

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-16 – FINAL PUBLICATION  
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
In the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Five  
AN ORDINANCE

That the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge be amended on a Zoning Petition by the Cambridge City Council to amend the Cambridge Zoning Map and Ordinance in Articles 2.000, 3.000, 4.000, 5.000, 6.000, 11.000, 17.000, and 20.000 with the intent of establishing four new base zoning districts for the Massachusetts Avenue corridor in order to:

- (1) encourage patterns of development consistent with the vision of the *Mass Ave Planning Study (2025)*;
- (2) allow up to 12 stories of residential uses along the length of the corridor;
- (3) incentivize active non-residential uses on the ground floor;
- (4) establish building and site design standards to achieve urban design goals; and
- (5) create a Planned Unit Development Overlay District in Porter Square allowing up to 18 stories of residential uses in exchange for increased open space requirements and minimum retail density.

**Petition: To amend the Zoning Map and Articles 2.000, 3.000, 4.000, 5.000, 6.000, 11.000 17.000, and 20.000 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance as follows with the intent of establishing four new zoning districts for the Massachusetts Avenue corridor.**

**Amendments to the Zoning Map.**

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See attached Zoning Map and descriptive text.

**Amendments to Article 2.000.**

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Amend the definition of *AHO Square District* to read as follows:

**AHO Square District.** One of the following Zoning Districts or areas: the Central Square Overlay District, Harvard Square Overlay District, Porter Square Planned Unit Development Overlay District, or the area bounded by the centerline of Elm Street to the west, the Somerville/Cambridge municipal boundary to the north, the centerline of Windsor Street to the east, and Cambridge Street to the south; but not including the premises shown on Cambridge Assessor's Map #81 Lots 81-50, 81-101, or 81-100.

**Amendments to Article 3.000.**

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Amend Section 3.11 to read as follows:

**3.11** For the purpose of this Ordinance, the City of Cambridge is hereby divided into fifty-two classes of districts listed below in order of decreasing restrictiveness as follows:

1.	Open Space District	Public parks and recreation facilities and other public facilities
2.	Residence C-1 District	Multifamily dwellings
3.	Residence C-1A District	Multifamily dwellings
4.	Residence C-2 District	Multifamily dwellings
5.	Residence C-2B District	Multifamily dwellings
6.	Residence C-2A District	Multifamily dwellings
7.	Residence C-3A District	Multifamily dwellings and limited office

8.	Residence C-3 District	Multifamily dwellings
9.	Residence C-3B District	Multifamily dwellings
10.	Office 1 District	Business and professional office and multifamily dwellings (Apartment house, hotel, dormitory)
11.	Office 2A District	Business, research and professional offices, limited research oriented manufacturing
12.	Office 2 District	Business, research and professional offices, limited research oriented manufacturing
13.	Office 3A District	Business and professional offices and multifamily dwellings
14.	Office 3 District	Business and professional offices and multifamily dwellings
15.	Business A-3 District	Neighborhood business
16.	Business A-1 District	Local business
17.	Business A-2 District	Local business
18.	Business A District	Local and drive in retail business offices and multifamily dwellings
19.	Business A-4 District	Local business
20.	Business B-1 District	General business, business and professional offices, and multifamily dwellings
21.	Business B-2 District	General business, business and professional offices and multifamily dwellings
22.	Business B District	General business
23.	Industry B-2 District	Office, warehouse and light manufacturing
24.	Industry A-1 District	Limited impact business and industry
25.	Industry B-1 District	Heavy manufacturing, warehouses, and offices
26.	Industry A-2 District	Limited impact business and industry
27.	Industry A District	Warehouse, storage and light manufacturing
28.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 1	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
29.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 2	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
30.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 3	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
31.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 4 and 4A	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
32.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 5	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
33.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 6	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
34.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 7	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
35.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 8	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
36.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 8A	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
37.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 9	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
38.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 10(F)	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
39.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 10(H)	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
40.	Special Business, Office and	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000

	Industrial District 11	
41.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 12	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
42.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 13	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
43.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 14	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
44.	Special Business, Office and Industrial District 15	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
45.	Massachusetts Avenue-6	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
46.	Massachusetts Avenue-12	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
47.	Massachusetts Avenue-12A	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
48.	Massachusetts Avenue-18	Various Uses governed by the requirements of Article 17.000
49.	Mixed Use Development (MXD) District: Kendall Center	Various uses governed by the requirements of Article 14.000
50.	Cambridgeport Revitalization Development District	Various uses governed by the requirements of Article 15.000
51.	North Point Residence, Office and Business District	Various uses governed by the requirements of Article 16.000
52.	Industry B District	Heavy Industry

#### **Amendments to Article 4.000.**

Amend the Table of Use Regulations in Section 4.30 by deleting “A-5” from the sixth column and the column with the heading “Bus C” in its entirety as follows:

		Open Space	Res C-1, C-1A, 2, 2A, 2B, 3, 3A, 3B	Off 1, 2A, 2, 3, 3A	Bus A-1, A-2, A-3 <sup>1</sup>	Bus A, A-4	Bus B, B-1, B-2	Ind A-1, A-2	Ind A	Ind B-1, B-2	Ind B

Amend Section 4.40, Footnote 7, Paragraph (b) to read as follows with no change to the following Paragraphs:

(b) Hotels and motels shall be permitted as of right in Residence C-3A districts and in Residence C-2, 2A, 2B, and 3 districts where at least fifty (50) percent of the area of the lot upon which the hotel or motel is located, and the point of entry from a street for all vehicular access to the hotel or motel, is located within the Harvard Square Overlay District the Central Square Overlay District or a Massachusetts Avenue District.

#### **Amendments to Article 5.000.**

Amend the Table of District Dimensional Regulations in Section 5.33 by deleting the rows with the headings “Bus. A-5” and “Bus. C”.

Amend Section 5.40, Footnote 23. to read as follows:

(23) Or two-thirds (2/3) of the height of the rear wall whichever is greater.

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Delete Section 5.40, Footnote 27. as follows:

(27) [Deleted]

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Delete Section 5.40, Footnote 35. as follows:

(35) [Deleted]

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Amend Section 5.40, Footnote 36. by deleting the rows with the headings “Bus. A-5” and “Bus. C”.

### **Amendments to Article 6.000.**

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Amend the Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements in Section 6.36 by deleting the text “Bus A-5” from the third column and “Bus. C, C-1” from the fourth column to read as follows:

Land Use Category	Maximum Off Street Parking Requirements in Open Space	Maximum Off Street Parking Requirements in Res C-1, C-1A, Off 1, Bus A (Comm), Bus A-1, A-2, Bus A-3 <sup>14</sup> , A-4, Ind A-1, Ind B-2, Ind C	Maximum Off Street Parking Requirements in Ind A, Off 2, 2A, Res C-2, C-2A, Res C-2B, Bus A (res)	Maximum Off Street Parking Requirements in Ind B-1, Res C-3, C-3A, C-3B, Off 3-A, 3, Bus B, Ind A-2, Ind B, Bus B-1, B-2	Loading Facility Category	Long-Term Bicycle Parking (6.107.2)	Short-Term Bicycle Parking (6.107.3)

### **Amendments to Article 11.000.**

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Amend Section 11.207.7.3, Paragraph (a) to read as follows:

(a) At least twenty percent (20%) of the area of building façades 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), or Business B (BB) zoning district, this figure shall be increased to thirty percent (30%) for non-residential portions of the building, if any.

### **Amendments to Article 17.000.**

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Create a new Section 17.800 to read as follows:

**17.800      Massachusetts Avenue Districts**

**17.801      Scope.** This Section 17.800 regulates development within the Massachusetts Avenue Districts (MAS-6, MAS-12, MAS-12A and MAS-18) and the Porter Square Planned Unit

Development Overlay District (POR-PUD) as shown on the Zoning Map of the City of Cambridge, as amended. The regulations of this Section shall apply equally to all Massachusetts Avenue Districts and the Porter Square Planned Unit Development Overlay District except where otherwise specified.

**17.802** **Purpose.** It is the intent of the Massachusetts Avenue Districts to encourage patterns of development consistent with the vision of the *Mass Ave Planning Study* (2025). This Section establishes the following goals for the Massachusetts Avenue corridor:

- (a) Transform the corridor as a livable, walkable neighborhood through the development of mixed-use buildings that help to establish a consistent street wall along Mass Ave and provide active, ground-floor uses.
- (b) Identify opportunities for development to contribute meaningfully to the Mass Ave public realm through the inclusion of additional trees and plantings, shading devices, art and cultural elements on sites and buildings, and places to passively recreate.
- (c) Encourage development to include, where needed, additional room for expanded sidewalk area and tree plantings.
- (d) Accommodate more housing development along Mass Ave through increased density. Address the need for affordable housing and integrate it into the existing neighborhood fabric.

**17.803** **Use Regulations.**

**17.803.1** **Permitted Uses.** The following uses, as they are listed in Article 4.000 and otherwise defined in this Zoning Ordinance, shall be permitted as-of-right:

- (a) Residential Uses: All uses in Section 4.31.a through 4.31.i.
- (b) Tourist house, Section 4.31.1.a.
- (c) Hotel or motel (Section 4.31.1.b) within the following areas:
  - (i) PUD-POR Overlay District
  - (ii) MAS-12 District south of Shepard Street and Wendell Street provided that at least 50% of the area of the lot upon which the hotel or motel is located, and the point of entry from a street for all vehicular access to the hotel or motel, is located within the MAS-12 District.
- (d) Radio and television studio, Section 4.32.f.
- (e) Transportation Uses: Bus or railroad passenger station, Section 4.32.a, all uses in Section 4.32.k through 4.32.n.
- (f) Institutional Uses: All uses in Section 4.33 except Municipal service facility (Section 4.33.f.4) and Institutional use not listed in any other category (Section 4.33.h.4).
- (g) Office and Laboratory Uses: All uses in Section 4.34.
- (h) Retail or Consumer Service Establishments: All uses in Section 4.35 except Animal Services Facility (4.35.l) and Retail or Consumer Service Establishment not otherwise defined. A Craft Retail and Production Shop (4.35.b) shall be permitted as-of-right if it occupies no more than 2,500 square feet of Gross Floor Area, including storage areas,

and does not involve the use of equipment that produces dust, fumes, odors, smoke, vapors, noise, vibration, flashing, light trespass, or glare outside of the premises.

- (i) Outdoor Retail or Consumer Service Establishments: Open-Lot Retail Sales Establishment (Section 4.36.a) and Temporary Outdoor Retail or Consumer Service Use (Section 4.36.j).
- (j) Cannabis Delivery Operator Establishment (Section 4.37.o).

