Zoning Considerations Preview

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Presentation to Climate Resilience Zoning Task Force
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City of Cambridge
Community Development Department
Zoning: Things to Know Before Trying
Zoning Doesn’t “Make” Anything

• There is always an existing condition and a new condition. Zoning protects existing conditions and regulates changes.

• Property owners decide what changes to make. Zoning (along with many factors beyond our control) affects the value of the proposed condition and the cost of making the change.

• Most often, change doesn’t happen. Sometimes the new condition is much more valuable than the existing and change will happen. If the cost of change is high, the existing condition is likely to remain.
Housing Units by Building Size

- **All Housing (2019)**:
  - 1-3 units: 16,975
  - 4-12 units: 7,983
  - 13-25 units: 3,343
  - 26-100 units: 10,134
  - > 100 units: 16,553

- **New Construction (2009-2018)**:
  - 1-3 units: 91
  - 4-12 units: 143
  - 13-25 units: 250
  - 26-100 units: 1,141
  - > 100 units: 4,662

**ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE**
Housing Developments by Building Size

- **1-3 units**: 9,340
- **4-12 units**: 64
- **13-25 units**: 1,350
- **26-100 units**: 22
- **>100 units**: 184

**ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE**

Housing Developments by Building Size

- **All Housing (2019)**
- **New Construction (2009-2018)**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Degree of Difficulty</strong></th>
<th><strong>Easier</strong></th>
<th><strong>Specific, quantifiable standards that are easy to measure and don’t change</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A bit tricky</strong></td>
<td>Performance-based standards that are harder to measure but still measurable and related to physical design</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tough</strong></td>
<td>Qualitative standards that require review, subjective interpretation and judgment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Very hard</strong></td>
<td>Standards for ongoing activity or maintenance of characteristics that tend to change over time</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Zoning Does Some Things Better Than Others

## Examples at Varying Scales, Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All projects</th>
<th>Dimensional standards for height, setbacks, parking, &amp;c. (Article 5.000 and Special Standards)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25,000 SF+</td>
<td>Green Building Requirements (Section 22.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood plain</td>
<td>Flood Plain Overlay District Standards (Section 20.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000 SF+ (&amp; others)</td>
<td>Project Review procedures and Urban Design Objectives (Article 19.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited examples</td>
<td>Landscape maintenance, operational standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Rule 1: Must Follow All Rules

## Potential Overlap with Current Zoning Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Open Space Requirements** | Residential uses citywide have minimum private open space; neighborhood districts have minimum permeable open space (Section 5.22)  
Open space and permeability required for all uses in Alewife (Section 20.90)  
Public open space required in many major development areas (Articles 13, 14, 15) |
| **Planting Requirements**   | Landscaping and trees required for surface parking lots (Section 6.48)  
Green area setbacks required in Alewife (Section 20.90) and some other areas  
Tree planting required in Parkway Overlay District (Section 20.60) |
| **“Green Relief”**          | Exemptions/incentives for “functional” (planted) green roof area, exterior wall insulation, and sun-shading devices (Sections 22.30, 22.40, 22.50) |
| **Environmental Standards** | Green Building Requirements (Section 22.20)  
Flood Plain Overlay District Standards (Section 20.70)  
Urban Design Objectives re: environment, infrastructure (Sections 19.33, 19.34) |
# Rule 1: Must Follow All Rules

## Potential Tension with Current Zoning Standards (and others)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basement Uses</th>
<th>Basement floor area not limited in single-family and two-family dwellings, waivable by special permit otherwise (Article 2.000) Special permit relief for basement apartments in some areas, with required flood impact review (Section 20.600)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shading</td>
<td>Covered structures (e.g., porches, canopies) limited by floor area and setback requirements (Articles 2.000, 5.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>Height limits can disincentivize elevating uses (Article 5.000, special districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking and Pathways</td>
<td>Requirements for number of parking spaces, dimensions and width of drive aisles, access for bicycle parking all require paved surface (Article 6.000) Accessibility standards require paved surface (ADA, building code)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Design</td>
<td>Urban Design Objectives re: conformance with established patterns, pedestrian and bicycle friendliness, historic preservation (Sections 19.31, 19.32, 19.35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank You