

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: October 19, 2017

Subject: Christopher D. Smith, et al., zoning petition regarding graduate student housing production associated with development in the proposed PUD-7 district.

The Planning Board makes no recommendation at this time, but offers some comments.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

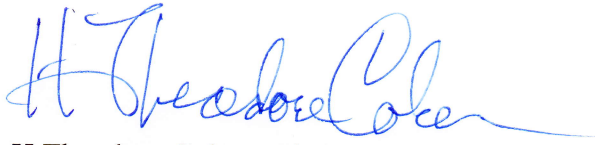
The Board held a public hearing on this petition on October 17, 2017, at which the Board heard a presentation from the petitioners and comments from the public. Due to the unusual situation that the petition seeks to amend zoning provisions that have not yet been adopted, the Board elected not to make a recommendation and to hold the hearing open in order to provide the opportunity for continued dialogue on the issues raised in the petition. However, because these issues are being actively discussed by the City Council, the Board wishes to transmit some comments at this time.

The Board strongly encourages the Council to consider the critical planning issues regarding housing in the city that are raised by the petition, and appreciates the thorough, data-driven presentation from the petitioners supporting their argument for additional graduate student housing. The Board understands that MIT has recently made a commitment to create additional graduate student housing beds as part of the Volpe (PUD-7) zoning petition currently under consideration, which is an important step towards advancing the goals of this petition. There are many tradeoffs to be considered by the Council regarding the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity presented by the Volpe site redevelopment, and the Board believes the demand for graduate student housing is an important factor to be included in the Council's considerations. The Board also suggests that the Council consider graduate student housing production not just in terms of the number of graduate student beds created, but also in terms of the percentage of all graduate students housed on campus.

The Board believes there needs to be an ongoing, long-term conversation about graduate student housing that goes beyond the development that is under immediate consideration. This conversation should consider not just the creation of additional graduate student beds but also other graduate student housing issues, such as the pricing differential between university housing and market housing and the establishment of clear long-term targets for the number or percentage of graduate students housed on a campus. The Board does not expect any university to singlehandedly remedy the affordable housing issues faced in Cambridge, but acknowledges that graduate students in all the universities do impact the housing market and that it is important

that the universities and the City devote the necessary time and energy to study this issue, evaluate options, and propose policy solutions.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,



H Theodore Cohen, Chair.