



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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TO: Robert W. Healy, City Manager
FROM: Beth Rubenstein, Assistant City Manager
for Community Development
DATE: March 19, 2009
RE: Report O-10 dated September 22, 2008 regarding finding a zoning
or other solution to the issue of parking car-sharing vehicles in the
city

In 2000 the city issued a request for proposals to attract a car-sharing company to operate here, a move that launched Zipcar. For the past decade, car-sharing in Cambridge has provided residents with a transportation option that complements the city's robust transit, bicycling, and walking networks. It is a critical tool in the city's efforts to reduce car-dependence.

The last decade has demonstrated the value of car-sharing. For example, Zipcar has experienced explosive growth—10,000 members now drive 200 Cambridge-based cars (each shared car serves 50 members), which is about 10% of the residential population. This is consistent with membership throughout all of its established metropolitan markets, and the company estimates that this number will keep rising. With 225,000 members, it is now the largest car-sharing company in the United States and has a growing membership in London. Other businesses have now entered the field, with Hertz and U-Haul, among others, offering car-sharing services.

Car-sharing strongly supports city goals of reducing traffic and greenhouse gas emissions. The biggest impacts result from two key behavior changes: Car-share members 1) often get rid of their cars and 2) they drive less.

Research shows that car-sharing enables members to live comfortably without owning a private car and reduces the number of miles they drive per year, while increasing the number of trips they take by public transit, bicycle, and on foot. For example, Zipcar has found that 40% of members say that joining the service has led them to get rid of their car or put off a purchasing decision. Research by academics at UC Berkeley also shows that each car-share vehicle takes 15 to 20 privately owned vehicles off the road, which helps reduce the parking burden and traffic in residential neighborhoods. With 200 shared cars in Cambridge, an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 cars have been removed from Cambridge streets.

Today, membership growth in car-sharing services is limited by the number of parking spaces that are available to park car-share vehicles. Currently in zoning, each residential unit and each land use is required to have a certain number of parking spaces associated with it. Therefore, many properties cannot convert existing parking into car-share parking because they would fall out of compliance



with zoning. In addition, car-sharing vehicles are not allowed to be parked in certain residential zones. The attached zoning proposal allows greater flexibility to provide car-sharing services in Cambridge by making changes to regulations regarding two types of parking: principal-use parking, which is available to the public for a fee (e.g. a public parking garage) and accessory use parking, which is the parking associated with different land uses. (Accessory parking is further divided into two categories—residential and non-residential.) The goal is to provide expanded opportunities for car-sharing parking, so this valuable service can continue to grow.

The zoning proposal is summarized below.

- **Accessory residential parking:** In residential districts, vehicle-share parking would be allowed to take the place of up to 10% of total spaces in a parking lot, rounding up to the next whole number. (For example, houses with 1 to 10 spaces would be allowed to have 1 car-share space. Buildings with 11 to 20 spaces would be allowed to have 2 car-share spaces. Buildings with 21 to 30 spaces would be allowed to have 3 car-share spaces, etc.
- **Accessory non-residential parking:** In non-residential districts, vehicle-share parking would be allowed to take the place of up to 10% of total accessory spaces, with more of such parking allowed by Special Permit.
- **Principal-use parking:** In commercial parking facilities, which is parking available to the public for a fee (e.g. a public parking garage), unlimited vehicle-share parking would be allowed.

Proposed zoning language is attached. We look forward to discussing this proposal with the public and the City Council.

VEHICLE-SHARING PARKING FACILITIES

Proposed Zoning Language

1. In Article 2.000 Insert the Appropriate Definitions

Amend Article 2.000 by inserting a new definition *Parking facility, Vehicle-sharing and Vehicle-Sharing Service* in the appropriate alphabetical location, to read as follows:

Parking Facility, Vehicle-Sharing. A portion of a building or lot that contains one or more off-street motor vehicle self-service parking spaces and access thereto including driveways or other publicly accessible ways, that serves as the location of the actively in-service vehicles used by a Vehicle-Sharing Service. The Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility may be a garage, an area of a lot or all or a portion of a parking lot. A Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility may be a part of an accessory or a principal use Parking Facility serving other uses. The Vehicle Use Parking Facility may be a principal use exclusively. Such a facility shall not accommodate or include any administrative offices, repair facilities, vehicle storage or any other management, administrative, or maintenance aspect of a Vehicle-Sharing Service. Such a facility shall be subject to the dimensional and other requirements of accessory and principal use parking facilities as set forth in Article 6.000 unless otherwise provided in Section 11.20 of this Ordinance.

