



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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Development

To: Planning Board
From: Jeff Roberts, Land Use and Zoning Planner
Date: April 10, 2015
Re: **Basement Housing Overlay District Amendments**

Background

The Basement Housing Overlay District was established in 2011 following a rezoning petition by Chestnut Hill Realty, the owner of some properties within the district. The purpose of the district is to allow the creation of new dwelling units within existing basement-level spaces in some larger, older apartment buildings.

The overlay district allows the Planning Board to waive certain zoning limitations by special permit in order to allow new basement-level units in buildings meeting a set of specific qualifications (e.g., the building must have been built prior to 1930 and must contain at least 30 existing units, with at least one existing unit at the basement level). The new units would be required to include measures to mitigate flood risk and at least one of the new units would be an Affordable Unit administered per the City's affordable housing programs. Attached is a map of the district and the locations of buildings that may qualify for special permits under the overlay provisions.

To date, the Planning Board has permitted two projects per the overlay provisions. The first (PB #280) authorized four new units at 19-21 Wendell Street, which are nearing completion. The second (PB #290) authorized five new units at 1-3 Langdon Street. However, that project did not receive a building permit due to a zoning issue that was identified, which is the reason for the proposed amendment.

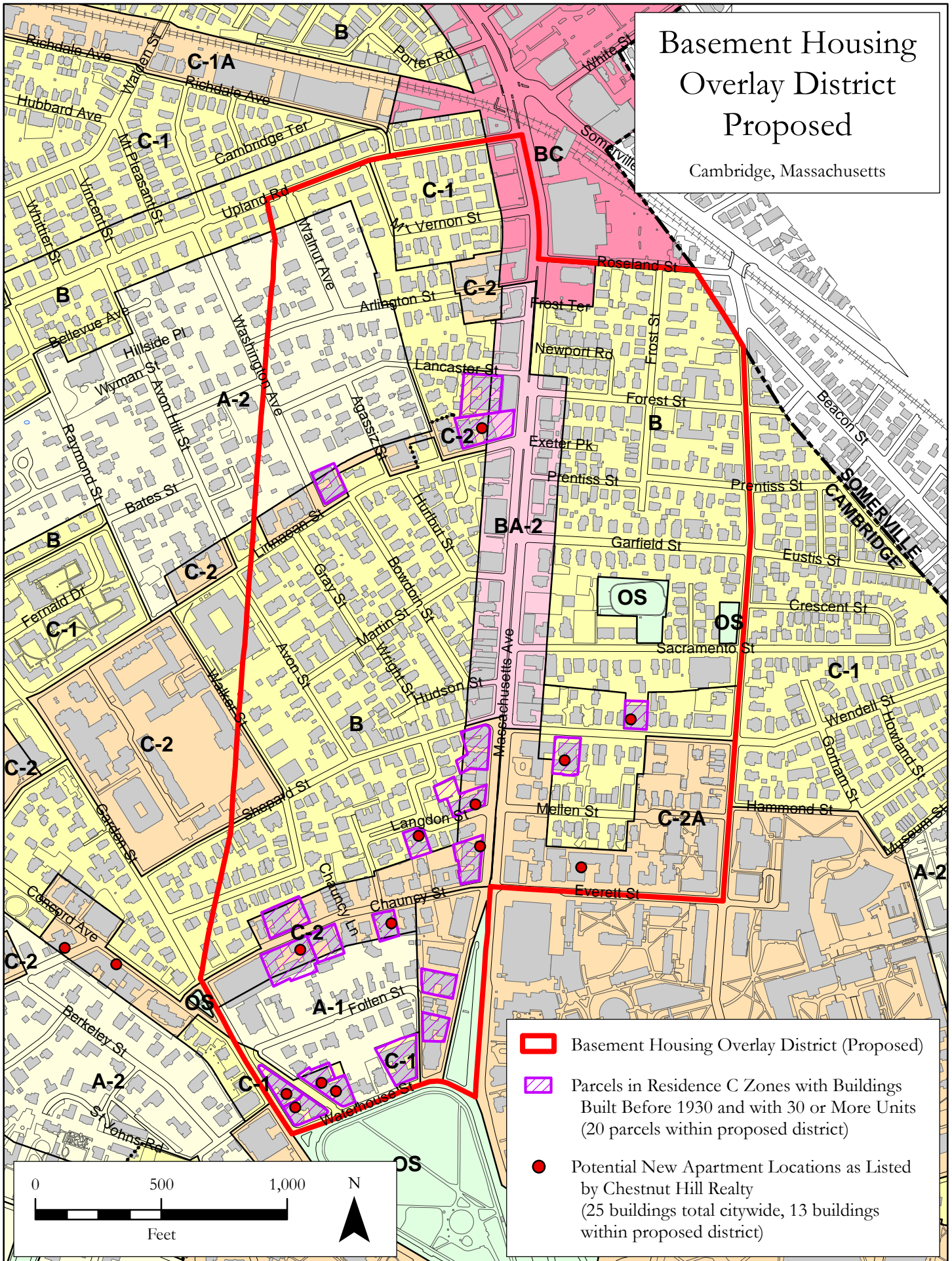
Proposed Amendment




The Basement Housing Overlay District limits its provisions to existing buildings "located within a Residence C, C-1, C-1A, C-2A, C-2, C-2A, C-2B, C-3, C-3A, or C-3B base zoning district." While the most of 1-3 Langdon Street is within the Residence C-2 district, a portion is in the Residence B district, where the existing multifamily building is a non-conforming use. It was determined that the special permit could not grant the needed relief within the Residence B portion of the project. The proposed zoning amendment would clarify that the provisions apply to buildings that are "located ***wholly or partially*** within a Residence C, C-1, C-1A, C-2A, C-2B, C-3, C-3A, or C-3B base zoning district."

The amendment is not expected to change the number of buildings that were originally intended to qualify for the overlay provisions or to alter the requirements that would apply to such buildings. It is intended to allow the 1-3 Langdon Street project to proceed as permitted, and to clarify that the overlay district provisions would also apply to future projects with similar "split-lot" zoning.

Basement Housing Overlay District Proposed

Cambridge, Massachusetts



-  Basement Housing Overlay District (Proposed)
-  Parcels in Residence C Zones with Buildings Built Before 1930 and with 30 or More Units (20 parcels within proposed district)
-  Potential New Apartment Locations as Listed by Chestnut Hill Realty (25 buildings total citywide, 13 buildings within proposed district)