**17.803.2 Special Permit Uses.** The following additional uses, as they are listed in Article 4.000 and otherwise defined in this Zoning Ordinance, shall only be permitted upon the issuance of a special permit by the Planning Board:

- (a) Trailer Park or mobile home park, Section 4.31.j.
- (b) Hotel or motel (Section 4.31.1.b), where not permitted as-of-right as set forth in Section 17.803.1, only within the MAS-12 district south of Shepard Street and Wendell Street and subject to the criteria set forth in Section 4.40, Footnote 7, Paragraph (c).
- (c) Transportation Uses: Automobile parking lot or parking garage for private passenger cars, Section 4.32.b – so long as not an accessory use, and no repairs, servicing, or sale of gasoline allowed, provided that the Building and Site Planning Standards of Section 17.805 below are met and that all other state and local laws applicable to parking facilities are met.
- (d) Utility Uses: All uses in Section 4.32.g.1 through 4.32.g.2.
- (e) Wind turbine Installation, Section 4.32.j,
- (f) Institutional Uses: Municipal service facility (Section 4.33.f.4) and Institutional use not listed in any other category (Section 4.33.h.4).
- (g) Retail or Consumer Service Establishments (Section 4.35), not otherwise permitted.
- (h) Outdoor Entertainment and Recreation Facility, Section 4.36.d.
- (i) Any other use permitted as-of-right or by special permit in a Business B zoning district, except hotel or motel uses not otherwise permissible by Paragraph (b) above, if the Planning Board finds that the use is compatible with permitted uses and supports the purpose of the Massachusetts Avenue Districts.

**17.803.3 Ground Story Active Uses.** The following uses, as they are listed in Article 4.000 and otherwise defined in this Zoning Ordinance, shall be considered Active Uses for the purposes of this Section 17.800.

- (a) Institutional Uses: All uses in Section 4.33.
- (b) Office of a physician, dentist or other medical practitioner, Section 4.34.a.
- (c) Office of an accountant, attorney, or other non-medical professional person, Section 4.34.b.
- (d) Real Estate, insurance or other agency office, Section 4.34.c.
- (e) Retail or Consumer Service Establishments: All uses in Section 4.35.
- (f) Radio and television studio, Section 4.32.f.
- (g) Other uses upon the issuance of a special permit by the Planning Board if the Planning

Board finds that the use serves the purpose of providing services to the general public and promoting pedestrian activity along Massachusetts Avenue, with necessary conditions to ensure those objectives are met.

**17.804 Development Standards.**

**17.804.1 FAR Limitations.** The maximum FAR devoted to non-residential uses shall be 1.0 except as listed below. There shall be no maximum FAR for residential uses or for Religious Purposes listed in Section 4.33.a. FAR limits shall be applied in accordance with Section 5.25.4.

- (a) The maximum FAR for Dormitory uses (Section 4.33.b.7), shall be 1.75, except within the PUD-POR Overlay District where the maximum FAR for Dormitory uses shall be 2.00.
- (b) The maximum FAR for all Institutional Uses except Religious Purposes (Section 4.33, except 4.33.a) within an Institutional Use Overlay District shall be 2.50.
- (c) For hotel or motel uses (Section 4.31.1.b) on a lot that is within both the PUD-POR Overlay District and a Residence C-1 district, the Planning Board may allow a FAR of 1.60, calculated on the area of the entire lot, subject to the following conditions and limitations:
  - (i) All of the resulting Gross Floor Area will be located on the PUD-POR portion of the lot.
  - (ii) All parking required by this ordinance will be located in a below-grade parking facility.
  - (iii) The at-grade portion of the lot within the Residence C-1 District is substantially dedicated to Green Area, Permeable, or Publicly Beneficial Open Space as defined in Article 2.000.
  - (iv) The additional FAR of 1.60 shall only apply to the first 15,000 square feet of a lot. For portions of the lot greater than 15,000 square feet the FAR permitted in the applicable base PUD-POR and residential districts shall continue to apply.
  - (v) No preferably preserved significant building, as determined by the Cambridge Historical Commission, is demolished, as set forth in the City of Cambridge Demolition Ordinance #965.
  - (vi) The lot is held in single ownership as of June 1, 2008.

**17.804.1.1 Ground Story GFA Exemption.** Portions of the Ground Story of a building that are devoted to one or more of the following active non-residential uses, as they are listed in Article 4.000 and otherwise defined in this Zoning Ordinance, shall be exempted from FAR limitations upon granting of a special permit by the Planning Board:

- (a) Social or recreation center, Section 4.33.a.4.
- (b) Community Center, Section 4.33.e.2.
- (c) Public park, playground, or public recreation building, Section 4.33.f.5.
- (d) Municipal Library, Section 4.33.f.6.
- (e) Private library, museum, or noncommercial gallery, Section 4.33.h.2.

(f) All Retail or Consumer Service Establishments listed in Section 4.35.

**17.804.2 Building Height.** Building height in feet above grade and Stories Above Grade shall be limited by the Table of Height Limitations below. The provisions of Section 5.23 shall govern the application of height limits.

**17.804.2.1 Additional Height for Ground Story Active Uses.** As set forth in the Table of Height Limitations, greater height shall be permitted for portions of buildings containing Residential Uses if the Ground Story is occupied by one or more Active Uses, as defined in Section 17.803.3, comprising at least 60% of the interior portion of the Ground Story that is within 50 feet of a Primary Street.

