



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The following material is provided as a guide for applicants seeking a special permit from the Planning Board. For detailed information about special permits and other zoning requirements, refer to the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance, available at the City Clerk's office and online at www.cambridgema.gov/cdd.

Applicants are responsible for determining what relief is required for their projects and for specifying the exact relief being sought in their special permit applications. Applicants should refer to the official Cambridge Zoning Ordinance to determine what special permit or variance relief may be needed and what permit-granting authority (Planning Board or Board of Zoning Appeal) grants such relief.

Note: Per Section 10.45 of the Zoning Ordinance, "Any development application requiring a special permit from the Planning Board that contains elements requiring a special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeal may be allowed by the Planning Board within the scope of the Planning Board special permit and shall not require a separate application to the Board of Zoning Appeal."

Where more than one special permit is required for a development proposal, only one application need be submitted; however, all information required for each special permit must be included in the application. Information not relevant to the special permit being submitted need not be provided.

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Checklist of Required Submissions (for use by Applicant)

See Pages 6-9 for detailed descriptions. Additional materials may be required if relevant to the proposal.

For All Special Permits	Required Submissions (described on following pages)
1. Application Forms <i>(download from CDD website)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Cover Sheet <input type="checkbox"/> Dimensional Form <input type="checkbox"/> Ownership Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Fee Schedule
2. Project Narrative	<input type="checkbox"/> Project Overview <input type="checkbox"/> Compliance with Zoning <input type="checkbox"/> Compliance with Criteria Specific to Special Permits Being Sought <input type="checkbox"/> Compliance with General Special Permit Criteria (<i>Section 10.43</i>)
3. Project Plans and Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Existing Conditions Map <input type="checkbox"/> Site Context Map <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Site Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Floor Plans <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Landscaping Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Elevations <input type="checkbox"/> Existing Condition Photographs <input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Perspective Renderings or Photo Simulations <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other Materials (e.g., Shadow Studies) Where Applicable</i>
4. Other Agency Review	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Include Certification of Receipt of Plans by Traffic, Parking and Transportation Dept., City Engineer, City Arborist, Water Dept., Conservation Commission, or other agencies where applicable.</i>

Submissions for Some Special Permits	Required for	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Study (certified by Traffic, Parking and Transportation Dept.)	Project Review Special Permit (<i>Section 19.20</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Tree Study (certified by City Arborist)	Project Review Special Permit (<i>19.20</i>); Multifamily Special Permit (<i>4.26</i>); Townhouse Special Permit (<i>11.10</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Sewer Service Infrastructure Narrative (certified by Dept. of Public Works)	Project Review Special Permit (<i>19.20</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Water Service Infrastructure Narrative (certified by Cambridge Water Dept.)	Project Review Special Permit (<i>19.20</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Flood Plan Documentation	Development in a flood plain (<i>20.70 and 5.25.42, where applicable</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> LEED Checklist and Narrative (signed by LEED-Accredited Professional)	Projects 25,000 square feet or more, subject to Green Building Requirements (<i>22.20</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Parking Analysis (consult with Traffic, Parking and Transportation Dept.)	Reduction of Required Parking (<i>6.35.1</i>) and certain conversions to residential use (<i>5.28.2</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Summary of Public Outreach	<i>Required where specified in zoning; otherwise optional but recommended</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Special Permit Application Procedures

1. Determine the special permits being sought for the project. It is important to seek all necessary permits in the initial application. If it is later determined that other special permits are needed, a new application must be submitted.
2. Produce the materials required to complete a Special Permit Application for all the special permits being sought, using the Checklist (*on Page 2*) as a guide. Assemble the materials into a single application and produce the required copies in the required formats (*see Format Requirements on Page 5*).
3. Submit completed Special Permit Application to: **Community Development Department, c/o Liza Paden, 344 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139.**
4. The Community Development Department will review the Special Permit Application to determine if it is complete. If the Application is complete, the case will be assigned a public hearing date at a Planning Board meeting no later than 65 days from the date of receiving the Application. Community Development Department staff will contact the Applicant with the hearing date and information about notification requirements.
5. At the scheduled public hearing, the Planning Board will hear a presentation by the Applicant and will then open the hearing to public comment. After closing the hearing, the Board will deliberate on the Application before rendering a Decision. Either the public hearing or the deliberations may be continued to a future Planning Board meeting. The Planning Board may also request that the Applicant submit revised or supplemental materials prior to reaching a Decision.
6. After deliberations, the Board may decide to grant the special permit, with conditions where appropriate, or deny the special permit. A special permit may be granted by a vote of at least five (5) Planning Board members voting in the affirmative.
7. Unless a time extension is requested by the Applicant in writing and approved by the Planning Board at a regular business meeting, a Decision will be voted by the Planning Board, written, and filed at the City Clerk's office within 90 days of the date of the public hearing.

At any time, the Applicant may consult with the Community Development Department for advice on completing a Special Permit Application. Contact Liza Paden at 617-349-4647 or lpaden@cambridgema.gov with questions.

However, the Applicant is solely responsible for determining what special permits are needed and what materials are required to complete a Special Permit Application for the necessary permits.

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Planned Unit Development Special Permit Procedures

Planned Unit Development (PUD) special permit procedures differ from those of ordinary special permits, as summarized below. See Article 12 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance for detailed information. *This process does not apply to special permits other than those seeking PUD approval.*

1. PUD special permit approval requires two public hearings instead of one. An applicant may also request an *optional* pre-application conference at a meeting of the Planning Board to gather feedback on the proposal prior to submitting an Application and holding a public hearing.
2. The first official step is the submission of a Development Proposal. The specific requirements for the Development Proposal are explained in Section 12.34. The Development Proposal should follow the Format Requirements of a Special Permit Application (*see Page 5*).
3. After submission of the Development Proposal, two public hearings will be scheduled. The first public hearing will be to consider the Development Proposal. Upon considering whether the proposal meets the review criteria set forth in Section 12.35.3, the Planning Board will issue a Preliminary Determination approving or denying the Development Proposal. The Preliminary Determination may also include requests for modification.
4. If the Development Proposal is approved, the Applicant will revise the proposal and submit a Final Development Plan within 59 days after the first public hearing. The Final Development Plan requirements are described in Section 12.36. The Final Development Plan should follow the Format Requirements of a Special Permit Application (*see Page 5*).
5. A public hearing on the Final Development Plan will be held within 69 days after the hearing of the Development Proposal. After this second hearing, and within 90 days of the first public hearing, the Planning Board will make a Decision to grant (with conditions) or deny the PUD special permit.
6. If a Final Development Plan includes multiple buildings, new roadway systems, or other major elements presented in conceptual form, the Planning Board may require as a condition of the special permit that the design of individual buildings or project elements undergo further design review at future Planning Board meetings before receiving any building permits.
7. Amendments to an approved PUD special permit may be sought from the Planning Board. The Planning Board will determine whether a proposed amendment is *Major* or *Minor* according to the criteria in Section 12.37. A Minor Amendment may be granted by the Planning Board at a regular business meeting without a public hearing. A Major Amendment requires a new PUD special permit hearing process starting with the re-submission of a Development Proposal.

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Format Requirements

Special Permit materials should be prepared in the following page formats:

- All textual materials in 8.5" × 11" format
- All project plans and illustrations in 17" × 11" format

The Applicant is required to submit the following materials:

- Three (3) original printed Special Permit Applications with original signatures
- Fifteen (15) hard copies of the Special Permit Application in one or more bound volumes
- One CD-ROM or DVD-ROM containing all application materials in digital format (for posting to the City of Cambridge website), meeting the following standards:
 - Files must be in PDF format and readable by Adobe Acrobat v.7.0 and later
 - Native page size must be 8.5" × 11" or 17" × 11" (as specified above)
 - Both portrait and landscape oriented pages should be rotated so that the top of all pages align with the top of the screen
 - Scanned documents must be processed with optical character recognition (OCR) software, if necessary, to ensure their submission in text format within the PDF file
 - Submitted files must *NOT* be write-secured (City staff will secure all files before posting to the website)
 - File sizes should be minimized and set to a resolution of approximately 150 dpi.
 - No single file should be greater than 5 MB (volumes may be broken into separate files)

If for any reason these format requirements cannot be met, contact Community Development Department staff to discuss alternatives.

