



*Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood  
Study Update*

City of Cambridge  
Community Development Department  
May 31, 2011

## *Neighborhood Planning Questions*

- What do you like about the character of the neighborhood?
- What concerns do you have about the neighborhood?
- What do you see as opportunities for change and improvement over time?

## *First Meeting – February 5*

- Learn about planning in Cambridge
  - Hear your thoughts, concerns, vision for the future
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## *Today's Meeting*

- Based on your vision for the neighborhood, what are some **recommendations** that will help guide the City's future planning?

## *Agenda*

- “What is a Recommendation?”
- Review of Main Issues  
(February 5 Meeting + Questionnaire)
- Additional Information on Selected Topics
- *Discussion:*  
*What are the priority issues?*  
*How could these issues be addressed?*

## *What is a Recommendation?*

**OS 26**

**2004 Update**

Provide air conditioning at War Memorial facilities.

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2004 Update

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**COMPLETED:** The War Memorial building was fully renovated in 2008 with upgraded mechanical systems.

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## *What is a Recommendation?*

**H 14**

**2004 Update**

Address the amount of time it takes to get affordable housing.

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The amount of time it takes for a household to find affordable housing is the result of high demand and limited supply of affordable units. Through the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust, the City works to support the creation of new affordable units to be made available to interested income-eligible households. The City also provides homebuyer resources, including first-time homebuyer classes, to help households purchase housing either from the City's affordable housing supply or from the private market.

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## What is a Recommendation?

**LU 9**

**2004 Update**

The City should work to protect existing small businesses and promote new small businesses within Mid-Cambridge.

This might be accomplished through zoning or design guidelines (especially of locations with desirable non-conforming uses on Broadway and Cambridge Streets). Some areas that could be considered for this type of zoning would be the Skenderian Apothecary site and the former Savenours site. The City should look for additional appropriate locations.

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**COMPLETED PROCESS:** The Community Development Department held meetings in 2007 to discuss possible zoning approaches to support existing non-conforming retail businesses in the residential neighborhood. There was little support for changes to current zoning regulations.

The city's Economic Development Division actively works to support small businesses in a variety of ways, including improvement grants, workshops, one-on-one consulting, and assistance matching local retail business owners with available spaces.

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## *What's in a "Good Recommendation?"*

- New ideas
- Clear vision and direction
- Focus on the future – goals and outcomes
- Different possibilities for implementation

## *Main Issues from Community Members*

- February 5 meeting  
(28+ Attendees)
- Questionnaire from January-March  
(26 Responses)

*See handout summarizing results*

## *What people like about Mid-Cambridge*

- Walkability, accessibility, centrality  
(Easy to live without a car)
- Residential character
- Variety, diversity of buildings and uses
- Lively area with things to do
- Availability of Main Library
- Parks (especially for kids)

## Main Issues – Land Use and Zoning

- Supporting **retail vitality**
- Concerns about **infill housing**
- *What is allowed under **current zoning** regulations?*  
*(How do zoning regulations get reviewed?)*
- *How does **historic review** work?*



## *Main Issues – Energy and Environment*

- Information to homeowners and landlords – what can they do?
- Incentives for energy-saving measures – insulation, green roofs, white roofs, solar
- Permeability – less hardscape, more plantings, trees, and pervious surface
- Improving efficiency in city buildings, infrastructure and programs

## *Main Issues – Transportation*

- Promoting non-auto travel
- Improving **bus service/public transportation**
- Support for **bicycling**
- Enforcement – road rules, snow clearance  
*(see handout)*
- **Parking** *(some want it, some like not needing it!)*



## *Main Issues – Housing*

- More affordable housing options – low, moderate and middle income
- Encouraging renovation, improving energy-efficiency
- Affordable housing scattered through neighborhood, not concentrated in large buildings

## *Main Issues – Economic Development*

- **Storefront vacancies**
- More small-scale, **local retail** (unique character)
- Fewer chains, fast food, “mall-like stores”
- Affordable food, clothing, household goods
- *Interest in **Mass Ave from Central to Harvard***



## *Main Issues – Open Space*

- More open space for adults to enjoy
- Small areas with **greenery, sitting places**  
(no space for big new parks)
- Interest in **community gardens**  
(possibly raised plots)
- *Dog use*



