

City of Cambridge
Community Development Department

Flexible Parking Corridors

Presented to Cambridge Street Safety Improvement Project
Working Group

March 18, 2025





Context



Changes to our streets sometimes require removal of on-street parking

The Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO), adopted in 2018 and amended in 2020, calls for the installation of a network of separated bicycle lanes across the City on an accelerated timeline. Additionally, the City is committed to prioritizing public transit through implementation of bus priority treatments on our streets.

Installation of bike lanes, whether through quick-build methods (paint and posts) or full construction, typically requires a significant removal of on-street parking spaces. Upon completion of the installation and construction work under the CSO, it is anticipated that 800-900 on-street spaces will have been removed. Similarly, bus priority treatments can at times require removal of parking.

The City Council requested that staff explore ways to mitigate the impacts of this parking loss on local businesses and residents. They adopted changes to three ordinances in December 2024.



Mitigating short-term parking impacts

A more complete bicycle and transit network will make it possible for more people to get around without driving, **reducing the long-term demand for parking**. Building our bicycle and transit networks sometimes requires reducing on-street parking.


We are trying to mitigate the short-term impact of that loss by making it easier for private owners to let more people use their underused parking spaces.



Some off-street parking facilities have more spaces than they need for on-site parkers

As non-automobile modes become easier and more convenient than they were in the past, there is less demand for parking. Existing parking lots and garages were built based on needs expected at the time, but many now see less demand for parking from the users at their site.

Using today's existing parking better makes it possible to build less new parking in the future.



The 2022 Parking Study also recommended changes to these rules

In 2022, the City of Cambridge conducted a study about how people use car parking. The purpose was to evaluate how well parking policies and regulations for cars support both community needs and City goals.

The adopted changes are in line with recommendations from the [2022 Parking Study](#), which included:

- Developing a “detailed **zoning** amendment recommendation to allow and encourage the use of existing underused accessory and principal use parking spaces where a loss of metered on-street spaces is anticipated” (Strategy 1/Action 2), and
- “Evaluating the **PTDM Ordinance** for changes” (Strategy 4/Action 12).



Goals for introducing Flexible Parking Corridors

1. Build our bike and bus networks while mitigating parking impacts,
2. Respond to business and resident needs,
3. Make it easier for owners of off-street parking to use their existing parking more efficiently, and
4. Avoid inducing new driving trips, undermining the City's transportation goals, or limiting the effectiveness of the PTDM Ordinance in other areas of the city.



Flexible Parking Corridors adopted

In December 2024, City Council adopted changes to:

1. Zoning Ordinance
2. Commercial Parking Space Permits Ordinance
3. Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Ordinance

These are not the only City regulations governing off-street parking. The changes to these ordinances do not change other City requirements, including most requirements under the Commercial Parking Space Permits Ordinance (Chapter 10.16) or Cambridge License Commission requirements.



What to expect

- The City is enabling underused parking to be used better, not guaranteeing access to off-street parking.
- The City is not operating the off-street parking covered by these changes, except when the City owns the parking facility. The City does not plan to acquire new parking facilities to mitigate on-street parking removal.
- The experience of using an off-street lot or garage will not be the same as using on-street parking. It might cost more, have different time limits, and be located farther from your destination.



Where are Flexible Parking Corridors?

