Res. B	0.6 <sup>(j)</sup>	5,000	2,500 <sup>(j)</sup>	50	15	7'6" (sum of 20)	25 (c)	35	40%

2. Footnotes:

~~(j) Applicable to the first five thousand (5,000) square feet of lot area. For those portions of any lot exceeding five thousand (5,000) square feet, the applicable Maximum Ratio of Floor Area to Lot Area shall be 0.35 for all permitted residential uses and the~~



~~Minimum Lot Area for Each Dwelling Unit shall be four thousand (4,000) square feet. However, for any lot in existence as of June 30, 1995 that is subsequently subdivided into two or more lots, the total amount of gross area and number of units on the subdivided lots, in total, shall at no time exceed that permitted by this footnote (j) on the lot before the subdivision occurred. Unless otherwise permitted by special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeal, the gross floor area and dwelling units permitted on each subdivided lot shall be in the same ratio as that lot's area is to the area of the unsubdivided lot. Nothing in this footnote (j) shall prohibit the subdivision of a Townhouse Development conforming at the time of its construction, as permitted in Section 11.10.~~

**5) ARTICLE 8-** Eliminate the rules that limit new additions to a small percentage of the existing area or volume, even in situations where an addition is otherwise conforming:

8.22.1 The following alterations, reconstructions, extensions, and/or enlargements of nonconforming structures, which do not result in a use for a substantially different purpose or for the same purpose in a substantially different manner or to a substantially greater extent than the existing use, or which are undertaken to accommodate a new conforming use, shall be permitted after the issuance of a building permit by the Superintendent of Buildings. Any change, extension or alteration of a nonconforming use shall be subject to the provisions of Subsection 8.22.2.

f. Conforming additions, under [Article 5.000](#), to a structure not conforming to the requirements of [Article 5.000](#) provided that no nonconforming element or aspect of the nonconforming structure is extended or increased ~~and further provided that the nonconforming structure is not thereby increased in area or volume by more than ten (10) percent since the structure first became nonconforming.~~

8.22.2 The following changes, extensions, or alterations of a pre-existing nonconforming structure or use may be granted in the following cases after the issuance of a special permit. Such a permit shall be granted only if the permit granting authority specified below finds that such change, extension, or alteration will not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming use.

c. In a Residence District the Board of Zoning Appeal may grant a special permit for the alteration or enlargement of a nonconforming structure, not otherwise permitted in Section 8.22.1 above, but not the alteration or enlargement of a nonconforming use, provided any enlargement or alteration of such nonconforming structure is not further in violation of the dimensional requirements of [Article 5.000](#) or the off street parking and loading requirements in [Article 6.000](#) for the district in which such structure is located ~~and provided such nonconforming structure will not be increased in area or volume by more than twenty-five (25) percent since it first began to be nonconforming.~~