**17.804.2.2 Inclusionary Housing.** Building heights exceeding 7 stories above grade or 85 feet above grade shall only be permitted if portions of the building used as Residences comply with the Inclusionary Housing Requirements in Section 11.203 of this Zoning Ordinance, regardless of whether it exceeds the size threshold requiring compliance.

**17.804.3 Table of Height Limitations**

	<b>MAS-6</b>	<b>MAS-12</b>	<b>MAS-12A</b>	<b>MAS-18</b>
<b>Non-Residential Uses (Section 4.30 except 4.31 a-j. &amp; 4.33.a)</b>	45 feet and 4 stories above grade	45 feet and 4 stories above grade	45 feet and 4 stories above grade	45 feet and 4 stories above grade
<b>Non-Residential Uses (Section 4.30 except 4.31 a-j. &amp; 4.33.a) within the PUD-POR District</b>	55 feet and 5 stories above grade	55 feet and 5 stories above grade	55 feet and 5 stories above grade	55 feet and 5 stories above grade
<b>Institutional Uses (Section 4.33) except Religious Purposes (Section 4.33.a) within an Institutional Use Overlay District</b>	60 feet and 6 stories above grade	60 feet and 6 stories above grade	60 feet and 6 stories above grade	60 feet and 6 stories above grade
<b>Residential Uses (Section 4.31 a-j.)</b>	75 feet and 6 stories above grade	100 feet and 8 stories above grade	45 feet and 4 stories above grade	100 feet and 8 stories above grade
<b>Religious Purposes Uses (Section 4.33.a)</b>	75 feet and 6 stories above grade	100 feet and 8 stories above grade	100 feet and 8 stories above grade	100 feet and 8 stories above grade
<b>Residential Uses with Ground Story Active Uses (Section 17.803.3)</b>	75 feet and 6 stories above grade	145 feet and 12 stories above grade	145 feet and 12 stories above grade	145 feet and 12 stories above grade
<b>Residential Uses with a Porter Square PUD Special Permit (Section 17.808)</b>	75 feet and 6 stories above grade	145 feet and 12 stories above grade	145 feet and 12 stories above grade	220 feet and 18 stories above grade

**17.805 Building and Site Plan Standards.**

**17.805.1 General Provisions.**

**17.805.1.1** **Applicability.** The standards of this Section 17.805 shall apply to new construction, including buildings and additions to buildings. Buildings in existence before the adoption of this Section do not need to be modified to meet the standards of this Section, but shall not be modified in a way that further violates the standards of this Section unless approved by special permit from the Planning Board.

**17.805.1.2** **Other Standards.** The general development standards of Article 5.000 shall apply except as otherwise set forth in this Section 17.805. The applicable Sustainable Development standards in Article 22.000 shall be met. The standards of Section 19.50 shall not apply except as set forth in this Section.

**17.805.1.3** **Modifications.** The Planning Board may approve modifications to the standards of this Section 17.805 by special permit upon finding that: (i) the criteria in Section 17.807.2 are met and (ii) such modifications respond to unique site-specific conditions that result in a design that is equally supportive of the purpose of the Massachusetts Avenue Districts. Approved modifications shall be specifically enumerated in the special permit decision.

**17.805.2 Site Plan Standards.**

**17.805.2.1** **Street Types.** For the purposes of this Section 17.800, there shall be Primary Streets and Secondary Streets as defined below:

(a) Primary Streets shall include Massachusetts Avenue and Somerville Avenue.

(b) Secondary Streets shall include all streets not identified as Primary Streets.

**17.805.2.2** **Open Space.** Lots shall be subject to a minimum ratio of total open space to lot area as set forth in the table below. The application of open space requirements shall be governed by Section 5.22. Some lots shall have a minimum requirement for Publicly Beneficial Open Space or Public Open Space as set forth in the table below, expressed as a minimum ratio of open space to lot area but included within the total open space requirement. Such required Public Open Space or Publicly Beneficial Open Space shall be accessible for use by the general public during reasonable times of the day for the purposes for which the space is designed. The intent of such Open Space shall be to provide small-scale neighborhood amenities such as pocket parks, plazas, playgrounds, and other similar uses.

**17.805.2.3** **Front Yards.** Minimum required front yard setback distances are set forth in the table below. Such setback distances shall be measured in feet from front lot lines (or street lines). Different standards may apply based on the street type from which the setback is measured.

**17.805.2.4** **Side and Rear Yards.** Minimum required side and rear yard setback distances are set forth in the table below. Such setback distances shall be measured in feet from side or rear lot lines. Different standards may apply based on whether or not the portion of the lot line from which the setback is measured is located within 85 feet of a front lot line abutting a Primary Street, measured perpendicularly from the front lot line.

**17.805.2.5 Upper Story Setbacks.** Minimum setback distances are set forth in the table below that apply to portions of buildings above a specified height above grade. Such setback distances shall be measured in feet horizontally from either the front lot line, varying by street type, or from a zoning district boundary adjoining a Residence district. Where development is impacted by the Flood Resilience Standards in Section 22.80, the heights at which upper story setbacks are required shall be adjusted according to the provisions of Section 5.23.2.

