

Affordable Housing Overlay – Zoning Petition Comparison

Note: Differences between the September 3, 2019 and June 10, 2020 versions of the petition are indicated in boldface.

Section	9/3/2019 AHO Petition	6/10/2020 AHO Petition	Explanation	Comments
11.207.3(c)(ii)	“At least eighty percent (80%) of AHO Dwelling Units shall be occupied by AHO Eligible Households whose gross household income upon initial occupancy is no more than eighty percent (80%) of AMI.	“At least eighty percent (80%) of AHO Dwelling Units within the project shall be occupied by AHO Eligible Households whose gross household income upon initial occupancy is no more than eighty percent (80%) of AMI.”	The addition of the phrase “within the project” makes it clear that the 80% threshold must be met within each AHO project, and shall not be considered across multiple AHO projects.	Language clarification
11.207.3(b)(i)	“AHO Dwelling Units shall be rented or sold only to AHO Eligible Households, with preference given to Cambridge residents, and former Cambridge residents who experienced a no-fault eviction in Cambridge in the last twelve (12) months, in accordance with standards and procedures related to selection, asset limits, and marketing established by the Community Development Department (CDD)”	“AHO Dwelling Units shall be rented or sold only to AHO Eligible Households, with preference given to Cambridge residents, and former Cambridge residents who experienced a no-fault eviction in Cambridge in the last twelve (12) months, in accordance with standards and procedures related to selection, asset limits, and marketing established by the Community Development Department (CDD) and applicable state funding requirements. ”	In addition to being subject to City requirements for marketing and resident selection and asset eligibility, AHO projects which rely on state funding must also meet state funding requirements.	Most affordable housing projects in Cambridge require state funding; any AHO project which receives state funding could meet applicable state funding requirements.

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11.207.5.2.1(c)(i)	<p>“Portions of an AHO Project that are within thirty-five (35) feet of a district whose District Dimensional Standards allow a maximum residential building height of forty (40) feet or less shall be reduced to a minimum of five (5) Stories Above Grade or a maximum height of (60) feet, as measured from existing Grade, except where the AHO Project abuts a nonresidential use.”</p>	<p>“Except where the AHO Project abuts a non-residential use, portions of an AHO Project that are within thirty-five (35) feet of a district whose District Dimensional Standards allow a maximum residential building height of forty (40) feet or less shall be reduced to a minimum of five (5) Stories Above Grade or a maximum height of sixty (60) feet, as measured from existing Grade, except that if the AHO project parcel extends into that District, then the height limitation shall only extend thirty-five (35) feet from the property line.”</p>	<p>The previous and current petitions both require a two-story step-down transition where a taller-height district abuts a lower-height district. The change would waive this requirement where the abutting lot is non-residential, and would require the step-down to be at least 35 feet measured from the abutting property line instead of the zoning district boundary.</p> <p><i>See attached diagrams on Page 9.</i></p>	<p>This change provides some additional flexibility to an AHO project on a lot that is “split-zoned” between a higher-scale district and lower-scale district or that is abutting a non-residential lot. The required step-down relative to abutting residential lots would be the same as in the prior version.</p>

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Section	9/3/2019 AHO Petition	6/10/2020 AHO Petition	Explanation	Comments
11.207.5.2.3(b)	<p>“Front Yards. An AHO Project shall conform to the minimum front yard setback set forth in the District Dimensional Standards that is not derived by formula, or the front yard setback may be reduced to the average of the front yard setbacks of the four (4) nearest pre-existing principal buildings that contain at least two Stories Above Grade and directly front the same side of the street as the AHO Project, or may be reduced to a minimum of ten (10) feet in the case of an AHO Project on a corner lot. Where the District Dimensional Standards set forth different requirements for residential and non-residential uses, the non-residential front yard setback requirement shall apply to the entire AHO Project if the Ground Story contains a non-residential use as set forth in Section 11.207.4 Paragraph (b) above; otherwise, the residential front yard setback shall apply.”</p>	<p>“Front Yards. An AHO Project shall have a minimum front yard setback of 15 feet, except where the District Dimensional Standards establish a less restrictive requirement or where the average of the front yard setbacks of the four (4) nearest pre-existing principal buildings that contain at least two Stories Above Grade and directly front the same side of the street as the AHO Project, or may be reduced to a minimum of ten (10) feet in the case of an AHO Project on a corner lot. Where the District Dimensional Standards set forth different requirements for residential and non-residential uses, the non-residential front yard setback requirement shall apply to the entire AHO Project if the Ground Story contains a non-residential use as set forth in Section 11.207.4 Paragraph (b) above; otherwise, the residential front yard setback shall apply.”</p>	<p>The front yard setback standard evolved throughout the review of the 2019 petition. Generally, the minimum setbacks in the district apply. The original 2019 AHO petition would have allowed a reduction to 10 feet in districts that otherwise require more than 10 feet. The amended 2019 petition would have allowed a reduction to 10 feet only on corner lots, or a reduction to the average of the four nearest buildings, for buildings to align with the prevailing setback on the street. The current petition would allow a reduction to 15 feet in all cases, a reduction to 10 feet on corner lots, or a reduction to the average of the four nearest substantial buildings.</p>	<p>These modifications are only relevant in lower-density districts (Residence A-1, A-2, and B) where the district front setback standards range from 15 to 25 feet – other districts generally require less than a 15-foot setback. Setting a minimum standard of 15 feet would provide some greater flexibility for AHO projects in Residence A-1 and A-2 districts but not affect the standards for AHO projects in other districts.</p>

