



---

## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

---

**IRAM FAROOQ**

Assistant City Manager for  
Community Development

To: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager  
From: Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development  
Date: December 16, 2015  
Re: Council Order #0-1 dated November 23, 2015 regarding the feasibility of having a comprehensive housing plan as part of an early action item of the citywide planning process

---

Over the next three years, the citywide planning process will engage residents in crafting a shared vision for the community. Supply and affordability of housing is one of the most significant issues facing Cambridge and the region. Housing analysis and recommendations will be a key component of the citywide plan, and both staff and the consultant team are committed to ensuring that housing is an integral part of the conversation informing the plan through all stages.

The citywide planning process will address a range of topics in addition to housing -- climate and energy, social equity, transportation, economic development, infrastructure, as well as urban form and design. One of the many benefits of a citywide comprehensive plan is to evaluate planning topics together to identify and understand inherent synergies and conflicts between topics and to establish community priorities. Discussions around community priorities and a shared community vision will help advance planning objectives in a thoughtful and holistic manner.

For this reason, the first phase of the citywide planning process has been designed to include both the development of a shared community vision as well as research and analysis of the full range of planning topics. This initial work is underway and is scheduled to conclude in the summer of 2016. The results from this phase are a necessary precursor to developing comprehensive and topic-specific recommendations in later phases. In addition, the City has committed to making a study of the Alewife area an early action item to be completed within the first year of the planning process.

While we are committed to ensuring that housing remains a central topic in all phases of the citywide plan, it is not feasible to complete a comprehensive citywide housing plan during the first year in addition to the Alewife study and keep the project timeline intact. It is critical that discussions regarding housing and housing policy be a substantial feature of the early phase, and continue throughout all phases of the plan as specific action items are identified to meet the objectives established during the community visioning process.

While the plan is under development, we will continue to build on current and identify new housing strategies as noted in a September 2015 memo to City Council, a copy of which is attached for reference.

Some of the work has begun. The CPA Committee and the City Council upheld the 80% CPA commitment to affordable housing in FY2016. The Council has adopted changes to increase Incentive Zoning contributions from non-residential development. A study of the Inclusionary Zoning provisions is ongoing and we anticipate having the report available in January 2016, with discussions regarding potential changes to the ordinance to follow. We are also looking at zoning changes which would help facilitate new affordable housing development.

We will continue discussions of these and other new ideas we have been having with the Affordable Housing Trust, the City Council's Housing Committee, and Planning Board. This will happen in tandem with the citywide plan with staff ensuring that discussions in all forums can inform each other. We look forward to continuing work on advancing these ideas and strategies to support affordable housing creation and preservation while we discuss our broader housing goals in the community visioning process for the citywide plan.