

# Affordable Housing Overlay Amendments: Presentation to the Planning Board

August 8th, 2023

# Why are these amendments needed?

- We have a housing emergency that is not going to be solved by nibbling around the edges.
- According to the Cambridge Housing Authority, there are currently over 21,000 people on the affordable housing waiting list. Of those 21,000, over 6,500 of them live and/or work in Cambridge.
- We are nowhere close to being on track to reaching our Envision goals which state that we need to build 12,500 housing units by 2030.

# Why do we have to do upzoning?

- Affordable housing production (other than CHA) requires new land acquisition
- Without higher density affordable housing developers lose out to private buyers
- After buying land (with financial help from the city) it takes years to finance, design and build a project
- Additional density means that each project can produce more homes for people
- Additional homes means we can clear more people off the waiting list sooner!
- We have millions of \$ in the Affordable Housing Trust and this is the best way to put them to work quickly.

# AHO Amendments Process Timeline

## Process Thus Far

- November 21st, 2022 - Introduced - November 21st, 2022
- February 8th, 2023 - Housing Committee Hearing #1
- March 8th, 2023 - Housing Committee Hearing #2
- March 22nd, 2023 - Neighborhood & Long Term Planning Hearing
- April 13th, 2023 - Housing Committee Hearing #3
- May 1st & May 8th - Policy Order Asking CDD for Amendments
- June 12th - CDD Returns Amendments and Forwarded to Ordinance
- July 31st, 2023 - Ordinance Committee #1
- August 3rd, 2023 - Ordinance Committee #2
- August 8th, 2023 - Planning Board Hearing

# Why we chose corridors & squares

- Direct transit options and the most plausible/potential “soft” sites
- Many recent AHO “missed opportunities” were on main corridors
- Smaller side streets not as conducive to land acquisition projects; focus on giving AHO developers the greatest possible market advantage where they need it most
- Corridor network runs through every neighborhood



