



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board
From: Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development
Swaathi Joseph, Zoning Associate Planner
Date: March 13, 2019
Re: **CambridgeSide PUD-8 Zoning Petition**

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Overview

New England Development and Cambridgeside Galleria Associates Trust have proposed amending the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance to establish a new Planned Unit Development district (PUD-8) in East Cambridge, with development controls contained in a new Section 13.100. The district would encompass a single contiguous area along First Street and cover parts of the existing PUD-4 District. *See attached maps.*

In concept, the petition would allow additional mixed-use development in addition to any rights previously granted under PUD-4 development controls in the areas where the PUD-8 District overlaps the PUD-4 District. The proposed PUD-8 development rights are not intended to merge with the existing PUD-4 development rights.

The area of rezoning includes a portion of the PUD approved by the Planning Board in 1987 (PB-66), authorizing the creation of the CambridgeSide retail mall (formerly known as Galleria at Riverside Place and CambridgeSide Galleria), an office building to the south (now attached to the One Charles Park building, which was separately permitted as PB-65), and a residential building to the east (later amended to a hotel use and now the Hotel Marlowe). The PB-66 development contains a mix of uses, but is dominated by retail activities in the mall building, with the hotel and offices being secondary uses. The proposed zoning would allow the addition of new commercial (office, laboratory, and/or retail) and residential development to the mall site.

The purpose of this memo is to provide background information on various topics related to this petition. It includes three major parts:

- A summary of the current and proposed zoning (supplemented by attached maps).
- A summary of past planning work that is relevant to this area.
- An overview of planning topics that are addressed in some form in the petition.

Staff will be available to discuss this information and respond to questions at the hearings.

Current and Proposed Zoning

The following is a summary of the specific changes proposed. Please refer to the attached maps for reference.

Area of Proposed Rezoning

The proposal is to establish the PUD-8 overlay zoning district over an area of nearly 7.5 acres. The area is currently zoned Business A (BA) and is already modified by the PUD-4 overlay district. The area of rezoning covers the “CambridgeSide” shopping mall site, which is on a portion of a PUD development parcel (PB-66) approved in 1987 and amended many times, most recently in 2019. However, some of the sites and development authorized by PB-66 – including the Hotel Marlowe and a portion of the One Charles Park office building – are outside of the proposed PUD-8 area.

The intent of the proposed district is to allow and regulate additional development beyond the limitations of the base zoning and the PUD-4 zoning. Existing development permitted by PUD-66 would continue to be regulated under the PUD-4 zoning, with additional development regulated by the PUD-8 zoning. This approach has similarities to prior cases where zoning was amended to specifically regulate new “infill” development, including the MIT Kendall Square zoning (PUD-5) and MXD “Infill Development” zoning. This proposal is somewhat different in that the existing development is already subject to PUD requirements and the conditions of a Planning Board special permit.

The Petitioner, as the owner of CambridgeSide, presently controls most of the area of rezoning, though some portions (including the former Sears building) are under separate ownership. The petition would explicitly allow development under a “condominium property regime” by which development may be assigned to different owners.

Current Zoning Requirements

The table below summarizes the current use and dimensional limitations in the existing base and overlay zoning districts.

Zoning Requirements	BA (base)	PUD-4 (overlay)
General range of allowed uses	residential, institutional, offices and laboratories, retail	residential, institutional, offices and laboratories, retail, and other uses with written determination by Planning Board
Max. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	1.00 non-residential 1.75 residential	2.0 non-residential 2.0 residential
Min. Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	600 sq.ft.	450 sq.ft.
Max. Height	35’ non-residential 45’ residential	85’ non-residential 85’ residential
Required Yards (Setbacks)	Non-residential: No front or side; rear yard by formula, at least 20’ Residential: Formula; at least 10’ front, 5’ sides, 20’ rear	As approved by Planning Board in a PUD Final Development Plan
Min. Open Space Ratio	Non-residential: None Residential: 15% (private)	Non-residential: 20% (all types) Residential: 20% (all types)

Proposed Changes

The table below compares the requirements for development allowed under the PUD-4 zoning with the requirements for the additional “net new” development allowed by the proposed PUD-8 zoning.

Zoning Limitations	Current PUD-4 Zoning	Proposed PUD-8 Zoning
Allowed Uses	residential, institutional, offices and laboratories, retail, and other uses with written determination by Planning Board	residential, institutional, offices and laboratories, retail, light industry and other uses with written determination by Planning Board
Max. Gross Floor Area (GFA)	766,000* SF (existing)	625,000 SF (additional net new)
Min. Residential Use	No minimum	20% of net new development
Min. Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	450 sq.ft.	No minimum
Max. Height	85’	85’ / 135’ /185’
Required Setbacks	As approved by Planning Board in a PUD Final Development Plan	As approved by Planning Board in a PUD Final Development Plan
Min. Open Space	20% (may be met on adjacent sites)	20% (not additional to PUD-4)

* Includes development approved by PB-66 only within the boundaries of the proposed PUD-8 district.

Effects on Existing PUD Development Plan

The proposed zoning would allow a change to the overall scale and use mix of development within the area of the previously approved PB-66 PUD Final Development Plan. The following table summarizes the potential aggregate change to the PB-66 development plan. Note that this summary includes all development authorized by PB-66, some of which is outside the proposed PUD-8 district, and incorporates the most recent major amendment authorizing the conversion of some or all of the third floor of the mall building (approximately 140,000 square feet) from retail to office.

Use Category	PB-66 Final Development Plan (including 2019 major amendment)	Potential Aggregate Development PB-66 + Proposed PUD-8 Zoning
Retail (square feet)	626,000-766,000	At least 626,000 (also see below)
Office (square feet)	115,675-255,675	Up to 755,675 (also see below)
Laboratories (square feet)	0	
Light Industry (square feet)	0	
Hotel (square feet)	152,877	152,877
Residential (square feet)	0	125,000
Total	1,034,522	1,659,522

The intersection of the current and proposed zoning leaves some flexibility with regard to future retail. The proposed PUD-8 zoning states that an “eligible site” for additional development must contain at least 100,000 square feet of ground-floor retail at the time of application, but does not require any existing retail to be maintained (nor does the current PUD-4 zoning). The proposed zoning also requires ground-floor retail use for new development fronting First Street, though it is not clear precisely how much floor area that would entail. Through the major amendment process, space within the mall could

be converted to other types of allowed uses over time, similar to the recent major amendment authorizing office use on the third floor.

Height and Setbacks

As seen in the attached maps, the current height limit for the mall site and the immediate vicinity is 85 feet, scaling up to 120 feet for areas along the riverfront and scaling down to 65 feet on the opposite side of First Street. The existing mall building was built under the 85-foot height limit (per the zoning definition of building height), though the tallest point of the structure is approximately 105 feet (as determined by the City's aerial survey).

The proposed zoning would retain the 85-foot limit in areas adjacent to Lechmere Canal Park, scaling up to a maximum of 185 feet for areas along Cambridgeside Place. This height would be taller than the adjacent Royal Sonesta building, but shorter than the high-rise residential developments in the North Point area and the former Sullivan Courthouse building, which are currently the tallest buildings in the vicinity of the mall site.

Setback requirements would be determined through the Planning Board's review and approval of a PUD Final Development Plan, which is typical of other PUD zoning districts (including the current PUD-4 zoning). Streets, sidewalks, and landscaped areas are important elements of PUD review, which is usually informed by design guidelines. While the guidelines for development along First Street have encouraged a pattern of development where buildings meet the sidewalk with active retail frontage, recent developments have revealed some issues regarding the adequacy of sidewalk width to support pedestrian activity, plantings, and street furniture when buildings are built to the lot line. If setback requirements are left flexible, it will be important to establish expectations (possibly through review criteria and guidelines) for a functional and well-designed public realm.

Open Space

The proposed open space requirement mirrors the current zoning by requiring 20% open space, satisfied by adjacent public open space off-site, which would not change the current condition. This provision in the current and proposed zoning reflects the original development plan for the area, where the City (with Federal grant funding) developed the area's major public open spaces, including the adjacent Lechmere Canal Park and Charles Park. These open spaces are publicly owned but maintained through a collective private funding agreement with abutting landowners. In order to meet the open space requirement in this manner, the proposed zoning requires a finding that "the developer has historically contributed to, or is committed to contributing to, the creation of such Open Space (e.g., through a financial contribution to, or development of, such Open Space)."

Parking

The proposed PUD-8 parking requirements are summarized below in relation to the current PUD-4 parking requirements. The new requirements are similar to parking requirements in other recently zoned development areas in that they establish maximum limitations, although they also maintain minimum parking requirements that are similar to those in the current zoning.

Use	PUD-4 Parking Requirement (min-max)	Proposed PUD-8 Parking Requirement (min-max)
Ground Floor Retail/Office	0.89 space/1,000 SF (no max.)*	0.89-5.00 space/1,000 SF
Retail (other floors)	0.56 space/1,000 SF (no max.)	0.56-5.00 space/1,000 SF
Office (other floors)	0.56 space/1,000 SF (no max.)	0.50-0.90 space/1,000 SF
Laboratory	N/A	0.40-0.80 space/1,000 SF
Residence	1.00-1.50 space/unit	0.25-1.00 space/unit
Institutional	0.56 space/1,000 SF (no max.)	N/A
Public Assembly	1 space/15 seats	N/A

* Not required for establishments of 10,000 SF or less with entrance on First Street.

Also similar to other recently rezoned areas, the PUD plan review process would include the requirement for a shared parking study to determine if overall parking can be reduced by allowing it to serve different uses at different times. One complication with this proposal, compared to zoning for other development areas, is that there is a large amount of existing parking that has a commercial parking permit, meaning that it can be used by the general public at any time for a fee, subject to City Ordinance Chapter 10.16. Using existing parking to serve new development, while minimizing the production of new parking, has advantages in terms of meeting the City’s overall planning goals of minimizing new auto trips. However, it is difficult to assess the effects of the proposed zoning if existing uses and parking are regulated by the current PUD-4 zoning while new uses and parking are regulated by another set of requirements.

The proposed zoning would also allow the Planning Board to approve waivers of minimum and maximum parking limitations, which is generally allowed by a special permit under Article 6.000 of the Zoning Ordinance. The general expectation in redevelopment areas has been that reducing the amount of parking for commercial uses is encouraged to the extent feasible, but exceeding the maximum limitations would not ordinarily be supported.

Other Zoning Provisions

The proposed PUD-8 zoning incorporates many plan requirements, review criteria, guidelines, and procedures that would be applied through the Planning Board’s PUD review and approval process. These elements of the zoning cover topics such as transportation impacts, sustainability and resiliency, open space and connections, ground-floor activation, site design, architectural materials, housing, and project phasing. Many of these zoning elements are derived from the provisions of PUD zoning districts that were recently created for Kendall Square, particularly the zoning provisions recently adopted for the Volpe Site. Some of these issues are discussed further in the following sections on planning and zoning for the area.

Planning for Development in Eastern Cambridge

This area of Cambridge has been the subject of multiple planning efforts over many decades, which inform the review of this petition in various ways. Some of the past planning efforts for the area are summarized below.

East Cambridge Riverfront Plan

The [East Cambridge Riverfront Plan](#) (1978) was one of the city's earliest plans for redevelopment following the end of the "urban renewal era." The plan was undertaken to coordinate the redevelopment of former industrial sites within the "Lechmere Triangle" area and to advance the goals of increasing employment opportunities, expanding the city's tax base, enhancing the physical environment, conserving the neighborhood's social and economic diversity, and exploiting the environmental, recreational, and economic potential offered by the Charles Riverfront. The result was a plan to enable contemporary commercial and residential redevelopment within an urbanistic pattern of streets and public open spaces that prioritized the pedestrian experience, contrasting with past plans that focused more on automobiles.

Following this plan, the zoning of the area was changed to establish residential and commercial base zoning districts with Planned Unit Development (PUD) overlays, allowing greater development potential balanced with more rigorous design review, public benefits, and mitigation for project impacts. An "East Cambridge Development Review Process and Guidelines" document was published in 1985 to establish principles for the Planning Board's review and approval of new development proposals. These design principles guide use, scale, density, setbacks, bulk, height, and landscaping of developments proposed in the area so that they complement each other while improving connections to and from the adjacent East Cambridge community.

Many private development projects were permitted and developed under the new PUD zoning districts created for the area, including Thomas Graves Landing (PB-17, permitted 1981), Ten Canal Park (PB-35, 1983), One Canal Park (PB-38, 1984), Royal Sonesta Hotel (PB-52, 1985), Esplanade residences (PB-53, 1986), River Court residences (PB-55, 1986), 55 Cambridge Parkway office building (PB-65, 1987, also known as "Lotus Building" or "One Charles Park"), the CambridgeSide site (PB-66, 1987), and Two Canal Park (PB-125, 1997). Nearly all of these plans have evolved and have been amended over time. For example, the original plans for many of these sites required retail uses fronting the Lechmere Canal and First Street, but in most cases these requirements were modified or waived as property owners contended that it was difficult to secure viable retail tenants for those sites. Only in more recent years has there been new ground-floor retail along First Street.

An important objective of the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan was to enable a mix of new private development with public open space and connections. Unlike later development plans that required private property to incorporate publicly beneficial open space into their sites, the City undertook the acquisition, design and development of parks and other public amenities using Federal grant funding. This investment provided public benefits while also stimulating private investment in an area that had deteriorated from neglect. As adjacent areas were redeveloped, the City engaged with landowners to secure agreements to fund the ongoing maintenance of these public spaces.

ECaPS

In 2001, directly following the Citywide Rezoning, the City conducted the [Eastern Cambridge Planning Study \(ECaPS\)](#) that focused on the future of East Cambridge as a major gateway from Boston into Cambridge. The area of the current rezoning proposal is immediately outside the formal boundaries of the ECaPS study area, which included the “transition zone” between First and Second Streets along with redevelopment areas in North Point and Kendall Square. However, some of the planning objectives resulting from this process, particularly those articulated in the [Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines](#), are relevant to this area. For example, the plan aims to improve pedestrian, and bicycle connections to the Charles River, and the guidelines specifically encourage building designs that create street-level activity and a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly public realm along major streets such as First Street.

One of the key ECaPS objectives was to encourage more residential development to complement the commercial uses that tend to predominate. The zoning that resulted from this study created the PUD-4A and PUD-4B districts west of First Street. The PUD-4B district, which is directly opposite First Street from the mall site, lowered the height limit to 65 feet and adopted a density control that maintains the same maximum FAR of 2.0 but only for mixed-use development that is at least 50% housing. The adopted zoning also introduced transfer of development rights (TDR) provisions, particularly to facilitate the creation of public open space and housing in the “transition area” by allowing development rights to be transferred closer to Kendall Square.

Cambridge Riverfront Plan

The 2011 [Cambridge Riverfront Plan: Reconnecting People to the Water](#), which focused more on public use and activity than on new development, explored the challenges and opportunities of the riverfront and sought to create stronger physical design relationships between the river and the rest of the city through a focused plan for improvement. The plan explored the riverfront section-by-section, and the area of the current rezoning proposal is within “Area B – Charles River Dam/Msgr. O’Brien Highway to Longfellow Bridge,” which is identified as the closest location providing the potential for the most direct connections between the East Cambridge neighborhood and the waterfront. The plan identifies the importance of safe and convenient crossings of First Street and Land Boulevard to enable access, and highlights the potential of First Street to be a walkable retail corridor with growth in residential population to support retail activity.

K2 Study

In 2011-2013, the City conducted the [“K2C2” Planning Study](#) for Kendall Square and Central Square, producing separate plans and design guidelines for each area. Although the area of the current rezoning proposal is not within the “K2” study area, the proposal itself makes reference to many issues that were considered in the K2 plan, including housing, transportation options, ground floor activity, open space connections, sustainability, and urban design. Much of the proposed zoning language is derived from zoning that was recently adopted for areas in Kendall Square, particularly the Volpe site, and many of the topics addressed in the K2 study are incorporated into the petition. Some other topics, such as innovation space and workforce development programs, are not addressed in this current petition.

The K2 study also led to some topic-specific studies that are relevant to the area. The [Connect Kendall Square](#) process, completed in 2015, developed a framework plan for a future integrated network of open spaces, developed through a competition process among planning and design firms. The [Kendall Square Mobility Task Force](#), which brought together the City, MassDOT, MBTA, and other stakeholders, looked comprehensively at future mobility needs in the area and released a report in 2017 outlining policy and project recommendations, which focused primarily on public transit and shuttles.

Envision Cambridge

As the City's most recent comprehensive planning effort, [Envision Cambridge](#) does not establish planning objectives specific to this area but provides a set of overarching goals and strategies to inform future planning processes and decision-making. The Envision Cambridge process has been completed and an Executive Summary was published in 2018, with a final report forthcoming.

The Envision goals and strategies are organized into a set of topic areas. The following is a list of topic areas along with a summary of major goals, focusing on those that are most relevant to this proposal.

- **Growth Management:** “Evolving Mixed-Use Districts” (including the petition area) should continue to accommodate the bulk of the city's growth and change, taking advantage of transit proximity, and positively transforming areas characterized by surface parking lots, automobile-oriented uses, and obsolete commercial buildings.
- **Climate and Environment:** Achieve carbon neutrality by 2050; prepare for impacts of climate change; promote ecological protection, water quality, waste management, and environmental justice.
- **Community Wellbeing:** Promote equal access to opportunity, racial justice, civic engagement, health and wellness, art and culture, and sense of belonging.
- **Economy:** Ensure shared access to job opportunities, living wages, robust education, training, and support services; eliminate racial, gender, and other disparities in economic opportunity; maintain centrality in the global knowledge economy; diversify employment opportunities beyond high-skill work; support local businesses of different types, sizes, and growth stages; preserve and enhance the distinctive character of Cambridge's commercial districts.
- **Housing:** Maintain and expand deed-restricted affordable housing; provide a variety of housing options for individuals and families of different socioeconomic levels, life stages, and physical needs; support high-quality housing that is healthy, climate-resilient, and energy-efficient; support the ability of Cambridge residents to remain in Cambridge; support overall market affordability; provide housing in diverse neighborhoods that are close to public transit, places of employment, and social services.
- **Mobility:** Meet the access and mobility needs of people of all ages, abilities, and incomes; ensure reliability and efficiency; encourage space-efficient transportation choices like walking, biking, transit, and carpooling; eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries; encourage active living; create an easy-to-understand, integrated, continuous, and comfortable transportation

network; support shared community spaces and enhance neighborhood streets; achieve a carbon-neutral transportation system; adapt to climate change.

- **Urban Form:** Promote mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, sustainable redevelopment; shape new development to complement the prevailing pattern of adjacent districts, accommodate variations in use and scale, and add greater density to areas well-served by public transit; create a connected network of high-quality open spaces that links all residents to local and regional natural assets, provides a range of activities and experiences, is inclusive of all people, and encourages social connections; support an active public realm; strive for design excellence through a clear and efficient public review process.

These topic areas each have an associated set of strategies and action items. In considering redevelopment proposals, the urban form strategies are particularly relevant:

1. Increase density near transit nodes while accommodating the unique character of our squares and areas along the corridors.
2. Preserve the historical integrity and diversity of Cambridge's neighborhoods, including buildings and the public realm.
3. Encourage activity on the ground floors of new buildings, particularly along mixed-use corridors.
4. Proactively guide development in areas with a strong potential for change through area-specific planning and development review.
5. Revise the development review process to be more transparent to developers and the public while striving for high-quality design.
6. Leverage private development to create and maintain high-quality public open spaces and to provide dynamic programming.
7. Expand the public open space network through new open spaces, new programming, and improved local and regional connections.
8. Improve the public open space network by preserving, maintaining, and enhancing existing open spaces to serve a diverse population.
9. For Cambridge's institutions, including university and hospital campuses, support growth within existing campus boundaries and adjacent evolving mixed-use areas, and discourage intrusion into residential neighborhoods.

Planning Topics Addressed in Zoning Petition

The following is a summary of the planning considerations that are addressed in the petition language and how they relate to the city's broader planning efforts for this area and for redevelopment within the city in general.

Housing

Like many other mixed-use development proposals, this proposal would require a minimum ratio of housing to commercial development. The proposed 20% residential ratio falls within a range of other approved development plans. To provide some examples (in all cases calculated on the basis of residential to residential+commercial Gross Floor Area): the Alexandria Binney Street PUD is approximately 12% housing (with a higher affordability requirement); MIT Kendall Square development (NoMa/SoMa) is approximately 20% housing; the MXD Infill Development Concept Plan and the zoning for the MIT Volpe Site redevelopment are both approximately 40% housing; First Street PUD is approximately 50% housing, and North Point (Cambridge Crossing) is approximately 60% housing.

The petition also notes that development would be subject to inclusionary housing and incentive zoning requirements, which both result in contributions to promote affordable housing. As reflected in the Envision Cambridge goals, creating residential communities that are inclusive to individuals and families of different socioeconomic levels, life stages, and physical needs are particularly important in areas where new housing is being created.

Transportation

Similar to other larger-scale mixed-use projects, development under the proposed petition would require a robust transportation plan including a traffic study, transit study, parking analysis, and transportation demand management (TDM) program, similar to other major redevelopments.

Managing parking supply is one of the City's key strategies for mitigating traffic impacts, since one of the most effective ways to limit growth in auto trips is to limit available parking, particularly for peak-hour commuters. While the petition addresses this in concept with maximum parking ratios, it is not clear what parking ratios would be most appropriate for this area. The proposed maximum ratios for office and laboratory uses are consistent with the ratios recommended by the K2 study and adopted for Kendall Square, but the proposed maximum of 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail is much higher than recommended retail parking ratios elsewhere in the City. Greater amounts of retail parking might be necessary for a regional shopping center, but it might be difficult to ensure that unused retail spaces do not become an alternative for commuters. Moreover, given the significant amount of parking currently on-site, it is not clear how new parking requirements will interact with existing supply, and whether this proposal would result in new parking spaces or a more efficient use of existing parking spaces, which would be the preferred outcome.

TDM programs are also critical to discourage auto trips and incentivize more sustainable modes. Given the scale and location of the project, a significant TDM program would be expected, including measures such as transit pass subsidies, charging market-rate parking fees directly to employees and residents, and providing frequent bus/shuttle access to key transportation hubs such as North Station, Kendall

Square, Lechmere Station, Sullivan Station, and other areas. Along with programmatic interventions, improvements to the transit and bicycle network and infrastructure might be necessary, such as dedicated bus lanes, protected bicycle lanes, and bicycle sharing (Bluebikes). Some of these measures are cited in the petition. In areas such as Kendall Square and in the study recommendations for the Alewife area, a transportation funding contribution is proposed so that property owners can collectively contribute to future improvements.

Some broader city-wide and regional planning issues are also relevant to a project at this location. For example, the longstanding “Urban Ring” concept of circumferential transit at one time contemplated dedicated bus rapid transit lanes along First Street to connect the Kendall Square Red Line MBTA station to the Lechmere Green Line station. While this plan is not currently being advanced by the MBTA, there remains a need for improved connections. More recently, the Kendall Square Mobility Task Force studied bus priority treatments between Lechmere and Kendall Square, and recommended a new “CT4” bus route using part of the First Street corridor to connect Sullivan and Kenmore squares via Lechmere and Kendall. Other relevant citywide planning documents include the [Bicycle Plan](#), [Transit Plan](#), [Pedestrian Plan](#), and [Vision Zero Action Plan](#).

Transportation issues will also need to be reviewed at a site planning level, such as well-designed and maintained bus/shuttle stops, excellent and accessible bicycle parking, space for loading/deliveries, drop-off/pick-up activities for services such as buses, shuttles, taxis and transportation network companies (TNCs), bicycle sharing (Bluebikes), wayfinding signage, and real-time transit information.

Active Ground Floors

As noted above, planning for this area has long focused on trying to encourage retail activity along First Street. The prior phase of riverfront development was not very successful in this regard, with the presence of the interior mall often cited as an issue that made it difficult to secure tenants for street-facing spaces. However, while some of the retail activity in the mall has scaled back, more street-level retail activity has emerged through new development and modifications to existing buildings. The petition embraces this trend by requiring ground-floor portions of new buildings facing First Street to be designed for retail and other active uses.

Open Space

Past open space planning for this area has relied on public acquisition and development of open spaces and private contributions to ongoing maintenance. Because a comprehensive open space plan is already executed, it is difficult to imagine how new open space would be created through this type of development proposal. However, this proposal may provide opportunities to think more broadly about how existing open spaces can better meet the needs of the community.

One provision in the proposed zoning references past or future commitment to contributing to open space through funding as a way of fulfilling open space requirements. It is unclear whether the intent is to deem the requirement satisfied based on past funding, or to demonstrate a commitment to future funding. Some of the city’s recent planning work, including the Cambridge Riverfront Plan, K2 study, and Envision Cambridge, have noted the importance of operation and programming of open spaces in order to create places that are vibrant and attractive to different groups of users. Programming is mentioned

prominently in the preamble to the zoning petition but not specifically referenced in the petition text itself, except by reference to other plans and guidelines.

Another potential issue to consider is connectivity among open spaces within an area, which has been a longstanding planning consideration. Most notably in the K2 study and the subsequent “Connect Kendall Square” planning process, the importance of treating open space not as a collection of parks but as an integrated system has been increasingly recognized. The Cambridge Riverfront Plan, referenced in the petition, recommends specific connections within this area. The petition includes criteria for open space connectivity as an element of development plan review.

Noise Mitigation

The petition contains procedural requirements mirroring those of other areas in Kendall Square to ensure that rooftop mechanical equipment is selected, located, and screened to meet the City’s noise control standards. This will be important given that the proposal would allow laboratory uses at a potentially taller height than surrounding buildings, and there are some residential buildings in the vicinity. Additionally, noise generation from ground-level or façade mechanicals has been an issue in recent developments, given the ventilation needs of below-grade parking structures.

Sustainability

The petition contains requirements similar to those adopted in parts of Kendall Square, primarily requiring design of new buildings to a standard of LEED Gold or better “to the maximum extent practicable,” and evaluation of on-site renewable energy or co-generation.

The City’s current sustainable design standards are driven primarily by the [Net Zero Action Plan](#), which sets a target of neutralizing citywide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. For new buildings, this plan recommends a current minimum standard of LEED Gold for new construction, but encourages greater efforts toward maximizing energy efficiency, incorporating renewable energy systems, and designing systems to be convertible to renewable energy sources as they become more economical in the future. The plan also recommends incentives for new buildings to be designed to “net zero” standards, with the expectation for all new commercial lab buildings to be net zero by 2030, and recommends pursuing district-wide shared energy initiatives.

Another major sustainability initiative is the ongoing [Climate Change Preparedness and Resilience \(CCPR\)](#) plan, which is developing recommendations for how the community can respond to the anticipated impacts of climate change. For new buildings, these include protecting buildings against higher predicted flood elevations and designing sites to mitigate urban heat island effects with cooling features such as vegetation and low-albedo materials. It also incorporates strategies for neighborhood resilience such as locations where residents can seek shelter during extreme weather events. This concept is referenced in the petition as part of the Planning Board’s review criteria.

Urban Design

The petition references the main sets of plans and design guidelines that have been established for the area, including the Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines and Cambridge Riverfront Plan. The petition also incorporates some guidelines specific to this proposal that modify or supplement other guidelines,

such as specific design objectives for First Street, treatment of the tops of buildings, and encouragement of features such as bays, balconies, setbacks, tapers, cornices, and façade materials. As noted above, since there are no specific setback requirements and a desire to create an active streetwall along First Street, and given the narrow existing sidewalk conditions in some areas, it may be important to provide more clarity regarding the desired street and sidewalk design along First Street to ensure an appropriate balance between building and streetscape.

As with all PUD zoning, a future project would be subject to a development review process requiring special permit approval by the Planning Board. The petition explicitly notes that a pre-application conference would be required, and a formal development proposal would need to be provided in master plan format, which allows the opportunity to consider alternatives early in the design process. Therefore, it is important that the zoning contains enough clarity to guide the review process toward the desired outcomes, while also allowing some flexibility for alternatives to be considered.

Given the location, scale, and use mix of the proposed zoning, the following urban design considerations will be especially important to address through guidelines and the review process:

- The location (in terms of setback/build-to lines), form, and façade treatment of “streetwall” development, to encourage a comfortable and lively urban presence along the sidewalk.
- The location, form, and façade treatment of towers and other tall building masses in relation to streetwalls and view corridors.
- The expression of retail façades, notably the two-story expression suggested by the petition’s “Proposed First Street” rendering.
- Connectivity among the various streets and open spaces in the area, as recommended in the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan and the Cambridge Riverfront Plan, by enhancing connections to the neighborhood and the river as well as engaging the east/west axes of Spring Street and Hurley Street where they intersect First Street.
- The design of the public realm along the adjoining streets to enhance connectivity and create a better pedestrian experience, including consideration of façade design, retail storefronts, overall sidewalk width, street trees and other vegetation, street furniture, and spill-out activity.
- Sustainable design strategies to minimize energy use, enable renewable energy, promote resilience to future flooding, and mitigate increased heat impacts through efficient building orientation, appropriate building and landscape materials, and green infrastructure.

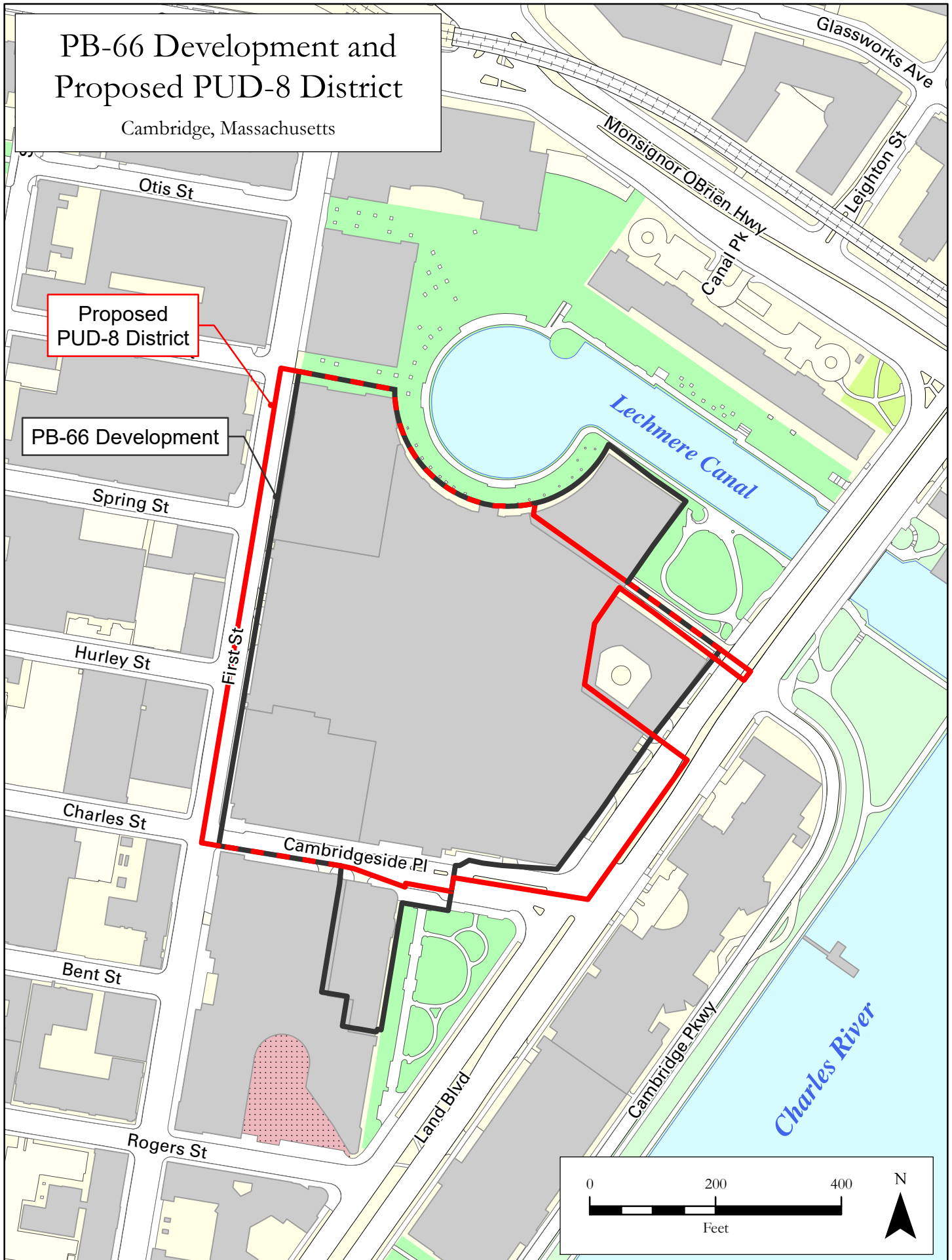
Existing Zoning at Cambridgeside Site

Cambridge, Massachusetts



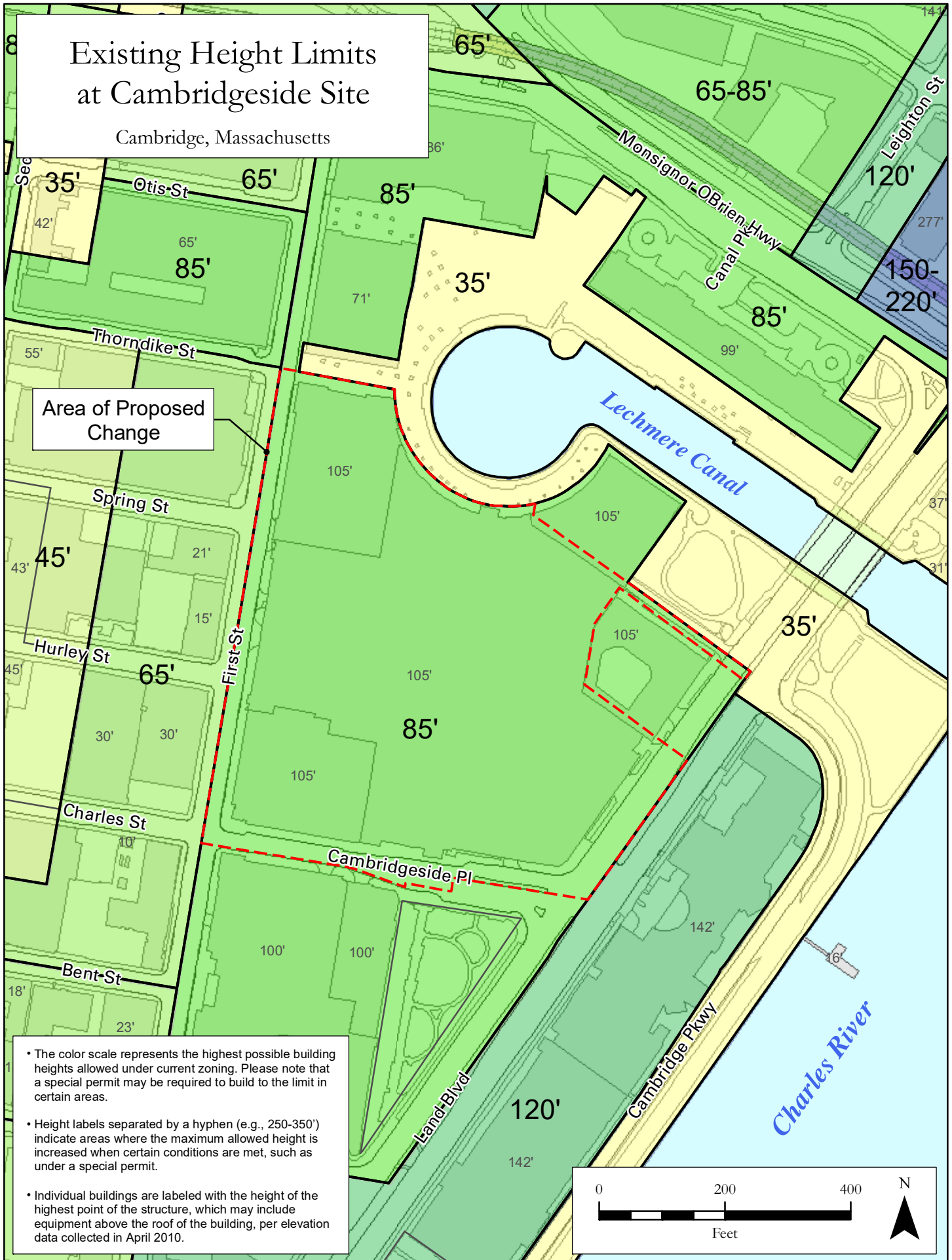
PB-66 Development and Proposed PUD-8 District

Cambridge, Massachusetts



Existing Height Limits at Cambridgeside Site

Cambridge, Massachusetts

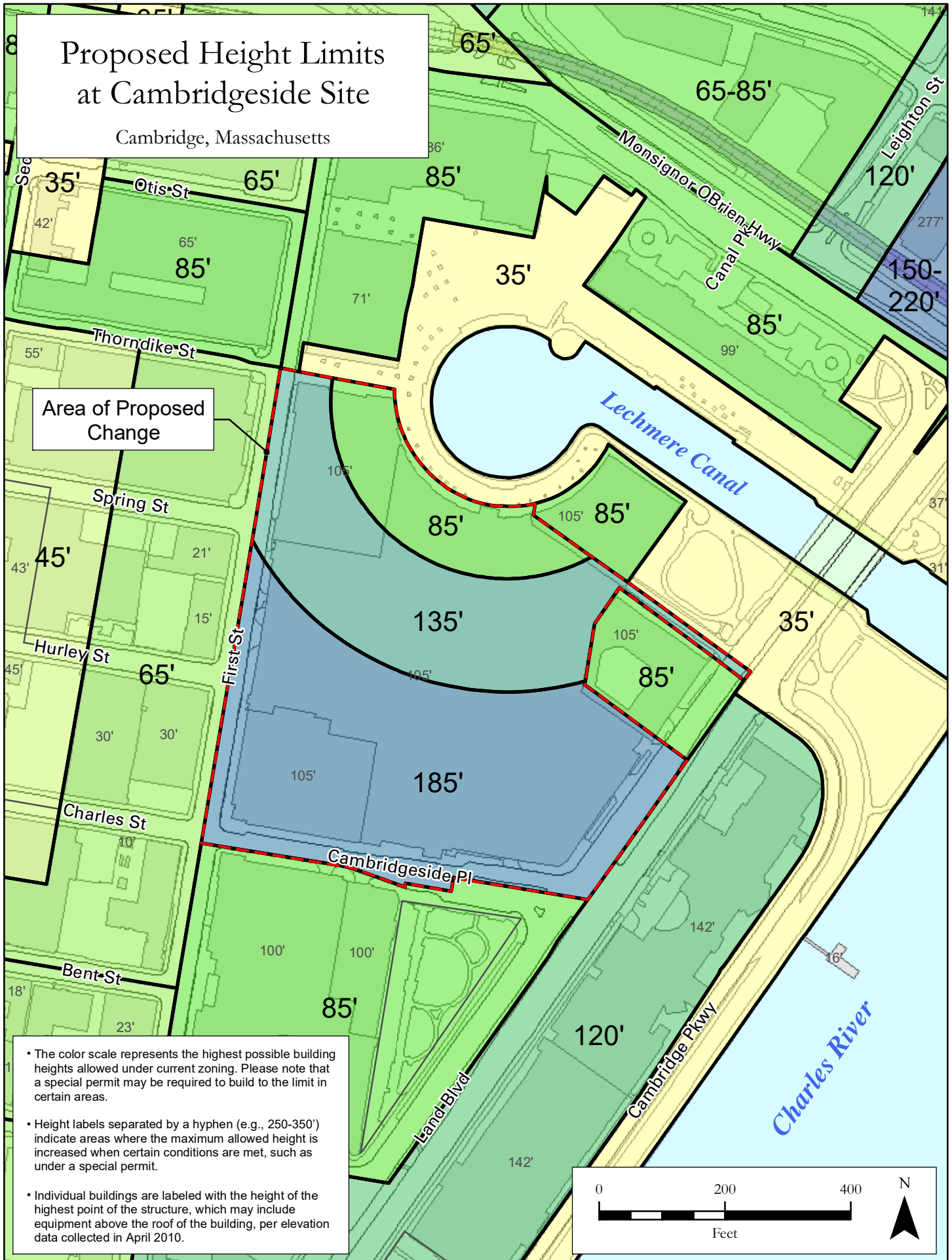


Area of Proposed Change

- The color scale represents the highest possible building heights allowed under current zoning. Please note that a special permit may be required to build to the limit in certain areas.
- Height labels separated by a hyphen (e.g., 250-350') indicate areas where the maximum allowed height is increased when certain conditions are met, such as under a special permit.
- Individual buildings are labeled with the height of the highest point of the structure, which may include equipment above the roof of the building, per elevation data collected in April 2010.

Proposed Height Limits at Cambridgeside Site

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