



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, October 31, 2024

12:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Economic Development and University Relations Committee will hold a public hearing to discuss the Economics of Real Estate: Housing, Zoning, and the Economic Impact of Zoning.

| Attendee Name | Present | Absent | Late | Arrived |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Marc C. McGovern | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Sumbul Siddiqui | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Paul F. Toner | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Ayesha M. Wilson | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 12:10 PM |

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Economic Development and University Relations Committee was held on Thursday, October 31, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:0p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Toner. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

- Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/Remote*
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote*
- Councillor Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Wilson – Absent*

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

- *Councillor Siddiqui went from remote participation to in person at 12:52p.m.
- *Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler went from remote participation to in person at 12:44p.m.
- *Councillor Wilson was marked present and in the Sullivan Chamber at 12:10p.m.

The Chair, Councillor Toner offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to hold a public hearing to discuss the Economics of Real Estate: Housing, Zoning, and the Economic Impact of Zoning. Present at the meeting was Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD), Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for the Department of Human Services (DHSP), Brook McKenna, Commissioner for Traffic, Parking, and Transportation (TPT), Kathy Watkins, Commissioner of the Department of Public Works (DPW), Gayle Willett, Director of Assessing, Claire Spinner, Assistant City Manager for Finance, Mark Gallagher, Managing Director for the Water Department, Megan Bayer, City Solicitor, Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, Chris Cotter, Housing Director, Jim Wilcox, Assistant Commissioner of Engineering, and Melissa Peters, Chief of Planning Strategy. Also present was Councillor Nolan, Councillor Zusy, and Mayor Simmons.

The Chair, Councillor Toner opened Public Comment.

Mary Jane Kornacki, 103 Avon Hill Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments on ending single family zoning.

Suzanne Blier, 5 Fuller Place, Cambridge, MA, pointed out that many neighborhood leaders share the same concerns regarding the proposal.

James Zall, 203 Pemberton Street, Cambridge, MA, shared that if the housing crisis is not addressed it will have a negative affect on the Cambridge economy.

Henrik Torres, 56 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA, agrees the housing crisis should be addressed, but shared concerns about the proposal.

Jana Odette, 176 Larch Road, Cambridge, MA, spoke on unintended consequences that may occur with the zoning proposal.

Marilee Meyer, 10 Dana Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns about proposal and zoning changes.

Joe Adiletta, 68 Walker Street, Cambridge, MA, urged that the concerns raised by residents be addressed.

Arthur MacEwan, 35 William Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns about the proposal and zoning changes.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, shared support for the conversation, thanked the Chair for holding this meeting, and spoke on the importance of tree canopy and green space.

Robert Winters, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of multifamily housing and shared concerns about the proposal.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who made a motion to close public comment.

Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized the team from the City who gave a presentation titled “Housing, Zoning, and their Impacts on Cambridge Services and the Economy”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. During the presentation, City staff were available to respond to questions from Councillors.

The Chair, Councillor Toner had a clarifying question relative to the slide on Agenda Packet page 12 and asked if the projections that were shown are what could happen if people decided to sell their properties and build more development. Melissa Peters pointed out that the projections were a planning level analysis, and explained how that analysis was determined, noting that it’s not a prediction, but a way to help plan. Councillor Zusy asked if these projections take into consideration interest rates lowering and asked for clarification on the 1580 units created in neighborhoods by 2030. Melissa Peters shared that the unit prediction comes from a growth rate and while also taking into consideration market cycle changes. Iram Farooq added additional information on growth rates.

The Chair, Councillor Toner had a clarifying question relative to the slide on Agenda Packet page 14 and asked how many houses would need to be sold in a neighborhood before a change would affect property taxes. Gayle Willett responded and provided an overview of how the City would determine market sales for different properties. Vice Mayor McGovern pointed out that in Public Comment, a concern that was raised was if six story developments would lower property values and asked if the City has a sense of the impact in that situation. Gayle Willett noted that typically there is little impact on property values when a large building is developed in a neighborhood.

