City of Cambridge
Community Development Department

What We Talk About When We Talk About Standards

Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development
Presentation to Climate Resilience Zoning Task Force
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The Standard is the “Ideal”

Meaning if everything were developed new today, what rules would we want it to follow?
The Real World is “Non-Standard”

• In Cambridge, all development is redevelopment

• Not everything conforms – but zoning is meant to transition from less to more conforming over the long term

• Non-conforming conditions are “protected” under state statute – can be maintained but not extended
# Standards Are Not the Same As Requirements

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<th>Ways to Apply Standards</th>
<th>Examples in Current Zoning</th>
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<td>Advisory (non-binding)</td>
<td>Design Guidelines</td>
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<td>Criteria in binding review (special permit, design approval)</td>
<td>Article 19 Special Permit Objectives (19.30)</td>
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<td>“Flexible” requirement with modifications by special permit</td>
<td>Building and Site Plan Requirements (19.50)</td>
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<td>“Special” requirement for certain types/sizes of development</td>
<td>Green Building Requirements (22.20)</td>
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<td>“Base” requirement (universally applied, modification only by variance)</td>
<td>Article 5 Development Standards</td>
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Using Standards Responsibly

Questions to Ask:

• Is this an easy standard for all property owners to understand?
• Does it require special professional expertise to conform?
• Could it conflict with other standards in zoning, or other codes?
• What level of review is needed to apply the standard effectively?
• How likely is it that the standard will be maintained over time?
• Is it more important to meet the standard exactly, or to achieve an outcome that is better than existing?
Thank You