

Land Use and Urban Design Recommendations from 2003 Agassiz Neighborhood Study

2003 RECOMMENDATION	2007 PROGRESS
LU1 Harvard University should implement the recommendations of the Hammond/Gorham edge committee, in order to create a more friendly campus edge with open quadrangles.	Harvard University submitted zoning recommendations to the Cambridge Planning Board, which were adopted by the City Council as the Hammond and Gorham Streets Transition Overlay District (Section 20.11) in 2002. In 2005, Harvard University received a special permit for development of a laboratory and classroom building adjacent to this transition area, deciding to retain most of the neighborhood edge as a landscaped green open space. Construction is underway.
LU2 The City's Community Development Department (CDD) should prepare an inventory of lots by size in the C-1 district showing the potential build out of lots over 6,000 square feet. This inventory should be presented to the Agassiz Neighborhood Council.	COMPLETED: An analysis of the remaining development potential of parcels in the Residence C-1 district was presented to the Agassiz Neighborhood Council in June 2005. This analysis is available at the Community Development Department. Call 617-349-4639 for information.
LU3 The Agassiz neighborhood should consider establishing a neighborhood conservation district.	Ten registered voters may petition to begin the process of designating a Neighborhood Conservation District. The process involves a year-long study of the area by a Study Committee, a review and recommendation by the Cambridge Historical Commission, and final approval by the City Council. No such process has been initiated in Agassiz within the past four years. Information at www.cambridgema.gov/historic .
LU4 A transition buffer zone should be created where the C-2A District abuts the C-1 District (where Lesley University abuts the neighborhood).	Discussions regarding Lesley University's campus planning efforts are being held through the Lesley Working Group, with representatives from neighborhood residents, Lesley, and the City. Currently, the regulations in Section 5.31.1(g) of the zoning ordinance require that buildings in the Residence C-2A district abutting the Residence C-1 district must follow the same minimum yard setback formula that applies in the Residence C-1 district, within 125 feet of the district edge.

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UD1 New buildings should be harmonious with existing neighborhood residential aesthetics.	Many new development projects, including most developments of 50,000 square feet of floor area or more in commercial and high-density residential districts, are required to undergo review and permitting by the Planning Board. The Planning Board reviews the urban design and transportation features of a proposed development to ensure that they are appropriate to the existing neighborhood context. In addition, certain areas have specific design guidelines, such as the North Massachusetts Avenue Design Guidelines, which are intended to ensure that future development is compatible with the existing context.
UD2 Pedestrian rights-of-way in the neighborhood should be preserved and maintained. Example: Francis Avenue to Museum Street.	Pedestrian access is one of the criteria addressed by the Planning Board in granting special permits for large projects. In addition, the Zoning Ordinance or a specific special permit may require that certain pedestrian routes within a project area remain open to the public. The Hammond and Gorham Streets Transition Overlay District, adopted into the zoning ordinance in 2002, specifies that at least three pedestrian points of access should be provided to allow residents to pass through that area.
UD3 Utility companies should be encouraged to place utilities underground whenever feasible.	The City encourages the placement of cables underground where practical, especially communications cables leading to major points of access and private commercial establishments. Utility lines are regulated through the Pole and Conduit Commission, and are reviewed by the Planning Board during special permit project review. However, placing existing utilities underground is not always feasible due to logistic difficulties and higher costs.
UD4 The City should plant and maintain street trees.	The City has an arborist and urban forestry staff that is responsible for the planting and maintenance of trees on public property. About 150-300 new public trees are planted annually across the city, and each tree is pruned once every four to five years, in addition to other maintenance that may be required in the interim. The next tree pruning cycle for Agassiz is scheduled for 2009. For information, contact the Parks and Forestry Division of the Department of Public Works at 617-349-4880.

Institutional Planning Recommendations from 2003 Agassiz Neighborhood Study

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I1 In conjunction with their residential projects, Harvard and Lesley should consider including housing for their hourly-wage employees.	Universities are encouraged by the City to provide housing for their own populations as well as affordable housing for the larger community where appropriate. In conjunction with its development of graduate student housing in the Riverside neighborhood, Harvard is developing 33 units of affordable housing in the former "Switch House" building on Blackstone Street.
I2 Harvard and Lesley should inform Cambridge residents of upcoming events open to the public.	Harvard and Lesley both post event listings on the web and in campus publications. See: www.news.harvard.edu/calendar/gazette and events.lesley.edu .
LES1 The University should improve the landscaping at the Oxford Street side of 47 Oxford Street.	To direct comments and questions to Lesley University officials, contact the Public Affairs office at 617-349-8525 or publicaffairs@lesley.edu .
LES2 Lesley should work with a neighborhood committee to discuss development issues with Agassiz.	In 2006, the City established the Lesley Working Group as a forum for neighbors, university representatives, and City officials to discuss issues related to current campus development.