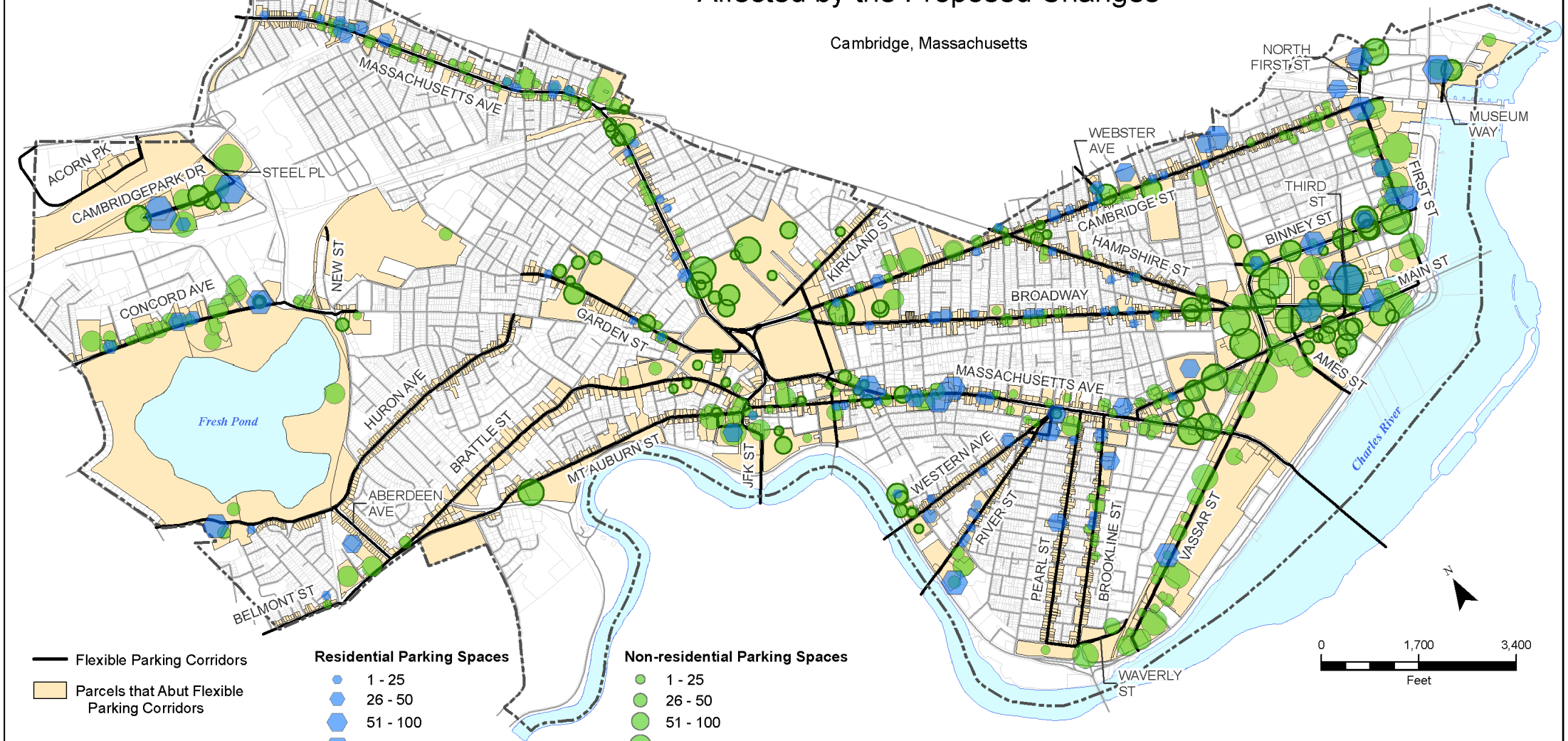
Flexible Parking Corridors rules in the Zoning and PTDM Ordinances apply to all corridors on the **2020 Bike Plan Network for Greater Separation** and **bus priority corridors**. Applying the same mitigation to both types of corridors:

- Makes the changes more uniform and simpler to understand, and
- Reduces concerns about on-street parking removal along the entire separated bike lane and bus priority networks.

About 55% of off-street parking in the City is located on parcels that abut Flexible Parking Corridors.

Parcels and Parking Facilities Affected by the Proposed Changes

Cambridge, Massachusetts



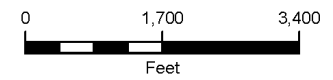
— Flexible Parking Corridors
 ■ Parcels that Abut Flexible Parking Corridors

Residential Parking Spaces

- 1 - 25
- 26 - 50
- 51 - 100
- 101 - 300
- 301 - 559

Non-residential Parking Spaces

- 1 - 25
- 26 - 50
- 51 - 100
- 101 - 300
- 301 - 750
- 751 - 2733
- Outline denotes PTDM project



Parking facility information is meant for visualization only and may not include all off-street parking along Flexible Parking Corridors. For official registration information about a particular parking facility, please contact the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department.



Zoning for Flexible Parking Corridors

Zoning for Parking: What Does it Control?

Principal Use Parking



Accessory Parking



Zoning for Parking: What Does it Control?