## Demographics Update

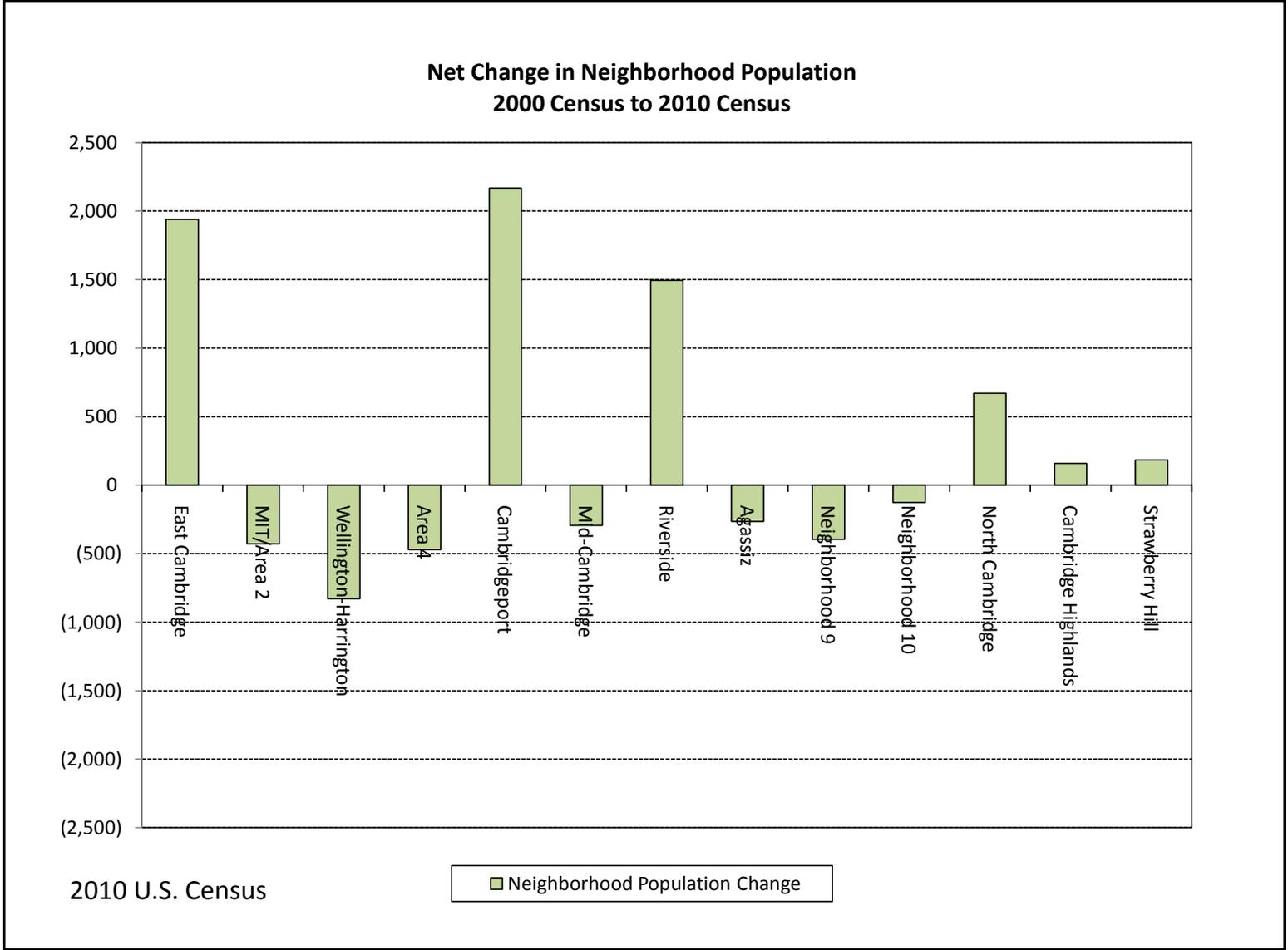
	2000 Population	2010 Population	Change
City of Cambridge	101,355	105,162	+ 3.8 %
Mid- Cambridge	13,285	12,991	- 2.2 %

2010 U.S. Census

## Demographics Update

	2000 Housing	2010 Housing	Change
City of Cambridge	44,725 units	47,291 units	+ 5.7 %
Mid- Cambridge	6,722 units	6,615 units	- 1.6 %

2010 U.S. Census



## What is Regulated under Zoning?

- How much **square footage** can you build?

***Floor Area Ratio (FAR)***

- How many **housing units** can you have?

***Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit***

- How much **yard space** must you have?