The Chair, Councillor Toner asked for an overview of the process and checklist that projects must go through before development, this question was brought forward as Jim Wilcox was providing a review of Agenda Packet page 18. Kathy Watkins provided an explanation regarding the process of evaluation in projects of all sizes, noting that it is important to do responsible development while also addressing concerns while evaluating the development without burdening the permit process. Vice Mayor McGovern shared that it would be helpful to have all of the information Kathy Watkins explained in one place to make it easier for people to understand the review process within each department.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Zusy who had a question on Agenda Packet page 17 regarding the increase in population by 2040 and asked how the City came up with that estimate. Melissa Peters explained that those numbers correspond to a previous slide regarding housing unit projection, as well as looking at current zoning and rezoning.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Jeff Roberts who provided an overview of what design review process could look like, including information on an advisory review that would go to the Planning Board for input that is non-binding. Jeff Roberts shared that this process would allow for both Planning Board and public input.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who pointed out that on Agenda Packet page 20, if you were to add up the nonresidential tree canopy, it is more than residential canopy. Kathy Watkins highlighted that it is about the importance of each of those categories. Councillor Wilson asked how long it takes for a new tree that is planted to be fully matured. Kathy Watkins provided a brief overview of the process of planting new trees within Tree Protection Ordinance, with the hope of having them matured within 10 to 15 years. Councillor Nolan shared that it would be helpful to know the number of trees that are planted and the number of trees that are removed. Kathy Watkins shared that the current survival rate for street trees is 80%, which is high compared to other communities.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who asked if there have been any conversations about building additional schools as the conversation around building more housing continues to move forward. Claire Spinner noted that it is hard to project the number of students that will be generated as housing develops. She pointed out that right now the City does not know what the size of that housing will be, one-, two- or three-bedroom apartments, could all be options. Claire Spinner added that there has been a year-by-year decline in births for Cambridge residents. Councillor Zusy pointed out that 15%-20% of Cambridge children go to private schools. Councillor Nolan had a clarifying question on the American Community Survey, which Iram Farooq was able to provide an overview of, in addition to sharing that the City is encouraging more family sized units within developments. Ellen Semonoff shared that currently DHSP does not have concerns right now about continuing to provide services to the public as the population in Cambridge increases with additional housing.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who had a clarifying question on Agenda Packet page 26 and asked if there was any data on how often the Door2Door shuttle is being utilized. Brooke McKenna noted that the Senior Center does have good data. Ellen Semonoff shared that in addition to Door2Door, DHSP also provides a City shuttle to transport to and from the senior centers, with occasional trips and grocery shopping, while Door2Door is funded to provide grocery shopping trips as well as transportation to the senior centers.

The Chair, Councillor Toner asked for clarification on allowing residents to share the EV charging stations and the possibility of having a car sharing program such as Turo. Iram Farooq responded about EV charges in private driveways, noting that it is an Ordinance that the Council has adopted. Megan Bayer shared that she would be happy to follow up on the car sharing program at a later time, but believes there would be zoning issues involved due to it being a commercial use program.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked if there was a study being done around shared use of the various shuttle services in Cambridge. Iram Farooq confirmed that there is a study being conducted, with the goal of trying to consolidate while also maintaining efficiency.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who made a motion to extend the meeting by fifteen minutes.

Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Vice Mayor McGovern, Co-Chair of the Ordinance Committee, who provided an overview of the schedule on the upcoming Ordinance meetings on the Multifamily Zoning Petitions. Vice Mayor McGovern asked the City to include in their presentation for the Zoning Petition how many meetings have been done in Committee relative to multifamily zoning. In addition, Councillor Wilson asked that community meetings that have been held also be included. Iram Farooq provided a brief review of the meetings that have been held so far, both in Committee and in the community, and shared that while the Petition is in the Ordinance Committee, the City does not plan to have additional community engagement other than what is discussed in Committee. Iram Farooq explained that staff goals will be preparing materials as they receive input from the Ordinance Committee, and if a neighborhood group does reach out, they will speak with them when possible. Iram Farooq added that they do not want to create the expectation that discussions with the community will bring up additional changes to the Petition while its in the Ordinance Committee. Councillor Wilson stressed the importance of community outreach as the conversation continues.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Nolan who echoed comments made by Councillor Wilson related to outreach. Councillor Nolan asked if the City had any numbers specific to the number of housing units that would be done under the proposed zoning. Melissa Peters explained that it is a planning level analysis, and they are currently working on a recent Policy Order asking for an update on the zoning projections based on specific heights that the City Council requested be looked at for different areas of the City.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Siddiqui, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, and Councillor Zusy who all shared information that they would like to see presented at the upcoming Ordinance Committee meeting.

The Chair, Councillor Toner asked if there was any information on how many residential properties in Cambridge were owned by private investors. Gayle Willett explained that that information could be found by seeing which properties receive the residential exemption.

The Chair, Councillor Toner offered closing remarks and shared how this information will continue to be discussed in Ordinance.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**Deputy City Clerk Crane called the roll.**

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.**The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:17p.m.****Attachment A** – Written communications from the public.

Clerk's Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at: https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/880?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Councillor Toner, transmitting the meeting agenda for the October 31, 2024 Economic Development and University Relations Committee hearing.

A communication was received from Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department, transmitting a presentation regarding housing, zoning, and the impacts on Cambridge services and the economy.

