



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: July 19, 2012

Subject: North Massachusetts Avenue Rezoning Petition

Recommendation: The Planning Board **recommends** the adoption of the zoning change proposed in the petition.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

The North Massachusetts Avenue rezoning petition proposes text changes to the Massachusetts Avenue Overlay District north of Porter Square that are intended to maintain and encourage ground floor non-residential uses, preserve the historic character of the Avenue, and facilitate outdoor seating.

The proposed zoning rebalances the allowable densities to create a strong incentive for mixed use development along North Massachusetts Avenue while helping to preserve lots with historic structures. An active non-residential use on the ground floor is required for all lots with an existing non-residential use. Buildings that are considered historically significant are exempt from the ground floor use requirements. The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for lots with exclusively residential uses is lowered from 1.75 FAR to 1.0 FAR, while lots with an approved non-residential use on the ground floor are allowed an FAR of 1.75. In addition, seasonal outdoor seating for eating establishments is exempt from parking requirements up to 50 seats or 50% of the permanent seats.

Massachusetts Avenue is the primary transportation and retail corridor for the North Cambridge Neighborhood and in many ways also serves as a gateway into the City. As the neighborhood continues to grow and change it is important to encourage the retention and expansion of neighborhood scaled and focused ground floor retail and other active non-residential uses on the ground floors of buildings on the Avenue to promote a mixed-use streetscape that is safe, appropriately scaled, visually appealing, and reinforces the urban and historic characteristics of the corridor.

The Board finds that the zoning petition is an appropriate strategy and recognizes that the zoning changes in the petition have been developed with extensive input and coordination among city staff, neighborhood residents, property owners and business owners on and near North Massachusetts Avenue.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

Hugh Russell, Chair

Summary Chart of Proposed North Mass Ave Zoning Changes – Changes in Bold

Requirement	Current Zoning	Proposed Zoning
FAR – Non-Residential Only	1.00 max	1.00 max
FAR – Residential Only *	1.75 max	1.00 max (allowed only by special permit)
FAR – Residential with Ground-Floor Commercial *	Approx. 1.4–1.5 max (depends on exact mix of uses)	1.75 max
Height – Non-Residential Only	45' max <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulk control plane at 35' in front • Reduced to 35' within 50' of res. district 	45' max <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulk control plane at 35' in front • Reduced to 35' within 50' of res. district
Height – Residential Only	45' max <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulk control plane at 35' in front • Reduced to 35' within 50' of res. district 	45' max <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulk control plane at 35' in front • Reduced to 35' within 50' of res. district
Height – Residential with Ground-Floor Commercial	45' max <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulk control plane at 35' in front • Reduced to 35' within 50' of res. district 	50' max <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No bulk control plane required in front • Reduced to 35' within 50' of res. district
Ground-Floor Use Requirements	Active uses required: including residential, institutional, office, retail; excluding parking	Non-residential active uses required: including retail, some office, some institutional; excluding parking
Ground-Floor Design Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floor height is at-grade (except residential) • Minimum active use depth of 20' • Pedestrian entrances face Mass Ave • Separate entrance for each leased space • Minimum 50% clear glass (25% if residential) • Planning Board may permit divergence from design standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floor height is at-grade (except residential) • Minimum active use depth of 40' • Pedestrian entrances face Mass Ave • Separate entrance for each leased space • Minimum 50% clear glass (25% if residential) • Maximum store size of 5,000 SF • Minimum ground-floor height of 15' • Maximum bank frontage of 25' • Planning Board may permit divergence from design standards
Historical Buildings	No specific protections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing buildings are exempt from some design requirements • Buildings of historic significance are exempt from ground-floor non-residential use requirements
Basements Serving Ground-Floor Non-Residential	Included in FAR	Exempt from FAR
Projecting Bays	Exempt from FAR for a max. of 3' x 6' per bay, max. 50% of building facade	Exempt from FAR for a max. of 3.5' x 12' per bay and max. 32 SF per bay , max. 50% of building facade
Parking for Outdoor Seasonal Restaurant Seating	Required to provide parking	Not required to provide parking

* In certain cases, Inclusionary Housing bonus would also apply

North Massachusetts Avenue Subdistrict – Proposed Area of Zoning Change

Cambridge Zoning Districts

- A-2** Residence A-2
- B** Residence B
- C-1** Residence C-1
- C-1A** Residence C-1A
- C-2** Residence C-2
- C-2B** Residence C-2B
- C-3** Residence C-3
- BA** Business A
- BA-1** Business A-1
- BA-2** Business A-2
- BA-3** Business A-3
- BA-4** Business A-4
- BA-5** Business A-5
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- ## Somerville Zoning Districts
- IA** Industrial
 - RB** Residential Business
 - RC** Residential Community
 - RD** Residential Detached
 - RE** Residential Medium Density
 - RF** Residential Single-Family
 - RG** Residential General
 - RI** Residential Institutional
 - RM** Residential Medium Density
 - RS** Residential Single-Family
 - RT** Residential Townhouse
 - RU** Residential Urban
 - RV** Residential Village
 - RW** Residential Workforce
 - RY** Residential Young Professional
 - SA** Special Use
 - SB** Special Use
 - SC** Special Use
 - SD** Special Use
 - SE** Special Use
 - SF** Special Use
 - SG** Special Use
 - SH** Special Use
 - SI** Special Use
 - SJ** Special Use
 - SK** Special Use
 - SL** Special Use
 - SM** Special Use
 - SN** Special Use
 - SO** Special Use
 - SP** Special Use
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 - SV** Special Use
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 - SX** Special Use
 - SY** Special Use
 - SZ** Special Use