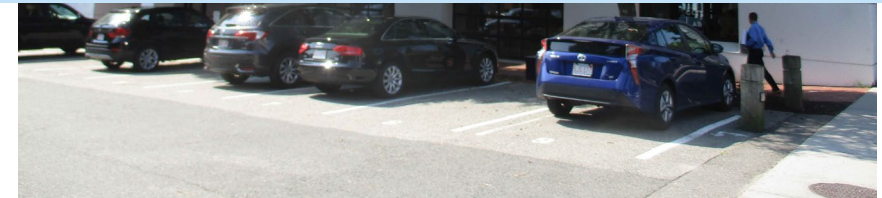
Principal Use Parking



Accessory Parking



Off-Street, NOT On-Street



Zoning for Parking: What Does it Control?

Principal Use Parking

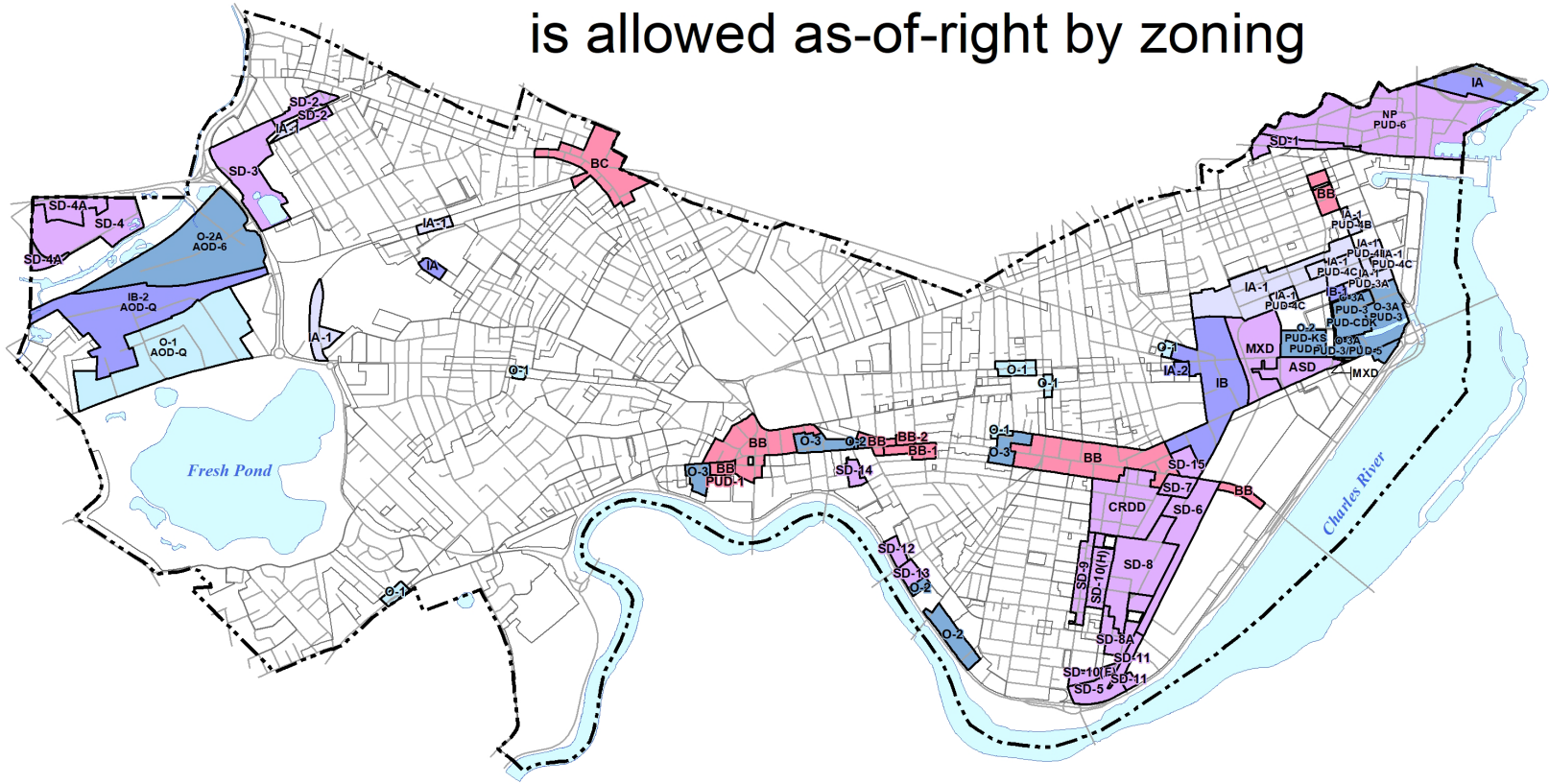


Parking as a “principal use” (not associated with another use, like housing or a business)

Limited to certain districts, sometimes needs a special permit

Prior to Adoption of Flexible Parking Corridors...