***Private Open Space Ratio*** and ***Setbacks***

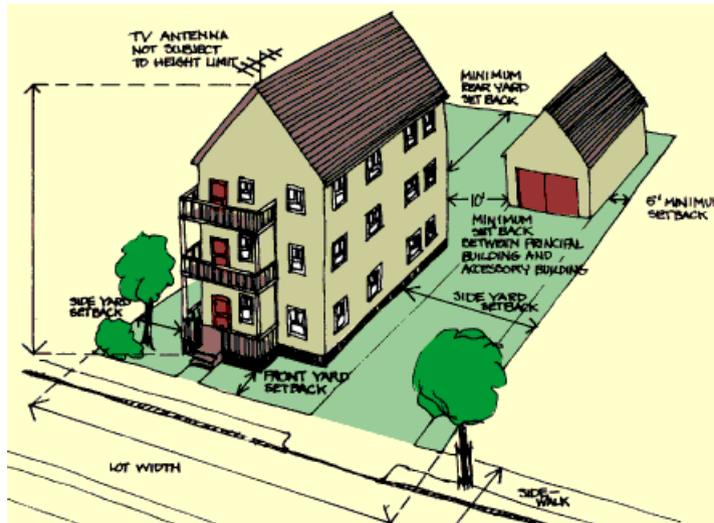
- How tall can your building be?

***Maximum Height***

- How much ***parking*** must you provide?

## Residence C-1 Zoning District

On a **5,000 square-foot (SF) lot**:



**5,000 SF lot** × **0.75 FAR**  
= **3,750 SF building**

**5,000 SF lot** ÷ **1,500 SF/D.U.**  
= **3 dwelling units**

**5,000 SF lot** × **30% O.S.**  
= **1,500 SF open space**

**Setbacks:**    ≥ 10' in front  
                      ≥ 20' in rear  
                      ~ 10-15' sides

**35 feet max height**  
**(about 3 stories)**

**1 parking space / unit**

*“Backyard Rezoning” (1999) – Residence C-1*

Standard	Old Requirement	Current Requirement
Floor Area Ratio	0.75 (max)	0.75 (max)
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	1,200 sq.ft. (min)	1,500 sq.ft. (min)
Open Space Ratio	15 % (min)	30 % (min)
Height	35’ (max)	35’ (max)

## Residence C-1 Zoning District – Mid-Cambridge

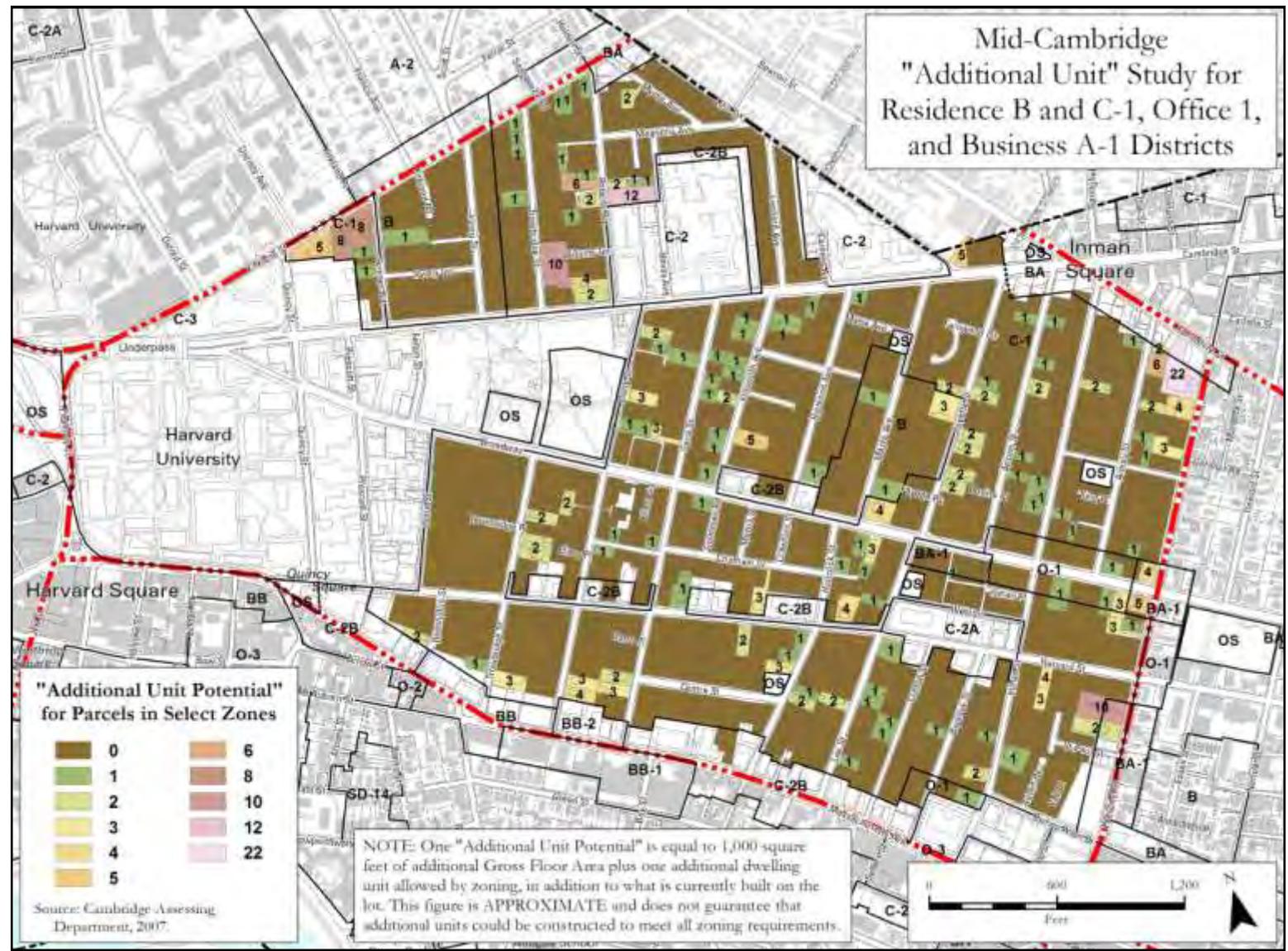
Standard	Required	Median	Average
Floor Area Ratio	<b>0.75 (max)</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.98</b>
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	<b>1,500 SF (min)</b>	<b>1,446 SF</b>	<b>1,828 SF</b>
Open Space Ratio	<b>30 % (min)</b>	<b>41.7 %</b>	<b>41.1 %</b>
Height	<b>35' (max)</b>	<b>31.7'</b>	<b>31.6'</b>

