



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: August 11, 2020

Subject: Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Zoning Petition

Recommendation: The Planning Board recommends ADOPTION.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On August 4, 2020, the Planning Board (the “Board”) held a public hearing to discuss the Affordable Housing Overlay City Council Zoning Petition (the “Petition”). Board members heard an introductory statement from Councillor Marc McGovern, who sponsored the Petition, a presentation from Community Development Department (CDD) staff, and testimony from the public.

Board members asked clarifying questions of staff regarding the applicability of the proposed AHO Design Guidelines in relation to the proposed zoning, the role of the Board in project review if the AHO is adopted, and the rationale for specific dimensional requirements in the Petition.

The majority of Board members expressed strong support for the AHO in concept, and recognized that the AHO is an important step in addressing the challenge of housing unaffordability in Cambridge by removing barriers to the production of affordable housing. The majority of Board members agreed that an as-of-right approval process for AHO projects is crucial to provide a level of certainty to developers of AHO projects, and that a citywide approach is necessary to promote goals of equity. Board members acknowledged that the Petition might not be perfect, and some Board members expressed concerns around details such as parking and dimensional standards, but it was noted that there is an evaluation process built into the zoning and that adjustments could be made over time to better meet the desired goals. Some Board members reflected on this Petition as an opportunity to acknowledge and address the broader role that zoning has played over time in furthering segregation and social inequity.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board voted 7-1 in favor of recommending adoption of the Petition as referred.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

Catherine Preston Connolly

Catherine Preston Connolly, Chair.