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11.207.6.1(b)	<p>“An AHO Project shall provide or have access to either on-street or off-street facilities that can accommodate passenger pick-up and drop-off by motor vehicles and short-term loading by moving vans or small delivery trucks. The Cambridge Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the AHO Project is designed to reasonably accommodate such activity without causing significant hazard or congestion. The Cambridge Director of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation shall have the authority to promulgate regulations for the implementation of the provisions of this Paragraph.”</p>	<p>“An AHO Project of greater than 20 units, for which no off-street parking is provided shall provide or have access to either on-street or off-street facilities that can accommodate passenger pick-up and drop-off by motor vehicles and short-term loading by moving vans or small delivery trucks. The Cambridge Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the AHO Project is designed to reasonably accommodate such activity without causing significant hazard or congestion. The Cambridge Director of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation shall have the authority to promulgate regulations for the implementation of the provisions of this Paragraph.”</p>	<p>The requirement for a pick-up/drop-off area was added by the Ordinance Committee during the review of the 2019 AHO petition. The current petition would require such an area only for projects of 20 units or more.</p>	<p>For a smaller residential project (< 20 units), it may be unnecessary and onerous to require a designated pick-up/drop-off area.</p>

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Section	9/3/2019 AHO Petition	6/10/2020 AHO Petition	Explanation	Comments
11.207.7.2(a)	“The area directly between the front lot line and the principal wall plane of the building nearest to the front lot line shall match its street context and shall consist of landscaped area, hardscaped area accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists, and usable spaces such as uncovered porches, patios, or balconies. Parking and other motor vehicle uses, including service and loading facilities, shall not be located within such area except for driveway access which shall be limited to a total of thirty (30) feet of width for any individual driveway for each one hundred (100) feet of lot frontage.”	“The area directly between the front lot line and the principal wall plane of the building nearest to the front lot line shall consist of any combination of landscaped area, hardscaped area accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists, and usable spaces such as uncovered porches, patios, or balconies. Parking shall not be located within such area, except for driveway access which shall be limited to a total of thirty (30) feet of width for any individual driveway for each one hundred (100) feet of lot frontage.”	The current petition does not include a requirement that the front yard of an AHO project “shall match its street context,” which was added by the Ordinance Committee during the review of the 2019 AHO petition. The current petition also does not include the phrase “and other motor vehicle uses,” which could permit non-parking facilities in front yards such as driveways, pick-up/drop-off areas or vehicular loading and service functions.	The standard that the front yard of an AHO project “match its street context” could be perceived as subjective, as was noted in the 2019 petition review. If there is a desire to provide pick-up/drop-off areas in some AHO projects (as discussed above), it is helpful to ensure that other parts of the zoning text would not create impediments.
11.207.7.2(c)	“A building footprint exceeding one hundred and fifty (150) feet in length, measured parallel to the street, shall contain entry courtyards that are set back at least forty (40) feet in depth measured from and perpendicular to the front lot line and at least thirty (30) feet in width measured parallel to the front lot line.”	“A building footprint exceeding two hundred and fifty (250) feet in length, measured parallel to the street, contains a massing recess extending back at least fifteen (15) feet in depth measured from and perpendicular to the front lot line and at least fifteen (15) feet in width measured parallel to the front lot line so that the maximum length of unbroken façade is one hundred fifty (150) feet. ”	The current petition retains the requirement for an AHO Project that has a long street frontage to include “courtyard breaks,” but reduces the required minimum dimension from 40’x30’ to 15’x15’ and makes the requirement applicable to buildings of 250’ or more, so that the length of an unbroken façade is 150’ or less.	This change allows for greater flexibility in the design of facade recesses for longer buildings. The requirement for breaks is meaningful but flexibility can be helpful to account for different site conditions.

