



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date:	November 1, 2011
Subject:	Runkel, et al. Zoning Petition (41 Bellis Circle)
Recommendation:	The Planning Board DOES NOT RECOMMEND adoption of the petition pending further study.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

After consideration of the Runkel, et al. Zoning Petition, which proposes to alter the base zoning of the site at 41 Bellis Circle from Residence C-1A to Residence C, the Planning Board has the following comments.

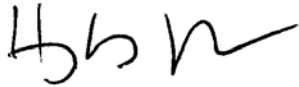
The Planning Board acknowledges the neighbors' concerns about the height and scale of potential future development on Bellis Circle. Although a representative of the owner of 41 Bellis Circle has testified to the Planning Board that there are no future plans for redevelopment of the existing site from its current use as surface parking, it is still reasonable to consider the issues and potential impacts of allowed development before any such development is proposed. Nonetheless, the current rezoning proposal raises some significant concerns.

First, the Board does not find it appropriate to consider only this single site for potential rezoning when there are adjacent sites that remain zoned Residence C-1A (see attached map). This would result in a "piecemeal" zoning approach that could impair the uniformity and rationality of the zoning map. The Board would recommend that the Community Development Department, in consultation with the Planning Board, be directed to study the entire C-1A district in this area and investigate a rational and uniform zoning approach.

Secondly, while Board members believe a case could be made that the area is "overzoned," in the sense that the currently allowed scale and density of development is greater than what the Board would consider permitting, Board members also believe that a Residence C designation may result in the area being "underzoned" by being too restrictive. Prior developments that have been built or permitted in the area, including the 61-69 Bolton Street project and the townhouses adjacent to 41 Bellis Circle (which are partially in the C-1A district as well), were designed to a scale that is acceptable to the neighborhood although they are greater in density than would be allowed under Residence C regulations. Given this past experience, it may be appropriate to investigate a set of zoning regulations that is less restrictive than Residence C while still addressing concerns about scale and neighborhood character.

The additional study recommended by the Board might result in an expanded rezoning proposal that would require additional advertisement to affected property owners. However, the Board believes that such additional study would not be extensive, and could be conducted through the Planning Board within a modest timeframe.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H Russell", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hugh Russell, Chair.

Runkel Petition Area Zoning Basemap

Cambridge, Massachusetts