**17.805.2.6 Yard Exceptions and Projections.** In general, the yard provisions of Section 5.24 shall apply to yard setbacks but not to upper story setbacks. However, portions of buildings may project into a required front setback or upper story setback from a Primary Street, notwithstanding Paragraph 5.24.1(f), if the following limitations are met:

- (a) Projections shall not be allowed at or below the ground story.
- (b) Projections shall not extend more than 4 feet into the required setback.
- (c) Projections shall not occur over more than 50% of the total area of the façade facing a Primary Street.
- (d) In a MAS-12, MAS-12A, or MAS-18 district, the Planning Board may approve additional, limited projections into a yard setback or upper story setback upon granting a special permit if it is found to provide spatial definition of larger or broader streets, parks, or squares or to emphasize significant locations such as major street intersections, prominent bends in streets, and termina of major view corridors.

**17.805.2.7 Upper Story Floorplates.** Portions of buildings above a specified height shall have a maximum floorplate area in square feet as set forth in the table below. For the purpose of this Section, the floorplate above a specified height shall mean the Gross Floor Area of any contiguous story of the building located partially or completely above the specified height. A building may have multiple non-contiguous stories above the specified height so long as each contiguous story does not exceed the maximum floorplate area. Where development is impacted by the Flood Resilience Standards in Section 22.80, the heights at which floorplates are limited shall be adjusted according to the provisions of Section 5.23.2.

**17.805.3 Table of Site Plan Standards.**

	<b>MAS-6</b>	<b>MAS-12 and MAS-12A</b>	<b>MAS-18</b>
<b>Minimum Open Space as a percentage of lot area</b>			
Lots with no buildings more than 8 stories above grade	none	none	none
Lots with a building 9 or more stories above grade	N/A	15% total 10% public or publicly beneficial	15% total 10% public or publicly beneficial
<b>Minimum Yard Setbacks in feet</b>			
Front, Primary Streets	none	3'	3'
Front, Secondary Streets	2'	2'	2'

Side or Rear, within 85 feet of a Primary Street	none	none	none
Side or Rear, not within 85 feet of a Primary Street	5'	5'	5'
<b>Minimum Upper Story Setbacks in feet</b>			
Setback from Primary Street	none	13' above 100'	13' above 100'
Setback from Secondary Street	none	12' above 100'	12' above 100'
Setback from Residence District Boundary	none	15' above 75' 25' above 100'	15' above 75' 25' above 100'
<b>Maximum Upper Story Floorplates in square feet</b>			
Maximum floorplate	No maximum	15,000 sf. above 100'	15,000 sf. above 100'

**17.805.4 Building and Site Design Standards.**

**17.805.4.1 Location of Uses.** The standards for location of uses set forth in Section 19.53 of this Zoning Ordinance shall be met.

**17.805.4.2 Maximum Building Length.** A building footprint exceeding 200 feet in length, measured parallel to a street line, shall contain a massing recess extending back at least 15 feet in depth measured from and perpendicular to the front lot line and at least 15 feet in width measured parallel to the front lot line so that the maximum length of unbroken façade is 200 feet.

**17.805.4.3 Front Yard Design.**

(a) The area directly between a front lot line and the principal wall plane of the building nearest to that front lot line shall consist of any combination of hardscaped walkways, landscaped areas, and usable spaces such as seating, benches, canopies, awnings, porches, patios accessible to pedestrians, or bicycle parking, and may contain elevated porches, walkways, stairs, and/or ramps to provide a transition from the sidewalk Grade to portions of the Ground Story that are elevated above grade.

(b) Parking and circulation for automobiles shall not be permitted in a front yard with the exception of access drives to parking facilities located elsewhere on the lot, which shall be limited to a total of 30 feet of width for each 100 feet of lot frontage.

**17.805.4.4 Overall Façade Transparency.** At least 20% of the total area of building façades facing a public street or public open space shall consist of clear glass windows. This figure shall be increased to 30% for non-residential portions of the building, if any. No minimum requirement shall be imposed for portions of buildings containing uses identified in Paragraph 19.50(2)(c).

**17.805.4.5 Ground Story Façade Transparency.** For the portion of the Ground Story façade facing a Primary Street, the following additional standards shall apply:

(a) Where the Ground Story contains non-residential uses, the portion of the façade between 2 feet and 10 feet above the finished floor shall consist of at least 50% transparent glass windows.

(b) There shall be no section of the façade more than 25 feet in length, measured parallel to the street, that does not contain at least one transparent window or pedestrian entryway.

**17.805.4.6 Ground Story Finished Floor Grade.** Ground Stories shall not have a finished floor below the mean Grade of the adjacent sidewalk on a Primary Street. Ground Stories containing only residential uses may be elevated no more than 4 feet above the mean Grade of the adjacent sidewalk or to the 1%-LTFE as described in the Flood Resilience Standards in Section 22.80 of this Zoning Ordinance, whichever is greater. Ground Stories containing non-residential uses may be elevated above the sidewalk grade no higher than the 1%-LTFE, where applicable.

**17.805.4.7 Ground Story Height.** The minimum height of a Ground Story shall be 15 feet, measured from the Grade of the adjacent sidewalk on a Primary Street to the finished floor of the second Story Above Grade.

**17.805.4.8 Ground Story Entrances.** Each use at the Ground Story shall have a pedestrian entrance directly from the public sidewalk of a Primary Street, or of a Secondary Street where the use does not have direct frontage onto a Primary Street. All pedestrian entrances shall be accessible by way of routes that are separated from parking areas or motor vehicle access drives. Where the Ground Story is elevated above the Grade of the existing sidewalk, access to Ground Story uses shall be provided from the sidewalk using exterior or interior ramps, stairs, lifts, or other means that meet accessibility standards.

**17.805.4.9 Structured Parking Restrictions.**

(a) Structured parking in Stories Above Grade, whether as a principal or accessory use, shall not be permitted to have direct frontage on a Primary Street but shall be permitted if it is shielded from a Primary Street by a building or portion of a building containing principal non-residential or residential uses, pedestrian lobbies and common areas, or other areas devoted to non-vehicular use with a depth of at least 20 feet measured from the building façade to the above-grade parking facility in a direction perpendicular to the Primary Street. Driveway access shall be permitted as allowed in Section 17.804.4.3.

(b) Structured parking in Stories Below Grade shall be permitted but must be fully screened from a Primary Street by an exterior wall wherever the story extends above the sidewalk grade.

(c) All permitted structured parking, where not fully enclosed within a building, shall be screened from view from adjacent public streets by fences, plantings, fabric, or similar decorative elements that are at least 50% opaque across the visible portion of the structured parking with the exception of vehicular entrances and exits.

**17.805.4.10 Fences.** Fences within a front, side, or rear yard shall meet the following standards:

(a) No fence shall be made primarily of chain-link or wire.

(b) Fences may be provided for the purpose of screening parking areas, driveways, or on-grade mechanical or electrical equipment but shall be less than 7 feet in height above grade and may be partially or fully opaque. Any opaque fence shall be reviewed by the

Cambridge Department of Transportation to ensure that it does not compromise safety by impeding views for motor vehicle drivers.

- (c) Fences may be provided for the purpose of containing or protecting planted areas, including trees, as well as for delineating Private Open Space for the use of occupants of the lot, but may be no more than 30% opaque and may be no more than 4 feet in height above grade if located in a front yard. Fences may be partially or fully opaque and may be no more than 7 feet above grade if located in a side or rear yard.
- (d) Fences not meeting the standards or serving the purposes described in Paragraphs (a) through (c) above shall require a special permit from the Planning Board.

**17.805.4.11 Street Tree Planting.** New buildings containing 25,000 square feet of Gross Floor Area or more shall incorporate tree plantings on public sidewalks directly adjacent to the lot or otherwise needing to be rebuilt as part of the development to the extent feasible, subject to approval by the Department of Public Works in accordance with the Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan.

**17.805.4.12 Mechanical Equipment, Refuse Storage, and Loading Areas.** The standards for location and screening set forth in Section 19.58 of this Zoning Ordinance shall be met. Electrical equipment whose location is mandated by a public utility is strongly discouraged from being located on a Primary Street; however, where it is necessary, it shall be screened from public view by fences, plantings, or similar materials to the greatest extent allowable by the utility's standards.

**17.806 Transportation.**

**17.806.1 Off-Street Parking, Bicycle Parking, and Loading.** The off-street parking, bicycle parking, and loading requirements of the Business A district as set forth in Article 6.000 of the Zoning Ordinance shall apply equally to the Massachusetts Avenue Districts, except as set forth below.

**17.806.2 Waiver of Off-Street Loading Requirements.** The Planning Board may, upon issuing a special permit, waive any requirements for the amount, location, and design of loading facilities, and may permit loading facilities to be shared across various uses and lots within the Massachusetts Avenue Districts, upon finding that such waiver would reduce the negative impacts of loading activities on pedestrian access to the public sidewalk. The special permit may include conditions to ensure this criterion is met.

**17.807 Development Review.**

**17.807.1 Review Procedures.** The Massachusetts Avenue Districts shall be considered Areas of Special Planning Concern. The development review procedures shall apply as set forth in Article 19.000 of the Zoning Ordinance, except that GFA dedicated to Active Uses (Section 17.803.3) shall not be counted when calculating the Project Review Special Permit Threshold set forth in Section 19.23.

**17.807.2 Special Permit Criteria.** In granting a special permit under this Section or any other special permit granted by the Planning Board, the Planning Board shall find that the following criteria are met in addition to the criteria in Section 10.43 of the Zoning Ordinance and other criteria specific to the special permit being sought:

- (a) The proposal supports the purpose of the Massachusetts Avenue Districts as described in Section 17.802.
- (b) Development plans are in general conformance with the vision and goals of the *Mass Ave Planning Study* (2023) and the Citywide Urban Design Objectives in Section 19.30 of this Zoning Ordinance and are consistent with the *Citywide Urban Design Guidelines* (2025) and *Design Guidelines for Multifamily Housing* (2025) as applicable. The Planning Board may grant special permits for development that deviate from specific design guidelines if the Board finds that the proposal, on the whole, advances the intent of those guidelines.

**17.808 Porter Square Planned Unit Development Overlay District (PUD-POR)**

**17.808.1** Purpose. This Section 17.808 is established to enable development at a greater height and density than the underlying base zoning in order to advance the following area-specific planning objectives for Porter Square described in the *Mass Ave Planning Study* (2025):

- (a) Create a greater concentration of housing near public transit and other amenities.
- (b) Retain the area's function as a major retail center with a variety of amenities serving a local and regional population.
- (c) Provide additional public open space serving unmet needs in the area.
- (d) Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections through the area.

**17.808.2 Applicability and Procedure.**

- (a) The Planning Board may grant a special permit approving a Planned Unit Development (PUD) according to the procedures in Article 12.000 of this Zoning Ordinance.
- (b) In granting a special permit, the Planning Board shall find that the proposal complies with the requirements and criteria in Article 12.000, the Development Controls set forth below, and the criteria in Section 17.807 above and is generally supportive of the purpose of this Section 17.808.
- (c) The Planning Board may grant a special permit for a phased PUD to be built over an extended period of time, which period shall be defined in the special permit. For such a phased PUD, the Planning Board shall grant approval based on an overall site plan establishing building sites, arrangement of uses and Gross Floor Area, building heights, open spaces, travel routes for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles, access and egress points, general explanations of how applicable development standards will be met, overall approach to sustainable development, and other relevant information deemed sufficient by the Planning Board. Individual buildings and major open spaces may be subject to future design review and approval by the Planning Board according to procedures set forth in the special permit.

**17.808.3 Development Controls.**

**17.808.3.1 Development Parcel.** The minimum development parcel size shall be 25,000 square feet. A development parcel may include any number of contiguous and non-contiguous lots within the Porter Square Planned Unit Development Overlay District.

**17.808.3.2 Minimum Requirements.** A PUD shall include the following components:

- (a) **Open Space.** At least 20% of the development parcel area, in the aggregate, shall be devoted to public or publicly beneficial open space. The purpose of this open space shall be to improve connections for pedestrians and bicycles and to provide active and passive recreational opportunities to the public that are not present in the immediate area. Publicly beneficial open space shall be accessible for use by the general public for reasonable periods throughout the day for the purposes for which the open space is designed and approved by the Planning Board. Open space that provides pedestrian and bicycle access through the site shall be permanently guaranteed for public use by means of a recorded covenant, easement, conservation restriction, or other similar legal instrument acceptable to the City. Any proposal to significantly limit public access to the required open space shall require the approval of the Planning Board.
- (b) **Retail.** A minimum FAR of 0.5 shall be devoted to Retail and Consumer Service Establishments, inclusive of uses that would otherwise be exempt from FAR limitations by Section 17.804.1.1. At least one such establishment shall be a Grocery Store or Merchandise Store with at least 20,000 square feet of floor area providing goods that serve general convenience or household needs, or other establishment providing a comparable type of service to area households as approved by the Planning Board. In approving a PUD, the Planning Board shall approve an initial plan for retail mix and tenanting that may be subject to change over time with Planning Board approval.
- (c) **Residential.** A minimum FAR of 3.0 shall be devoted to multifamily housing.

**17.808.3.3 Development Limitations.** The general use and dimensional requirements of the base zoning district shall apply with the following exceptions:

- (a) **Height.** The maximum height for residential uses shall be increased to 220 feet and 18 stories above grade within the MAS-18 base zoning district. The base zoning height limitations for residential uses shall apply to all development within the MAS-6, MAS-12, and MAS-12A districts. The maximum height for non-residential uses shall be 55 feet and 5 stories above grade within the MAS-6, MAS-12, MAS-12A, and MAS-18 base zoning districts.
- (b) **FAR.** The maximum FAR for non-residential uses shall be 1.25, except where a greater FAR limit is established in Section 17.804.1, the greater limit for such uses shall apply. Exemptions allowable by Section 17.804.1.1 shall apply. FAR limitations may be calculated in the aggregate across the entire development parcel so that allowable Gross Floor Area may be concentrated or distributed flexibly across different contiguous or non-contiguous sites. Land within the development parcel that is later conveyed to the City of Cambridge by easement or fee interest to create a public or private street, a pedestrian or bicycle pathway, open space or park, or other public use shall be included in the total lot area when applying FAR limitations.
- (c) **Building and Site Plan Standards.** Any standards of Section 17.805 may be waived by the Planning Board when approving a PUD. The open space, yard setbacks, upper story setbacks, upper story floorplate areas, and other site plan standards for each development site shall be established by the Planning Board in its approval of a PUD special permit.
- (d) **Parking.** Off-street accessory parking shall be limited by the following maximum ratios

for principal uses within the PUD. However, parking for the PUD may be provided in one or more pooled parking facilities serving all principal uses, or within a principal use parking facility (subject to the Commercial Parking Space Permits Ordinance, Chapter 10.16 of the Cambridge Municipal Code, where applicable) with approval from the Planning Board provided that the total number of parking spaces does not exceed the sum of maximum allowed parking for all other uses in the PUD.

- (i) Maximum 0.25 spaces per Dwelling Unit for Residential Uses listed in Section 6.36.1, lines a. through h. of the Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements.
- (ii) Maximum 0.90 spaces per 1,000 square feet of GFA for Office Uses listed in Section 6.36.4, lines a. through e. of the Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements.
- (iii) Maximum 0.80 spaces per 1,000 square feet of GFA for Technical Office for Research and Development Uses listed in Section 6.36.4, line f. of the Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements.
- (iv) Maximum 1.35 spaces per 1,000 square feet of GFA for Retail and Consumer Service Uses listed in Sections 6.36.5 and 6.36.6 of the Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements.
- (v) Maximum 0.50 spaces per 1,000 square feet of GFA for Industrial Uses listed in Sections 6.36.7 and 6.36.8 of the Schedule and Parking and Loading Requirements.
- (vi) Uses not listed in (i) through (v) above as limited by the maximum requirements of Section 6.36 in a Business B district.

(e) **Bicycle Parking.** Bicycle parking shall be provided as required by Section 6.100. however, the Planning Board may approve modifications to enable the creation of a pooled bicycle parking facility serving all uses within the PUD if it meets the criteria set forth in Section 6.108.

## **Amendments to Article 19.000.**

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**Amend the first paragraph Section 19.23 to read as follows (with no changes to subsequent paragraphs):**

**19.23** Special Permit Threshold. In all applicable zoning districts, a Project Review Special Permit shall be required for new building construction or change of use (pursuant to Subsection 19.23.1 below) where a Table I threshold has been met, on a lot or combination of contiguous lots held in common ownership at any time after September 15, 2000. In a Business A, Business A-1, or Business A-2 district, or a Massachusetts Avenue District (MAS-6, MAS-12, MAS-12A or MAS-18), a Project Review Special Permit shall also be required for new building construction of 20,000 square feet or more of non-residential Gross Floor Area (GFA), though a Traffic Study shall not be required if a Table I threshold is not met. Where a mix of uses is proposed the threshold shall be determined by the application of the Mixed Use Formula set forth in Table 1.

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**Amend Section 19.46 to read as follows:**

**19.46** Areas of Special Planning Concern. The following zoning districts shall be considered Areas of Special Planning Concern:

- (a) Business A-1 and Business A-2 and Business A-4 Districts
- (b) Parkway Overlay District
- (c) Kirkland Place Overlay District
- (d) Harvard Square Overlay District
- (e) Central Square Overlay District
- (f) Cambridgeport Revitalization Development District
- (g) Massachusetts Avenue Districts (MAS-6, MAS-12, MAS-12A and MAS-18)
- (h) Special District 12
- (i) Special District 13
- (j) Special District 14
- (k) Memorial Drive Overlay District
- (l) Prospect Street Overlay District
- (m) Alewife Overlay Districts

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**Amendments to Article 20.000.**

Delete Section 20.100 as follows:

**20.100 - DELETED**

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Amend Section 20.501 to read as follows:

**20.501** *Establishment and Scope.* There is hereby established the Lesley Porter Overlay District which shall be governed by regulations and procedures specified in this Section. The District encompasses property constituting Lesley University's Porter Square campus and has a Massachusetts Avenue District base zoning designation.

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Amend Section 20.503.1 to read as follows:

**20.503.1** The buildings and land uses within this district shall be controlled by the pertinent regulations of the applicable base zoning district, except as modified by the requirements of this Section 20.500. Where regulations differ among the several applicable zoning districts, the provisions of this Section 20.500 shall apply.

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Amend Section 20.504.2, Paragraph 1. to read as follows with no change to the following paragraphs:

**20.504.2** Height.

1. Height shall be that permitted in the base zoning district and, notwithstanding other provisions in the Zoning Ordinance, shall be measured from mean grade measured at the perimeter of the lot.

However, the height of any historic structure (including any building determined to be a Preferably Preserved Significant Building by the Cambridge Historical Commission under the provisions of Ordinance No. 965, designated as a landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78 of the Cambridge Municipal Code or the subject of a Preservation Easement granted to the Cambridge Historical Commission) shall be exempted from the provisions of Sections 5.33.2 and 5.43. All other new construction within the Overlay District, however, shall be subject to these sections.

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Amend Section 20.504.3 to read as follows:

**20.504.3** Setbacks, yards.

1. Setbacks, except as otherwise provided in Section 20.504.3 (2) below, shall be the same as required in the base zoning district for all new construction provided, however, that historic structures (as defined above) shall not be subject to the yard requirements of Sections 5.41 and 5.42, including if all or a portion of such structures is relocated on the same lot in the Overlay District.
2. Church Lot Setbacks.
  - a. There shall be a required setback of twenty (20) feet from the side lot line of the Church Lot perpendicular to Roseland Street.
  - b. There shall be required a 7.5 foot front yard setback along the Frost Terrace front lot line. Such setback shall not be subject to the surface parking restrictions of Section 6.44.1 or the base zoning district.
  - c. In granting a special permit for development on the Church Lot the Planning Board shall pay particular attention to the design details of the building wall facing this lot line and the landscape treatment of the yard provided, as required in Section 20.505 (9) below. In general building walls should not remain uninterrupted for more than thirty (30) feet, with changes in the plane of building wall of up to four (4) feet encouraged.

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Amend Section 20.504.5, Paragraph 1. to read as follows with no change to the following paragraphs:

**20.504.5** Open Space Requirements.

1. For the Church Lot located south of Roseland Street there shall be a minimum ratio of Open Space to Lot Area of ten (10) percent. For purposes of calculating Open Space under this provision the following requirements shall apply:
  - a. Open Space shall be located along the Massachusetts Avenue frontage and have a depth of at least twenty (20) feet and shall have a minimum area of 3,000 contiguous square feet;
  - b. Area that is covered by a portion of a building but is open on three

(3) sides with a height of at least twelve (12) feet may be included;

c. Area that is ten (10) feet or more in any direction may be included.

In City Council December 22, 2025.  
Ordained as amended by substitution  
by a yea and nay vote:-  
Yea 6; Nays 3; Absent 0.  
Attest:- Paula M. Crane, Interim City Clerk  
A true copy;



ATTEST:-

Paula M. Crane  
Interim City Clerk