Cambridge Assessing Department and GIS. **ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE**

## Other Zoning Districts in Mid-Cambridge

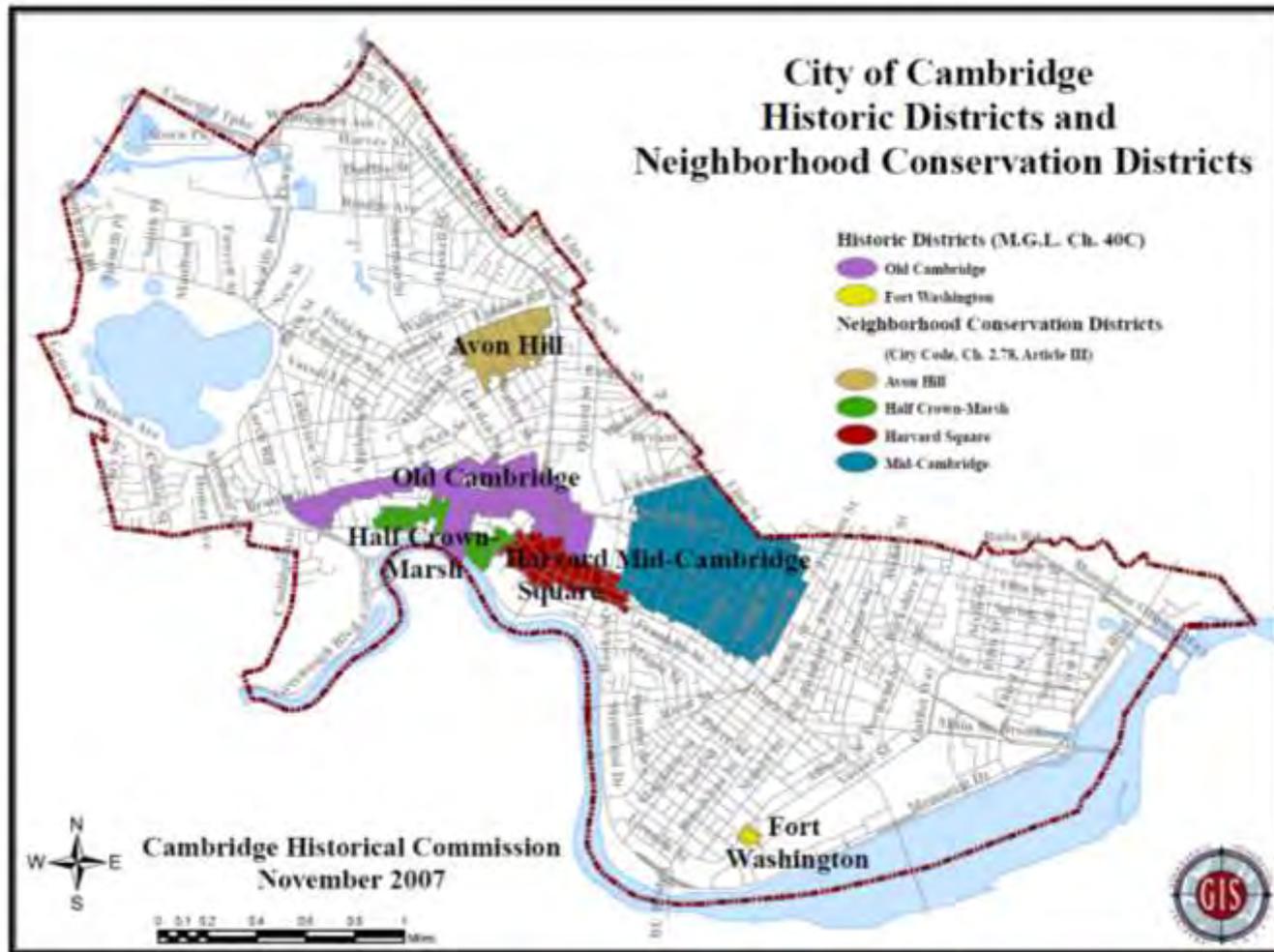
<b>District</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Residence B	Lower-density housing, more yard space
Office 1	Similar to C-1, allows office uses
Business A-1	Similar to C-1, allows office and retail uses
Residence C-2A, Residence C-2B	Higher-density housing, taller heights
Residence C-2, Residence C-3	Higher-density housing and institutional uses
Office 3	Higher-density housing and office uses
Business A, Business B (1,2)	Higher-density housing, office and retail uses







