



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: November 29, 2022

Subject: Emissions Accounting Zoning Petition (Version 3)

Recommendation: The Planning Board RECOMMENDS ADOPTION, with clarifying comments.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On November 22, 2022, the Planning Board (the “Board”) held a public hearing to discuss a Zoning Petition by the City Council to amend Section 22.25.1, Paragraph (c) of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (the “Petition”).

The Petition would require applicants of most Green Building Projects to provide, as part of their Net Zero Narrative, an “Embodied Emissions” analysis described as “A full lifecycle analysis of the estimated emissions generated by the construction of the Green Building Project.” This analysis would not be required for “a project of the Affordable Housing Trust” or other construction of low and moderate income housing. The Petition would also specify that the currently required calculation of “energy loads, baseline energy simulation tool assumptions, and proposed energy targets” would be “projected until 2050,” and that the currently required description of a technical framework to transition to net zero emissions would specify “prior to 2050.”

The Board heard a presentation from Councillor Quinton Zondervan and received written materials from staff in the City’s Community Development Department (CDD). Following the presentation, public comment, and discussion among Board members, the Planning Board voted to transmit a favorable recommendation to the City Council.

The Board had reviewed two substantively similar versions of the Petition in the past, and transmitted a favorable recommendation on the previous version. Board members expressed support for receiving information on a building’s projected greenhouse gas emissions at the early design review stage in order to advance the City’s climate goals. Board members also acknowledged that evaluating embodied emissions is an emerging practice that will take time to become standardized, and it is important for the City to be part of that emerging movement.

Board members found that the revised Petition is an improvement over the previous version and that it presents the requirements in a more straightforward way. However, Board members noted two issues in need of clarification:

- In Paragraph (7), the text states “The Department shall promulgate regulations ...” but does not specify which department.
- Paragraph (7) also sets an effective date that may need to be adjusted to better align with the current Petition timeline.

The Planning Board voted with seven members in favor of transmitting the above recommendation. One member was absent.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary T. Flynn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "M" and "F".

Mary Flynn, Vice Chair.