



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

June 1, 2010

To the Honorable, the City Council,

Subject: City Council Rezoning Petition to Modify Section 5.28.2 Related to Buildings Occupied by Institutional Uses.

Recommendation. The Planning Board does not recommend adoption of the Petition as filed.

Discussion. Section 5.28.2 was created during the citywide rezoning effort of 2001. Its purpose is to facilitate the reuse of the large industrial and institutional buildings commonly found in residential neighborhoods for residential purposes; those structures are typically denser, bulkier and taller than the surrounding residential properties and usually would not be allowed under the provisions of the zoning district applying to their sites. To encourage the reuse, Section 5.28.2 grants additional dwelling units, waives some or all of the open space requirements imposed on residential uses, and holds harmless any non-compliance with FAR, setbacks and height that these anomalous non-residential buildings frequently exhibit.

The proposed amendment would apply these special bonus provisions to formerly residential buildings, currently used institutionally, that are generally not much different than their neighbors in terms of their scale, density or lot development pattern precisely because they were built as residential buildings very similar to those neighbors. The Planning Board is not convinced that such buildings should be treated differently from those surrounding structures in the neighborhood just because they have been occupied for some interim period by an institutional activity. In such circumstances the bonus provisions may produce undesirable changes to the lots, such as the loss of open space to accommodate the required parking for the increased dwelling units allowed, which would not be the case if the buildings were returned to housing use at densities more typical of the neighborhood.

It may be that if more housing is desired in such buildings, a rezoning to a zoning district permitting a greater number of housing units, applied more generally to the neighborhood as a whole, might be the most appropriate approach. However, should the City Council support the approach proposed in the zoning amendment, the Board would suggest that additional criteria be developed to ensure that unacceptable changes in character, like an excessive reduction in open space, does not occur on the lots that might make use of the new provisions.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

Hugh Russell (PRK)

Hugh Russell, Chair

SECTION 5.28.2 – INSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Comparison of Base District and 5.28.2 Unit Development Potential on Selected Lots (For illustrative purposes only)

<u>Lot</u>	Lot Area	Building Area	Zoning District	Base District Unit Count	Section 5.28.2 Unit Count
40 Kirkland St.	8,150 sf	7,909 sf	Residence B	2 Units	8 Units
42 Kirkland St.	10,518 sf	8,145 sf	Residence B	3 Units	9 Units
20 Sumner Rd.	8,185 sf	3,694 sf	Residence B	2 Units	4 Units
7 Kirkland Rd	3,749 sf	3,663 sf	Residence B	1 Unit	4 Units
Combined Lots	30,602 sf	23,410 sf*	Residence B	8 Units	26 Units*
26 Trowbridge St.	6,090 sf	5,258 sf	Residence C-1	4 Units	5 Units
33 Garden Street	14,100 sf	10,718 sf*	Residence B	4 Units	11 Units*
113 Brattle Street	33,907 sf	18,134 sf*	Residence A-1	4 -5 Units	20 Units*

* Projects subject to Inclusionary requirements by virtue of area of building or number of units