



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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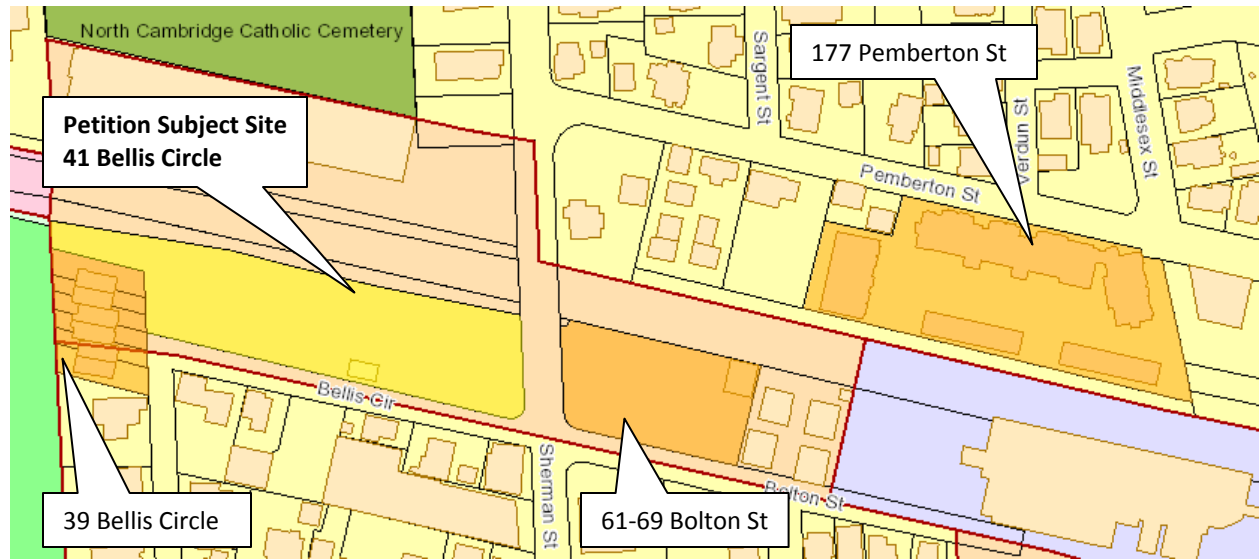
To: Planning Board
From: CDD Staff
Date: October 25, 2011
Re: **Runkel, et al. Zoning Petition (Bellis Circle)**



Update

Staff have assembled the following information in response to requests from the Planning Board and Ordinance Committee at prior public hearings. This information relates to:

- Characteristics of prior residential projects in the area
- Buildout potential of the petition area under various zoning alternatives
- Recent sale prices for residential development properties
- Recommendations from neighborhood studies
- Background on previous rezoning for this area (Citywide Rezoning process)
- Communication with owner of subject property

Please also note that the Ordinance Committee held a second hearing to consider this petition on October 13, 2011. At that hearing, the Ordinance Committee moved and voted to refer the petition to the full City Council with a positive recommendation.



Project:	39 Bellis Circle (Wedgemere Group)	177 Pemberton Street (Portland Stone Ware)	61-69 Bolton Street
			<i>UNDER CONSTRUCTION (no image available)</i>
Special Permit Granted:	1986	1997	2010
Lot Area:	11,006 SF	42,173 SF	19,567 SF
Gross Floor Area:	11,400 SF	43,615 SF	26,436 SF
Floor Area Ratio:	1.04	1.03	1.53
Dwelling Units:	6	20	20
Lot Area / Dwg. Unit:	1,834 SF	2,109 SF	978 SF

Petition Subject Site: 41 Bellis Circle – Zoning Alternatives Analysis

District Designation:		C-1A (current)	C-1	C (proposed)	B
	Lot Area:	40,383 SF	40,383 SF	40,383 SF	40,383 SF
Base Zoning	Gross Floor Area:	50,479 SF	30,287 SF	24,230 SF	14,884 SF
	Floor Area Ratio:	1.25	0.75	0.60	0.37
	Dwelling Units:	40	26	22	10
	Lot Area / Dwg. Unit:	1,010 SF	1,553 SF	1,836 SF	4,038 SF
Base + Inclusionary	Gross Floor Area:	65,622 SF	39,575 SF	31,499 SF	19,349 SF
	Floor Area Ratio:	1.63	0.98	0.78	0.48
	Dwelling Units:	52	34	28	14
	Lot Area / Dwg. Unit:	777 SF	1,188 SF	1,442 SF	2,884 SF

ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE

Analysis

The example projects include two projects that have been regarded as fitting relatively well into the neighborhood context – the townhouses at 39 Bellis Circle and the “Portland Stone Ware” site project on Pemberton Street. The other example, at 61-69 Bolton Street (which has been permitted and is currently under construction), is the project that petitioners have cited as part of their motivation for the proposed rezoning.