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Section	9/3/2019 AHO Petition	6/10/2020 AHO Petition	Explanation	Comments
11.207.7.3(a)	“At least twenty percent (20%) of the area of building facades facing a public street or public open space shall consist of clear glass windows. For buildings located in a Business A (BA), Business A-2 (BA-2), Business B (BB), or Business C (BC) zoning district, this figure shall be increased to thirty percent (30%).”	“At least twenty percent (20%) of the area of building facades facing a public street or public open space shall consist of clear glass windows. For buildings located in a Business A (BA), Business A-2 (BA-2), Business B (BB), or Business C (BC) zoning district, this figure shall be increased to thirty percent (30%) for non-residential portions of the building, if any. ”	The current petition would require clear windows on at least 30% public-facing facades in BA, BA-2, BB, and BC districts but only on non-residential portions of a building.	Competing city interests need to be balanced when setting standards for façade transparency. Sustainable design standards often promote lower window-to-wall ratios, while urban design objectives promote transparency.
11.207.7.4(d)(iii)	“that portion of the Ground Story façade containing active non-residential uses shall consist of at least fifty percent (50%) transparent glass windows or, if the use is a retail or consumer service establishment, at least 70 percent (70%) transparent glass windows along one street in the case of a corner lot.”	“that portion of the Ground Story façade containing active non-residential uses shall consist of at least thirty percent (30%) transparent glass windows or, if the use is a retail or consumer service establishment, at least thirty percent (30%) transparent glass windows, across the combined façade on both streets in the case of a corner lot. ”	Consistent with the provision above, the current petition would require a minimum of 30% of the façade area to be clear windows for non-residential uses, which in the case of the AHO would include only ground-floor spaces and only uses that are permitted in the zoning district.	See comment above.

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Section	9/3/2019 AHO Petition	6/10/2020 AHO Petition	Explanation	Comments
11.207.7.4(e)	<p>“Ground Stories shall be designed to accommodate at least one space, with a total frontage equaling at least fifty percent (50%) of the frontage of any existing retail space on the site for an active non-residential use, which may include retail or consumer establishments as well as social service facilities supporting the mission of the owner of the AHO Project, on sites that are located in a Business base zoning district, and where the project site or at least one of the lots abutting the project site contains or has contained a retail or consumer service use at any point within the past two years prior to application for a building permit for an AHO project.”</p>	<p>“Ground stories on sites that are located in a Business base zoning district may include retail or consumer establishments as well as social service facilities supporting the mission of the owner of the AHO Project.”</p>	<p>The 2019 petition contained a requirement that in certain scenarios where an AHO Project is in a business zoning district, and where the existing lot and at least one abutting lot contains a retail use, the AHO project must contain some non-residential storefront space (though the use could be any non-residential use permitted in the district). The current petition would permit such a use but would not necessarily require it.</p>	<p>City design objectives encourage storefront spaces in predominantly retail areas, but such spaces might not be appropriate in every circumstance and could be burdensome for affordable housing developments.</p>

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11.207.7.6(c)	<p>“An AHO Project shall be subject to other applicable laws, regulations, codes and ordinances pertaining to environmental standards. Notwithstanding the language of the Tree Protection Ordinance, Chapter 8.66 of the Cambridge Municipal Code, an AHO Project shall comply with the requirements of such Ordinance to the extent that it would be required to comply if it were not an affordable housing project.”</p>	<p>“An AHO Project shall be subject to other applicable laws, regulations, codes, and ordinances pertaining to environmental standards.”</p>	<p>The proposed text removes reference to the Tree Protection Ordinance in chapter 8.66 of the Cambridge Municipal Code. The Tree Protection Ordinance is separate from the Zoning Ordinance</p>	<p>In the 2019 petition, staff cautioned against trying to indirectly change the provisions of one ordinance by amending a separate ordinance. If there is a desire to change the provisions of the Tree Protection Ordinance, then the Tree Protection Ordinance must be amended.</p>

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Illustration of Proposed Changes to Step-Down Requirements