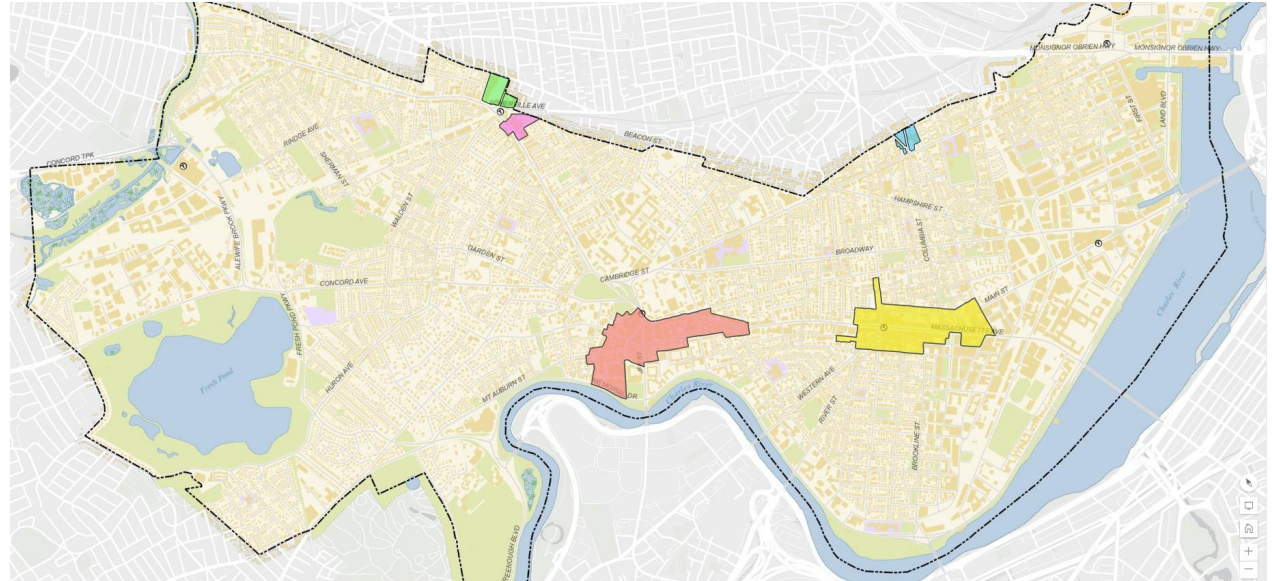
# Summary of Proposed Zoning Changes

- We are proposing a number of changes to the dimensional requirements of the AHO ordinance.
  - Building height
    - AHO projects can now be up to **9 stories** (up from 6 in the original AHO) or **100ft** in areas where the maximum allowable residential height is between **40 and 65ft** or if it is an **AHO Corridor project**.
    - AHO projects can now be up to **13 stories** (up from 7 in the original AHO) or **150ft** in areas where the maximum allowable residential height is **above 65ft**.
    - AHO projects can now be up to **15 stories** near Central, Harvard, Union, and Porter Squares
  - Density
    - The proposed amendments **remove the FAR requirements for an AHO Square/Corridor project**.
  - Setbacks
    - The proposed amendments remove side and front setbacks
    - An AHO Project with a height of **less than 4 stories or 45ft**, shall have a minimum rear yard setback of **15ft** (down from 20ft in the original AHO).
      - All other AHO projects have **no minimum rear setbacks**

# AHO Squares

For the purposes of this Section, the phrase “AHO Square” refers to the Central Square, Harvard Square and Lesley Porter Overlay Districts, as well as any Lot or directly adjacent Lots owned by the same entity, where at least one of the Lot Lines abuts the northern side of Massachusetts Avenue or Somerville Avenue between Davenport and the city border (just west of Acadia Park), or either Webster Avenue or Columbia Street, north of Cambridge Street.

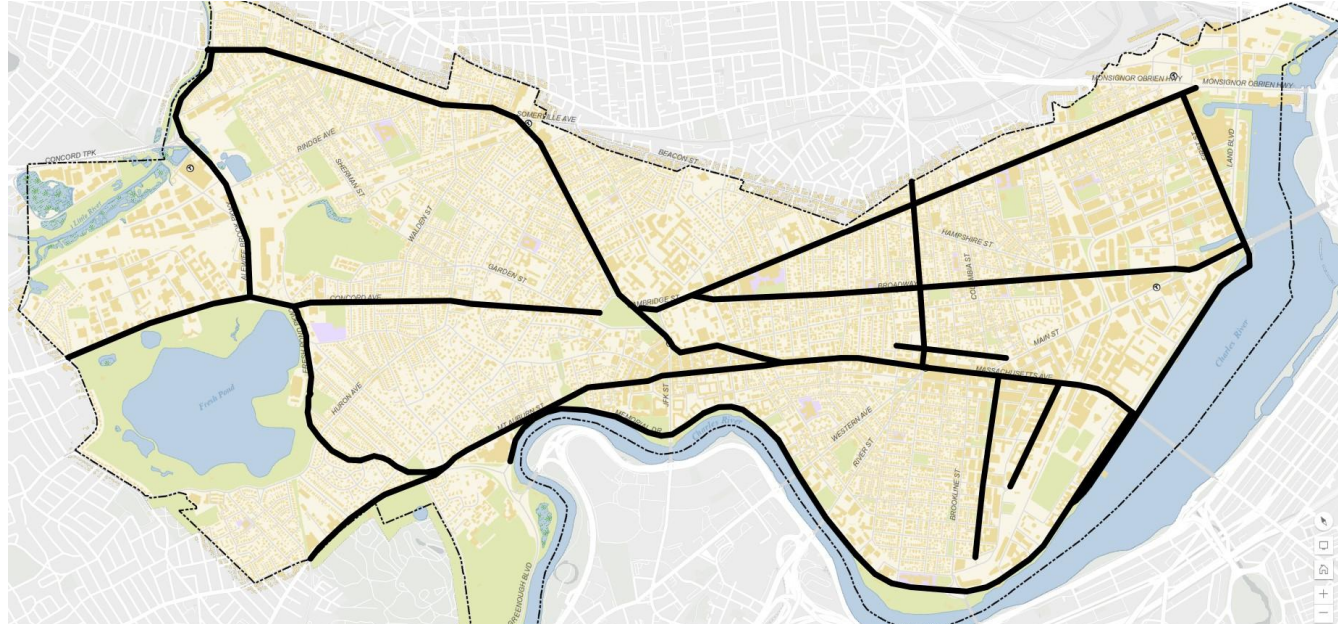
- An AHO Project within an AHO Square shall contain no more than fifteen (15) Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of one hundred and seventy (170) feet