Transportation Recommendations from 2003 Agassiz Neighborhood Study

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T1 Encourage non-automobile travel.	The City has adopted a number of policies and measures to encourage non-automobile travel in Cambridge and continues to address the issue on an ongoing basis. Businesses and property developers that generate new parking demand must adhere to the Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance (adopted in 1998), which requires ongoing reductions of commuter car trips into the city. Large projects that undergo review by the City's Planning Board are often required to mitigate traffic and parking impacts by, among other measures, including facilities and programs to support walking, bicycling, and public transportation. The Environmental and Transportation Planning Division of the Community Development Department works to improve public facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users throughout the city, with the input of the citizen Pedestrian Committee and Bicycle Committee. The City also supports the EZRide shuttle service and raises awareness of alternative transportation options through publicity and special events, particularly during annual "GoGreen Month" activities.
T2 Encourage Harvard and Lesley Universities to implement intra-city transportation options for their communities.	Both Harvard and Lesley operate shuttle services connecting the various parts of their campuses. In addition, the "m2" shuttle connecting Harvard's main campus to the Longwood Medical Area and other locations is available to the general public for a \$2.30 per ride fare.
T3 Encourage the MBTA to institute a bus route from Porter Square to Kendall Square along Beacon St and Hampshire St. Although this is a natural transportation corridor, no public transport goes along the length of this route.	The City works actively with the MBTA on issues related to bus and other transit service in Cambridge. Currently, Porter and Kendall Squares are connected by the Red Line, and the #83 bus connects North Cambridge to Porter, Inman, and Central Squares via Beacon, Hampshire and Prospect Streets.
T4 Support efforts to promote system-wide improvements in MBTA bus service. Example: Harvard Square to Coolidge Corner.	The City meets regularly with MBTA staff to discuss bus service-related issues and improvements in Cambridge, and is represented on the MBTA Advisory Board. In addition, the City undertakes some infrastructure improvements, including the recent installation of 33 new Cemusa shelters at many bus stops throughout Cambridge and the posting of schedules along some bus routes.

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T5 Encourage alternative fuel transportation.	The 2003 Cambridge Climate Protection Plan outlines an overall strategy for reducing the greenhouse gases throughout the city. Encouraging alternative fuel use, such as biodiesel, as well as hybrid electric vehicles, is a part of this overall strategy. As of 2005, the Cambridge Department of Public Works has the capacity to run most of its truck fleet on “B20” (a 20% biodiesel blend) and purchases biodiesel fuel when it is cost-feasible. Harvard University Transportation Services has also converted its shuttle fleet to biodiesel.
T6 Support efforts to implement urban ring transit system.	Planning for future phases of the Urban Ring transit system is now being coordinated by the state Executive Office of Transportation (EOT). The City has staff representatives on its Citizens Advisory Committee and advises on other issues specific to Cambridge. The EOT is currently in the process of conducting public meetings and developing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project, after which it can apply for funding assistance through the Federal “New Starts” transit program. Information at www.theurbanring.com .
T7 Implement traffic calming as neighborhood streets are resurfaced.	Traffic calming projects are implemented at strategic locations along streets that are being resurfaced or reconstructed as part of the City’s overall infrastructure improvement program. About three or four traffic calming projects are undertaken annually throughout the city. For information, contact the Traffic Calming program manager at 617-349-4655.
T8 Promote safer pedestrian crossings at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Massachusetts Avenue at Garfield Street. b. Oxford Street at Kirkland Street. The Committee supports Harvard’s relocation of the shuttle stop to the Memorial Hall circular driveway. c. The exit from the Science Center on Oxford Street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The signage and crosswalk striping were upgraded in 2003. This will be a potential location for curb bump-outs if roadway construction occurs in the future. b. Harvard’s shuttle stop is currently located at the Memorial Hall driveway. Traffic calming is planned as a future long-range improvement following the planned reconstruction of Oxford Street. c. A marked crosswalk exists at this location.

