

12/7/2015

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Dear Mayor Maher and Honorable City Council,

In August I submitted a petition that has been two years in the making. I spent time reaching out to neighborhood groups, homeowners, developers, architects, and other members of the community who take zoning seriously. The petition that sits before you now is the culmination of some of the best minds and thoughtful advocates this city has to offer. You have received numerous letters of praise from members of the community, the chamber of commerce, and people who have helped shape this city. Tonight I am asking you to take the next step. I want to recognize some of the trepidation offered from CDD and the Planning Board and to that end I have given all of you a list of possible amendments to this petition that would erode some of its impact but not entirely diminish its aim.

Part A creates 1000 units of housing spread throughout the city. It expands an already existing section of our ordinance that currently only allows the very affluent to create accessory apartments. However I have to ask, for whom does one build an accessory housing unit in a 6 million dollar mansion? The truth is that the ordinance as currently depicted is a gift to the rich. My petition is a gift to everyone else. Under this section a family in East Cambridge is entitled to just as much flexibility as someone on Brattle Street. You pass this part of my petition and people's lives change for the better. That gift does not come without a price and the building code, sanitary code, and zoning ordinance still apply. Neighborhoods will look the same as they do right now. The change comes from what families are allowed to do inside; provide for aging parents, house under-employed children, maybe even provide some income later in life...and in essence to share their home with people who need it. I realize that zoning is scary to some, and it may seem prudent to push this back to the master plan. I disagree with this, but so long as this type of development is included I don't think I could argue against prudence. I would say that pushing this back to "get it right" is a misguided notion, as nothing in zoning is ever "right" for too long.

Part B is a fix. It aligns the building code, sanitary code, and zoning. It, for a lack of a better expression is a "no brainer." We need to create safe spaces and a path for homeowners to create usable spaces and not funnel illegal work that, out of necessity, forces families and owners to make decisions to either move or do something that is not safe. Everyone is already allowed to create spaces at 6'8" - 6'11" ... why are we arbitrarily keeping them from getting extra height? adding proper windows and wells? Why are we rewarding developers who build these spaces and letting them get off without making them habitable? Part B needs no long wait, Part B is ready ... and well past its due. I urge this council, please give something back to home owners and lets bring this safety issue to light. PASS "PART B" NOW.

Above all I ask that you look at the people who signed this petition. They represent all walks of life and in any other instance would be more inclined to shake their fists at one another than agree on any the time of day. This is a good petition and should be passed. We have the benefit of the master plan and to engage in what Utile called "live tv planning" ... pass this now, lets monitor the growth over the next three years and give homeowners a path to provide for their loved ones without the need to cut corners. I thank you for your patience and I thank you for your time.

Regards,

Patrick W. Barrett III, Esq

to have them