Districts where commercial parking is allowed as-of-right by zoning



Zoning for Parking: What Does it Control?

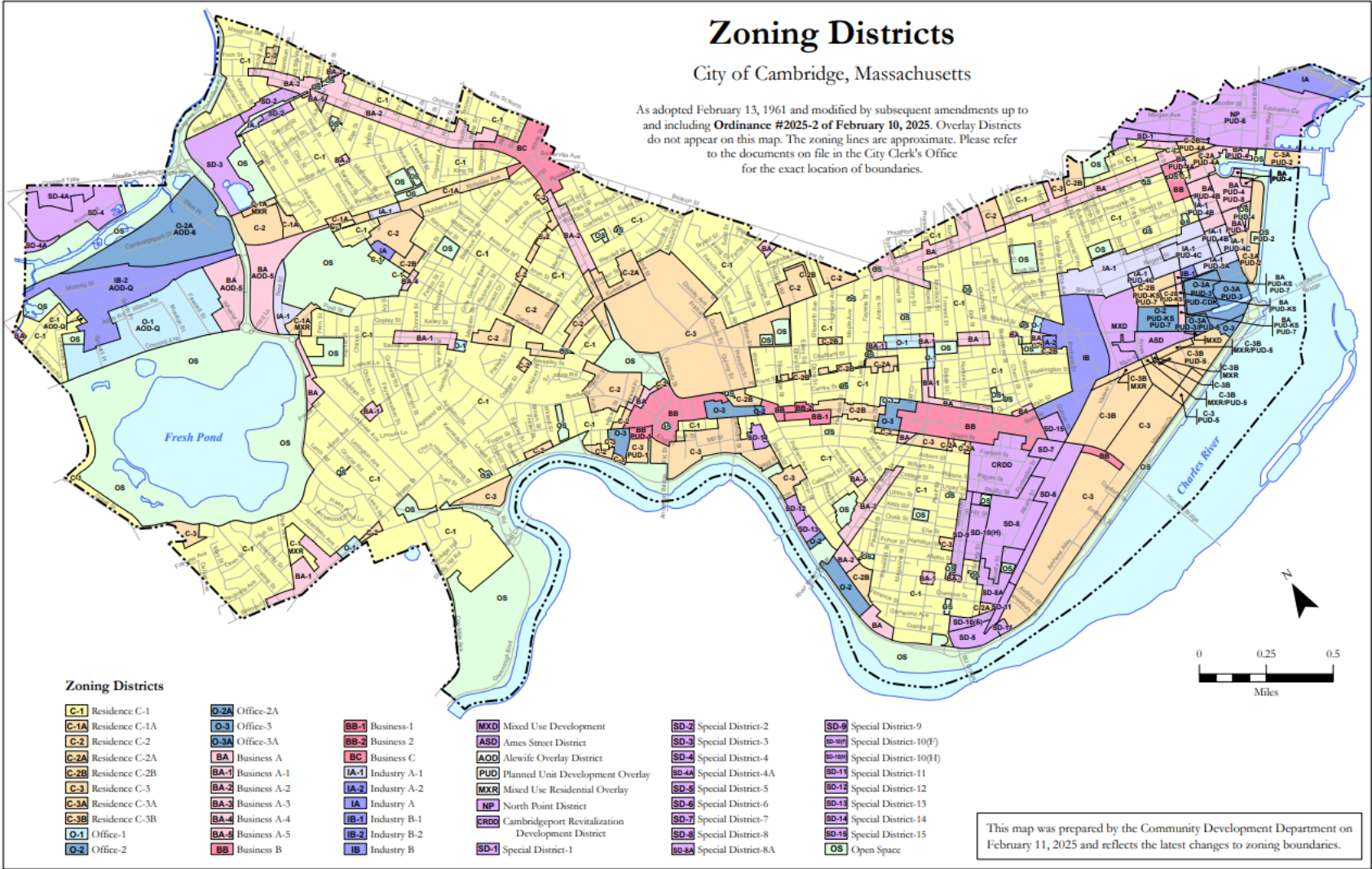
Accessory Parking

Parking as an “accessory use”
(associated with a non-parking use)

If off-site, needs to be within a
specific distance, in the same or less
restrictive district, and under control
of the owner



Prior to Adoption of Flexible Parking Corridors...