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment A

From: Lee Rosenthal <leerosenthalj@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 10:43 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Cambridge resident in support of six-story upzoning

Hi Cambridge city council,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the proposed measure to legalize six-story multi-family housing. I love my apartment (in a multi-family apartment on Crawford St), neighborhood (mid-Cambridge), my local community, and am so grateful for the opportunity to live in such a special place. Not nearly enough people without wealth share this opportunity, mainly because of 20th century zoning designed to economically and racially segregate Cambridge residents. As a result, housing supply has been effectively frozen. This has driven up rents and halted the growth of our city.

The only way to make Cambridge affordable for everyone is to drastically increase housing supply, as evidenced by countless studies controlling for a diversity of cities and regulatory structures. Building new housing not only allows more people to move here, it lowers rent for people who don't move into new housing. The clearest recent example of this is Austin, which has seen rents drop by over 10% across neighborhoods in the past year since eliminating single-family zoning.

Thank you for all of your work to support Cambridge. I love this city, and want it to be accessible and welcoming to folks of all incomes and backgrounds. People will write to you to say that new housing must face strict constraints; it can't be too tall, or it has to look like historical buildings, or it can't be mixed with single-family units. Please look past these superficial complaints and pass this upzoning ordinance in order to make Cambridge a more affordable and equitable home for all of its residents.

Hoping for the best for our city,
Lee Rosenthal

Erwin, Nicole

From: karenlme (null) <karenlme@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 2:22 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: UPZONING

Remember, the weight of the DOWNSIDES of building more housing per square foot of land [congestion meaning a denser population], too many kids in your schools that teachers will be unable to teach or manage] are borne at the LOCAL level and will thus be borne on YOUR shoulders.* The power to UPZONE lies with states, as well as their city councils and city managers who, with thoughtlessness and greed for themselves, their families, and their friends and neighbors, support UPZONING.

UPZONING, however, remains subject to the U.S. Constitution. Its validity was established by the 1926 Supreme Court case "Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co." The Court ruled that "If they are not arbitrary or unreasonable, zoning ordinances are constitutional under the police power of local governments, as long as they have some relation to public health, safety, morals, or general welfare." "The Court inveighed against apartment houses." This means the Court spoke or wrote about apartment houses with GREAT HOSTILITY. "In residential areas zoned for SINGLE-FAMILY USE, the six-member majority wrote, "Very often the apartment house is a mere parasite, constructed in order to take advantage of the open spaces and attractive surroundings created BY the residential character of the district." They also "bring NOISE, TRAFFIC, BUSINESS, AND CARS; INTERFERE WITH THE CIRCULATION OF AIR; AND MONOPOLIZE THE SUN, UNTIL FINALLY, THE RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT [IS] "UTTERLY DESTROYED." "Under these circumstances, apartment houses, which in a different environment would be not only entirely UNobjectionable but highly desirable, come very near to being nuisances." In fact, it's emphasized that "So, Palo Alto gets all of the negatives, and only a tiny share of the benefits. Palo Alto has no incentive to build more housing." Zoning as per its current Cambridge City Council proposal, however, is an unreasonable plan as it contains no concern for the welfare or health or safety of its citizens (think COVID, which remains), has no concern for the morals of its citizens in its planning of tiny, shoddy-walled apartments that have windows that look into the next apartment building's windows on three sides, has unsafe, narrow streets that no vehicle wider than an amusement park-type car can drive upon with the building front door opening up to the curb (think NO AMBULANCES OR FIRE TRUCKS OR POLICEMEN), and noise, Noise, NOise, NOISE traveling from one building to the next via opened windows.

NOTE that "High-wage cities such as New York and Boston pay college graduates a lot more than medium-wage cities such as Cleveland and high-wage cities pay low-skill workers better, too, the premium" of this payment "is much less than that for highly-compensated individuals" - and NOT NEARLY ENOUGH "to cover the larger percentage of budget the low-skill workers pay for housing."

Please be THOUGHTFUL and STOP the insanity of a quick fix that CANNOT BE REVERSED for yourselves, your families, and your neighbors, friends, and citizens of the City of Cambridge. VOTE AGAINST any sort of Upzoning Proposal. George Washington and the other Fathers of our country would be appalled at your lack of caution and plans for UPZONING!

*The quotations and sentences were, often directly, taken from Harvard Magazine, November-December 2024, pp. 24-25.

Thank you.
Karen Eton
34 Larchwood Drive
Cambridge, MA

Erwin, Nicole

From: karenlme (null) <karenlme@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 12:19 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: UPZONING

Remember, the weight of the DOWNSIDES of building more housing per square foot of land [congestion meaning a denser population], too many kids in your schools that teachers will be unable to teach or manage] are borne at the LOCAL level and will thus be borne on YOUR shoulders.* The power to UPZONE lies with states, as well as their city councils and city managers who, with thoughtlessness and greed for themselves, their families, and their friends and neighbors, support UPZONING.