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<p>d. Kirkland Street at Irving Street. The existing crosswalk does not correspond to the one at Cambridge and Irving Street, disrupting a logical pedestrian route. Crosswalks should be on both sides of the street.</p> <p>e. Kirkland Street at Holden Street. At present there is only a crosswalk on the west side of the street, not the east side. Crosswalks should be on both sides of the street.</p> <p>f. The end of Holden Street to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences park entrances.</p>	<p>d. A crosswalk is not planned for the east side of the intersection because there is currently no sidewalk ramp, and at least two parking spaces would need to be removed to provide adequate sight lines for a new crosswalk.</p> <p>e. The existing crosswalk was re-marked to current standards in 2003. A crosswalk is not currently planned for the east side because there is no sidewalk ramp.</p> <p>f. During discussion of a previous traffic calming project in this area, residents determined that a crosswalk would not be appropriate at this location.</p>
<p>T9 Make resident only parking at night on Oxford Street from Everett to Wendell.</p>	<p>COMPLETED: In 2004, the parking signage was changed on the west side of Oxford from Everett to Wendell and the east side of Oxford from Everett to Hammond to allow two-hour parking 8am–6pm and resident permit parking 6pm–8am.</p>
<p>T10 Provide Zipcar spaces in Harvard and/ or Lesley parking lots.</p>	<p>Currently, there is a Zipcar in the parking lot of Lesley University's Porter Exchange building, and car-sharing spaces will be required in new Harvard University projects in Agassiz. Parking spaces for car-sharing services are now often required as traffic mitigation measures for projects requiring a special permit.</p>

Housing Recommendations from 2003 Agassiz Neighborhood Study

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H1 In order to maintain a diverse community, the City of Cambridge should explore affordable housing opportunities in the Agassiz neighborhood as they may arise.	Through the Housing Division of the Community Development Department, the City works with non-profit partners and the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust to create and preserve affordable housing units throughout the city. Since 1995, more than 2,800 affordable units have been created or preserved across Cambridge due to these efforts. Residents are encouraged to notify the City of opportunities that may arise as properties are placed on the market. Contact the Housing Division at 617-349-4622. Cambridge also adopted an Inclusionary Zoning ordinance in 1998, which requires housing developments of ten or more units to include a minimum percentage of affordable units for low- and moderate-income households.
H2 The City should explore the possibility of allowing single room occupancy buildings in more residential districts and acquiring land or structures for this use.	In moderate-to-high-density residential districts, including Residence C-1 and C-2A (but not including Residence B), some types of single room occupancy housing are allowed. There is also no required minimum size for a residential unit, however there is a maximum number of units that can be built on any given site.
H3 The Committee recognizes that, by developing dormitories, institutions help to reduce pressure on other renters in the neighborhood. However, any new student housing construction in the Agassiz neighborhood should be low-density and compatible with the existing scale and character of the neighborhood.	The City's Growth Policy encourages universities to provide housing for its students on their campuses, while it also encourages preservation of the scale and character of existing residential neighborhoods. The Zoning Ordinance requires that many large institutional projects, such as dormitories, receive a project review special permit from the Planning Board, which considers the potential impacts of a project on existing neighborhood character. The Institutional Use requirements in Article 4 of the Zoning Ordinance restrict dormitory uses in lower-density residential zoning districts.

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H4 The City of Cambridge should pursue the affordable housing funds available through the Community Preservation Act.	Cambridge dedicates the majority of its Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust, which, along with funding from a variety of other sources, funds the acquisition, development, and improvement of affordable housing units. Within the first six years of the City's implementation of the CPA program, Cambridge has dedicated over \$37 million of those funds to affordable housing. About \$10 million in CPA funding has been allocated to affordable housing for this fiscal year.