On-Site Notification Requirements

Posting of on-site notification panels is required for all Planning Board Special Permits. Applicants will receive blank panels from the Community Development Department, but are responsible for posting and maintaining the panels on-site according to the following standards (*Section 10.42.1*):

- Panels shall be installed not less than 14 days before the date of the public hearing, and shall be maintained in legible condition until a Notice of Decision has been filed with the City Clerk by the Planning Board.
- One panel shall be installed for lots having street frontage of 200 feet or less. One additional panel shall be installed for each additional 500 feet of street frontage.
- Panels shall be mounted at the street line or inside the lot within 20 feet of the street line, and shall be visible, easily identifiable, and legible to passersby from the public way.
- Panels that are stolen, destroyed, or rendered illegible shall be promptly replaced, and panels shall be promptly removed after the Notice of Decision has been filed.

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Description of Special Permit Application Requirements

1. Application Forms

• Cover Sheet

Contains basic information including the project location, zoning district, owner and applicant name and address, a list of the specific permits being sought (with references to the applicable zoning sections), and a brief description of the project. Must be signed by the Applicant.

Download form from CDD website or request by calling 617-349-4647.

• Dimensional Form

Describes the dimensional characteristics of the project and the zoning requirements, including: lot size, gross floor area, dwelling units, yard setbacks, building heights, and parking. **Download form from CDD website or request by calling 617-349-4647.**

• Ownership Certificate(s)

Provides signed authorization by the land owner, specifying the parcel deed(s) and title(s).

Download form from CDD website or request by calling 617-349-4647.

• Fee Schedule

Calculates the fee requirement for the requested special permit(s). *Full payment must be included with the Special Permit Application.* **Download form from CDD website or request by calling 617-349-4647.**

2. Project Narrative

• Project Overview

Summarize the key characteristics of the project, including the project location and surrounding context, existing conditions, proposed new uses, and proposed new structures. Specify what Planning Board special permits are being sought for the project and why they are needed.

• Compliance with Zoning

Describe how the proposed project meets the intent and the specific requirements of the base and overlay zoning districts, referring to the Dimensional Form where appropriate. Where the project does not conform to zoning and relief cannot be granted by the Planning Board, list variances that will be sought from the Board of Zoning Appeal.

• Compliance with Criteria Specific to Special Permits Being Sought

Describe how the project meets the criteria for approval of the specific permits sought, which may include criteria specific to the zoning district or area of planning concern. The preferred format is to list all applicable criteria, as set forth in the zoning, and respond to each individually.

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- **Compliance with General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)**

As above, describe how the proposed project meets the general criteria for issuance of a special permit as set forth in Section 10.43 of the Zoning Ordinance.

3. Project Plans and Illustrations

The following maps and plans are required, although additional illustrations may be provided if they address the requirements and criteria for granting the requested special permit(s). Each map or plan should include a clear and unique title, an indicated scale, north arrow and/or names of surrounding streets for orientation purposes.

- **Existing Conditions Map**

An accurately scaled boundary map of the development lot or parcel certified by a registered land surveyor, showing the existing conditions on the subject parcel or lot and on lots abutting or directly across the street from the subject parcel or lot.

- **Site Context Map**

A map covering an approximately one-eighth to one-quarter mile radius around the project site (may be larger or smaller depending on the size of the project), clearly labeling the project site, streets, and other major land uses in the area (such as transit stations, employment centers, shopping centers, residential areas). *For new construction projects, the context map should show the locations of Registered Solar Energy Systems in the vicinity (as defined in Section 22.63). Contact the Inspectional Services Department for a list of Registered Solar Energy Systems.*

- **Proposed Site Plan**

A plan of the development parcel(s) showing: proposed lot subdivision if any; the location of proposed buildings and any existing buildings to remain; proposed vegetation and existing vegetation to be retained; location of parking spaces; pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular access, egress and circulation; proposed treatment of the perimeter of the site including techniques and materials to be used (e.g. screens, fences, walls, landscaping, etc.); location of required open space (identified on the plan through distinctive shading or other appropriate technique); and the location of any easements or rights of way to remain and as proposed.

- **Proposed Floor Plans**

Schematic drawings of each floor of each proposed building, including basement and roof levels.

- **Proposed Landscaping Plan**

Schematic drawing(s) illustrating and clearly labeling all outdoor elements of the proposed design.

- **Proposed Elevations**

Schematic drawings of each façade of each building, with vertical and horizontal dimensions clearly labeled.

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- Existing Condition Photographs

Photographs showing conditions on the development lot or parcel at the time of the application and showing structures on abutting lots.