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*The quotations and sentences were, often directly, taken from Harvard Magazine, November-December 2024, pp. 24-25.

Thank you.
Karen Eton
34 Larchwood Drive
Cambridge, MA

Erwin, Nicole

From: Janet B. Plotkin <janetbplotkin@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 11:42 AM
To: City Manager; City Clerk; City Council; Simmons, Denise
Subject: Please consider my concerns and suggestions about the Zoning Proposal for the City of Cambridge

Dear Mayor Simmons, Manager Yi-An Huang, City Clerk, and Cambridge Council Members,

As a 30 year resident of Cambridge I am very concerned and frightened about the new Zoning Plans.

Most important for me is that your plan include a requirement that all apartment/condo developers must meet with the appropriate city departments/boards to assure they include the requirements I state below, and that the sewage and other necessary city infrastructure necessary is addressed..

I am in favor of 4 stories in neighborhoods, 6 story buildings on major streets as you propose. But 6 stories should be the LIMIT, not higher.

I favor a **requirement** that parking spaces be a part of all new building plans, either on site or underground. There is no more street parking available. (an example: the apartment building at Trowbridge and Cambridge streets has parking on the ground level below the building, and the apartment building actually starts above the parking area)

I favor that there **MUST** be required permeable set backs that allow for some green planting and planting of trees. This is imperative to address the fast paced climate change.

I favor the city setting a priority to provide as many parking lots as possible, especially because on street parking has been drastically reduced.

Thank you for considering my suggestions. I hope all of them can be included in your zoning plan.

Warm regards,
Janet Plotkin

975 Memorial Drive
Unit 910
Cambridge MA 02138
C: 617-821-6748

Erwin, Nicole

From: Blier, Suzanne <blier@fas.harvard.edu>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 11:01 AM
To: Simmons, Denise; McGovern, Marc; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Nolan, Patricia; Toner, Paul; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Wilson, Ayesha; Zusy, Catherine
Cc: City Council; Huang, Yi-An; City Clerk; Peters, Melissa
Subject: Zoning Lessons From Other Cities: Will We Heed Them?
Attachments: 3 upzoning scenarios composite .png

Honorable Mayor and Members of the Cambridge City Council as well as our City Manager and CDD staff,

In preparation for today's meeting on the upzoning, I researched and wrote an overview of recent upzoning plans across other important U.S. and international cities (Austin, Chicago, Minneapolis, Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver among these). These cities have each approached the problem in a different way, and we have much to learn from them.

Zoning Lessons From Other Cities: Will We Heed Them?

The three buildings in the attached composite photograph offer interesting insight on how design decisions get made. The design of each structure is an important one, depending on the site, date, and context. The English example on the left, long considered an eyesore, has now been demolished, less than 15 years after the 150' (c.15 story) property was built by developers to serve as a hotel. In its place today is a far better designed student center admired today as simultaneously "classic" and "modern" – a work that fits remarkably well into this city center setting. Read more [HERE](#). The contemporary concrete building on the right is frequently labeled sometimes as "what one can do if the land is small." In the right setting, with other similar structures, it is a practical, visually interesting single-family home for a family of means. The example in the middle is from 231 and 235 Third Street in East Cambridge. A 2,613 SF structure with land at the rear (totaling 5,559 SF), Zillow last advertised one of the two units as a \$3,561 rental apartment. The structure which sits in the heart of the East Cambridge redevelopment frenzy, sits next to a sizable parking lot, may have been a good candidate to be moved elsewhere in the city rather than being torn down. Most likely it will see more labs not critically needed housing. Individually and together these structures represent the kinds of decisions that cities often are called on to make.

Many cities have begun to up-zoning, as they seek to add more housing at levels that will enable middle-income individuals to live there. Six examples provide us with particularly interesting parallels: Austin (Texas), Chicago (Illinois), Los Angeles (California) Portland (Oregon), San Francisco (California), and Vancouver (Canada).

Before we begin, note that Cambridge, Massachusetts

- Is 6.8 square miles it is already one of the densest cities in the country for our size.
- Is a notably old city (founded 1630 – the first planned city in North America)
- Includes a rich heritage of handsome sustainable homes.
- Cares deeply about retaining our diversity and supporting our lower- and middle-income residents.
- Has only 3,772 single family homes (6.52% of our total housing stock of 57.894 units).

