

Section 17.40: Special Districts 4 and 4A

17.41 *Scope and Purpose.* This Section 17.40 regulates development in Special Districts 4 and 4A as shown on the Zoning Map of the City of Cambridge, as amended.

It is the intent of these Special Districts 4 and 4A to permit an appropriate level of residential and nonresidential development in the Districts consistent with the public interest in protecting regulated wetlands where they occur; maintain in flood storage capacity consistent with federal, state and local regulations; restoring areas currently developed to urban uses to their natural state in order to eliminate harmful impacts on sensitive wetlands environments; limiting the extent of land covered by impervious surfaces; and minimizing the amount of additional traffic passing through congested intersections on arterial and neighborhood streets. Further enhancement of the parkway character of Concord Turnpike is also intended.

[...]

17.42.1 *Yard Requirements.* The minimum yards required in the Districts may be waived by the Planning Board by Special Permit. In no case, however, shall the front yard required in the Parkway Overlay District, Section 11.60, be waived.

17.42.2 *Maximum Height.* The maximum height in the Districts shall be sixty (60) feet except that it may be increased to eight-five (85) feet for nonresidential uses and ninety (90) for residential uses, by special permit from the Planning Board. The special permit shall be granted where the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Board that the additional height will better serve the objectives of this Section 17.40 to increase the amount of open space in the district and to limit the extent to which building and other hard surfaces cover the ground.

Section 19.20: Project Review Special Permit

19.25.1 Traffic Impact Findings. Where a Traffic Study is required as set forth in Section 19.24 (3) above the Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area as analyzed in the Traffic Study. Substantial adverse impact on city traffic shall be measured by reference to the traffic impact indicators set forth in Section 19.25.11 below.

In areas where the Planning Board determines that area-specific traffic guidelines have been established in the Ordinance, the Board recognizes written agreements between project proponents and the City dealing with transportation mitigation strategies.

19.25.11 Traffic Impact Indicators. In determining whether a proposal has substantial adverse impacts on city traffic the Planning Board shall apply the following indicators. When one or more of the indicators is exceeded, it will be indicative of potentially substantial adverse impact on city traffic. In making its findings, however, the Planning Board shall consider the mitigation efforts proposed, their anticipated effectiveness, and other supplemental information that identifies circumstances or actions that will result in a reduction in adverse traffic impacts. Such efforts and actions may include, but are not limited to, transportation demand management plans; roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities improvements; measures to reduce traffic on residential streets; and measures undertaken to improve safety for pedestrians and vehicles, particularly at intersections identified in the Traffic Study as having a history of high crash rates.

The indicators are: (1) Project vehicle trip generation weekdays and weekends for a twenty-four hour period and A. M. and P.M. peak vehicle trips generated; (2) Change in level of service at identified signalized intersections; (3) Increased volume of trips on residential streets; (4) Increase of length of vehicle queues at identified signalized intersections; and (5) Lack of sufficient pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The precise numerical values that will be deemed to indicate potentially substantial adverse impact for each of these indicators shall be adopted from time to time by the Planning Board in consultation with the TPTD, published and made available to all applicants.

19.25.2 Urban Design Findings. The Planning Board shall grant the special permit only if it finds that the project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the city as set forth in Section 19.30. In making that determination the Board may be guided by or make reference to urban design guidelines or planning reports that may have been developed for specific areas of the city and shall apply the standards herein contained in a reasonable manner to nonprofit religious and educational organizations in light of the special circumstances applicable to nonprofit religious and educational activities.

[see summary of Citywide Urban Design Objectives on following page]

Special Permit Criteria

19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives (Summarized)

Objective	Considerations
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods • Consistency with established streetscape • Compatibility with adjacent uses • Consideration of nearby historic buildings
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhabited ground floor spaces • Discouraged ground-floor parking • Windows on ground floor • Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways • Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/impact of mechanical equipment • Location/impact of loading and trash handling • Stormwater management • Shadow impacts • Retaining walls, if provided • Building scale and wall treatment • Outdoor lighting • Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management • Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service • Efficient design (LEED standards)
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional use focused on existing campuses • Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed • Preservation of historic structures and environment • Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as a component of large, multi-building development • Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families
Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development • Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks • Provide wider range of activities

Section 20.70: Flood Plain Special Permit

20.75 *Criteria.* The Planning Board shall grant a Special Permit for development in the Flood Plain Overlay District if the Board finds that such development has met all of the following criteria in addition to other criteria specified in Section 10.43:

1. No filling or other encroachment shall be allowed in Zone A areas or in the floodway which would impair the ability of these Special Flood Hazard Areas to carry and discharge flood waters, except where such activity is fully offset by stream improvements such as, but not limited to, flood water retention systems as allowed by applicable law.
2. Displacement of water retention capacity at one location shall be replaced in equal volume at another location on the same lot, on an abutting lot in the same ownership, on a noncontiguous lot in the same ownership, or in accordance with the following requirements.
3. All flood water retention systems shall be suitably designed and located so as not to cause any nuisance, hazard, or detriment to the occupants of the site or abutters. The Planning Board may require screening, or landscaping of flood water retention systems to create a safe, healthful, and pleasing environment.
4. The proposed use shall comply in all respects with the provision of the underlying zoning district, provisions of the State Building Code, Wetlands Protection Act, and any other applicable laws.
5. Applicants for development in the Alewife area shall be familiar with area-specific and general city-wide land use plans and policy objectives (e.g. *Concord-Alewife Plan, A Report of the Concord Alewife Planning Study, November 2005; Toward a Sustainable Future, Cambridge Growth Policy, 1993, Update, 2007; Section 19.30 - Urban Design Objectives of this Zoning Ordinance*) and shall demonstrate how their plan meets the spirit and intent of such documents in conjunction with the requirements of this Section 20.70 - Flood Plain Overlay District and Section 20.90 – Alewife Overlay Districts 1-6.
6. The requirement of Section 20.74(3) has been met.

Section 20.60: Parkway Overlay District

20.62 *Purpose.* It is the purpose of this Section 11.60 to augment base zoning regulations in designated areas in order to create unified identifiable images of designated areas, to enhance public safety by reducing visual confusion and haphazard development, to encourage development which will protect and enhance the use and enjoyment of public open space resources. The Parkway Overlay District has been designated specifically for the areas adjacent to arterial roadways located in parklike settings such as the Fresh Pond Reservation.

[...]

20.63.7 The development standards specified in this Section 20.60 shall apply to all development within the Parkway Overlay District not exempted by subsections 20.63.2, 20.63.3, and 20.63.4. Divergence from these standards may be allowed only by issuance of a special permit from the Planning Board as specified in Subsection 10.45. The Board may grant such a permit upon its determination that the development proposed will better serve the objectives of this Section 20.60 than if the standards were followed and that the criteria specified in Section 10.43 will be satisfied.

[...]

20.64.3 Building Facades. Building facades should be designed so as to enhance the visual quality of the district. The following standards shall apply:

1. Principal building entrances shall face the parkways and boulevards which serve to define the district.
2. Building facades and rooflines shall be articulated and expanses of unbroken wall planes shall be limited to thirty-five (35) linear feet for those facades facing public open space and/or public roadways.
3. Ground floor levels shall include a minimum of thirty (30) percent transparency to enliven and enrich the public environment.

10.43: General Special Permit Criteria

- 10.43** *Criteria.* Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:
- (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or
 - (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or
 - (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or
 - (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or
 - (e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.