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

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE:

Douglas P. 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 2, 5, 6, 11, + 19 with the intent of promoting sensible neighborhood development by adjusting height, setback, parking, open space, and design review requirements.

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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)

FOR CITY CLERK USE ONLY – Zoning Petition Number: _____
Submission Date: _____

Zoning Amendments to Promote Sensible Neighborhood Development

Submitted by Doug Brown on June 3rd, 2026

I. HEIGHT & STORIES ABOVE GRADE CHANGES

Within Article 5.40-Footnotes to the Table of Dimensional Requirements, make the following addition:

(2) The height of buildings or portions of buildings used as Residences or Religious Purposes Uses may exceed the base height limit, up to a maximum of 6 stories above grade and 74 feet above grade, if all of the following criteria are met:

(a) The building or portions of the building used as Residences complies with the Inclusionary Housing Requirements in Section 11.203 of this Zoning Ordinance, regardless of whether it exceeds the size threshold requiring compliance; and

(b) The area of the lot on which the building is located is not less than 5,000 square feet; **and**

(c) All abutters to the property exceed three (3) stories above grade.

Within Article 11.207.5.2.1-Building Height and Stories Above Grade, make the following changes:

(a) Where the District Dimensional Standards set forth a maximum residential building height of less than seventy-five (75) feet, an AHO Project shall contain no more than **nine (9)-six (6)** Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of **one hundred (100)-seventy-four (74)** feet, as measured from existing Grade.

II. SETBACK CHANGES

Within Table 5-1-Table of District Dimensional Requirements, make the following change:

District	All Uses	Residential Uses (Section 4.31 a-j.) & Religious Purposes Uses (Section 4.33.a)				Non-Residential Uses (Section 4.30 except 4.31 a-j. & 4.33.a)				
	1. Min. Open Space Ratio (5.22)	2. Max. Stories Above Grade (5.23)	3. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	4. Min. Front Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	5. Min. Side or Rear Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	6. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	7. Min. Front Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	8. Min. Side Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	9. Min. Rear Yard Setback in feet (5.24)	10. Max. FAR (5.25)
5.31 Residence Districts										
Res. C-1	30% ⁽¹⁾	4 ⁽²⁾⁽³⁷⁾	45 ⁽²⁾⁽³⁷⁾	10 ⁽³⁾	5 10 ^{(4) (38) (39)}	35	H+L ⁽⁵⁾ 4	H+L ⁽¹⁴⁾⁽¹⁵⁾ 5	H+L ⁽⁷⁾ 4	0.75

Within Article 5.40-Footnotes to the Table of Dimensional Requirements, make the following changes:

(4) The required side or rear yard setback may be reduced in either of the ways described below:

(b) The required setback for one side yard of a lot may be reduced **to five (5) feet** if the setbacks for two opposite side yards of the lot sum to at least **10 fifteen (15) feet**, and if no portion of a building is closer than 10 feet to the exterior wall of an existing building on an abutting lot.

(38) Above the third (3rd) story above grade, side walls and rear walls shall step back an additional five (5) feet per floor from the primary wall plane of the floors below.

(39) To prevent walling off abutting homes and yards, no structure shall extend for more than 60% of the lot depth, as measured along the full length of its side façade, or more than 80% of the lot width, as measured along the full width of its rear façade.

Within Article 11.207.5.2.3-Yard Setbacks, make the following changes:

(a) For the purpose of this Section, the applicable District Dimensional Standards shall not include yard setback requirements based on a formula calculation as provided in Section 5.24.4 of the Zoning Ordinance, but shall include non-derived minimum yard setback requirements set forth in [Article 5.000](#) or other Sections of this Zoning Ordinance.

(c) Side Yards. An AHO Project shall have ~~no-a~~ **minimum side yard setback of ten (10) feet. The required setback for one side yard of a lot may be reduced to five (5) feet if the setbacks for two opposite side yards of the lot sum to at least fifteen (15) feet, and if no portion of a building is closer than ten (10) feet to the exterior wall of an existing building on an abutting lot. Above the third (3rd) story above grade, side walls and rear walls shall step back an additional five (5) feet per floor from the primary wall plane of the floors below. To prevent walling off abutting homes and yards, no structure shall extend for more than 60% of the lot depth, as measured along the full length of its side façade, or more than 80% of the lot width, as measured along the full width of its rear façade.**

III. PARKING CHANGES

Within Article 6.31 Required Amount of Parking, make the following changes:

6.31 Required Amount of Parking. Off street parking facilities shall be allowed for each use of a lot or structure in the amount specified in the schedule of parking requirements contained in Subsection 6.36. Said schedule specifies the maximum amount of accessory off street parking allowed for each type of land use listed in "Table of Use Regulations" in this Ordinance. The maximum amount of allowed parking is also based on the intensity of development permitted in the district in which the use is located. Notwithstanding any other provision in this Zoning Ordinance, the minimum accessory parking required for all uses shall be zero (0) parking spaces, including in all overlay districts, **except that in the Residence C-1 District, all structures containing 4 or more dwelling units shall provide a minimum of 0.5 spaces of accessory parking per dwelling unit.**

Within Article 6.35.1-Reduction of Required Parking, delete the following passage:

~~(6) The provision of required parking for developments containing affordable housing units, and especially for developments employing the increased FAR and Dwelling unit density provisions of Section 11.200, will increase the cost of the development, will require variance relief from other zoning requirements applicable to the development because of limitations of space on the lot, or will significantly diminish the environmental quality for all residents of the development.~~ For a project seeking a reduction in required off-street parking for residential uses, a Parking Analysis shall be required as part of the Special Permit Application as set forth in Section 6.35.3.

Within Article 6.44-Layout of Off Street Parking Facilities, make the following addition:

6.44.1 Setbacks for on grade open parking facilities shall be provided as follows:

(c) No on grade open parking space shall be located within a required front yard setback. **A variance from the Board of Zoning Appeal is required to modify this requirement.**

Within Article 11.207.6.1-Required Off-Street Accessory Parking, delete the following passage:

~~(a) There shall be no required minimum number of off-street parking spaces for an AHO Project except to the extent necessary to conform to other applicable laws, codes, or regulations.~~

IV. OPEN SPACE CHANGES

Within Article 2.000-Definitions, make the following changes:

Open Space, Publicly Beneficial. A portion of **a structure**, a lot or other area of land associated with and adjacent to a building or group of buildings in relation to which it serves to provide light and air, or scenic, recreation, pedestrian amenity or similar purposes.

Open Space, Private. The part or parts of a lot **or structure** which are reserved for the use of occupants of a building which is used wholly, or in part, for residential purposes. This space shall have minimum dimensions as prescribed in the Ordinance, shall exclude parking areas, driveways, **balconies, roof areas**, and walkways, and shall be open and unobstructed to the sky.

Within Article 5.22.1-Private Open Space, make the following changes:

5.22.1 Private Open Space. Private Open Space shall be open and unobstructed to the sky, except that up to fifty (50) percent of the total Private Open Space may be Shaded Area. Trees, plantings, arbors, fences, flagpoles, sculpture, fountains and recreational and drying apparatus and similar objects shall not be considered obstructions when located within a private open space. Objects or structures intended exclusively for bicycle parking, designed and located in accordance with Section [6.100](#), which may be uncovered, partially covered or fully enclosed, shall not be considered obstructions provided that such objects or structures are not used for motor vehicle parking, general storage or any other use, and further provided that any such structure exceeding six feet (6') in height conforms to the requirements for an accessory building in Section 4.21. Beehives and apiaries

conforming to the Standards for Urban Agriculture in [Article 23.000](#) of this Zoning Ordinance shall not be considered obstructions provided that they are no more than six (6) feet in height. Structures or features that are necessary for a building to comply with the Flood Resilience Standards in Section [22.80](#), such as stairs, ramps, or window wells, shall not be considered obstructions. **To the extent permitted in this Ordinance, Balconies and roof areas may also shall not** be considered as Private Open Space. Private Open Space shall include areas that are shared by all building occupants or available to occupants of separately tenanted areas of a building, such as dwelling units. Private Open Space may include either hardscaped or permeable areas but may not have a slope greater than ten percent (10%). Private Open Space must meet the following other dimensional characteristics:

a. If located at grade, Private Open Space must have both a width and a length of at least fifteen (15) feet and may be shared by all occupants of a building or divided into areas that are accessed separately.

b. If located above grade, such as balconies, decks, and roofs of garages and buildings, and shared by all occupants of a building, Private Open Space must have both a width and a length of at least six (6) feet and have a minimum area of seventy-two (72) square feet.

c. If located above grade or partially below grade and accessible to separately tenanted spaces, such as balconies and decks or lower-level patios, Private Open Space must have a width and length of at least three (3) feet and have a minimum area of twenty (20) square feet.

Within Article 5.28.25-Open Space Requirements, make the following additions:

The open space requirement shall be that required in the district in which the structure is located, except as modified herein.

Upon issuance of a special permit by the Planning Board, the dimensional and locational limitations for Private open space set forth in Section 5.22 shall not apply, **and** any combination of at-grade private open space and decks and balconies at other levels shall be permitted as shall walks intended for non vehicular use. However, in every case where those requirements of Section 5.22 waived by this Paragraph (a) are not met, all portions of the surface of the lot shall be Green Area as defined in [Article 2.000](#) that are (1) not covered by the building or (2) devoted to the minimum area necessary to provide at grade, conforming parking spaces and the minimum necessary circulation and driveways for no more than one parking space per dwelling unit. The amount of Private open space required may be reduced upon issuance of a special permit by the Planning Board should the Board find that full compliance cannot reasonably be expected given the existing development of the lot and the provision of parking necessary to serve the dwelling units. However, where open space requirements are not met, the Applicant shall explore the use of portions of the interior of the building to provide recreational opportunities not possible on the exterior.

Within Article 5.40-Footnotes to the Table of Dimensional Requirements, delete the following passage:

- (1) At least fifty percent (50%) of the required Open Space in a Residence C-1 district shall meet all of the requirements of Section 5.22.1. In the case of a permitted non-residential use, the standards set forth in Section 5.22.1 shall be met for at least fifty percent (50%) of the required Open Space regardless of whether it meets the definition of Private Open Space. At least fifty percent (50%) of the required Open Space shall meet the definition of Permeable Open Space

~~and shall not be subject to the dimensional limitations of Section 5.22.1 as applied to Private Open Space.~~

Within Article 11.207.5.2.4- Open Space, delete the following passage:

The Open Space requirements set forth in the District Dimensional Standards shall apply except as set forth below:

~~(e) Private Open Space shall not be subject to the dimensional limitations set forth in Section 5.22.1 of this Zoning Ordinance, paragraphs a. through c., but shall exclude parking and driveways for automobiles.~~

V. PROJECT REVIEW CHANGES

Within Article 19.23, Table 1-Thresholds for Required Traffic Study by Land Use Type, make the following addition:

<u>Land Use Category</u>	<u>Threshold</u>
Standard Threshold: All Land Uses Set forth in Tables 4.30 and 4.56 except as enumerated below.	50,000 sf
Residences: All uses in Section 4.31, a—j	75,000 sf (20,000 sf in Residence C-1 District)