



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CMA 2026-214
IN CITY COUNCIL
August 3, 2026

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Please see below a memo regarding two potential proposals to update the curb cut review process.

In previous Policy Order 125 of 2024 and in discussion of Awaiting Report response 24-54, the Council expressed interest in changing the way the City reviews and approves curb cut applications. Accordingly, City staff have evaluated the curb cut application and approval process and propose the following for consideration by the Council:

1. Adoption of a new ordinance that would delegate regulatory and enforcement authority for curb cuts to the ISD Commissioner. To support timely action, a draft ordinance is attached.
2. Issuance of Inspectional Services Department (ISD) regulations related to the new Delegation of Curb Cut Authority Ordinance. These regulations are intended to improve efficiency and provide clear, publicly accessible guidance on creating or modifying curb cuts.

Primary proposal:

City staff developed a primary proposal that reflects what we believe is the most effective way to improve the curb cut process. This approach is similar to as of right development wherein any application that meets the stated requirements would be approved.

The ISD Commissioner would:

- review the application for zoning compliance,
- receive nonbinding input from the Departments of Transportation and Public Works, and
- make the final determination on the permit.

This process would not include abutter or neighbor input.



Alternative proposal:

If the Council prefers to retain abutter/neighbor involvement, the process could include notification to abutters/neighbors after an initial positive determination by the ISD Commissioner. The applicant would be required to notify all abutters/neighbors, defined as anyone within 150 feet of the property lines along either side of the street who owns property or rents a residential or commercial unit. Feedback from abutters/neighbors would be sent directly to ISD for consideration but would remain nonbinding.

Next steps:

1. Council will need to provide direction between the 2 different proposals. Council could choose to give direction on the 2 different proposals or could continue discussion at a committee hearing, potentially within the Ordinance or Government Operations Committees.
2. Ordinance: The attached draft ordinance is appropriate for both the primary and alternative proposals.
3. ISD Regulations: Attached are proposed ISD regulations for the two different proposals.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yi-An Huang', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Yi-An Huang
City Manager

Alternative Proposal

City of Cambridge Curb Cut Ordinance Regulations

The City of Cambridge Inspectional Services Department Commissioner hereby adopts the following Curb Cut Ordinance Regulations pursuant to the Delegation of Curb Cut Authority Ordinance, 12.24 of the Cambridge Municipal Code (“Curb Cut Ordinance” or “Ordinance”). The provisions of the Curb Cut Ordinance, including but not limited to the definitions contained in the Ordinance, shall apply to these regulations.

Article I – Definitions

§ 1.1 Construction of definitions or words and phrases

- (a) The following words and phrases when used in these regulations shall for the purpose of these regulations have the meanings respectively ascribed to them in this article, except in those instances where the context clearly indicates a different meaning.
- (b) Whenever any words and phrases used herein are not defined herein but are defined in [any applicable] State laws or regulations, any such definition therein shall be deemed to apply to such words and phrases used herein.

§ 1.2 Definitions

“Abutters/Neighbors” shall mean anyone within 150 feet of the property lines of the parcel on which the Curb Cut, as defined herein, is proposed, along either side of the street, who owns a parcel or rents as a tenant of a residential or commercial unit.

“CDOT” shall mean the City’s Department of Transportation.

“City” shall mean the City of Cambridge.

“Curb Cut” shall mean the installation or modification of an at-grade motor vehicle passage between a public way and private property.

“Department of Public Works” or “DPW” shall mean the City’s Public Works Department.

“DPW Commissioner” shall mean the Commissioner of DPW or their designee.

“Inspectional Services Department” or “ISD” shall mean the City’s Inspectional Services Department.

“ISD Application” shall mean an Application for installing or modifying Curb Cuts submitted to ISD.

“ISD Commissioner” shall mean the Commissioner of ISD or their designee.

“ISD Permit File” shall mean the file maintained by ISD after an applicant submits an ISD Application and pays any related fees.

“Plan” shall mean a scale plan stamped by a registered land surveyor or a professional civil engineer.

“Traffic Director” shall mean the Traffic Director of CDOT or their designee.

Article II – Curb Cut Requirements

§ 2.1 Allowable Curb Cuts

- (a) Curb Cut shall be permitted only when it does not constitute a nuisance, hazard, or unreasonable impediment to traffic. The criteria for determining that a Curb Cut does not constitute a nuisance, hazard, or unreasonable impediment to traffic is met if the ISD Commissioner determines that the proposed curb cut complies with:
 - i. Cambridge Zoning Ordinance Section 6.43.3(a)-(c)
 - ii. Cambridge Zoning Ordinance Section 6.43.4(a)-(c)
- (b) In accordance with Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (CZO) 6.43.5, the BZA may grant relief in the form of a special permit modifying the provisions of CZO 6.43, and its subsections.

Article III - Curb Cut Application and Approval Process

§ 3.1 Application

- (a) An applicant seeking a Curb Cut shall submit an ISD Application. Instructions for opening an ISD Application can be found at:
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/iwantto/applyforacurbcut>.
- (b) The ISD Application shall detail the requirements for completing and submitting the application.

- (c) Upon submission to ISD of an ISD Application and payment of any related fees ISD will open and maintain an ISD Permit File.