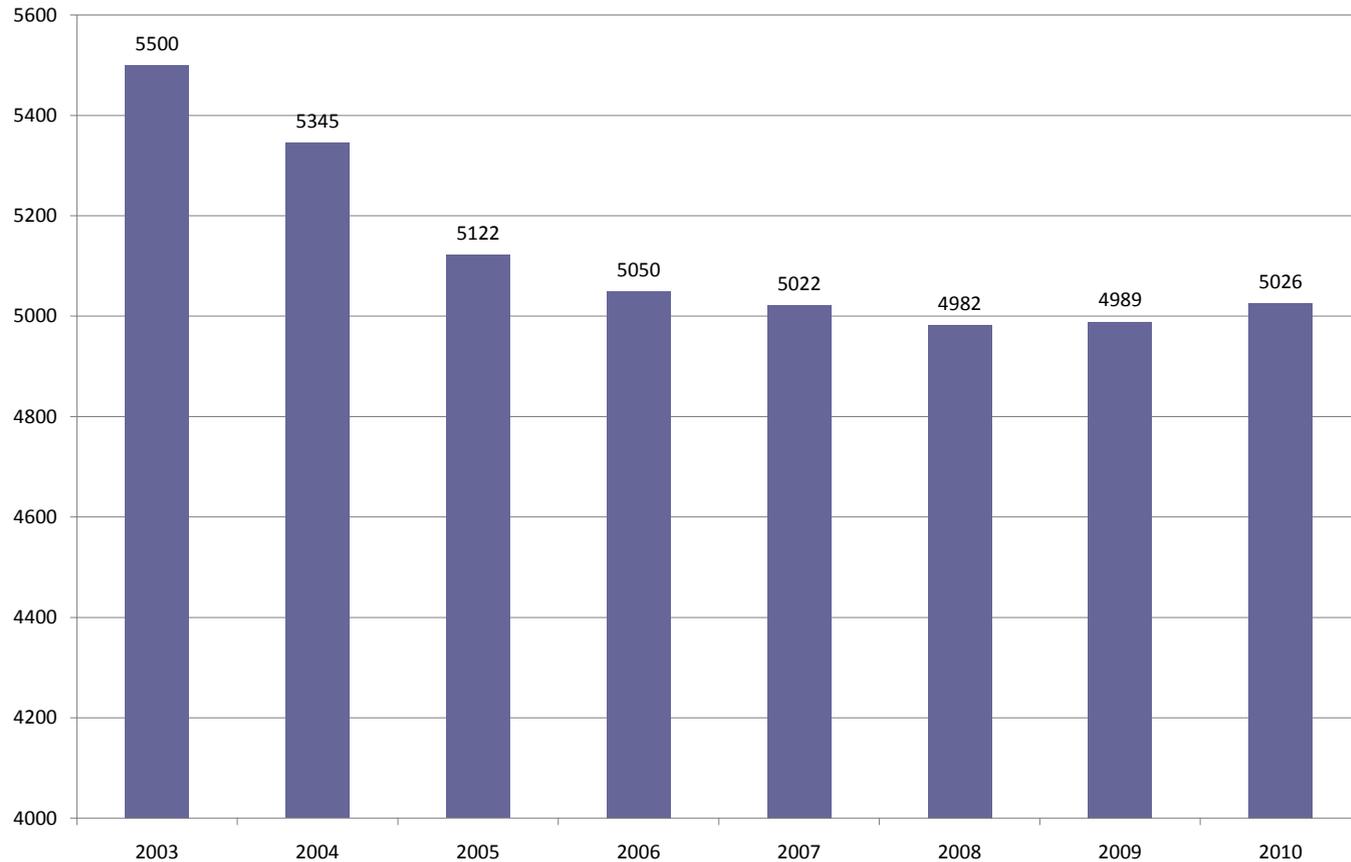
# Historic Review



## *Questions from Zoning Analysis*

- *Is infill housing a major concern given current zoning? How might it be addressed?*
- *Are there other zoning issues that stand out?*