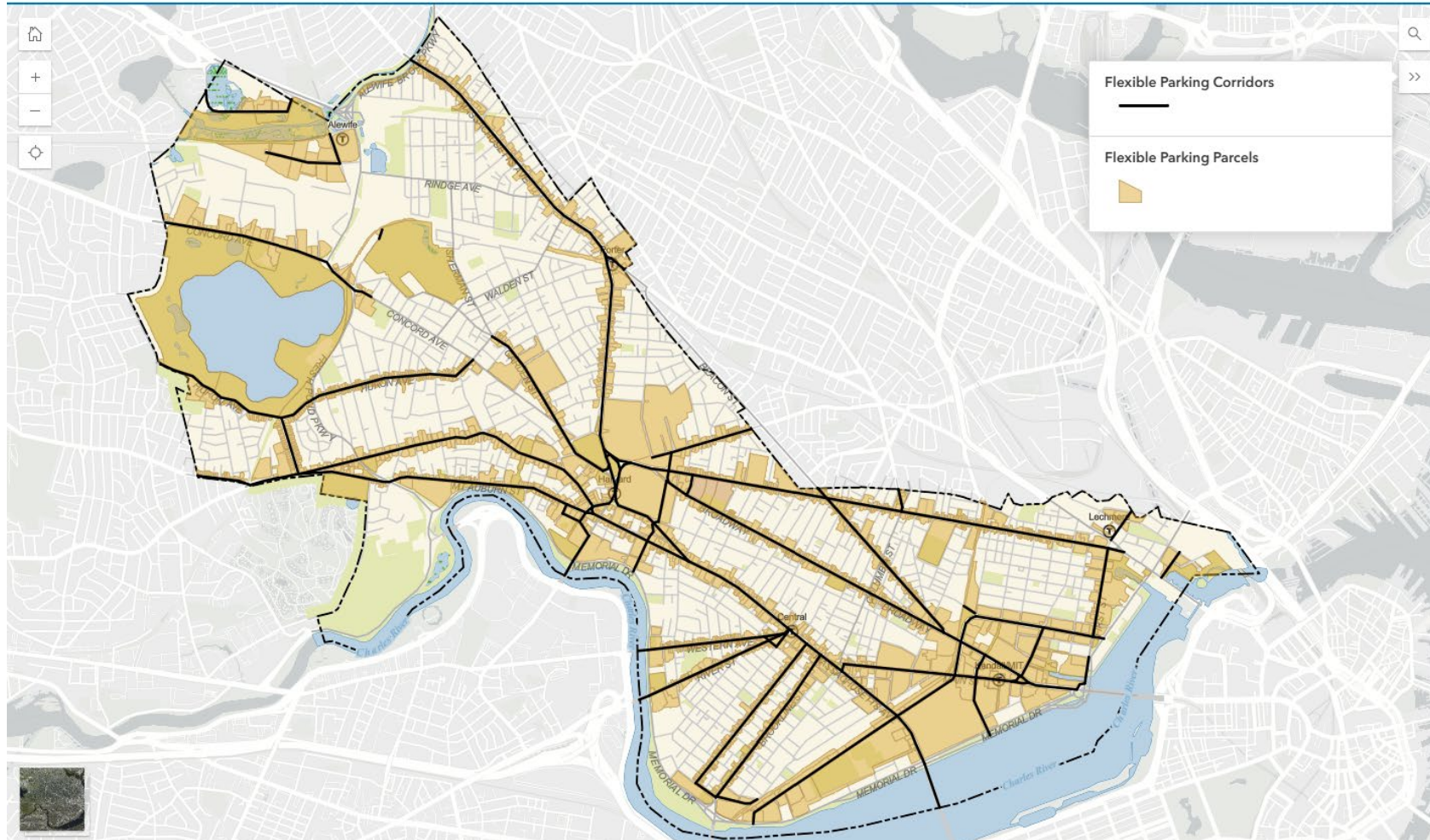
New Zoning: Flexible Parking Corridors

Where?	What?
<p>An alternative set of zoning rules for lots that...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Front on a listed “Flexible Parking Corridor,” AND...<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have existing parking as of the date of adoption, OR• Is vacant	<p>An alternative set of zoning rules that allow...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parking as a principal use as-of-right (the Commercial Parking Ordinance might apply)• Parking to be "shared" among multiple uses (residential or non-residential) that all front a "Flexible Parking Corridor"