Economic Development Recommendations from 2003 Agassiz Neighborhood Study

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ED1 The Committee encourages the creation of pedestrian-friendly, neighborhood-oriented uses of commercial spaces along Massachusetts Avenue and throughout the Agassiz neighborhood.	<p>COMPLETED STUDY: In 2003-2005, the Community Development Department held a series of community discussions about the future of ground-floor commercial spaces on Massachusetts Avenue. Some zoning modifications were suggested that might provide an incentive to retain small retail spaces if new residential or institutional development occurred along the avenue, but the City Council ultimately decided not to support this zoning proposal.</p> <p>Massachusetts Avenue in Agassiz continues to be a vibrant commercial area featuring many small, independent, neighborhood-oriented businesses. The Economic Development division of the Community Development Department supports local business through façade and signage improvement programs, retail workshops, small business classes, and one-on-one consulting. A few Massachusetts Avenue businesses have participated in the City's economic development programs. Information is available on the web at www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/ed or by calling 617-349-4637.</p>
ED2 The City should develop a formalized plan to communicate with the Agassiz Neighborhood Council about types of new businesses that would be useful in the neighborhood. Example: Currently, a bakery is needed in the neighborhood.	Staff in the Economic Development division are available to discuss small business goals or needs with neighborhood residents on request. Following discussions between neighborhood residents and Economic Development staff, a new Rosie's Bakery location opened on Massachusetts Avenue in 2005.
ED3 The Committee supports Harvard's established practice of reduced rents to diverse retail tenants.	

Open Space Recommendations from 2003 Agassiz Neighborhood Study

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<p>OS1 The City of Cambridge should work with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to explore the feasibility of constructing a park over the commuter rail line adjacent to the Porter Square T stop. If that fails, we recommend putting one of the many parking lots in the square underground and using the above ground area for a park. Porter Square is the location in Cambridge that is furthest from any parks, and creating a park over one of these locations is our most visionary and most expensive recommendation.</p>	<p>The work of the Green Ribbon Open Space Committee in 2000 identified Porter Square as a top priority area for new parks. Open space will be a topic of future planning discussions with the MBTA and Lesley University, which own much of the land in the area. The MBTA is also planning to issue a new request for proposals for leasing the “air rights” space above the station.</p>
<p>OS2 The City of Cambridge should pursue the open space preservation funds available through the Community Preservation Act.</p>	<p>Within the first six years of receiving Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding, Cambridge has dedicated about \$6 million to open space preservation projects. These have included improvements to the Fresh Pond Reservation and protection of land within the watershed that contributes to the municipal water supply. The City also funds open space projects through its Public Investment Fund and free cash appropriations, and actively pursues outside grant funding for qualifying projects.</p>
<p>OS3 The Committee recommends enhancing the recreational use, especially the passive recreational use, of Sacramento Field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Cambridge should consider renaming Sacramento Field to Sacramento Park. • New signage should be placed at the main entrance to Sacramento Field on Sacramento Street. • The recently re-opened second public access route to Sacramento Field/Park should be maintained. 	<p>FUTURE ACTION: Sacramento Field has been identified in the City’s Open Space Plan as an area for future renovation and landscape improvement. In park renovation projects, the City works to maximize the space’s function a place for recreation, relaxation and community gathering, as well as a space that beautifies the surrounding area and improves the natural environment. In doing so, the City pays careful attention to entrances, fencing, signage, furniture, and plantings, and uses high-quality materials and equipment.</p>
<p>OS4 Encourage the closing of Oxford Street for community celebrations.</p>	<p>Community organizations are encouraged to hold outdoor events that are open to the general public. An event in a public space requires advance approval from the City’s Special Events Committee. For information about special events, call 617-349-4846. A Temporary Street Closing Permit would also be required for a celebration in the street, which requires an application and written approval from abutters. Call 617-349-4700 for information about temporary street closings.</p>

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OS5 Encourage prompt removal of all graffiti by property owners - including City street signs and U.S. mailboxes.	The Department of Public Works operates a graffiti hotline at 617-349-6955 to report vandalism of public property for prompt clean-up and for information about removing graffiti from private property.
OS6 Encourage the Agassiz Neighborhood Council to continue its tree-sponsorship program.	Residents, businesses and community groups are all encouraged to participate in the Client Tree Program and the Commemorative Tree Program. Residents may request that a new public tree be planted on the sidewalk or on their property within 20 feet of the sidewalk, with the resident or a neighborhood group paying a share of the cost to buy and plant the tree. If feasible, the City will also re-plant a tree in an existing sidewalk tree well at no cost to residents. For information, contact the Parks and Forestry Division of the Department of Public Works at 617-349-4880.
OS7 Encourage residents to take advantage of the City's sidewalk tree program.	See above.