

VI. Recommendations

The potential authority of a neighborhood conservation district extends to regulation of all publicly-visible construction, demolition, and alterations, excluding color. This amount of protection is neither necessary nor desirable in most situations, and the enabling ordinance allows flexibility in crafting a level of jurisdiction that protects significant buildings and features while allowing property owners to maintain and improve their properties without unnecessary complications.

Study committee members, CHC staff, and members of the public engaged in extended discussions about necessary jurisdiction, National Register status with regard to regulation, and nonbinding review (see Part III above). The following recommendations are still subject to further debate and change.

A. Exemptions from Review

The enabling ordinance, while enabling jurisdiction over all publicly visible exterior alterations, new construction, and demolition, categorically excludes the following from review:

- Maintenance and ordinary repairs in kind.
- Interior alterations.
- Exterior alterations not visible from a public way.
- Paint color

The Study Committee envisions accepting the following additional exclusions from review as enabled by the ordinance:

- Except for masonry structures, the application of exterior wall material in a manner that does not require the removal or enclosure of any cornice, fascia, soffit, bay, porch, hood, window or door casing, or any other protruding decorative element.¹
- Alterations to the exterior of existing structures that do not increase or diminish the size and location of windows and doors, cause the removal of any bay, porch, hood, window or door casing or any other protruding decorative element, or alter the appearance of a roof;
- Signs, temporary structures, lawn statuary, or recreational equipment, subject to such conditions as to duration of use, dimension, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the Commission may reasonably specify;
- Terraces, walks, driveways, sidewalks and similar structures substantially at grade level;

¹ Underlined phrase indicates an exception to the permitted exclusion.

- Storm doors and windows, screens, window air conditioners, lighting fixtures, antennae, trelliswork and similar appurtenances.

The Study Committee also recommends that the East Cambridge NCD Order adopt further exclusions under the provision that a commission “may determine from time to time after a public hearing that certain categories of exterior architectural features or structures ... may be constructed or altered without review” (2.78.090.C). Further exclusions should include the following:

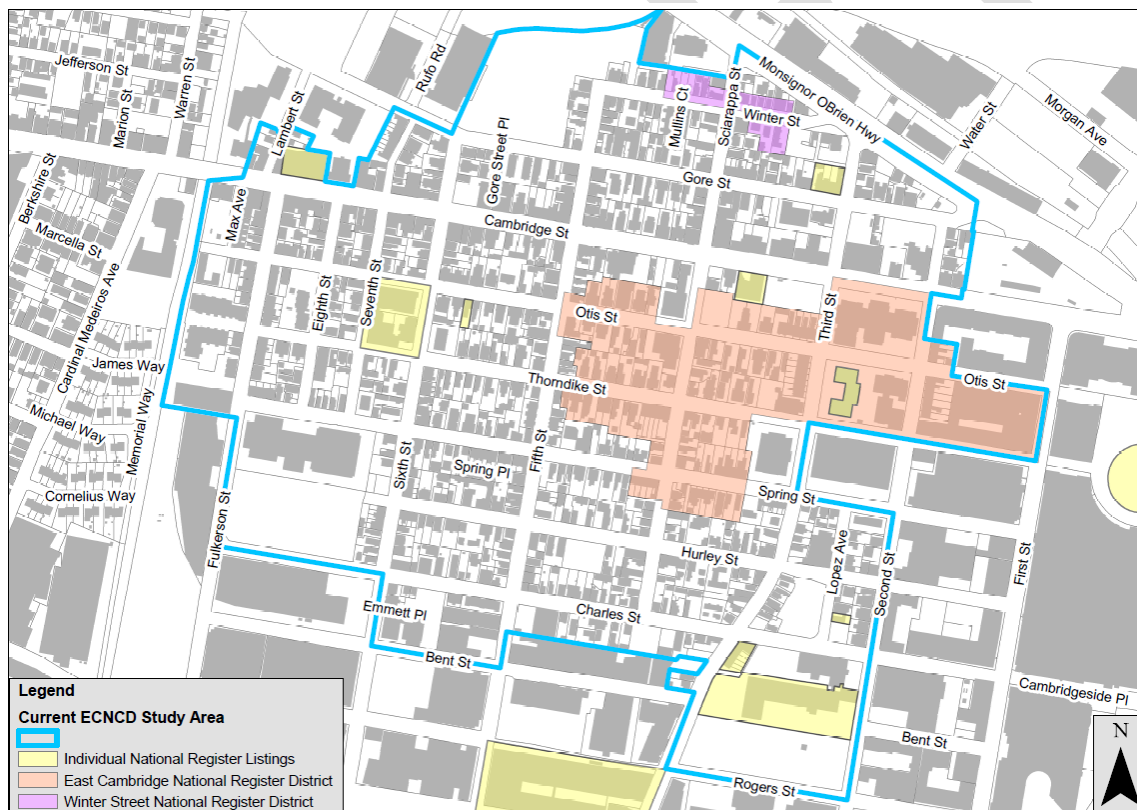
- Replacement windows pursuant to the Cambridge Historical Commission’s *Guidelines for the Replacement of Wood Windows* (see appendix)
- New openings in foundations (below the first floor) for windows and light wells.
- Furnace vents not located on a principal facade.
- HVAC equipment behind the principal front wall plane of a building.
- Flat skylights and solar panels parallel to and in close contact with the plane of the roof.
- Satellite dishes, antennae, or similar features.
- Replacement roofing materials, except when replacing a slate roof.
- Exterior lighting that conforms to city codes.
- Electric vehicle charging stations.
- Walls and fences four feet high or less between the sidewalk and the principal wall plane of the building, and walls and fences six feet high or less behind the principal wall plane of the building.²
- Alterations to commercial building facades that the Executive Director of the Historical Commission determines will uncover the decorative or structural framework of the building originally intended to surround a storefront. Framework consists of such elements as piers, columns, corner boards, quoins, friezes, cornices, and similar structural or decorative features.
- Storefront alterations that the Executive Director determines do not obscure, remove, relocate, or replace historic or original exterior architectural features. Such features include, but are not limited to, elements such as brackets, window and door casings, fascia, hoods, bays, and window sash.
- Signs conforming to Section 7.000, “Signs and Illumination” of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance.

