

Outdoor Use Zoning Petition for the Central Square Cultural District

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OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Introduction:

In March of 2020, Central Square, like the rest of the world, faced its biggest crisis in a generation, the COVID-19 pandemic. Within weeks, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Cambridge announced the immediate closure of all businesses, non-profits, and arts spaces. The pandemic effectively rendered indoor space unsafe. For theaters, performances spaces, and cultural centers this condition would last for over a year and a half. In response to the devastating effect of the pandemic on the Cultural District, the Central Square Business Improvement District moved swiftly to redeploy outdoor space throughout the District to support what was lost. Spaces for cars became places for people. Surface-level parking lots became spaces for safe-gathering and community programming, defunct turning lanes became safe outdoor seating for beleaguered restaurants, gratuitous loading zones became places for micro-enterprise. The results of this reuse of outdoors space was thousands of residents attending hundreds of free public events, dozens of new homegrown small businesses, and a sense of hope and community during an undeniably dark time. All of this was made possible by the flexible reuse of outdoor space.

Statement of facts:

WHEREAS Central Square was designated an official Cultural District in the state of Massachusetts by the Mass Cultural Council in October 2012, and

WHEREAS Central Square is the home to multiple live music venues, non-profit art institutions, a historic retail corridor, and

WHEREAS the Central Square remains an epicenter for artistic expression with nationally acclaimed public art, outdoor events, festivals, and Starlight Square, and

WHEREAS Central Square must remain a home to the arts and be able to continue its tradition of being a home to artists, art, culture, and freedom of expression.

NOW, THEREFORE, we the Undersigned respectfully petition the honorable City Council of Cambridge to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance, by amending the table of uses to allow outdoor recreation facilities 4.36 (d) and Outdoor Retail or Consumer Service Establishment, not otherwise defined be a "Yes" and by right within the Business B zone of the Central Square Overlay with the following language:

4.36 Outdoor Retail or Consumer Service Establishments														
	Outdoor Retail or Consumer Service Establishment, not otherwise defined	No <sup>11</sup>	No	No	No	No	SP	SP	SP <sup>62</sup>	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP
	a. Open-Lot Retail Sales Establishment	No	No	No	No	Yes <sup>12</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	b. Drive-In Food Service Establishment	No	No	No	No	No	SP	SP	No	SP	No	SP	No	SP
	c. Drive-In Consumer Service Establishment	No	No	No	No	No	No	SP	SP <sup>13</sup>	SP	SP	SP	No	SP
	d. Outdoor Entertainment and Recreation Facility	No <sup>11</sup>	No	No	No	Yes <sup>12</sup>	No	No	SP <sup>63</sup>	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP
	e. Drive-In Theater	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
	f. Outdoor Auto Sales Facility	No	No	No	No	No	No	SP	No	No	No	SP	No	SP
	g. Auto Service Station	No	No	No	No	No	SP	SP	SP <sup>13</sup>	SP	No	Yes	SP	Yes
	h. Auto Wash	No	No	No	No	No	No	SP	No	No	No	SP	SP	SP
	i. [Deleted]													
	j. Temporary Outdoor Retail or Consumer Service Use	Yes	No	No	SP <sup>61</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

<sup>62</sup> For the Central Square Overlay see section 20.304.5 (5)

<sup>63</sup> For the Central Square Overlay see section 20.304.5 (6)

**20.304.5** Allowed Uses, Use Limitations and Restrictions. In addition to the use regulations applicable in each base zoning district the following use restrictions and limitations shall apply in the Central Square Overlay District:

5. Outdoor Retail or Consumer Service Establishment, not otherwise defined shall be subject to a special permit granted by the Planning Board. In granting the special permit the Planning Board must be able to find the proposed use has been designed and located to minimize the impact on neighboring uses, including but not limited to light trespass, noise mitigation, hours of operation, and other measures to ensure ongoing compliance with the Planning Board's findings.

6. Outdoor Entertainment and Recreation Facility, 4.36 (d), shall be permitted as of right within the Business B District of the Central Square Overlay.







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