Corridors and Lots with Additional Flexibility



Flexible Parking Corridors and Parcels



Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, Microsoft, Facebook, Inc. and its affiliates, Esri Community Maps contributors, Map layer by Esri | City Of Cambridge, MA | City of Cambridge

Powered by Esri



Additional Conditions

- **No increase** to the number of parking spaces in existing parking lots/garages
- Vacant lots can be used **temporarily** as parking for up to two years with minimal improvements, **or for longer** if designed to meet dimensional/layout standards



One More Thing

- Parking as a principal use is allowed as-of-right on City-owned lots citywide



Commercial Parking Space Permits Ordinance (Chapter 10.16) Amendment

What is commercial parking?

Commercial parking: paid parking that is open for *anyone* to use

1



2



← **Customer** parking during business hours

← **Commercial** parking during off hours



These are *not* commercial parking:

- Parking available to **specific groups** of people (like customers of a specific business or residents of a specific building), even if those people pay to park
- Parking leased to another business for use by **their customers or employees**
- Free parking



Commercial Parking Space Permits Ordinance

- Created in 1998 through agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to cap the number of commercial parking spaces in Cambridge to limit air pollution
- Cambridge can issue about 1,400 more commercial parking space permits
- Requires all commercial parking spaces to be approved by the Commercial Parking Control Committee (CPCC)
- The City will be reforming the CPCC in the coming months



Small commercial parking facilities

Before December 2024, the Commercial Parking Space Permits Ordinance required applicants to have an approved **transportation demand management** plan.

The December 2024 amendment **eliminated that requirement for parking facilities with 19 or fewer total parking spaces**. This aligns with changes to the Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance for small parking facilities along Flexible Parking Corridors.

Small facilities still need Commercial Parking Space Permits for all commercial spaces.



PTDM for Flexible Parking Corridors



What is Transportation Demand Management?

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures encourage people to switch from driving alone to walking, biking, taking buses and trains, carpooling, and other sustainable transportation options.

Types of TDM measures include:

- Incentives and subsidies for using sustainable transportation
- Disincentives for driving alone
- Programs that promote a culture of using sustainable transportation



A property may be required to participate in Cambridge's TDM Program through:

Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Ordinance

or

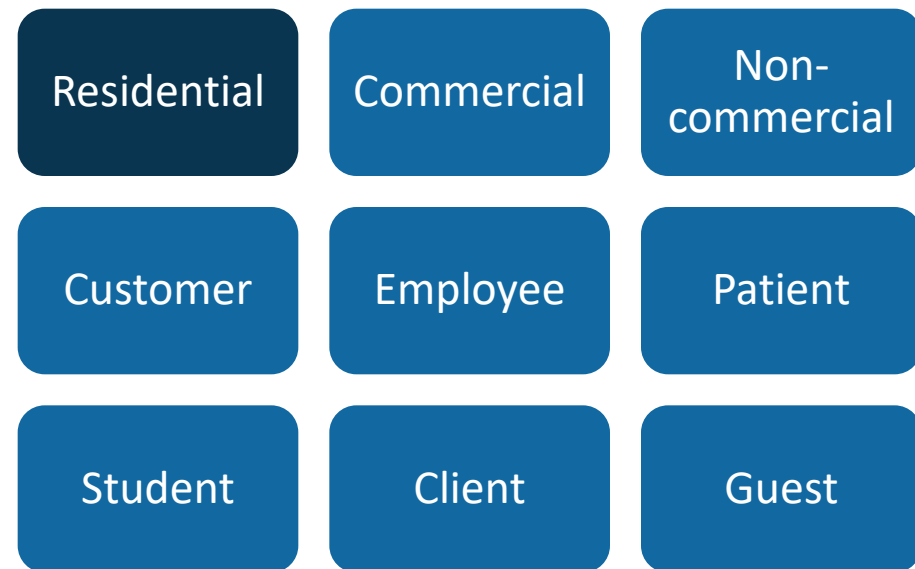
TDM Conditions in Planning Board Special Permits

← No changes

Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Ordinance

- When a property owner **creates new parking** or **allows new types of parkers** to use existing parking, they must create a PTDM Plan
- Does not apply to residential parking
- Facilities with fewer than 5 spaces do not need a PTDM Plan