² As measured from the grade of the sidewalk or the surface of the ground immediately below the wall or fence, whichever is lower.

CHC staff will issue Certificates of Nonapplicability for projects involving the listed exceptions; no public hearings will be necessary in these instances. Applicants seeking approval for projects in these categories that do not qualify for a Certificate of Nonapplicability may apply to the NCD commission for a Certificate of Appropriateness. After enactment, the East Cambridge NCD Commission may decide to delegate approval of Certificates of Appropriateness in these categories to CHC staff.

B. Jurisdiction over New Construction, Demolition, and Certain Alterations

Activities such as demolition and new construction are categorically irreversible and must be subject to NCD commission review in all parts of the district. Certain types of publicly-visible alterations may be less critical in their effect. National Register status is considered to be a useful tool to differentiate between levels of review. The study committee debated whether to treat National Register buildings more strictly, or non-National Register buildings less so. A consensus emerged that all buildings should be subject to the same jurisdiction, but that certain activities or alterations to non-National Register buildings should be subject to non-binding review



East Cambridge properties on the National Register of Historic Places

1. Properties on the National Register of Historic Places

For properties on the National Register of Historic Places, all new construction and demolition, as well as publicly-visible alterations that do not qualify for an exemption, will be subject to binding review by the NCD Commission pursuant to the guidelines stated in Part IV.

2. Non-National Register properties – Binding and Non-binding Review

For properties that are not on the National Register, there will be binding review by the NCD Commission for all new construction and demolition.

- There will be non-binding review of the following categories of non-exempt alterations:
 - Removal of exterior materials down to the sheathing if the removal results in changes to the appearance of cornices, fascias, soffits, bays, porches, hoods, corner boards, window or door casings, or any other protruding decorative element.
 - Changes to roof form, shape or height, including addition of dormers
 - Replacement of a slate roof with other material
 - Changes to door and window sizes and locations, except basement windows and exempted storefront alterations
 - Removal or covering original door hoods or cornice trim

The NCD Commission, once established, should adopt procedures delegating review and approval to the staff of reversible alterations which nevertheless have the potential to adversely affect historic fabric. A Certificate of Nonapplicability would be issued by the staff if neighborhood conservation district guidelines are followed. These categories should include:

- Ordinary repairs or maintenance using synthetics or similar materials and construction details to those existing.
- Reconstruction replicating the exterior design of a building, structure, or exterior architectural feature damaged or destroyed by fire, storm, or other disaster, provided such reconstruction is begun within one year thereafter and carried forward with due diligence.

C. Boundaries

The Study Committee recommends adoption of the boundaries as drawn for the purposes on the study.