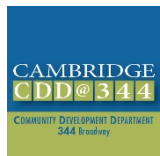

City of Cambridge
Community Development Department

Retail Land Use Initiative Update

February 2019





Project Background

- CDD engaged with planning consulting firm Community Opportunity Group, Inc. to develop the *Commercial Land Use Classification Study*, providing recommendations to the City on ways to update, consolidate, and clarify commercial classifications in the Zoning Ordinance
- City's Retail Strategic Plan consultant recommended that the City incorporate recommendations from the *Classification Study* to allow for more flexible and new retail uses



Current Trends

- **Retailers are combining uses**
 - Retail and classroom (e.g. retail and community classes)
 - Retail and food uses (e.g. café and clothing)
 - Retail and manufacturing/makerspace (e.g. microbrewery and taproom)
- **Growth in small retail has increased**
 - People look for items that are locally made/artisanal products
- **Urban and makerspace manufacturing is growing**
- **New retail spaces are coming online**



Why Now?

- **Opportunity to adapt to changes** in the way we work, shop, and consume goods and services
- **Encourage new experiential retail and productions spaces** that are changing the face of commercial areas
- **Support local retail and identity**
- **Boost local entrepreneurship**
- **Address the Retail Strategic Plan** and other small business feedback about regulatory barriers



Recent Efforts

- **Outreach to business associations**
 - Harvard Square Business Association
 - East Cambridge Business Association
 - Cambridge Local First
- **Online survey to businesses**
- **Research**
 - BZA cases involving retail or small business



Specific Issues Heard

- Use table complicated to read – too many footnotes, too many categories, definitions not up-to-date
- Food entrepreneurs face difficulties – e.g., commercial kitchens, fast order food requirements
- Too much time to resolve zoning issues and obtain variances, costly for small businesses having to carry rent
- Parking requirements
- Non-conforming uses
- Allowing mixed uses in one space, different revenue streams
- Neighborhood objections about noise, traffic, parking



Impact on Business

Most Common BZA requests:

- Parking Waivers (SP and Variances)
- Fast Order Food Permits
- Variances for non-defined uses or mixed of uses
- Current uses are not clearly defined

Time and Costs:

- Average legal costs for SP/Variances: \$3,000
- Average time of SP/Variance legal process (per statute): 3-6 months



Retail Land Use Initiative Zoning Recommendations



Zoning Recommendations Overview

1. Consistently define all retail use types
2. Add use types that are not listed
3. Regulate “hybrid” activities
4. Plan for unforeseen use types
5. Consider relaxing some requirements (parking, change of use, &c.)



1. Consistently define all retail use types

| Current Zoning | Recommended Changes |
|---|---|
| Not all uses are defined, but many use listings require tracking through many footnotes | Create consistent definitions for each use, consolidate footnotes into definitions where possible |

2. Add use types that are not listed

| Current Zoning | Recommended Changes |
|---|---|
| Table contains many use types, but is missing uses that are increasingly common | In updated use table, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1312 625 1905 682">• Grocery store<li data-bbox="1312 711 2084 768">• Food stand or kiosk<li data-bbox="1312 796 2168 853">• Performing arts studio<li data-bbox="1312 882 1921 939">• Fitness center<li data-bbox="1312 968 2295 1025">• Outdoor recreation facility<li data-bbox="1312 1053 2328 1110">• Temporary open-air market |

3. Regulate “hybrid” activities

| Current Zoning | Recommended Changes |
|---|---|
| <p>No specific guidance when a business establishment combines different types of retail activities</p> | <p>In definitions, clarify the range of allowed activities for a given retail type (e.g., instruction or services offered along with retail sales)</p> <p>Establish new use types for retail/production establishments and food service/production establishments</p> |

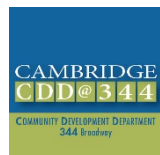
4. Plan for unforeseen use types

| Current Zoning | Recommended Changes |
|--|--|
| If a use is not specifically listed, it is considered not allowed (needs a variance) | Include general definition for retail establishments “not otherwise defined” Allow by special permit in districts where retail uses are generally allowed |

5. Consider relaxing some requirements

| Current Zoning | Recommended Changes |
|--|---|
| Additional parking required for many changes of use; “small business” exemption if up to 4 spaces are required | Exempt new parking requirement for any new retail use up to 10,000 SF in an existing building |
| Converting an existing non-conforming commercial use to a new type of retail use is not allowed (requires variance) | Consider a range of retail uses that can be allowed by special permit |
| Some small businesses types are more heavily restricted (e.g., theaters, dance halls, commercial recreation, fast order food, veterinary establishments) | Consider if zoning should be more permissive for some retail use types |

Thank you





Discussion

- What other zoning impediments might small businesses face?
- Are there issues/concerns with proposed new use types?
- How much should existing requirements be relaxed?