## *Residential Parking Permits in Mid-Cambridge*



Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department – March 2011

## *Public Transportation – MBTA Statistics*

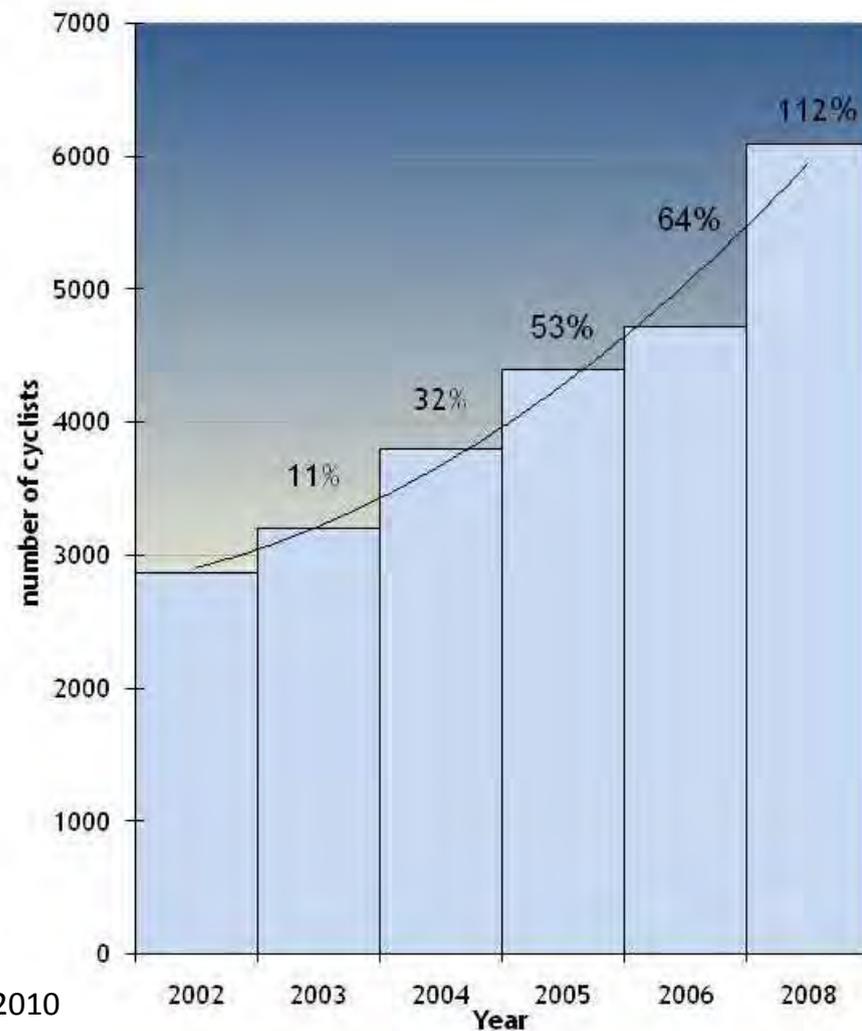
Station	Weekday Boardings	Change 2007-2010
Central	14,531	+ 7%
Harvard	21,868	+ 11 %