Types of parking in the PTDM Ordinance



Changing from one type to another (except to residential) requires the owner to create a PTDM Plan



PTDM Plans

Small Project

- Parking facilities with **5-19** parking spaces
- Property owner agrees to provide at least three TDM measures

Large Project

- Parking facilities with **20 or more** parking spaces
- Property owner agrees to a comprehensive TDM Plan, negotiated with the City
- Includes commitment to keep drive-alone trips below a certain percentage (SOV commitment)
- Includes annual monitoring



2024 amendment to the PTDM Ordinance: Flexible Parking Corridors

Along Flexible Parking Corridors,

1. Small Projects (5-19 total spaces) do not need a PTDM Plan, and
2. Facilities that change to commercial parking do not need to create a PTDM Plan

PTDM Ordinance along Flexible Parking Corridors

(differences underlined)

- When a property owner **creates new parking** or **allows new types of parkers** to use existing parking, they must create a PTDM Plan
- Does not apply to residential parking
- Facilities with fewer than 20 spaces do not need a PTDM Plan

Types of parking in the PTDM Ordinance

Residential	<u>Commercial</u>	Non-commercial
Customer	Employee	Patient
Student	Client	Guest

Changing from one type to another (except to residential or commercial) requires the owner to create a PTDM Plan

Example parking lot with 20 or more spaces on a Flexible Parking Corridor

If all parking is registered as employee parking...



These groups can park here **without a new PTDM Plan:**

- Off-site employees
- Residents
- The general public for a fee (requires a permit from the Commercial Parking Control Committee)

But a **new PTDM Plan is**

required if these groups park here:

- Customer/visitor/guest
- Student
- Patient/client
- The general public without a fee



Resources



Streets + Transportation

At any given time, the City of Cambridge has numerous transportation projects in design and under construction.

Three City departments collaborate on the design, community engagement, installation, and construction for street and transportation improvements: the [Community Development Department](#), [Public Works Department](#), and [Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department](#). The City also works closely with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), MBTA, and Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on regional projects.

Transportation and street design projects aim to meet the needs and interests of all travelers, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and drivers. Changes to the City's streets are often made at the same time as other infrastructure work (such as utility replacements) to minimize costs and disturbances to the community.

Menu

Streets + Transportation

[Streets + Transportation Projects](#)

[Streets + Transportation Policies, Ordinances, and Plans](#)

[Flexible Parking Corridors](#)



Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO)

[About the CSO](#)



Flexible Parking Corridors

Flexible Parking Corridors are designated streets in the City of Cambridge that have more flexible rules for off-street parking. They are the corridors identified in the [2020 Bike Plan Network](#) for Greater Separation and [bus priority corridors](#). The goal of Flexible Parking Corridors is to reduce the impact of on-street parking removal as we build our bike and bus networks. A complete bike and bus network will reduce demand for parking in the long-term. Flexible Parking Corridors create simpler rules for who is allowed to park in existing parking lots and garages along those streets.

Changes to three ordinances created Flexible Parking Corridors in the City, including:

- The **Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Ordinance**,
- The **Zoning Ordinance**, and
- The **Commercial Parking Space Permits Ordinance**.

This page explains the 2024 changes by the City Council and explains how to use and share existing parking for different uses along Flexible Parking Corridors.

Helpful Resources

- [Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance](#)
- [Zoning](#)
- [Parking Study](#)

Accessibility

The City of Cambridge does



Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, Microsoft, Facebook, Inc. and its affiliates, Esri Community Maps contributors, Map layer by Esri | Cit... Powered by Esri

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Flexible Parking Corridor? [^](#)

Connect with Us: Information Session and Office Hours [^](#)

What changes were made to the three ordinances? [^](#)

What goals did the City have in mind when making these changes? [^](#)



Resources

Flexible Parking Corridors Webpage

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/streetsandtransportation/flexibleparkingcorridors>

Upcoming Events

- **Information Session and Q+A**
Thursday, March 20, 5:30-6:30 PM on Zoom
- **Scheduled Office Hours**
Tuesday, March 25, 3:00-5:00 PM on Teams
Thursday, March 27 from 5:30-7:30 PM on Teams
Schedule a 30-minute meeting with CDD and TP+T

Registration links
available on the
**Flexible Parking
Corridors** webpage



Thank You