City of Cambridge
Community Development Department

Multifamily Housing Citywide: Envision Cambridge Context

Planning Board Presentation
January 18, 2022
Meeting Overview

**Background:**

• City Council asked CDD to work with the Planning Board to develop concepts for allowing multifamily housing citywide

• Second in series of meetings to discuss topic

**Meeting Purpose:**

• Provide an overview of Envision Cambridge

• Discuss how allowing multifamily housing citywide relates to key issues and planning goals identified in Envision Cambridge
Background: Envision Cambridge
Envision Cambridge serves as overarching guide for local policies and plans
Vision and Core Values

Vision: What we want to be

“Cambridge is a forward-thinking, welcoming, and diverse city. We enjoy a high quality of life and thrive in a sustainable, inclusive, and connected community.”

Core Values: What is important to us

• Livability
• Diversity & Equity
• Economic Opportunity
• Sustainability & Resilience
• Community Health & Wellbeing
• Learning
Core Values

**Community Health & Wellbeing**: We promote healthy and active lifestyles in a supportive, safe community with diverse opportunities to connect with our neighbors and engage in civic life.

**Diversity & Equity**: We are a welcoming community that celebrates our diversity and ensures access to affordable housing choices and opportunities to succeed.

**Economic Opportunity**: We provide opportunity and stability through access to quality jobs, workforce development and training, and livable wages that support high level of services.

**Learning**: We embrace lifelong learning and celebrate the pursuit of knowledge, and our culturally rich and creative community.

**Livability**: We value a vibrant built and natural environment and support sustainable transportation with affordable and convenient access to daily needs and recreational resources.

**Sustainability & Resilience**: We take responsible action to reduce our impact on the environment and build a resilient city and strong community.
Planning Topics

- Community Wellbeing
- Housing
- Economy
- Urban Form
- Climate & the Environment
- Mobility
Planning Rationale
Key Issues identified in Envision

01 Growing Economy
Our strong economy increases the demand for and cost of housing.

02 Growing Population
Economic growth, expansion of educational institutions, and desire for city living is fueling population growth.

03 Declining Affordability
Increased demand for housing has led to rising housing prices and unequal access to housing.

04 Rising Inequity
Not all people share in the benefits of growth.

05 Changing Urban Form
Tension between existing and new urban development can drive conflicts over desired urban form.
Growing High-Income Employment

Source: City of Cambridge, Top 25 Employers, 1995-2020

Cambridge Top 25 Employers by Sector by Number of Employees

Median Annual Income by Sector

- Higher Ed/Healthcare: $137,930
- Tech/Biotech/Research: $115,133
- Government: $80,340
- Consulting/Business Services: $70,441
- Construction/Manufacturing: $132,000

Source: City of Cambridge, Top 25 Employers, 1995-2020
Growing Population

Source: US Census, 1950–2020

1950
33,437 housing units; avg. 3.6 persons per household

2020
53,907 housing units; avg. 2.2 persons per household
Rising Home Sale Prices

Cambridge Median Home Sale Prices, 2000-2020

Source: City of Cambridge
Rising Rents

Cambridge Median Asking Rents, 2000-2021

A salary of $100,000 is necessary to afford an average market rate 1-bedroom rental apartment.

Source: City of Cambridge Housing Profile 2016. Rents for January of each year.
Changes in Household Income

AMI for 4-person household in 2018 was $107,800.

Income Inequality

Median Household Income By Race and Ethnicity, 2019

- White: $116,246
- Black: $32,215
- Asian: $96,359
- Hispanic or Latino: $63,618

Overall median income in Cambridge: $103,154

Racial diversity is not equally distributed across the city
Household income levels vary by location

Household Income by Census Tract
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

Legend:
- $47,045 - $73,250
- $73,251 - $102,500
- $102,501 - $136,310
- $136,311 - $182,328
Population growth varies by neighborhood

Population Growth by Neighborhood: 1990 - 2020
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Citywide Population Growth: +23.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, 1990 and 2020 Population Counts
Changing Urban Form

An evolving mix of building types, densities, and architectural styles define the character of Cambridge’s neighborhoods.
Why allow multifamily housing citywide?