Vehicle-Sharing Service. A Vehicle-Sharing Service shall mean a membership based company, organization or enterprise that provides hourly, daily or similar short-term rental of private passenger motor vehicles intended for use by paying members, by reservation. A Vehicle-Sharing Service shall provide insurance for its members when using the vehicles and shall assume responsibility for maintenance of the vehicles and the Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility.

Vehicle-Sharing Service Vehicle. A private passenger motor vehicle, small truck routinely used for private passenger transportation (2.5 tons or less), and passenger van (2.5 tons or less). It shall not include cargo vans, large trucks customarily used for commercial purposes, taxis, passenger vehicles used to transport passengers for a fee, or detachable trailers.

2. Insert a New *Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility* Use in Table of Use Regulations

Amend Article 4.000, Section 4.32 – Transportation, Communication and Utility Uses, by inserting a new line “i” with a companion footnote “56” to read as follows:

4.32 Transportation, Communication & Utility Uses

- a. Bus or railroad passenger station

- b. Automobile parking lot or parking garage for private passenger cars
- c. Railroad freight terminal, railroad yard and shops
- d. Truck or bus terminal, yard or building for storage or servicing of trucks, trailers or buses, parking lot for trucks
- e. Radio and Television transmission station, including towers
- f. Radio and television studio
- g. Utilities
 - 1. Telephone exchange (including switching, relay and transmission facilities serving mobile communications systems) and any towers or antennas accessory thereto
 - 2. Transformer station, substation, gas regulator station, or pumping station
 - 3. Power Plant for the non-nuclear production, generation, and distribution of electricity or steam.
- h. Helipad or Airport
- i. **Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility**

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Yes (for all zoning district columns except the Open Space column where it is No)

3. Insert a new Footnote 56

Amend Article 4.000, Section 4.40 – Footnotes to the Table of Use Regulations, by inserting a new Footnote 56 to read as follows:

56. Subject to the provisions of Section 11.20

4. Create a new Section 11.20 – Vehicle Sharing Service Parking Facilities

Amend Article 11.000 – Special Regulations by inserting a new Section 11.20 to read as follows:

11.20 Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility

11.21 *Statement of Purpose.* This Section 11.20 is intended to facilitate the provision of motor vehicles conveniently located throughout the city that are shared by multiple individuals through a membership based Vehicle-Sharing Service (VSS) available to the

general public for hourly or similar short term rental. It is anticipated that by providing such vehicles to residents, visitors, and employees of businesses in the city the City can advance its environmental goals by (a) reducing the need for individuals and businesses to own, park and store privately owned vehicles, (b) encouraging people to commute less by single-occupancy motor vehicles in the city, and (c) by reducing the need for families to have more than one motor vehicle, or perhaps any motor vehicle at all.

11.22 *Applicability.* A Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility shall be permitted in all zoning districts and shall be regulated as set forth below.

11.23 *Permitted Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facilities*

11.23.1 *Permitted As-of-right.* A Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility meeting the following conditions and limitations shall be permitted as-of-right. Where a limitation on the total number of parking spaces in a Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility is established by these regulations, that limitation shall be the combined total number of spaces located on the lot by all Vehicle-Sharing Services operating thereon.

1. The Facility (including any individual parking space) is lawfully established and conforming to the dimensional and other requirements of Article 6.000 and any other applicable regulations unless otherwise provided in this Section 11.20, or, if not, is lawfully non-conforming.

2. Parking spaces constituting the Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility shall be subject to the following limitations unless otherwise permitted in Section 11.23.2 below:

- a. In residential zoning districts, the number of VSS parking spaces on a lot shall not exceed 10% (rounded up to the next whole number), of the authorized accessory parking spaces on the lot, or one space, whichever is greater. The VSS spaces may be in addition to spaces serving other uses or may replace those spaces [Example: A lot having 1 to 10 existing parking spaces may have one VSS parking space; a lot having 11 to 20 existing spaces may have two VSS parking spaces, etc.].

- b. In any zoning district, the number of VSS parking spaces shall not be limited in commercial parking facilities (i.e. a facility registered with the Department of Traffic, Parking and Transportation as a Commercial Facility per the provisions of Chapter 10.16 of the Cambridge Municipal Code) or principal use parking facilities established under the provisions of Section 4.32 (b) [Automobile Parking Lot for Private Passenger Cars] of the Zoning Ordinance.

- c. For Accessory Parking Facilities in non-residential districts no more than 10% of the required accessory parking spaces may be replaced with VSS spaces.

d. For purposes of conformance to the accessory parking requirements of Article 6.000, any replaced parking space(s) shall continue to be considered accessory to the use to which it is tied.

3. No sales or vehicle servicing [such as oil changes] or administrative or similar functions or personnel shall be located at the site unless otherwise permitted by the use regulations in the applicable zoning district. Minor, unobtrusive, routine maintenance shall be permitted.

4. Vehicles using the Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility shall be accessed directly by the customer (member) without any assistance or supervision by company personnel.

5. *Permitted Signs.* The following signs only shall be permitted in residential zoning districts and in non-residential districts in addition to those signs otherwise permitted..

a. Identification of Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility spaces shall be limited to one non-illuminated wall, projecting or freestanding sign per space carrying the name of the company and other necessary information (e.g. contact and emergency phone numbers, etc). No sign may exceed one and one half (1.5) square foot in area (notwithstanding any other limitation or restriction in Article 7.000 of the Zoning Ordinance),

b. Up to three signs may be displayed on each vehicle, identifying the name and/or logo and contact information of the company. No sign may exceed two (2) square foot in area.

8. The vehicles shall be in active use by customers (members) of the VSS and shall not be stored for other purposes or for use at other locations. All vehicles shall be currently registered with the Massachusetts Department of Motor Vehicles, principally garaged in the City of Cambridge, and displaying a valid Cambridge Resident Parking Permit.

9. All owners of that portion of a lot accommodating a Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility, or their legally authorized representative (including the condominium association), shall be required to grant permission for the operation of such a facility on their property.

11.23.2 *Permitted By Special Permit.* A Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility not otherwise permitted in Section 11.23.1 above shall be permitted by special permit from the Planning Board. The Board may specifically (a) allow more principal use VSS parking spaces on a lot than are allowed in Section 11.23.1 or (b) may allow additional required accessory parking spaces for non-residential uses (including hotels and motels) to be replaced by VSS parking spaces in a Vehicle-Sharing

Parking Facility or (c) may allow a principal use Vehicle-Sharing Parking Facility on a lot.

In granting a special permit the Planning Board shall consider the following:

1. The extent to which the Facility, in its design, quantity of vehicles, distribution of vehicles on the lot, extent of pavement on the lot, the extent of landscaping and Open Space on the lot, and other features, is consistent with the residential pattern of development around it when such a facility is in a residential zoning district and consistent with the pattern of motor vehicle use and storage in the surrounding neighborhood.
2. The traffic generated by the Facility is appropriate to its location and the surrounding uses impacted by it, similar to the traffic that would be generated by accessory parking facilities, and does not result in activity on the lot that would significantly negatively impact uses surrounding it in ways that customary accessory parking would not do.
3. Where it is proposed to substitute Facility parking spaces for existing required accessory parking spaces, a demonstration, through on-street utilization surveys among other techniques where appropriate, that previous on-site parking demand will not be shifted to parking spaces on adjacent public streets to the detriment of the neighborhood as a whole.

The Planning Board may impose appropriate conditions in issuing a special permit to ensure that the operation of a Facility, particularly in residential neighborhood, does not create a nuisance or derogate from the intent of the zoning regulations to ensure a peaceful and quiet residential environment in a neighborhood.