§ 3.2 Plan

An ISD Application shall include an applicant submitted Plan detailing the proposed Curb Cut including property lines, driveway and curb cut location, widths, and distance from nearest intersections, crosswalks, and any vertical obstructions including but not limited to trees, fences, utility poles, street lights, and any additional information required to demonstrate zoning compliance. § 3.3 City Staff Review

- (a) The ISD Commissioner shall review an ISD Application to confirm zoning compliance.
 - (i) If the ISD Commissioner determines an ISD Application does not comply with applicable zoning ordinances, then the ISD Commissioner will notify the applicant that the ISD Application is denied and the ISD Permit File closed.
 - (ii) If the ISD Commissioner determines an ISD Application complies with applicable zoning ordinances and the applicant provided a Plan, then:
 - (A) The Traffic Director will review the ISD Application for impacts on traffic and safety and enter their findings in the ISD Permit File; and
 - (B) The DPW Commissioner will review the ISD Application for design compliance and street conflicts and enter their findings in the ISD Permit File.
- (b) The ISD Commissioner shall review the findings of the Traffic Director and the DPW Commissioner in making a preliminary determination regarding whether to issue a Curb Cut permit; however, those findings shall not be binding on the ISD Commissioner in deciding whether to issue a Curb Cut permit.
- (c) If the ISD Commissioner makes a negative determination, then the ISD Commissioner will notify the applicant that the ISD Application is denied and the ISD Permit File closed. If the ISD Commissioner makes a positive determination, then the applicant proceeds with Notification to Abutters/Neighbors.

§ 3.3 Notification to Abutters/Neighbors

- (a) An applicant shall send letters to all Abutters/Neighbors, at the Abutters/Neighbors' property addresses including all units in rental and condo multifamily buildings and owner's address if different than the property address, via certified and first-class mail, that:
 - (i) describe the proposed Curb Cut and information sufficient to allow the Abutters/Neighbors to locate and review the relevant ISD Permit File; and
 - (ii) give notice that ISD must receive comments, support, or objections within 30 days from the date the mailings were sent.
- (b) An applicant shall file in their ISD Permit File an affidavit attesting to any mailings sent pursuant to § X.X(a) and include therewith copies of those mailings.
- (c) Abutters/Neighbors may submit comments, support, or objections to ISD for review within 30 days from the date the mailings were sent.
- (d) The ISD Commissioner shall review the Abutters/Neighbors comments, support, or objections in making a final determination regarding whether to issue a Curb Cut permit; however, those findings shall not be binding on the ISD Commissioner in deciding whether to issue a Curb Cut permit.
- (e) If the ISD Commissioner makes a negative determination, then the ISD Commissioner will notify the applicant that the ISD Application is denied and the ISD Permit File closed. If the ISD Commissioner makes a positive determination, then the Curb Cut permit will be issued.

Primary Proposal

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
In the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Six
AN ORDINANCE
In amendment to the Ordinance
entitled "Cambridge Municipal Code."

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Cambridge that the Municipal Code of the City of Cambridge be amended by addition of Chapter 12.24, entitled "Delegation of Curb Cut Authority" to read as follows:

12.24 Delegation of Curb Cut Authority Ordinance.

12.24.010 Short title.

Sections **12.24.010** to **12.24.070** may be cited as the "Curb Cuts Ordinance" of the City of Cambridge.

12.24.020 Statement of Purpose.

The Cambridge City Council (Council) hereby finds that regulations governing the creation and removal of curb cuts are necessary to avoid the creation of nuisances, hazards, or unreasonable impediments to traffic. Whereas the Council has statutory authority to ordain such regulations, the Council also has authority to delegate to the City's Inspectional Services Department, and other City of Cambridge departments as necessary, the authority to review and approve or deny curb cuts. The purpose of delegating this authority to the Inspectional Services Department, and other City of Cambridge departments, as necessary, is to promote the efficiency of the municipal government while making the process of creating and removing curb cuts subject to clearly stated publicly available regulations.

12.24.030 Definitions.

The following words shall for the purposes of this Chapter and/or any regulations promulgated pursuant to this Chapter, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

A. "City" shall mean the City of Cambridge.

B. "Inspectional Services Department" or "ISD" shall mean the City's Inspectional Services Department.

C. "ISD Commissioner" shall mean the Commissioner of Inspectional Services Department or their designee.

12.24.040 Applicability.

A. These sections shall apply to every application for the addition or modification of a curb cut on a public way within the City.

B. These sections shall not apply to the closing of a curb cut since no application or permit is required for such action.

12.24.050 Regulations and Approval of Curb Cuts.

A. Regulations. The ISD Commissioner shall have the authority to draft and promulgate regulations to implement the provisions of this ordinance.

B. Approval of Curb Cuts. The ISD Commissioner shall approve or deny applications for a curb cut.

12.24.060 Enforcement.

A. Noncriminal Disposition. Whoever violates any provision of this chapter or any regulations promulgated hereunder may be penalized by a noncriminal disposition as provided in G.L. c. 40, s. 21D. For purposes of this section, the ISD Commissioner and their designee shall be the enforcing officer. The penalty for each violation shall not exceed three hundred dollars. Each day's violation shall constitute a separate violation.

B. Criminal Penalty. Any person who violates any provisions of this chapter or any regulations promulgated hereunder may be subject to a fine not exceeding three hundred dollars, and each day's violation shall constitute a separate offense. For purposes of this section, the ISD Commissioner shall be the enforcing officer, except that the ISD Commissioner may delegate their enforcing authority to designated Inspectional Services Enforcement Officers.

12.24.070 Conformity with existing state and federal law and severability.

These sections shall be implemented in conformity with all applicable provisions of federal, state, and local laws, and the provisions of these sections are severable; if any provision, or portion thereof, should be held to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality or invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions, which shall remain in full force and effect.

12.24.080 Effective date.

This Chapter shall be effective upon enactment.