City Council Policy Order #289 (Dec 2020)
• Single family only zoning is “artifact of historically exclusionary housing practices”
• “Increased need for housing production in Cambridge”
• “Creates more flexibility”
• “Increases the availability of housing units in all neighborhoods”

City Council Neighborhood and Long-Term Planning Discussion (Aug 2021)
• More inclusive zoning, dismantling systemic racism
• Fewer instances of people needing variances
• Not having to reduce units due to other requirements, e.g. parking
• More to encourage multifamily housing
Why allow multifamily housing citywide?

Advances Envision Cambridge goals:

• Support overall market affordability and lead the region in mitigating housing cost increases.
• Distribute housing opportunities equitably citywide
• Support the ability of Cambridge residents to remain in Cambridge. Maintain a range of housing options to enable households to transition to units best suited to meet their needs.
• Provide a variety of housing options for people of different socioeconomic levels, life stages, and physical needs.
• Promote climate neutrality through compact, sustainable development
• Provide access to opportunities for all people regardless of differences.
• Work toward addressing race-based disparities and racial equity.
• Maintain the existing patterns of the city through a mix of preservation and complementary infill development.
• Provide a safe and welcoming community.
Specific Envision Cambridge Recommendation

**Strategy:** “Increase overall housing production”

**Action:** “Change zoning to enable more housing, including affordable housing, to be built along major corridors, squares, and in other areas that have the capacity to accommodate growth and are well served by transit (e.g., increase base zoning, **allow multifamily residential development citywide**, offer density bonuses for increased percentage of affordable housing units).”
## Housing Goals

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<tr>
<th>Envision Cambridge Goal</th>
<th>Relevance to Topic</th>
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| **Market Affordability** | • Increases housing supply to mitigate the region-wide shortage and rising housing costs  
                               • Could stabilize housing costs by increasing supply and reducing steep increases                                                                |
| **Housing Opportunity**  | • Provides additional housing in less dense neighborhoods  
                               • Provides more people with the opportunity to live in Cambridge and access City’s educational opportunities and strong social services |
| **Housing Diversity**    | • Increases the range of housing options in some neighborhoods  
                               • Provides more people with the opportunity to live in Cambridge, including people at different socioeconomic levels, life stages, and physical needs |
| **Housing Stability**    | • Could provide options for residents to remain in place or downsize within Cambridge while accommodating life transitions                          |
| **Affordable Housing**   | • Incorporating affordability standards requires more in-depth analysis  
                               • Adding more market rate development potential could detract from the goal of the Affordable Housing Overlay to create more deed-restricted housing in areas with fewer affordable units |
# Climate & Environment Goals

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<td><strong>Climate Action</strong></td>
<td>• Housing development in Cambridge, an urban core community with good transit and access to jobs, is less energy intensive and more sustainable than building housing in the suburbs or undeveloped areas</td>
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| **Climate Change Preparedness**  | • Applicability depends on specific proposal  
  • New or improved buildings could include measures to promote flood resilience and reduce heat impacts.  
  • More dense development could reduce vegetation and tree canopy                                                                                                   |
| **Ecological Protection**        | • Applicability depends on specific proposal  
  • More dense developments could decrease open space and negatively impact biodiversity  
  • More development in urbanized areas has ecological benefits by reducing the pressure for greenfield development and sprawl                                                                                           |
### Urban Form Goal

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| Development Patterns             | • Smaller scale development is more likely to be compatible with existing neighborhood fabric  
                                 | • Less restrictive zoning requirements would be better aligned with existing patterns of development in many areas.                                    |
## Economy Goal

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<td><strong>Equity and Fairness</strong></td>
<td>• Provides more people with the opportunity to live in Cambridge and access City’s educational opportunities and strong social services</td>
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<td>• Addresses the exclusionary effects of single-family oriented zoning</td>
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## Community Wellbeing Goals

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<td>Access to Opportunity</td>
<td>• Provides more people with the opportunity to live in Cambridge and access City’s educational opportunities and strong social services</td>
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| Racial Justice               | • Addresses the exclusionary effects of single-family oriented zoning  
                                | • Unknown who would access new housing opportunities                                                                                      |
| Sense of Belonging           | • Communicates that Cambridge is a welcoming community                                                                                       |
Considerations when developing concepts for City Council:

- Highlight how specific proposals advance core values
- Balance trade-offs between conflicting goals
- Mitigate any negative impacts