



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: May 4, 2016

Subject: Richard Avenue Neighbors (Stern, et al.) Zoning Petition

Recommendation: The Planning Board recommends ADOPTION.


To the Honorable, the City Council,

On April 19, 2016, the Planning Board held a public hearing regarding the zoning petition by Elizabeth Stern, Sarah Bell, and other residents in the area of Richard Avenue to adjust the northern boundary of the North Massachusetts Avenue Subdistrict to terminate at the centerline of Richard Avenue. The proposed zoning would retain the Business A-2 (BA-2) base zoning and the other provisions of the Massachusetts Avenue Overlay District. The most substantial effect of the proposed change would be to eliminate the current requirement for ground-floor retail that would apply to any future building facing Massachusetts Avenue north of Richard Avenue.

The Planning Board strongly supports the petition that is currently before the Council. The Board has previously held several public hearings regarding this area, including a special permit case for development at 2551 Massachusetts Avenue, and two prior versions of a petition to rezone the area to Residence B. At each stage of the process, the Board encouraged neighbors and property owners in the affected area to discuss a solution that would be agreeable to all parties. Based on testimony at the hearing, it appears that consensus was reached on a preferred redevelopment plan, and the current petition reflects that consensus.

The Board would not typically support a petition to change the zoning of one small area in response to a redevelopment proposal. However, in this case having seen an awkward development proposal that attempted to adhere to zoning as closely as possible, the Board believes that the current zoning may not be well suited to this specific area. Given that lots on Massachusetts Avenue transition to a different size and character north of Richard Avenue, the Board believes it is reasonable to terminate the requirement for ground floor retail at that street. The Board is convinced by the petitioners' argument that the proposed zoning allows for development outcomes that are more appropriate to the small area of the proposed change.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,



H Theodore Cohen, Chair.