



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date:	March 19, 2013
Subject:	Bicycle Parking Zoning Petition
Recommendation:	The Planning Board recommends ADOPTING the petition, with consideration of some minor changes.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

The Planning Board considered the Bicycle Parking Zoning Petition at its meeting on March 19, 2013 and heard testimony from community members who spoke in support of the proposed changes. The Planning Board recommends adoption of the petition.

## Support for Petition

Bicycling serves many of Cambridge's planning goals, from traffic and climate change mitigation through decreased automobile use, to promoting public health through physical activity, to supporting economic development by connecting people to work and shopping opportunities. For many years, the City has promoted bicycling through efforts including bike lane or cycle track installation and public outreach programs to encourage safe bicycling.

There has been tremendous growth in the number of Cambridge residents who bicycle for commuting, shopping and recreation. In the past decade, the total number of bicyclists on Cambridge streets has tripled. Due to a combination of public efforts and changing lifestyle trends, bicycling has become a way of life in Cambridge, with numbers rivaling other bicycle-friendly cities like Portland, Oregon and Boulder, Colorado. However, it has also become increasingly apparent that places for residents to park their bicycles are in short supply.

Cambridge's current zoning regulations for bicycle parking were instituted in 1981, and there are some key issues that the proposed new zoning intends to address. First, the quantities of required bicycle parking have not kept pace with observed trends and the City's goals, which now anticipate a minimum of 10% of all trips in Cambridge made by bicycle. Also, the current zoning provides little guidance on the appropriate design and location of bicycle parking. There are now better nationwide standards that can be applied, which have been developed through the experiences of Cambridge and other bicycle-friendly cities around the country.

Given construction costs and other economic pressures, developers of new projects are often motivated to devote minimal space to bicycle parking. Without clear requirements in place, the result is often that bicycle parking is either underutilized due to poor design or inadequate to

meet the demand. For many proposed new buildings, City staff will work with designers to redesign a bicycle parking area to be functional after the rest of the building has been designed, which adds time and uncertainty to the process.

With clear standards in the zoning ordinance, developers will have a better expectation of the space needed and other requirements for bicycle parking before designing a new building. The proposed regulations are specific enough to provide a blueprint for designing functional, accessible and maintainable bicycle parking in adequate quantity to meet the City's needs. There is also flexibility in the proposed regulations where needed to allow alternate means of compliance if the exact standards would be difficult to apply in a particular case.

### **Additional Considerations**

The petition proposes excluding new development on lots with three or fewer units from the requirement to provide bicycle parking. The Planning Board initially suggested this approach based on the rationale that it may be onerous to require long-term bicycle parking on smaller lots where they might conflict with other requirements such as the provision of private yards and open space.

However, after hearing testimony from the public and discussing the issue further, the Board determined that there is still a need for bicycle parking on three-unit properties. Although it may be onerous to require new bicycle parking to be created on small lots with existing structures, it may be more reasonable to accommodate new bicycle parking in the construction of new three-unit dwellings.

Therefore, the Board recommends incorporating bicycle parking requirements that would apply to the construction of new three-unit dwellings as well as larger dwellings. Additional flexibility should be provided to ensure that such bicycle parking spaces would not unreasonably conflict with other site-design issues like yards and open space.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,



Hugh Russell, Chair.