

### ***Guidelines for Early Community Engagement***

Early Community Engagement is an important part of project review that provides opportunities for community members to learn about a potential development project prior to any formal public hearings, allows interested parties to have a dialogue about the major concerns and issues that may be associated with a project, and provides useful feedback to the Planning Board to inform the Board's future review, when required.

Early Community Engagement options may include meetings with established neighborhood groups (where applicable), open houses, informative and/or interactive websites, distributing information through e-mail, mailings, flyers and on-site postings, and informal conversations with interested parties. The extent of outreach and engagement may vary depending on the location, scale and impact of the project.

The Planning Board requires, in Section 5 of the Planning Board's Rules, that projects seeking a Special Permit conduct a pre-application Early Community Engagement process including at least one community meeting hosted by the Applicant. These guidelines provide additional suggestions and ideas for making the community meeting(s) as meaningful and productive as possible.

1. Applicants are encouraged to schedule a meeting with CDD staff before initiating a pre-application Early Community Engagement process to identify an appropriate list of contacts and to decide on an appropriate combination of notification methods.
2. Community meeting(s) should be held at a time and location that is convenient for most community members to attend. Applicants should schedule community meeting(s) in coordination with existing neighborhood and community groups to avoid any conflicts. Members of the public should be given the time and opportunity to discuss the project among themselves without the developer present.
3. Community meeting(s) should be advertised by mail or e-mail no less than two weeks prior to the meeting date and should be located on-site or in close proximity to the site of a proposed project.
4. Community members who should be directly notified include:
  - a) Abutting property owners as they appear on the most recent tax list, including direct abutters, property directly opposite any street, and abutters to abutters within 300 feet of the property line;
  - b) Nearby residents; and
  - c) Community groups in the project's neighborhood and adjoining neighborhoods. A list of existing neighborhood and community groups is available on the CDD website:  
<http://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/planud/neighborhoodorganizations.aspx>

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
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5. In addition to targeted notification, outreach methods could be expanded to inform and engage a wider range of community members who might be interested in a project. Possible methods of notification may include:
  - a) Informative and/or interactive websites;
  - b) Neighborhood and other e-mail lists;
  - c) Social media; and
  - d) Posters or signs posted on-site or at other convenient locations.
6. Community meeting(s) can take many different formats. A typical format of community meeting(s) includes a short presentation about the proposal followed by a Q&A session and discussion session. Community meeting(s) could also include an “open house” format allowing community members to come in and out at different times to review the proposal and ask questions.
7. Throughout the pre-application community engagement process, the following information should be presented along with other information that might be relevant to the specific project. If the community engagement process has multiple phases, more general information might be presented for discussion at an earlier phase, with more detailed plans presented at a later phase.
  - a) An initial site analysis addressing site opportunities and constraints, the uses of all adjacent buildings, traffic conditions and major environmental considerations, and the zoning of the site and adjacent properties;
  - b) A drawing of existing site context indicating topography of the site and the location of structures and prominent landscape elements on or abutting the site;
  - c) Photographs showing the facades of adjacent buildings, trees on the site, general streetscape character;
  - d) A three-dimensional zoning envelope study that illustrates the maximum allowable floor area and building bulk under current zoning;
  - e) A description of the Applicant’s objectives with regard to the site development including tentative program mix; and
  - f) Preliminary massing studies, plan(s) and rendering(s).
8. It is strongly recommended that presentation materials be made available online for community members who were unable to attend.
9. Applicants should maintain a contact list of meeting attendees and other interested community members. It is strongly recommended that the summary of community engagement (as required for the special permit application) be provided by mail or e-mail to participants in the process.