



East Cambridge ~ Wellington-Harrington ~ Inman Square
One Kendall Square ~ Lechmere Square

www.EastCambridgeBA.com

Executive Director

September 9, 2020

Jason Alves
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Cambridge Historical Commission
831 Massachusetts Ave
Cambridge, MA 02139

Board and Officers

Members of the Board,

Patrick Magee, President
Atwood's Tavern
ecbapresident@gmail.com

As you consider extending the time frame for the East Cambridge Conservation District Study, please consider the East Cambridge Business Association's (ECBA's) continued opposition to this proposal. Attached, for your convenience, is the previous letter offered by the ECBA which is still consistent with our position.

Lenny Frisoli, Clerk
Frisoli Associates, P.C.

The ECBA remains focused on reducing bureaucratic barriers for small businesses to operate. The uncertainty around what rules will emerge from this process prevent us from supporting this proposal. The added expenses that will be incurred and time lost to process also remains a concern.

Michelle Lower, Treasurer
Alexandria Real Estate Equities

Prior to, and since the impacts of COVID-19, ECBA has been advocating for reduction in fees and costs associated with doing business in the City of Cambridge. The small business community has especially felt the impacts of COVID, and we continue to worry about their viability. Creating a Conservation District encompassing Cambridge Street does not align with the ECBA or small business priorities at this time.

Michelle Carter
Divco West

Finally, we want to note the lack of consensus in the room early on this study process about whether a conservation district was appropriate for the neighborhood. The questions of diversity and equity continues to rise to the top of concerns for many.

Carl Fantasia
New Deal Fish Market

If the study is to be extended, we ask again for the removal of all business zones that are part of the current proposal.

Paul Ferreira
Cambridge Printing Co.

Thank you for taking this into consideration. Please see previous communication attached.

Michael Grill
Fairlane Properties

Sincerely

Virginia Johnson
Gather Here Stitch Lounge

Jason Alves
Executive Director

Stephen LaMaster
Vinfen

Michael J. Ring
The Law Office of Michael J. Ring

Mark Rogers
Rogers Properties Group



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Executive Director

September 30, 2019

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Thank you for your consideration and extending the timeline for the East Cambridge Conservation District Petition study so that the ECBA could meet with the petitioners to better understand their goals and what a conservation district would mean for the businesses and property owners in our business districts. Since the last meeting we have had the petitioners join us at a monthly ECBA meeting so they could present their vision for creating a conservation district in East Cambridge. The petitioners have a thoughtful and genuine desire to preserve neighborhood character in East Cambridge and we are sympathetic to their desire to preserve the architectural detail that has, at times, fallen victim to less thoughtful redevelopment. The topic was further discussed at an ECBA Board meeting. While we take no issue with a district being established in residential areas if that is desired, we are not supportive of the Conservation District encompassing our business districts of East Cambridge.

As a business organization, we often find ourselves advocating against policy that create additional layers of bureaucracy that only certain groups or companies may have the means or tolerance to address. Currently the business districts in East Cambridge need substantial reinvestment to bring buildings and commercial spaces up to date to ensure that Cambridge Street continues to be a place of commerce serving the community. Often additional approvals create a challenge for smaller owners and could be a deterrent to invest in necessary work. We want to ensure that East Cambridge remains a place that is diverse and accessible to small business owners. We fear that extra restrictions will create a financial burden that future tenants will bear and could also impact our diversity.

The Board also found it problematic that there is no way of knowing what rules could be put in place as a result of the study. Conservation Districts have a wide range of rules and the uncertainty of the final recommendations makes it difficult to endorse on behalf of the members, small businesses, and property owners.

It would be our recommendation to remove the BA, BB, and PUD4A zones from the study area thereby excluding the Cambridge Street corridor. We feel the Historical Commission itself has enough jurisdiction and tools to prevent detrimental changes from occurring in these areas. ECBA would be very interested in seeing an increase in grant funding available to small businesses and property owners to incentivize redevelopment and building upgrades that are aligned with the intentions of the Conservation District but are independent of said district.

Thank you for taking this into consideration.

Sincerely

Jason Alves
Executive Director

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