Bus Route	Weekday Boardings	Saturday Boardings	Sunday Boardings
1	12,325	9,495	4,914
69	2,985	1,818	920
68	520	–	–

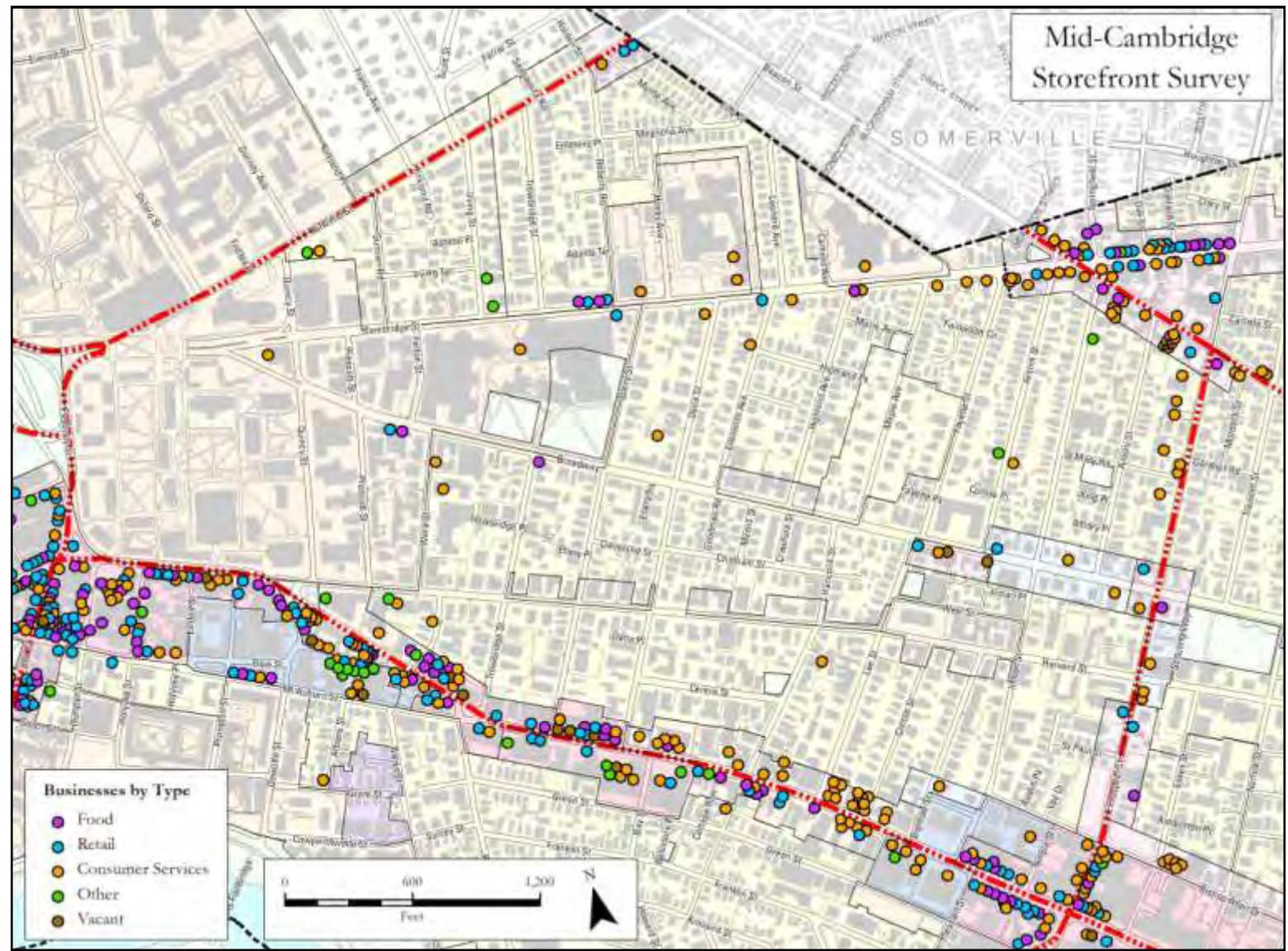
MBTA “Blue Book” Ridership and Service Statistics – 2010

