



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CMA 2025 #117
IN CITY COUNCIL
May 5, 2025

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Please find attached a memorandum regarding the prioritization of zoning priorities from Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Melissa Peters.

Yi-An Huang
City Manager





To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager

From: Melissa Peters, Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Date: May 1, 2025

Re: **Response to Policy Order 2025 #43 Re: Zoning Priorities**

At a joint hearing of the Housing Committee and Neighborhood and Long-Term Planning Committee held on March 4, 2025, both committees voted to recommend the following Policy Order that was adopted by the City Council on March 31, 2025:

“... to direct the Community Development Department to prioritize Cambridge Street and Northern Massachusetts Avenue first and to introduce the necessary zoning language and to continue working on Central Square as soon as practicable.”

As discussed at the hearing, the prior work plan had been to advance a zoning proposal for Central Square first, because the Massachusetts Avenue Planning Study is still ongoing and due to be completed in early May. However, at the Council’s request, we can work to advance a zoning petition for Northern Massachusetts Avenue and Cambridge Street (which had completed a planning study in 2023) as the next major zoning initiative instead of Central Square.

This would mean discussing the recommendations with Council in the spring and developing zoning amendments to be introduced by early fall. A rezoning proposal for Central Square could then proceed after Northern Massachusetts Avenue and Cambridge Street.

It should be noted that since the March 4 hearing, two additional zoning petitions have been introduced by outside parties. Hearings will need to be held this spring by the Planning Board and Ordinance Committee on these two new petitions, along with the two previously mentioned City-led petitions on amending AHO height limits and Floodplain requirements, as well as a newly introduced City-led petition on repackaging within cannabis retail stores.

The updated schedule on the following pages illustrates CDD’s new timeline for these initiatives in response to the Policy Order.

Melissa Peters | Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development
Sandra Clarke | Chief of Administration & Operations

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City of Cambridge Community Development Department
Response to Policy Order 2025 #43 Re: Zoning Priorities

CDD Zoning Initiatives – Updated 2025 Timeline (approximate – subject to change)

	←	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	→2026
Floodplain (City)		●	●	●							
AHO Heights (City)		●	●	●	●	●					
ECCE/Biomed Petition		●	●	●	●	●					
Cannabis (City)		●	●	●	●	●					
Marasao, et al. Petition		●	●	●	●	●					
Mass Ave	■←	■	■	Ⓢ	□	□	●	●	●	●	→●
Cambridge Street	■←			Ⓢ	□	□	●	●	●	●	→●
Central Square	■←						■	■	Ⓢ	□	□
Alewife (City/MBTA)							■	■	■	■	→■

Key to Process Phases

Community/Stakeholder Engagement	■
City Council (or Committee) Engagement	Ⓢ
Internal City Staff Petition Drafting	□
Zoning Petition Hearing Process (3-5 months)	●●●●●

Notes:

- CDD staff is also responding to two Policy Orders that the Council may choose to advance as zoning petitions (solar access protection, maximum unit sizes). The Health & Environment Committee asked staff to continue studying the solar access issue, and staff will respond to the maximum unit sizes policy order in the near future with options to consider. If the Council wishes to prioritize either of these zoning efforts ahead of the Mass Ave and Cambridge Street rezoning, that will likely affect the timelines.
- Additional outside zoning petitions may be referred that would require more staff support and may adjust the timelines referenced above.