



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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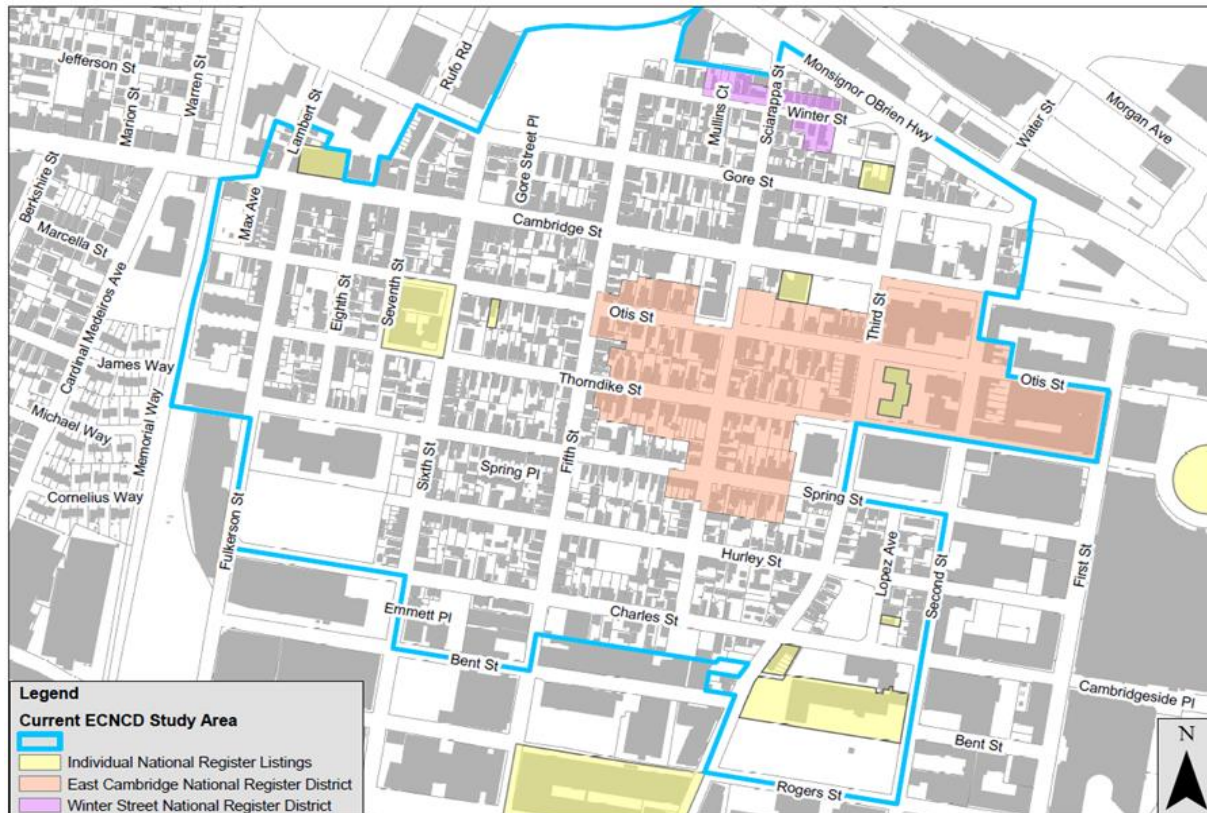
E-mail: histcomm@cambridgema.gov

URL: <http://www.cambridgema.gov/Historic>

To: East Cambridge Residents and Property Owners

The East Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee, which has been meeting for the last two years to identify neighborhood goals and draft a proposal for a neighborhood conservation district (NCD) in the area, asks for your feedback.

The East Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District, if adopted, would regulate demolition, new construction, and certain alterations to existing buildings with the goal of protecting the architectural character of the area while supporting appropriate change and development.



East Cambridge NCD Study Area. The blue line delineates the proposed conservation district. Properties on the National Register of Historic Places are shaded in yellow, peach, and purple.

NCDs regulate only exterior features visible from a public way. Interior features, landscaping, paint colors, and normal maintenance activities are always exempt from review. To address conditions in East Cambridge, the Study Committee also recommends automatic approval of activities such as new siding; alterations that don't change window or door locations and leave significant historical features intact, replacement windows (with certain conditions), vents, heating and air conditioning equipment, solar panels, charging stations, most roofing materials, skylights, and fences 4' high or less in front of a building or 6' high or less elsewhere on the property. On Cambridge Street, restoration of original storefronts would be encouraged, and zoning-compliant signs would be exempt from review.

Throughout the study process the committee has worked to ascertain the level of jurisdiction needed to protect historic resources without unduly burdening residents and property owners. The current proposal expresses the committee's desire to preserve significant buildings from demolition or inappropriate alterations, maintain original architectural detailing where existing, permit non-destructive alterations, and allow for architectural diversity in new construction. A goal statement, design guidelines, and a proposed scope of jurisdiction have been drafted to guide the reviews by a future East Cambridge NCD commission.

Proponents argue that the public benefits of a district would help conserve significant buildings in the historic core of East Cambridge, protect generational ownership and 'naturally-occurring' affordable housing, support smart growth, provide a public forum for comments on development projects, and encourage storefront revitalization on Cambridge Street.

Some members of the public disagree with these findings. They fear that the unintended consequences of a neighborhood conservation district might include increased costs, the prospect of deferred maintenance, a stifling of creativity, unnecessarily long delays, and arbitrary and capricious decisions by an NCD commission.

If adopted, the City Manager will appoint a commission comprised of East Cambridge residents and property owners to review applications for new construction, demolition, and alterations on properties within the district. Demolition and new construction would always be subject to review; decisions on alterations would be binding or non-binding based on the scope of work and whether the property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see map).



Bottle House Block, 204-214 Third Street (1827)

We encourage everyone to read through the Draft Preliminary Report of the Study Committee for a fuller understanding of the proposal. The Report, along with minutes, documents, and recordings of past Study Committee meetings, is available on the Cambridge Historical Commission webpage at: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/districtsHistoricProperties/eastcambridgencdstudy>.

We ask that each respondent complete the enclosed poll questionnaire no later than [date]. The poll may be returned by mail or dropped off at the O'Connell Branch Library circulation desk. The Study Committee will take the results into account as it prepares a recommendation to the Cambridge Historical Commission. The Commission will then conduct a public hearing and formulate a recommendation to the City Council, which alone has the authority to enact the designation.

Questions, comments or suggestions can be submitted to Eric Hill at the Cambridge Historical Commission at ehill@cambridgema.gov or by phone at 617-349-4688.

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East Cambridge NCD Postcard Poll

1) Your name (optional): _____

2) Check all that apply:

- I'm a property owner in the study area.
- I live in the study area.

3) Your address or the address of your property in the study area: _____

4) Do you support the creation of a neighborhood conservation district in East Cambridge?

- Yes**
- No**
- Not sure**

Please enter comments or suggestions

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