

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: June 7, 2017

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Subject: Petition to rezone the block bounded by Third Street, Cambridge Street, Second Street, and Gore Street from Business A to a new designation Business A-5.

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Recommendation: The Planning Board does NOT RECOMMEND adoption.

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To the Honorable, the City Council,

On May 2, 2017, the Planning Board held a public hearing on this petition, submitted by representatives of Mark Lechmere, LLC and Amadan Management, LLC which control ownership of land within the subject area fronting Cambridge Street, Third Street, and Gore Street. The proposal would create a new zoning district that alters some of the development standards currently applicable in the block, specifically by modifying floor area ratio (FAR), height, and setback requirements for residential developments incorporating small-scale retail uses at the ground floor and providing all parking below grade. According to the petitioner, the proposed change would enable development of a four-story mixed-use building with the previously described components. The Board heard testimony from representatives of the petitioners, including a design presentation of the prospective development scheme, and from members of the public, who were predominantly residents living near the affected area.


It is important to note that the Board's recommendation is on the specific proposed zoning change, and not on the proposed development. While Board members appreciated seeing the petitioners' proposed design as an example of what might result from the proposed amendment, the Board focused its discussion on the particulars of the zoning petition and did not engage in development review that would only occur if, and when, a proposal is before the Board seeking project approval.

The Board is in general agreement that the subject area would benefit from redevelopment, given that it currently contains a preponderance of paved parking lots that contribute little to the area. Board members also saw merit in various aspects of the proposed zoning, such as supporting ground-floor retail use in an important mixed-use corridor, accommodating parking below-grade, allowing buildings to be built to front lot lines, and encouraging the creation of new housing near transit.

Nevertheless, the Board believes that the current zoning proposal may be too narrowly tailored to enable a particular project, and did not arise out of the type of planning and zoning studies that typically precede a zoning amendment proposal. It may be that some or all of the proposals for

this small portion of Cambridge Street should be considered for other parts of Cambridge Street. Therefore, the Board believes that this petition would benefit from additional study and input from the community to determine if it should stand alone or if there should be a broader vision for the area as a whole, and also to determine the range of impacts such change(s) might have. Some of this study may occur in the future as the Envision Cambridge process focuses on major corridors, including Massachusetts Avenue and Cambridge Street.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Theodore Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "H" and a stylized "C" at the end.

H Theodore Cohen, Chair.