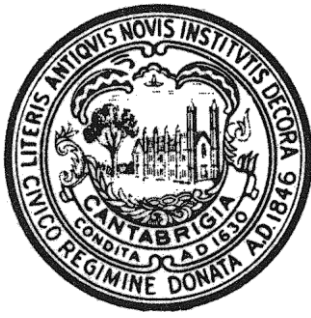




CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: July 20, 2026

Subject: Doug Brown, et al., Zoning Petition

Recommendation: The Planning Board does not recommend adoption.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On July 14, 2026, the Planning Board (the “Board”) held a public hearing to discuss a Zoning Petition (the “Petition”) by Douglas P. Brown, et al., a group of at least 10 people registered to vote in Cambridge (the “Petitioner”), to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Articles 2.000, 5.000, 6.000, 11.000, and 19.000 with the intent of amending height, setback, and open space requirements, adding step back and building depth and width requirements, and adding minimum off-street parking requirements for residential uses in Residence C-1 districts, including the Affordable Housing Overlay, as well as reducing the Project Review Special Permit threshold from 75,000 to 20,000 square feet for residential uses in Residence C-1 districts, among other changes.

Hearing Process

The Board heard a presentation from the Petitioner, followed by public comments and Planning Board discussion on the Petition. A written memorandum was provided in advance by Community Development Department (CDD) staff in addition to written comments from members of the public. After deliberating, the Planning Board voted to recommend that the Petition not be adopted and to provide the following report to the City Council.

Report and Comments

Board members expressed thanks to the Petitioner for preparing a thoughtful proposal, for listening to the community and for presenting ideas that have engendered meaningful discussion.

Board members agreed that this does not seem to be the right time to make drastic changes to the zoning that was adopted relatively recently and is only beginning to show results. Recent zoning amendments, including the Affordable Housing Overlay and Multifamily Zoning Amendments, were adopted to address a housing supply crisis that continues to persist. The changes proposed in the Petition appear very restrictive, and

materials provided by CDD staff and affordable housing developers indicate that they would likely have dramatic impacts on current and future housing proposals and would set back progress that has been made.

Board members were not opposed to considering changes to the zoning over time. There was support for letting housing development play out under the current zoning while CDD monitors trends and engages in continued discussion with the City Council and Planning Board. If changes are considered, they should be undertaken through a comprehensive process while thinking carefully about the implications. Board members also encouraged more nuance in accounting for different scenarios and conditions. The prior zoning amendments involved extensive study, public input, and discussion over long periods of time before changes were adopted, and Board members expressed concern about making sudden reactive changes.

Some Board members took note of the Petitioner's comments regarding the way in which demolition has proceeded in some cases. Board members encouraged the City Council to consider this issue but noted that demolition is not directly regulated by zoning.

The Planning Board voted 5-0 in favor of transmitting the above report. Two Planning Board members were absent.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,



Tom Sieniewicz, Chair.