- Proposed Perspective Renderings or Photo Simulations

Drawings (hand-drawn or digitally rendered) from at least one prominent public vantage point illustrating how the proposed project will appear within the context of its surroundings.

- Other Materials (e.g., Shadow Studies) Where Applicable

Additional maps or other graphical materials may be appropriate where they are relevant to the criteria for issuance of the special permits being sought. For instance, shadow studies may be appropriate where shadow impacts are to be considered by the Planning Board. *However, Applicants should avoid submitting materials that are not relevant to the special permit criteria.*

4. Other Agency Review

Applicants should consult the Zoning Ordinance to determine if review from outside agencies is required. *A Certification of Receipt of Plans form should be completed by all applicable agencies, and can be downloaded from the CDD website or requested by calling 617-349-4647.*

Documentation from other agencies (e.g., Historical Commission) may be included if it is relevant to the criteria for issuance of a special permit.

Description of Other Requirements

The following materials are required for some commonly-sought Planning Board Special Permits. This is not a comprehensive list of all materials that might be required. *It is the Applicant's responsibility to review the Zoning Ordinance and determine the full set of materials that are required for all special permits being sought.*

- Traffic Study

Projects subject to a Project Review Special Permit exceeding specific thresholds set forth in Section 19.23 are required to submit a traffic impact study (TIS). The requirements are in Section 19.24(2). The Applicant should consult with the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TPT) to determine the scope of the TIS prior to submitting an application. *The completed TIS must be certified by TPT prior to issuance of a special permit, and should be submitted as an Appendix to the Special Permit Application.*

- Tree Study

Applications for a Project Review Special Permit, Multifamily Housing Special Permit, or Townhouse Special Permit are required to include a tree study demonstrating that the project meets the requirements of the Tree Protection Ordinance, Chapter 8.66 of the Cambridge Municipal Code. The City Arborist at the Department of Public Works must certify the tree study prior to issuance of a special permit. *The Tree Study and Certification of Receipt of Plans by the City Arborist should be included as an Appendix to the Special Permit Application.*

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- **Sewer Service Infrastructure Narrative**

Applications for a Project Review Special Permit must include a report detailing the anticipated impact of the project on the city's sanitary, stormwater, and combined sewer infrastructure. The requirements are set forth in Section 19.24(5). This report may be included in the Project Narrative section of the Special Permit Application or in an appendix. ***A Certification of Receipt of Plans by the Department of Public Works should be included as an Appendix to the Special Permit Application.***

- **Water Service Infrastructure Narrative**

Applications for a Project Review Special Permit must include a report detailing the anticipated impact of the project on the city's water delivery infrastructure and supply. The requirements are set forth in Section 19.24 Paragraph (6). This report may be included in the Project Narrative section of the Special Permit Application or in an appendix. ***A Certification of Receipt of Plans by the Cambridge Water Department should be included as an Appendix to the Special Permit Application.***

- **Flood Plain Documentation**

Development subject to a Flood Plan Special Permit as set forth in Section 20.70 must submit elevation data and other technical documentation, prepared by a registered professional engineer, as specified in Section 20.74. The plans must also be received by the City Engineer and Conservation Commission and their recommendations submitted prior to issuing a special permit. ***Applicants should consult with Cambridge Conservation Commission staff prior to applying.***

- **LEED Checklist and Narrative**

Projects with 25,000 square feet or more of floor area are subject to the Green Building Requirements of Section 22.20. A Special Permit Application for a project subject to 22.20 must include a completed LEED Project Checklist for the appropriate building standard (see usgbc.org) and a narrative describing how the project will be designed to meet the applicable requirement. ***This documentation must include an affidavit signed by a LEED-Accredited Professional.***

- **Parking Analysis**

Residential projects that propose to reduce their parking requirement under Section 6.35.1, along with some other special permit projects, are required to provide evidence to support the proposed parking supply. ***The requirements for completing the analysis are set forth in Section 6.35.3.***

Applicants should consult with Traffic, Parking and Transportation staff prior to applying.

- **Summary of Community Outreach**

Summarize any contact that has been made with neighbors and abutters to describe the project, answer questions and address concerns. Include dates of community meetings (if any) and the type and extent of outreach (e.g., mailings, if any), and summarize comments that were heard. This summary should be included in the Project Narrative section. ***Except where required by the Zoning Ordinance, this narrative is optional, but strongly recommended.***