

Development Alert

City Council 5:30 pm, Monday, August 1

VOTE Scheduled on Zoning Change to allow

Multifamily, Commercial & Institutional Uses in One & Two Family Districts

This is an Election Year. Watch How Your Councillors Vote.

Some of our City Councillors disagree with calling this proposal “upzoning”. So instead let's focus on what you can do with a property (Use) and how much you can have (Density).

You be the judge.

Comparison Table of Uses Permitted in Residential Districts					Current v. Proposed	
Residential Districts	current Multifamily	current Commercial	proposed Multifamily	proposed Commercial	USES	DENSITY
A-1 one family	No	No	SP	SP	up	up
A-2 one family	No	No	SP	SP	up	up
B two family	No	No	SP	SP	up	up
C multifamily	Yes	No	SP	SP	up	down
C-1	Yes	No	SP	SP	up	down
C-1A	Yes	No	SP	SP	up	down
C-2	Yes	No	SP	SP	up	down
C-2B	Yes	No	SP	SP	up	down
C-2A	Yes	No	SP	SP	up	down
C-3	Yes	No	SP	SP	up	down
C-3A	Yes	Yes	SP	SP	almost same	down
C-3B	Yes	No	SP	SP	up	down
SP: Special Permit, mandated by State Law to be granted using a process that is almost impossible to appeal This Proposed Zoning Change is for new uses for existing nonresidential buildings, not new construction						

Email your opinion to all nine City Councillors at council@cambridgema.gov (please send a copy to ACNCCambridge@gmail.com) or call them at (617) 349-4280.

Thank you to everyone who called and wrote the City Council on June 27. There is a City Council vote scheduled for Monday, August 1, at City Hall. If you think there are too many open questions, your Councillors need to hear from you again.

Does This Affect Me?

Every neighborhood has nonresidential buildings like churches, schools and hospitals. They are part of our community. Changing times can prompt building owners to sell them for development. While neighbors see the church next door as the church next door and not 30 new condo units, developers take a different view. Just ask the people who live near the former Blessed Sacrament and Immaculate Conception churches, who had to sue to protect their neighborhood. Here are a few more examples developers might find attractive if they became available:

Holy Trinity Armenian Church

Spaulding Rehab (f/k/a Youville Hospital)

American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Buckingham, Browne & Nichols School

Cambridgeport Baptist Church

Upton Street school building (f/k/a Graham and Parks School f/k/a Webster School)

Sacred Heart Church and rectory and the adjacent office building (an entire city block)

Longfellow School building

Graham and Parks School (f/k/a Peabody School)

Shady Hill School

Matignon High School

Cambridgeport School

Why Does Zoning Matter?

Zoning is supposed to protect our homes and neighborhoods. Zoning keeps incompatible and inappropriate uses from appearing next door (say, a horse rendering plant or a software company with kids working all night). Here, the law is to be changed to conform to City officials' misinterpretation of our current zoning law. The effects of this decision may well outlive all of us.

Why Is This Zoning Change Important?

This proposed zoning change increases the allowable uses across the City's residential districts and increases the amount of density in the single and two-family districts (Residence A-1, A-2 and B Districts in zoning speak). This means that your neighborhood could see uses in a former nonresidential building that you did not anticipate when you bought your home. If the City Council approves the proposal, developers will have these new options. If you are concerned about the potential effects of the proposed zoning change, the best time to have your voice heard is **before the changes are voted on, not after.**

Did I Miss A Meeting in My Neighborhood on This Proposal?

No, to the best of our knowledge, aside from private meetings with the neighbors of the proposed redevelopment of the former North Cambridge Catholic High School, there have been no neighborhood meetings with City officials on this proposal. To be fair, there have been the requisite Planning Board and Ordinance Committee meetings where you could have testified. However, if you are not an avid reader of the legal notices in the Chronicle or a follower of the City Calendar on the City website, it's possible you didn't even know this was happening. After our requests, the City posted the most recent proposal on its website. You can read it at tinyurl.com/CambZoningAmendment. There may be an even newer one posted before Monday's meeting at www2.cambridgema.gov/cdd/ under zoning amendments.

Be a Part of Your Community and Make Your Voice Heard

If you are concerned about what could happen to your neighborhood if this zoning change is adopted, write to your City Council at council@cambridgema.gov and let them know that you would like to meet with them and your Community Development Department representative to discuss its potential impacts **before there is a vote to adopt it, not after.** Please copy us at ACNCambridge@gmail.com so we can continue to represent our fellow Cantabrigians' views fairly. We are in the process of posting further information on our website at www.acncambridge.org.

Mark Jaquith, Co-President, Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods