



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CMA 2026-219
IN CITY COUNCIL
August 3, 2026

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Please find attached communication from Melissa Peters, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, regarding edits to the Cambridge Street Active Use Zoning Petition.

Very truly yours,

Yi-An Huang
City Manager





To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager

From: Melissa Peters, Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Date: July 24, 2026

Re: **Revised Cambridge Street Active Use Zoning Petition**

We are pleased to transmit the attached revised Cambridge Street Active Use Zoning Petition for the Council's consideration. This revision comes at the end of the required public hearing phase for the petition, which included a hearing at the Planning Board on June 2, 2026, and two meetings of the Ordinance Committee on June 16 and July 7, 2026. The Planning Board voted to forward a report with no recommendation to the City Council, which was transmitted on June 22, 2026. The revisions reflect the changes discussed and approved by the Ordinance Committee at its meeting on July 7, 2026.

Summary of Revisions

- Revised ordinance text to apply ground story active use requirements in new buildings taller than 3 stories only in Lechmere (CAM-10) and the Webster/Windsor area (CAM-12).
- The rest of Cambridge Street (CAM-6) would have no active use requirement for new buildings of any height, which represents no change from existing zoning regulations.
- No zoning map amendments needed.

Next Steps

If the City Council chooses to accept the proposed changes, it can vote to amend the petition by substitution before passing it to a second reading at the August 3, 2026 meeting, which would allow the Council to take final action on September 14, 2026. The petition will expire on September 14, 2026.

Petition: To amend the Zoning Map and Article 17.000 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance as follows with the intent of strengthening active use requirements on Cambridge Street.

Amendments to the Zoning Map.

See attached Zoning Map and descriptive text.

Amendments to Article 17.000.

Amend Section 17.704.2.1 to read as follows:

- 17.704.2.1** ~~Additional Height for Ground Story Active Uses. The following limitations shall apply in addition to the Table of Height Limitations below: As set forth in the Table of Height Limitations, greater height shall be permitted for portions of buildings containing Residential Uses if the Ground Story is occupied by one or more Active Uses, as defined in Section 17.703.3, comprising at least 60% of the interior portion of the Ground Story that is within 50 feet of a Primary Street.~~
- (a) ~~On lots abutting one or more Primary Streets in a CAM-10 or CAM-12 district, residential uses shall be limited to 3 stories above grade and 35 feet above grade if the Ground Story is not occupied by one or more Active Uses, as defined in Section 17.703.3, comprising at least 60% of the interior portion of the Ground Story that is within 50 feet of a Primary Street.~~
- (b) ~~Upon granting a special permit, the Planning Board may approve modifications to the Active Use floor area and location standards in paragraph (a) above to permit residential heights up to those set forth in the Table of Height Limitations if the Board finds that all of the following criteria are met in addition to those in Section 17.707.2 and may impose conditions to ensure ongoing conformance:~~
- ~~(i) Active Uses shall be provided in a manner that generally meets the intent of the requirement to provide for reasonably continuous active ground floor frontage along the Primary Street, and~~
- ~~(ii) the total floor area of required Active Uses is not substantially reduced, and~~
- ~~(iii) the modifications directly respond to unique site-specific conditions that make the application of paragraph (a) infeasible.~~
- (c) ~~Lots that do not directly abut a Primary Street shall not be subject to the additional limitations of paragraph (a) above; however, (i) within 50 feet of the street line of a Primary Street, the permitted residential heights shall not exceed the applicable limitations set forth in paragraph (a) above, and (ii) the limitations set forth in paragraph (a) above shall apply to the entire area of any lot that abuts a Primary Street on April 27, 2026, including any lots or portions of lots that are later subdivided so that they no longer abut a Primary Street.~~
- (d) ~~The additional limitations of this Section shall not apply to an AHO Project.~~

Amend Section 17.704.3 to read as follows:

17.704.3 Table of Height Limitations.

	CAM-6	CAM-10	CAM-12
Non-Residential Uses (Section 4.30 except 4.31 a-j., 4.33.b.7 & 4.33.a)	35 feet and 3 stories above grade	45 feet and 4 stories above grade	35 feet and 3 stories above grade
Dormitory Uses (Section 4.33.b.7)	45 feet and 4 stories above grade	45 feet and 4 stories above grade	45 feet and 4 stories above grade
Residential Uses (Section 4.31 a-j.) & Religious Purposes Uses (Section 4.33.a)	75 feet and 6 stories above grade	75 feet and 6 stories above grade	75 feet and 6 stories above grade
Residential Uses (Section 4.31 a-j.) with Ground-Story Active Uses (Section 17.703.3)	75 feet and 6 stories above grade	120 feet and 10 stories above grade	145 feet and 12 stories above grade

Formula Business Special Permit

Amendments to Article 17.000.

Create a new Section 17.703.4 to read as follows:

- 17.703.4 Formula Businesses.** A Formula Business as defined in this Ordinance may be established in a Cambridge Street District only after the issuance of a special permit from the Planning Board. In reviewing an application the Planning Board shall take the following into consideration:
- (a) The extent to which the design of the proposal reflects, amplifies, and strengthens the established historical character of existing buildings and store fronts on Cambridge Street.
 - (b) The extent to which the particulars of the building or storefront design is varied from the formula or standard design of the chain in order to reflect the unique character and conditions of Cambridge Street generally or the specific location in particular.
 - (c) The extent to which the standard elements of the enterprise as they define it as a Formula Business are modified to respect and provide unique expressions of Cambridge Street history and traditions as well as innovation in physical design and marketing that will distinguish the Cambridge Street location from other locations of the Formula Business.

Description of proposed district boundaries based on the maps submitted with petition materials for the April 27th, 2026 City Council Meeting:

Cambridge Street Active Uses

Business A (BA) District – Legal Description

Create a Business A (BA) district on the Zoning Map of the City of Cambridge with the following boundaries:

Beginning at the northwesternmost point of the existing CAM-6/PUD-4A District where it meets the street centerline of Monsignor O'Brien Highway and the southern boundary of the SD-1 District, and proceeding along the western boundary of the CAM-6/PUD4A District in a southerly direction; thence continuing in a southerly direction along the western boundary of the CAM-6/PUD4A District to the intersection of the street centerline of Gore Street; thence turning in a southwesterly direction along the street centerline of Gore Street to the intersection of the street centerline of Third Street; thence turning in a northerly direction along the street centerline of Third Street to the intersection of the street centerline of Third Street and the northern boundary of the C-1 District; thence turning in a northwesterly direction and proceeding along the C-1 District boundary to the intersection of the street centerline of Monsignor O'Brien Highway and the southern boundary of the SD-1 District; thence turning in a southeasterly direction along the boundary of the SD-1 District to the point of beginning.

