



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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July 22, 2015

To: Reservoir Hill Property Owners

From: Charles Sullivan, Executive Director

Re: District study process initiated; seeking study committee members

At a public hearing on June 4, the Cambridge Historical Commission voted to initiate, effective October 1, 2015, a combined neighborhood conservation district (NCD) and historic district study for the south slope of Reservoir Hill (see area in yellow on the attached map). The fall start date allows for the fact that many people travel at this time of year and would not be available to participate if we were to hold study committee meetings during the summer months.

The first step is the appointment of a study committee by the city manager. [If you are interested in being a member of the NCD study committee, please send a resume and letter of interest by August 28, 2015 to:](#) Cambridge Historical Commission, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139 or by email to histcomm@cambridgema.gov. An NCD study committee consists of seven members, including three residents and/or property owners of the study area, three members or alternates of the Historical Commission, and one additional person with knowledge and concern for conservation of the character-defining features of the city's built environment; we hope to ensure that all points of view are represented. The NCD study committee will meet concurrently with the historic district extension study committee, which will be comprised of members of the Historical Commission. All the meetings will be open to the public and the public is encouraged to attend and participate. We hope to find a convenient and accessible location for the meetings; suggestions would be appreciated. A schedule of meeting dates and location(s) will be mailed to you after the committee has been appointed.

Historic districts and neighborhood conservation districts (NCDs) are enacted by the City Council to protect the architectural and historic character of the city that we all enjoy. Historic districts are adopted according to Chapter 40C of the General Laws; NCDs, according to Chapter 2.78, Article II of the City Code. Either designation would give the Historical Commission jurisdiction over demolition, new construction, and certain alterations visible from a public way. One option is to expand the boundaries of the Old Cambridge Historic District and the other option is to establish a new NCD. More information is available online here:

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/districtsHistoricProperties/reservoirhill>.

The study process will assess the character and history of the neighborhood, the development potential of each property under current regulatory conditions, the unique aspects of the neighborhood that are valued by its residents, and the jurisdiction and boundaries of a potential district. The study will conclude with the drafting of a report and recommendations to the Historical Commission. We anticipate that the study will consist of one to two meetings per month over the course of nine to twelve months.

Effective from October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016, interim regulatory protections will apply to the properties within the study area. This means that for up to one year the properties will be treated as if they were already in a designated district. Proposals for exterior alterations visible from a public way will need to be approved by the Historical Commission prior to commencement of work or issuance of a building permit. This requirement does not apply to interior renovations, exterior maintenance or repairs, or changes to plant material, all of which are exempt from review. Building permit applications for exempt projects will be approved administratively by Commission staff. Such administrative approvals generally take only one or two business days to complete.

Please look over the additional materials posted on our website. Feel free to contact me or Sarah Burks in my office if you have additional questions. Remember to send in your resume and letter of interest to the City Manager if you would like to be considered for appointment to the study committee.

Note: A new petition has recently been received. This petition requests that the Historical Commission reconsider its vote of June 4 and/or decline to exercise its jurisdiction to review projects as if the area was already a designated district during the study period. The Election Commission has validated the signatures and we will schedule this matter for consideration at the Commission's September 3 meeting.