Cambridge is also far denser than Minneapolis, MN (with 35% of their housing stock comprised of single-family homes on 59 square miles), Austin TX with 41% of their housing stock comprised of single-family homes on 305 square miles and Chicago, IL with 79% of their housing stock comprised of single-family homes on 234 square miles. As one of the oldest, most sought after, and densest cities in the country situated adjacent to several other

highly sought after cities with multiple local and adjacent universities and a large number of biotech and info-tech companies, with sizable numbers of well paid employees Cambridge has a unique set of factors that make it impossible for us to build ourselves out of our expensive housing situation.

OTHER U.S. CITY UP-ZONING EXAMPLES:

Austin Texas is a city of 331.4 square miles and has a population density of 3,097 people per square mile. It is considered a low density city, ranking 157th in this [city density assessment](#). Like Portland they chose to allow more homes per lot, and here specifically

- to allow 3 different SF zones (SF-1, SF-2, SF-3)
- reduce the minimum size of single-family lots from 5,750 SF to 2,500 SF
- allow up to three units per single family lot,
- with a front yard setback requirement of 15'
- a maximum building coverage of 40%.
- dwelling units may include “tiny homes” (400 SF excluding loft space).
- a program to incentivize “saving existing homes that conserve neighborhood character and help keep materials out of landfills” with *Preservation and Sustainability Bonuses*
- For more information read [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)

Chicago, Illinois: Chicago is a city of 234 square miles and has a population density of 11,847 people per square mile, and often ranked 5th most dense city. An article in the Nov-Dec 2024 [Harvard Magazine](#) provides results from Cook County Chicago that now simply

- allows multifamily housing to be built city wide.
- In Chicago “streamlining permitting” had a “negligible effect on generating new supply”
- But allowing triplexes in formerly single-family lots “led to more housing over time because the per-unit construction and development costs are vastly lower than for a single-family home.”

Los Angeles, California. Los Angeles is 502 square miles, with a population density of around 8,300 people per square mile, and often ranked number 10 most dense city. The Planning Board chose

- To stay clear of 72% of residential land in the city (single family homes)
 - because city’s current zoning can’t handle all that growth.
 - Apartments are not allowed in 72% of LA neighborhoods,
 - This decision was made despite complaints of racist origins of SFH, concerns about city’s unaffordable rents, and the lack of family-size housing for young parents.
- To build taller, denser buildings in neighborhoods that already allow for apartments
- Developers will have to keep some of those units affordable to low-income renters.
- City Council will make a decision in February.
- Read more [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)

Minneapolis, Minnesota. Minneapolis is 58 square miles, with 7.96 people per square mile and generally ranked 46th in population density. Their plan

- Allow construction of accessory dwelling units
- A variance is required to increase maximum height for single- and two-family dwellings and three-family dwellings in the two residential districts.
- Encourages apartment development on commercial corridor by adding several new zoning districts.
 - Allows three-to-six-story buildings along most of the city’s transit routes
 - “transit” districts allow 10-to-30-story buildings on lots adjacent to light rail stations and bus rapid transit.
- Lowers the *minimum* lot size requirements in non-residential zones
 - To prevent the underutilization of property, particularly in areas near substantial public transit investments.

- Minimum height requirements would only apply in districts where the comprehensive plan guidance calls for developing at a minimum building height
- These districts would also be subject to a minimum FAR requirement in order to best take advantage of the access to transit, jobs, and goods and services that their locations provide.
- To prevent circumventing the intent of the ordinance, the minimum height requirement shall apply to the majority of the building footprint a
- Additions to existing buildings would not be subject to the minimum height requirement unless the addition would exceed the existing floor area by 100 percent or more.
- Read more: [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)

Portland, Oregon is a city of 145 square miles, with a population density of 4,889 people per square miles. It ranks 26th for U.S. city density with populations over 100,000K. They chose to encourage the conversion of single-family homes into duplexes if one:

- Acquires the necessary permits and adheres to specific building codes.
- ADU's (auxiliary dwelling units) must be no more than 75% of the primary structure's living area (or 800 SF, whichever is smaller).
- Setbacks must be 5' from the side and rear property line, and front setbacks match that of the primary dwelling, because "...these setbacks help maintain neighborhood aesthetics and privacy."
- SDC Fees are assessed (System Development Calculation) to help fund city infrastructure. These are based on the number and type of units and can be considerable (from \$1000 to much more).
- Waivers are in place for those creating affordable housing with their ADUs. These waivers on affordable housing ADUs "...led to rise in the number of ADUs from 50 per year to 500 per year."
- For more information on Portland's plan, see [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

San Francisco, California. San Francisco is X square miles, has a population density (per square mile) of 18,790.8, and often is ranked #2 in population density for large cities. Like Cambridge, it has a rich heritage of fine historic homes, a large university, and is a key center of biotech development. San Francisco has created

- a specific housing plan called the Residential Development Pipeline that "...
 - calculates a residential development pipeline of ~43,000 units
 - based on planned projects that are under formal review
 - have already received some degree of approval – such as a planning approval or a building permit.
 - Some units in very large master planned developments, both approved and proposed, could not be counted since they are anticipated to be built well after 2031.
- This plan calls for specific percentages of new housing types:
 - 25.4% Low Income 12,014
 - 14.6% Moderate Income 13,717 1
 - 6.7% Above Moderate Income 35,471
 - 43.2% Total Units 82,069 100.0
- Non-site-specific development throughout the city, such as
 - Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
 - acquisition of residential buildings for permanent affordable housing and is expected to account for ~3,900 units.
- Underutilized and vacant sites throughout the city (that are either vacant or are not built out close to the full extent) are
 - expected to account for ~11,300 units.
- Read more [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)

Vancouver, Canada: Downtown Vancouver is 44.5 square miles has a population density of 14,892/sq mi). It is the densest city in Canada and has faced sky rocketing housing costs.

Vancouver's strategy focuses on an equitable housing system by:

- Shifting housing delivery to rental units to address the most pressing needs

- Building more family-friendly options to ensure a diverse range of housing types that meet current and future demands
- Following both a 3 year and 10 year plan.
- Creating and protecting “purpose-built rental housing”
- Housing options for lower density areas: provide more housing that falls between single-family homes and higher density apartments
 - Multifamily - 3-6 units (up to 8 units for secured rental) depending on lot size. Up to 1.0 FAR
 - Renovation and restoration of “existing character house” can include conversion to multiple units and/or addition of new building. Up to 0.85 FAR
 - Duplex up to 0.85 FAR
 - SFH (can have a 2ndary suite), added lane house. Up to 0.6 FAR
- Significantly increase the supply of social and supportive housing (community housing)
- Address speculation to ensure new and existing housing serves people who live and work in Vancouver.
- Read more [HERE](#)

International parallels: a March 2024 study by Murry and Gordon (and economist and political scientist) on land policy argues that

- “The public deserves a share in the value upzoning creates....”
- “Upzoning simply makes the inequality inherent in property ownership worse”
- “Adding rights to property owners and giving nothing to non-owners.”
- “A lot of places don’t give air space,” he said. “They sell it.”
- Create a “betterment tax” to capture part of value created by public land use decisions.
- Sell air rights that the city wants to see redeveloped (Sao Paulo did this). These sold by auction with a percent going back to the city to pay for the infrastructure required to support the future density.
- Upzoning for public players - properties owned by public agencies, the benefits can be used for the sake of the public.
 - In Singapore, the state’s Housing and Development Board will buy and upzone land for public housing.
 - In the Netherlands, municipalities purchase rural land, develop it, upzone it and sell it to the private market.
 - In Hong Kong, the MTR transit operator benefits from upzoning by developing and managing its properties, allowing it to provide housing and reinvest profits back into public transportation.
- Charles Darwin visited Sydney in 1836 noting large numbers of new housing, and as a result “everyone complains of the high rents & difficulty in procuring a house.” He writes this in his diary before he looks to study animals.
- Read more [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)

Does the free market make housing cheaper? Murry and Gordon, the authors are not sure of the above study are not convinced.

- In Cambridge, the highest rents and salaries are now in East Cambridge.
- East Cambridge also has the highest number and density of new homes built.
- Many of the East Cambridge units likely purchased by investors who do not live here.
- In the province of Ottawa, Canada, 85% of newly built condos have gone to investors.
 - Read more [HERE](#)

Does Cambridge want simply more housing, or housing that is affordable to middle- and lower- income people that also maintains the livability and look of our historic neighborhoods and does not promote even more gentrification.

- **This is what the city must decide**

I have created a new civic blogpost with this data: here: <https://www.suzanneprestonblier.com/civic-blogs/zoning-lessons-from-other-cities-will-we-heed-them>

Cordially,
Suzanne Blier
5 Fuller Place



Westgate House, Newcastle upon Tyne



Cambridge, MA (to be demolished)



Vietnam

Erwin, Nicole

From: Beth Gamse <bethgamse@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 10:19 AM
To: City Clerk; City Council; City Manager; Planning Board Comment
Cc: Judith Singer
Subject: Questions for Committee meeting

Dear Committee Members

I submit the following questions for your consideration.

With land costs so high, & going higher, how can this bring down home costs?

The proposal is not consistent with Envision Goals of adding green space in denser neighborhoods, building higher on corridors, preserving historic residences. What are the long-term costs of this proposed development?

Why is the City giving away financially valuable assets to investors and developers (the area above and beside current properties), especially as we learn from what other cities are doing (e.g., putting some controls in place and/or asking for some returns on investments)?