## *Bicycling Trends Citywide*

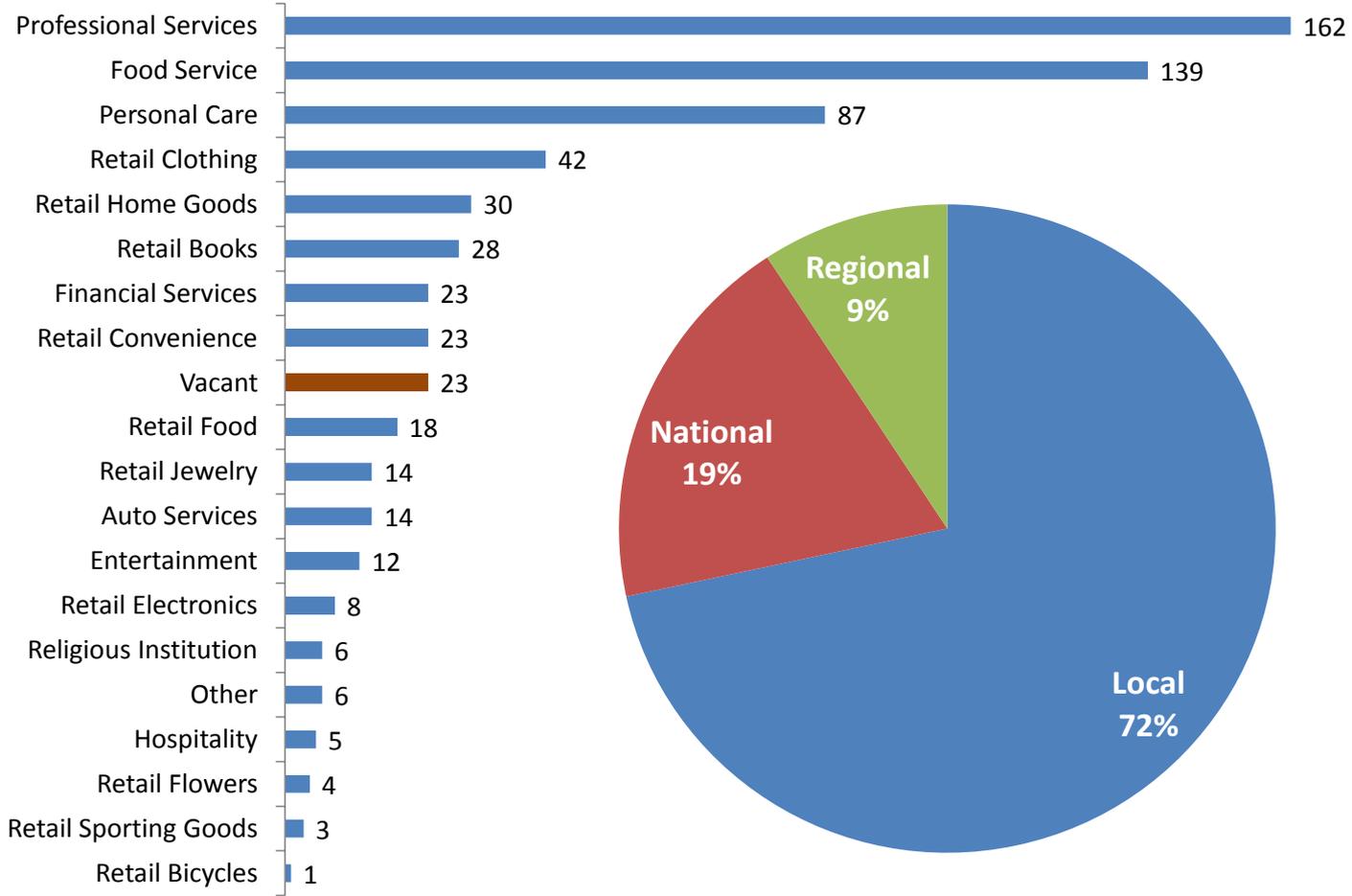
- Direct counts show doubling of cyclists
- Surveys show about 65% of households own at least one bicycle



Community Development Department, 2010



# Businesses in/around Mid-Cambridge



Community Development Department "Storefront Surveys" – 2004-2011. **ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE**

## *Questions About Retail*

- *Given the current mix, what are the businesses that are needed/desired?*
- *Given the current locations, what are the desired locations for new businesses?*

## *Open Space – Passive Sitting Areas*



## *Open Space – Raised Community Garden Beds*



## *Discussion – Future Recommendations*

- What are the priority issues for Mid-Cambridge?
- What are the desired outcomes?
- What approaches could the City take to achieve the desired outcomes?