



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

To: Planning Board and Ordinance Committee
From: Jeff Roberts, Senior Manager for Zoning and Development
Date: April 4, 2017
Re: **Zoning Petition on Rooftop Spaces in Harvard Square**

Background

The City Council has referred a zoning petition that would allow an exemption of open-air rooftop spaces from the calculation of Gross Floor Area (GFA) on a lot, by special permit from the Planning Board, in the Business B (BB) portion of the Harvard Square Overlay District. A similar provision was recently adopted into the zoning provisions for the Central Square Overlay District.

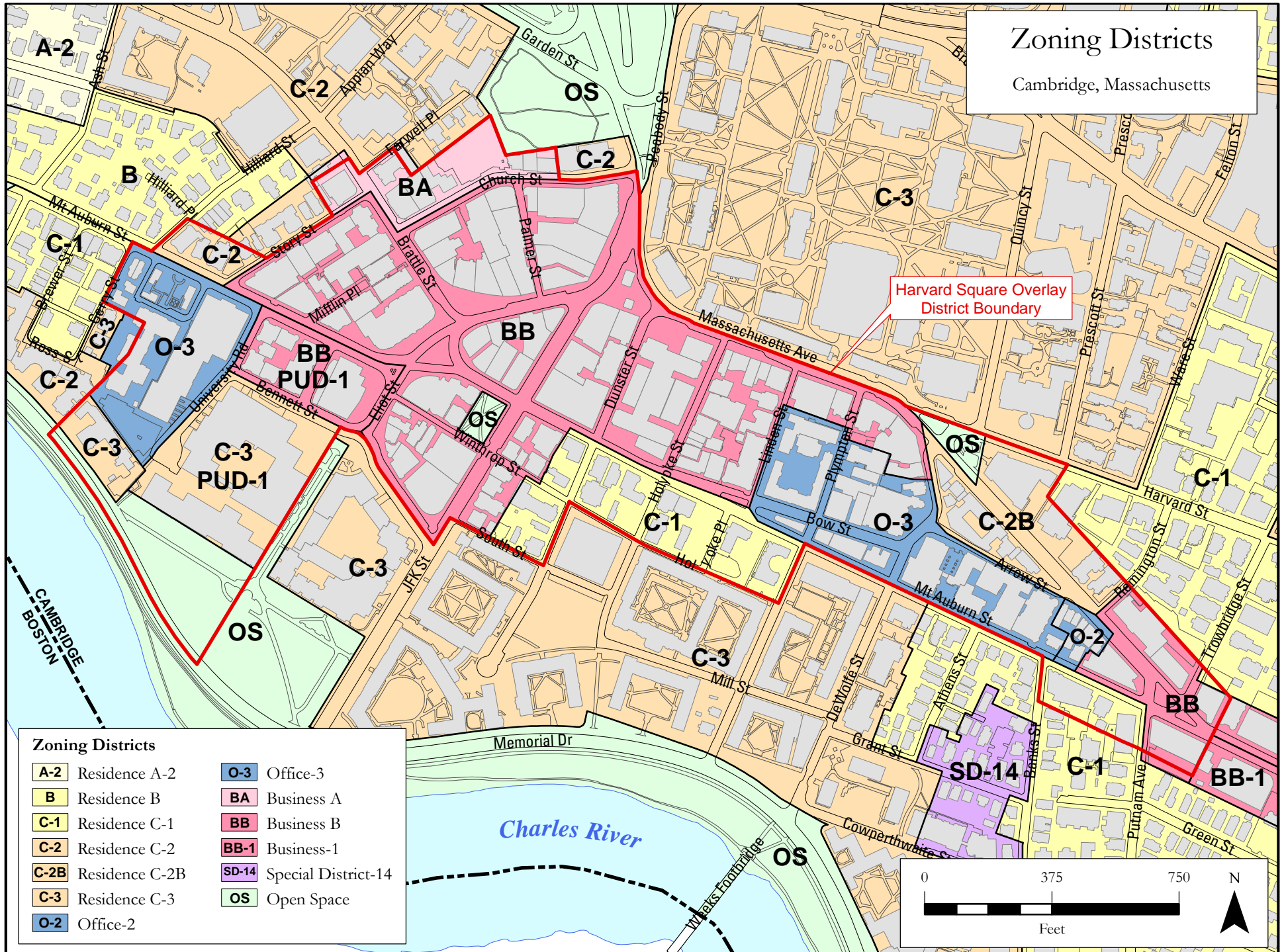
The following information is intended to provide some context related to the zoning provisions affected by this proposal.

- **Affected area (see attached map):** The Harvard Square Overlay District covers several base districts within in the Harvard Square area. Within the overlay district, the BB district (shown in red) encompasses the central commercial core immediately around Harvard Square, Brattle Square, Palmer Street, JFK Street, and Eliot Street, as well as some blocks along Massachusetts Avenue between Harvard Square and Quincy Square, and a smaller non-contiguous district at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Mount Auburn Street.
- **GFA exemption:** According to the definition of GFA in Article 2.000 of the Zoning Ordinance, unroofed porches and balconies are considered GFA if they are located above the third floor of a building, but not if they are located at or below the third floor. Porches or balconies that are covered with a roof are considered GFA in either case. The proposal would allow such GFA to be excluded when calculating GFA and FAR limitations after review and approval by the Planning Board, which could impose conditions in order to mitigate impacts and improve conformance with development objectives for the district.
- **Planning Board Special Permit:** The Harvard Square Overlay District zoning provisions are meant to promote consistency with the historic character of the area while not unreasonably limiting appropriate contemporary changes. The zoning contains allowances that may be granted by special permit from the Planning Board, including building heights up to 80 feet, waiver of setback requirements, and waiver of parking and loading requirements. The proposed exemption for rooftop spaces would be reviewed by the Planning Board in a similar manner to these other special permit provisions, considering the overall objectives and development guidelines for the area.

Zoning Districts

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Harvard Square Overlay District Boundary



Zoning Districts

| | | | |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| A-2 | Residence A-2 | O-3 | Office-3 |
| B | Residence B | BA | Business A |
| C-1 | Residence C-1 | BB | Business B |
| C-2 | Residence C-2 | BB-1 | Business-1 |
| C-2B | Residence C-2B | SD-14 | Special District-14 |
| C-3 | Residence C-3 | OS | Open Space |
| O-2 | Office-2 | | |