# AHO Corridors

“AHO Corridor” refers to Albany Street, Alewife Brook Parkway, Bishop Allen Drive, Broadway, Cambridge Street, Concord Avenue, First Street, Fresh Pond Parkway, Massachusetts Avenue, Memorial Drive, Mount Auburn Street, Prospect Street, and Sidney Street.

- An AHO Project within an AHO Corridor shall contain no more than twelve (12) Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of one hundred and forty (140) feet





# Open space amendment

More flexibility on building height in exchange for additional open space

Language allows for more height but not more density

CHA has analyzed how this would have impacted their recent projects, with very positive results



# Highlight from CDD Amendments

Where an AHO Project may have various applicable Building Height and Stories Above Grade limitations as specified in 11.207.5.2.1, the most permissive height limitations shall generally control. Notwithstanding the provisions set forth in Section 11.207.5.2.1, **an AHO Project may match the height of an existing building on an adjacent lot.**

# Will AHO projects use the great heights & density?

We've a shortage of affordable housing in our city and are short of meeting our goals. Increased heights along corridors will allow us to build more housing. *We can hear directly from CHA, HRI, others here.*

- This petition would legalize 2072 Mass Ave
- Cross Laminated Timber allows for affordable construction to 12 stories in MA (18+ internationally)
- Open Space adjustments would make other projects more viable.
- Projects would be viable on smaller lots and be able to preserve more open space

# What are unit costs as you go taller?

At greater heights builders change to different building codes and construction becomes more expensive, but the land cost is divided by more units and so total unit costs still go down.

CDD Statement: “Examples include going from all wood-frame to wood-frame over steel podium where 7 stories may be more cost effective than 5-6 stories, to going from wood-over-steel to light gauge steel where 10-11 stories may be more cost effective than 8-9 stories, and to all steel buildings where 16 or more stories may be more cost-feasible than 12-15 stories.”

# How long is the Affordable Housing Waitlist?

The Cambridge Housing Authority waitlist has **22,537 households** with **6,501 applicants** have a local preference.

Of these 6501: **4,488 live in Cambridge**, **2,912 work in Cambridge**, and **327 are Veterans**. There is some crossover so these numbers are not additive.

# **Are mixed-use projects eligible for the AHO? (For example Rindge Commons, a 40B)**

An AHO can be mixed-use in a mixed use district.

**11.207.4 B)** “An AHO Project may contain active non-residential uses on the ground floor as they may be permitted as-of-right in the base zoning district or the overlay district(s) that are applicable to a lot...”

## **CDD Amendments - Dimensional Requirements - Building Height (11.207.5.2.1)**

**(a) Where the District Dimensional Standards set forth a maximum residential building height of forty (40) feet or less, an AHO Project shall contain no more than four (4) Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of forty-five (45) feet, as measured from existing Grade. For AHO Projects containing active non-residential uses on the ground floor, the maximum height may be increased to fifty (50) feet but the number of Stories Above Grade shall not exceed four (4) stories.**

**(b) Where the District Dimensional Standards set forth a maximum residential building height of more than forty (40) feet but not more than sixty-five (65) feet, an AHO Project shall contain no more than nine (9) Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of one hundred (100) feet, as measured from existing Grade, except as further limited below. (i) Except where the AHO Project abuts a non-residential use, portions of an AHO Project that are within thirty-five (35) feet of a lot district whose District Dimensional Standards allow a maximum residential building height of forty (40) feet or less shall be limited by the provisions of Paragraph (a) above.**

**(c) Where the District Dimensional Standards set forth a maximum residential building height of more than sixty-five (65) feet, an AHO Project shall contain no more than thirteen (13) Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of one hundred and fifty (150) feet, as measured from existing Grade, except as further limited below.**

**(i) Except where the AHO Project abuts a non-residential use, portions of an AHO Project that are within thirty-five (35) feet of a district whose District Dimensional Standards allow a maximum residential building height of forty (40) feet or less shall be reduced to a minimum of five (5) Stories Above Grade or a maximum height of sixty (60) feet, as measured from existing Grade, except that if the AHO project parcel extends into that District, then the height limitation shall only extend thirty five (35) feet from the property line.**

## **CDD Amendments - Dimensional Requirements - Building Height (11.207.5.2.1)**

- (d) An AHO Project within an AHO Square shall contain no more than fifteen (15) Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of one hundred and seventy (170) feet, subject to the height restrictions specified in Section 11.207.5.2.1.c.i above.**
- (e) An AHO Project within an AHO Corridor shall contain no more than twelve (12) Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of one hundred and forty (140) feet, subject to the height restrictions specified in Section 11.207.5.2.1.c.i above.**
- (f) The Height Exceptions set forth in Section 5.23 of this Zoning Ordinance shall apply when determining the building height of an AHO Project.**
- (g) An AHO Project may exceed the allowable height limitations of this Section, without restriction, under the following circumstances, subject to the Residential Density limitations set forth in Section 11.207.5.2.2. If the AHO Project is not subject to an FAR restriction in Section 11.207.5.2.2, then the total allowable floor area shall be calculated by subtracting the required open space from the total lot area, and multiplying the resulting lot area by the maximum number of stories otherwise permitted under this Section:**
- (i) Where pre-existing, contiguous Green Area Open Space on a lot will be preserved or expanded, consisting of at least 5% or more of the total lot area.**
  - (ii) The AHO Project will exceed the minimum required open space as set forth in Section 11.207.5.2.4 of this Article.**



## **CDD Amendments - Dimensional Requirements - Residential Density (11.207.5.2.2)**

- (a) Where the District Dimensional Standards establish a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of less than 1.00, an AHO Project shall not exceed an FAR of 2.00. Otherwise, there shall be no maximum FAR for an AHO Project.**
- (b) There shall be no maximum FAR for an AHO Project within an AHO Square or AHO Corridor.**
- (c) There shall be no minimum lot area per dwelling unit for an AHO Project.**

## **CDD Amendments - Dimensional Requirements - Setbacks (11.207.5.2.3)**

**(a) For the purpose of this Section, the applicable District Dimensional Standards shall not include yard setback requirements based on a formula calculation as provided in Section 5.24.4 of the Zoning Ordinance, but shall include non-derived minimum yard setback requirements set forth in Article 5.000 or other Sections of this Zoning Ordinance.**

**(b) Front Yards. An AHO Project shall have no minimum front yard setback.**

**(c) Side Yards. An AHO Project shall have no minimum side yard setback.**

**(d) Rear Yards. An AHO Project shall have a minimum rear yard setback of fifteen (15) feet, or may be reduced to the minimum rear yard setback set forth in the District Dimensional Standards if it is less restrictive.**

**(e) Projecting eaves, chimneys, bay windows, balconies, open fire escapes and like projections which do not project more than three and one-half (3.5) feet from the principal exterior wall plane, and unenclosed steps, unroofed porches and the like which do not project more than ten (10) feet beyond the line of the foundation wall and which are not over four (4) feet above Grade, may extend beyond the minimum yard setback.**

**(f) Bicycle parking spaces, whether short-term or long-term, and appurtenant structures such as coverings, sheds, or storage lockers may be located within a required yard setback but no closer than seven and one-half (7.5) feet to an existing principal residential structure on an abutting lot.**

**Thank you!**