City of Cambridge
Community Development Department

Allowing Multifamily Housing Citywide

Planning Board Discussion
March 15, 2022
Tonight’s Discussion

• Recap earlier discussions

• Discuss Zoning **Principles**:  
  • *Is there agreement?*  
  • *What could be changed?*

• Discuss Zoning **Concepts**:  
  • *Are these the right concepts to study?*  
  • *Should other concepts be included?*

• Discuss Zoning **Options**:  
  • *Which might be pursued?*  
  • *Which should not be pursued?*
Recap
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City Council Policy Order (recommended 11/16):
Work with the Planning Board to develop concepts and principles to eliminate single family and two family only zones

Planning Board Discussions (so far):
• January 4, 2022 – Background Information, Potential Approaches
• January 18, 2022 – Envision Framework
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Planning Board Discussion – Goals and Benefits

• A more fair city, not more exclusive in some areas than others
• No reason to exclude multifamily housing, most neighborhoods already have a variety of housing types
• Encourage creation of more housing units – more opportunities in more parts of the city
• Multifamily housing in Cambridge and other transit-served communities serves broader environmental goals
• Statewide, regional policies encourage multifamily housing
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Planning Board Discussion – Issues and Concerns

• New market-rate housing will be high-cost, wealthier households
• Increased property values if more development is allowed
• Preserving private open space (backyards) and tree canopy
• Balance between accommodating families with children and higher cost of larger homes
• Competition for residential on-street parking
• Architectural character of neighborhoods, avoiding teardowns
• Unintended consequences
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Planning Board Discussion – Zoning Approaches

• Change standards in current districts, rather than a complete rezoning

• Aim for incremental, not wholesale change

• Some things can be advanced sooner (e.g., allowing more use types, housing units); others will need more study and discussion (e.g., setbacks, parking)

• Some issues will need non-zoning strategies as well – e.g., affordability will need subsidies, &c.
## Allowing Multifamily Housing Citywide

### What have other places done?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Minneapolis   | • 2-family, 3-family homes allowed in districts formerly restricted to single-family (effective 1/1/2021)  
• Minneapolis Fed to analyze outcomes (dashboard) |
| Berkeley      | • Voted to remove single-family zoning in 2021  
• To be implemented through general plan (2-year process) |
| Oregon        | • 2019 legislation requires cities to allow non-single-family housing types, depending on size |
| California    | • 2021 legislation requires cities to allow 4-unit development, division of lots (w/limitations) |
| Massachusetts | • 2021 “MBTA communities” legislation requires transit-served areas to permit multifamily housing of at least 15 units/acre |
Zoning Principles and Concepts
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Things to remember about zoning:

• Fundamentally: What is prohibited where, and why?
• What are the values that determine what the City allows in some areas, but prohibits in others?
• What should change if the status quo does not reflect the City’s values today?
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Zoning Principles (for discussion)

• Allow an equitable range of housing types and unit sizes in all residential districts – i.e., no districts limited only to large, single/two-family homes

• Allow additional housing units in restrictive zoning districts, to create more housing opportunities in those areas

• Balance the benefit of allowing more units with concerns about increases in building size, which could increase property values

• Encourage preservation of existing building stock where it’s valued
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Zoning Concepts (for discussion):

**What is necessary to enable multifamily housing in A-1, A-2, B districts?**

| Allowing More Housing Types (use) | • Current zoning limited to single detached unit on a lot (A), two-family or townhouse development (B)  
|                                | • Subdivision is constrained by lot sizes  
|                                | • **What range of housing types should be allowed?** |

| Allowing More Units per Acre (lot area per dwelling unit) | • More restrictive districts allow larger buildings with fewer units  
|                                                          | • **What changes would allow the creation of more units in the same floor area?** |
# Allowing Multifamily Housing Citywide

## What other concepts might be considered?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjust Parking Requirements</td>
<td>Ongoing process looking at parking requirements more broadly, along with other parking and transportation policies and regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjust Dimensional Standards</td>
<td>Design study needed to test balance among housing, environmental, and urban design goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Density Near Transit</td>
<td>Most of Cambridge served by transit, major transit hubs mostly zoned higher-density mixed-use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional analysis could inform a potential rezoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Affordability Requirements</td>
<td>Current zoning has “voluntary inclusionary” incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs careful legal and economic scrutiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Next review of inclusionary policy in 2022</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Concept 1: Allowing More Housing Types
Allowing More Housing Types

What’s allowed now in Res. A-1, A-2, B, C, C-1:

- “Detached” (Single-Family) Housing
  - 1,250 (+/-) square feet
  - 3,000 (+/-) square feet
  - 6,000 (+/-) square feet
Other housing types – **NOT ALLOWED in Res. A, ALLOWED in Res. B, C, C-1:**

- Two-family Rowhouses
- Rowhouses

Other housing types – **NOT ALLOWED in Res. A or Res. B, ALLOWED in Res. C, C-1:**

- 3 units
- 6 units
- 18 units
- Multifamily
- Group housing (e.g., Lodging House)
Allowing More Housing Types

What’s allowed now:

**Residence A-1, A-2**
- Detached dwellings only
- Lots below a certain size can’t be subdivided
- One principal structure per lot

**Residence B**
- Detached, two-family, townhouse
- Lots < 10,000 SF in area or < 100 feet wide can’t be subdivided
- Multiple structures per lot, **special permit** if second structure is > 75 feet from street
Site development options:


Detached subdivision

Townhouse subdivision

Multiple dwellings per lot

Considerations:

• Allowing multiple structures can provide infill opportunities without altering existing buildings
• Larger multi-unit buildings can result in more efficient development, usable open space, and/or consistency with neighborhood development patterns
# Allowing More Housing Types

## Options for Allowed Uses in Res. A-1, A-2, B

- **Allow conversions** of existing buildings to multifamily housing
- **Allow a limited range** of multifamily housing (e.g., 3-unit buildings, 6-unit buildings)
- **Allow all multifamily** housing
- **Allow multifamily and group** housing (same as Res. C, C-1)

## Options for Allowed Site Development

- **Maintain standards** to encourage fewer, larger buildings on a lot
- **Change standards** to allow subdivision and/or multiple building development
Concept 2: Allowing More Units per Acre
# Allowing More Units per Acre

*What’s allowed now:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Max. Height</th>
<th>Max. FAR</th>
<th>Min. Lot Area/Unit</th>
<th>Optimized GFA/Unit Range</th>
<th>Net Units/Acre Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-1</td>
<td>35 feet</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>6,000 SF</td>
<td>3,000-6,000 SF</td>
<td>3.6-7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-2</td>
<td>35 feet</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>4,500 SF</td>
<td>2,250-4,500 SF</td>
<td>4.8-9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>35 feet</td>
<td>0.50(-)*</td>
<td>2,500(+ ) SF*</td>
<td>1,250-2,500 SF</td>
<td>8.7-17.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>35 feet</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1,800 SF</td>
<td>1,080-2,160 SF</td>
<td>12.1-24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-1</td>
<td>35 feet</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1,500 SF</td>
<td>1,125-2,250 SF</td>
<td>14.5-29.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2,500 SF lot area/unit and 0.50 FAR for the first 5,000 SF of lot area, 4,000 SF lot area/unit and 0.35 FAR for lot area over 5,000 SF*
Allowing More Units per Acre

What are typical GFA/unit ratios?

Source: Cambridge Assessing Department

NOTE: ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE
## Allowing More Units per Acre

### Options for Changing Units per Acre Rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reduce minimum L.A./D.U.</strong> for a consistent GFA/unit ratio across districts**&lt;br&gt;(e.g., calibrate to 1,000-2,000 SF of GFA per unit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eliminate minimum L.A./D.U.,</strong> limit number of units based on GFA/FAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eliminate all limits on units per acre,</strong> keep other controls&lt;br&gt;(e.g., limits on building types, number of buildings, height/size, lot coverage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a <strong>minimum units per acre</strong> standard&lt;br&gt;(limit reductions in number of units, enlargements without adding units)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Next Steps
Further Study

*Based on preferred Concepts/Options:*

- **Existing Conditions Analysis:** Potential effects across the city, map areas where changes would be more likely
- **Design:** Look at example lots, potential building and site design outcomes
- **Economics:** Look at example lots, potential effects on development value, property value, home prices (note whether any increase in property value would potentially impact affordable housing opportunities)
- **Planning Goals:** Evaluate options according to Envision Cambridge metrics of livability, diversity & equity, economic opportunity, sustainability & resilience, community health & wellbeing, learning
Discussion

• Discuss Zoning **Principles** (±15 mins):
  • *Is there agreement?*
  • *What could be changed?*

• Discuss Zoning **Concepts** (±15 mins):
  • *Are these the right concepts to study?*
  • *Should other concepts be included?*

• Discuss Zoning **Options** (±30 mins total):
  • *Which might be pursued?*
  • *Which should not be pursued?*

*Questions before starting?*