Where are the drawings or plans that developers would need to conform with in order to build these structures and what redress do we require if things do not go well?

What is the evidence that new units would cost less than existing ones?

What prevents wealthier residents from tearing down existing structures to build larger residences?

What guarantees have you put in place to ensure that a majority of new projects will have 20% inclusionary dwellings?

How will the City pay for costs of new infrastructure (schools, fire engines, police, sewage)?

How will we stop investors from price gouging and/or leaving units empty?

Are there plans to repay residents forced out with evictions & lease terminations?

What financial or other give backs will investors/developers have to pay?

Will the increased residential tax revenues compared to commercial rates impact the proportion of taxes residents will have to pay, making the city less affordable?

How will we help middle income residents now renting be able to purchase these homes?

Will neighbors have higher property taxes as adjacent property values rise?

What will be the cost of increased transit time with more people on the roads?

What neighborhoods & residents will likely be hit the hardest? How will you compensate them?

Where will the new schools, citywide public transit, & electrical grid go?

What review schedule is in place to assess the impacts on various facets of our City (e.g., on housing costs, availability of green space, transportation access, population/demographic changes, etc)?

How will this affect opportunities from AHO city/state-funded housing developers?

Taken together, these proposed changes run counter to the key goals articulated in the Envision Plan (e.g., more green space, build higher on corridors only, preserve neighborhoods and communities). How can we enact changes that contradict Envision without being hypocritical? Will we now redo Envision?

Sincerely,
Beth Gamse & Judy Singer
14 Walker St, Cambridge

Beth Gamse
617-448-4860

Erwin, Nicole

From: Lynne Reiss <lreiss82@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 10:17 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: today's meeting on housing

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Print all
In new window

Dear Councilors:

I want to express my concern about the proposed upzoning plan. I agree that we need more housing but, given that we already live in the 4th densest city in the country, and that we have some architectural treasures, I am concerned that, if you allow residential buildings of up to 6 stories in all neighborhoods, developers will tear down smaller structures to build up and out. I am also not convinced that the emphasis will be on housing for low and moderate income people. The track record so far is not good.

I do support allowing multifamily housing in all parts of the city.

In short, I agree with the analysis below and urge you to vote down the proposal as written.

Sincerely,

Lynne Reiss
76 Oxford St.

| | | | |
|----|---|---|--|
| 1. | Upzoning Plan: Allow multifamily housing (such as apartments and condos) in all neighborhoods of the city. | Support? YES. <i>We support this.</i> | YES. Envision Supports this |
| 2. | Upzoning Plan: Allow residential buildings of up to 6 stories in all neighborhoods and districts of the city. | Support? NO. <i>We do NOT support this. This will encourage demolitions and will allow 6 story (75') & 13 story AHO buildings in every neighborhood. Greater heights should be on the corridors.</i> | NO. Envision calls for higher heights on corridors |
| 3. | Upzoning Plan: Remove other requirements that make it more difficult to build multifamily housing, such as minimum lot sizes, limits on the number of housing units and amount of floor area | Support? NO. <i>We do not support removing green space and trees, enabling lots to be divided into far smaller ones, and radically increasing the density (number of units/residents) on every residential lot. This plan will dramatically increase land values and housing costs citywide to the sizable benefit of investors without any givebacks, infrastructure planning and neighbor input. This will likely lead to evictions, lease terminations, and demolitions of sustainable historical homes. We oppose the removal existing design review and oversight. We oppose making these new projects would be "as of right" and would remove the ability of neighbors to both have a role in improving design or to have any legal recourse.</i> | NO. Envision supports adding green spaces, retaining historic homes and adding more height on corridors. |
| 4. | Upzoning Plan: Continue to encourage the creation of permanently affordable housing through the inclusionary housing requirements and Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO). | Support? NO. <i>We do not believe many inclusionary units will be added without specific requirements since many investors stop at 9 units. This proposal also promotes McMansions, encouraging more teardowns for larger single-family homes (in some cases decreasing units).</i> Support AHO: YES. <i>We support public funded housing (AHO). But this makes it harder for public funded housing projects to compete for available properties.</i> We believe the Councillors advocating for this plan have not thought through the widespread and long-term impacts, including home demolitions, lack of water, sewage, and electrical infrastructure, removal of green spaces, the heat islands effects, parking, clogged streets, schools, libraries, fire, police, grocery stores, health clinics, financial impacts. | It Depends. Adding more housing is supported, but removing current housing and adding far more costly housing and larger single family homes is not supported. |

Here are the questions I would like you to address:

- **With land costs so high, & going higher, how can this bring down home costs?**
- **The proposal is not consistent with Envision Goals of adding green space in denser neighborhoods, building higher on corridors, preserving historic residences. What are the long-term costs of this?**
- **Why are we giving away these financially important assets to investors and developers (the area above and beside current properties)? Some other cities are asking for some controls and/or returns**
- **Where are the drawings or plans that developers would need to conform with in order to build these structures and what redress do we require if things do not go well?**
- **What is the evidence for new units costing less than existing ones?**
- **What prevents wealthier residents from tearing downs for bigger SFH McMansions?**
- **What guarantees us that a majority of new projects will have 20% inclusionary?**
- **How will city pay for costs of new infrastructure (schools, fire engines, police, sewage)?**
- **How will we stop investors from price gauging and/or leaving units empty?**
- **Are there plans to repay residents forced out with evictions & lease terminations?**
- **What financial or other give backs will investors/developers have to pay?**
- **Will the increased residential tax revenues compared to commercial rates impact the proportion of taxes residents will have to pay, making the city less affordable?**

- *How will we help middle income residents now renting to purchase these homes?*
- *Will neighbors have higher property taxes as adjacent property values rise?*
- *What will be the cost of increased transit time with more people on the roads?*
- *What neighborhoods & residents will likely be hit the hardest? How will you compensate them?*
- *Where will the new schools, citywide public transit, & electrical grid go?*
- *Why do we not follow Boston's model and buy existing housing to keep them affordable?*
- *Will we have a regular five & ten year review of impacts? Housing cost decreases or increases? Loss of Green space, demographics and incomes of new residents, vacant investor units?*
- *Will this take away opportunities from AHO city/state-funded housing developers?*
- *Since this goes against key goals in Envision (more green space, build higher on corridors, preserve neighborhood homes), will we now redo Envision?*

Oct 31 2024

My opening comments reiterate what I said last week at Councillor Zusy's meeting and will continue to say.

Let's end single-family zoning. It is time to look at land use policy and its ramifications. I've heard no objection to that.

I've heard and you all have heard plenty of dissent around the details of THIS proposal...the negative ramifications of developers maximizing profits while building close to lot lines, cutting off sun, air, privacy, permeable surfaces, destroying the characters of neighborhoods. Too little planning for infrastructure like demand for sewers, roads, electricity to power fossil free energy. Green space and tree canopy to name just a few.

And the current proposal is deeply flawed in the assumption that easing the way for developers to build up to six stories by right everywhere is going to make housing more affordable. It will not. The unintended consequence of this approach is to raise real estate costs throughout the city, introducing another hurdle to acquiring land for affordable development.

this handout appears to be a start

For me, too many questions remain:

- What is the actual intent of structuring the proposal as it stands? Have you tested your assumptions that opening up development opportunities reduces housing costs across the board, in THIS city? **I don't think that's worked well in much sought after cities like New York City or Paris for example.**
- Like Paris or Manhattan there is only one Cambridge and our uniqueness -home to two of the world's leading universities and ground zero for life science research – mean that housing demand is never going to be met. Perhaps in a small or mid size city without our worldclass amenities, there's a point where supply meets or outstrips demand and housing cost fall. That's never going to happen here.

- The Urban institute concludes land-use policy IS important to opening up development but affordability is not going to be affected by any single single policy...for those truly in need of housing - not the tech bros who WANT to live in Cambridge - vouchers, rent subsidies matter as much as zoning change. Where are those policies on your agenda?
- What about the displaced? When land that is most affordable is purchased by developers who maximize profits with market rate housing, what's your responsibility to those you've displaced? And I do mean you...the sitting city councillors.
- Exactions from developers – I don't know of any. Just “give aways” to encourage development of residential neighborhoods. Let's face it, Cambridge is and will remain highly desirable. I ~~recall a time not that long ago when the council had some concern or fear upping inclusionary units requirement to 20% would scare off developers. Turns out that was wrong.~~ Other cities impose requirements on profit making developers – funding local transit, planting green space or funding parks, mandating green roofs, there are all sorts of “give backs” – not “give aways” that could be extracted from developers, but I haven't seen evidence of any. Am I wrong? If there are exactions, what are they?
- Public process. I am privileged that I am able to come to hearings you hold in this chamber during working hours. Many do not have this luxury. Councillor Azeem at one of the first meetings on this topic at which the public spoke promised there would be many opportunities public input/engagement. When and where are they schedule? I'm talking about town halls at which councilors not CDD present and engage in dialogue. If you are so proud of this proposal and so sure this is the vision for the city residents support....why are you not out there in multiple meetings making the case for it and hearing from constituents of all ages, income levels and part of our city?

Only a few of the questions that I hope the round table will take up this afternoon.

Mary Jane Kornacker
103 Avon Hill St