The analysis looks at floor area density (represented as Floor Area Ratio or FAR) as well as dwelling unit density (represented as Lot Area per Dwelling Unit). In terms of floor area, the previous Bellis Circle and Pemberton Street townhouse projects were built to an FAR of about 1.0, which is comparable to the FAR allowed under Residence C-1 regulations after the inclusionary housing bonus is calculated. In terms of dwelling unit density, both projects have a unit density that would be allowed in a Residence C district but not allowed in a Residence B district.

There are many other factors to consider in evaluating how well a project fits with the neighborhood context. The petitioners have noted that building heights are a significant issue, and the height limit would be reduced to 35’ with a Residence C-1, C, or B designation. There are also yard setbacks, required open space and other design standards, which are progressively more restrictive in C-1, C, and B districts. In addition, for any significant development projects in Residence B, C, C-1 or C-1A districts, design review by the Planning Board would most likely be required under the townhouse or multifamily special permit regulations.

Residential Sale Price Analysis

The following is a very basic summary comparing the sale prices of residential developable properties to the scale of development that was ultimately approved. This does not account for all of the costs and other factors that are involved in residential property development, and does not consider the potential differences in property values based on broad economic factors or specific site characteristics such as location, environmental conditions, etc.

Project:	2419 Mass Ave	87 New Street	70 Fawcett Street
Sale Date:	Oct. 2006 ¹	Sep. 2009 ¹	Oct. 2011 ²
Sale Price:	\$ 4,600,000 ¹	\$ 2,750,000 ¹	\$ 13,577,000 ²
Approved Res.GFA ³ :	46,535 SF	58,500 SF ⁴	289,000 SF
Sale Price Per Res. GSF:	\$ 98.85	\$ 47.01	\$ 46.98
Approved Units ³ :	37	54 ⁴	260
Sale Price Per Unit:	\$ 124,342.32	\$ 50,925.93	\$ 52,219.23

1. Based on Cambridge Assessing Department records
2. Based on information reported in Boston Business Journal
3. Includes affordable units required under Inclusionary Housing
4. Estimated from base zoning allowances – it is known that 54 units have been constructed, but the exact Gross Floor Area could not be determined

ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE

Recommendations in Neighborhood Nine Study (1996) and Updates (2004, 2010)

In the neighborhood study, there was little discussion specifically related to the area along the railroad tracks near Bellis Circle. However, it was recommended that a zoning change be made to require a Planning Board special permit for projects in the Industry A-1 district (the area was formerly IA-1) and to encourage residential use “on the parcel at Sherman Street,” which may have referred to the Bolton Street parcel across Sherman Street from Bellis Circle. These basic ideas were reiterated in the two neighborhood study updates.

Citywide Rezoning

This area was among the 17 zoning districts that were converted from a commercial to a residential designation in the Citywide Rezoning of 2001. Most of the industrial-zoned land along the Fitchburg Railroad Line was changed from Industry A-1 to Residence C-1A (the portion that remained Industry A-1 has retained its commercial use). The Residence C-1A designation was created as part of the Citywide Rezoning to serve as a residential analog to the Industry A-1 District. The allowed FAR, dwelling unit density, and other dimensional requirements are similar to those of the IA-1 district at the time.

The stated goals of the Citywide Rezoning process include the following (emphasis added):

- Encourage a mix of uses to enhance vitality.
- Promote transit-oriented development.
- ***Facilitate residential use and affordable housing.***
- Encourage appropriate retail uses.
- Work for the creation of new open space.
- Lower allowed density and bulk for non-residential uses across the city.
- Reduce traffic growth and traffic impacts.
- Urge institutions to house their graduate students, develop in core campuses, and control parking.
- ***Require design review and public input for large projects.***

Development History

Most of the properties along the Fitchburg Railroad line either retain a commercial use or have been redeveloped for residential use within the past two decades. Most projects underwent review by the Planning Board, some prior to 2001 (under the IA-1 zoning) and some following the Citywide Rezoning process. The only remaining undeveloped properties are the 41 Bellis Circle site and the 61-69 Bolton Street site, for which the Planning Board approved a 20-unit development which is now under construction. On the whole, as reflected in the examples on Page 2, projects approved by the Planning Board in this area have been multifamily or townhouse projects with a range of floor area and unit densities, falling within the limitations of a C-1A, C-1, or C district, depending on the project.

Contact with Property Owner

The owner on record of the 41 Bellis Circle property was sent a copy of the zoning petition via certified mail. Since receiving that communication, a representative of the owner has been in contact with the Community Development Department by phone. It is expected that the property owner will submit a formal objection to the rezoning petition to the City Council.