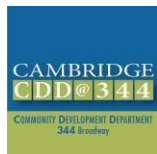


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# Harvard Square Advisory Committee

Member Orientation

July 15, 2021





# Agenda



# Meeting Agenda

**Welcome**

**What is the HSAC?**

**Zoning in Harvard Square**

**Meeting Participation**

**Feedback**



**Welcome**



# Introductions

## Please tell us...

- Your name;
- What Cambridge neighborhood you live in;
- A recent experience in Harvard Square that brought you joy.

# CDD Staff



**Sarah Scott**  
Associate Zoning Planner  
Division of Zoning & Development



**Daniel Wolf**  
Neighborhood Planner  
Division of Community Planning

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**What is the HSAC?**



# Role of the HSAC

**Generally:** The Harvard Square Advisory Committee (HSAC) reviews & comments on land use & development proposals in the Harvard Square Overlay District per the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (Section 20.50).

**Specifically:** The Committee conducts Large Project Review consultations and comments on applications for variances & special permits from the Planning Board & Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA), as well as other proposals.





# Authority of the HSAC

The Harvard Square Advisory Committee (HSAC) is **an advisory body**, not an adjudicatory body. This means that it makes recommendations on various projects to other boards & commissions but **does not grant approvals**.



# Relationship to Other Boards & Commissions

## Planning Board

- Makes decisions on certain types of special permits per the Zoning Ordinance.
- HSAC makes advisory recommendations to Planning Board.

## Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA)

- Makes decisions on zoning relief, including special permits & variances.
- HSAC makes advisory recommendations to BZA.

## Historical Commission

- Issues certificates for projects in the Harvard Square Conservation District (separate from zoning).
- More of an informal than a direct relationship.



# Other CDD Advisory Committees – Zoning

## Central Square Advisory Committee (CSAC)

- Reviews and comments on land use & development proposals in the Central Square Overlay District per the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance (Section 20.300).
- Similar structure and purpose to HSAC.
- Shares staff with HSAC.



# Other CDD Advisory Committees – Not Zoning

## Transit Advisory Committee (TAC)

- Guides Cambridge policies regarding a wide variety of transit-related issues
- Membership includes residents, stakeholders, & business representatives.

## Bicycle Committee

- Reviews City plans for road construction; comments on pending bicycle-related ordinances; organizes & participates in public outreach.
- Membership includes residents & City staff from CDD, TP&T, Police, & DPW.

## Pedestrian Committee

- Develops policies & design guidelines; makes suggestions about proposed development projects & the design of roadway projects; public outreach.
- Membership includes residents & City staff from CDD, TP&T, Police, and DPW.



# Cambridge Boards and Commissions

**List of All City of Cambridge Boards & Commissions:**

<http://cambridgema.iqm2.com/Citizens/Board>



# Clarifying Questions?

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# Zoning in Harvard Square



# Brief History of Harvard Square Development Regulation

**1979:** Harvard Square Overlay District established

**1986:** Harvard Square Development Guidelines developed; Harvard Square Overlay District amended

**2000:** Harvard Square Conservation District established

**2001:** Harvard Square Historic Overlay District established in 2001

**2002:** Harvard Square Development Guidelines revised

**2019:** Harvard Square Conservation District Study Committee issues final report

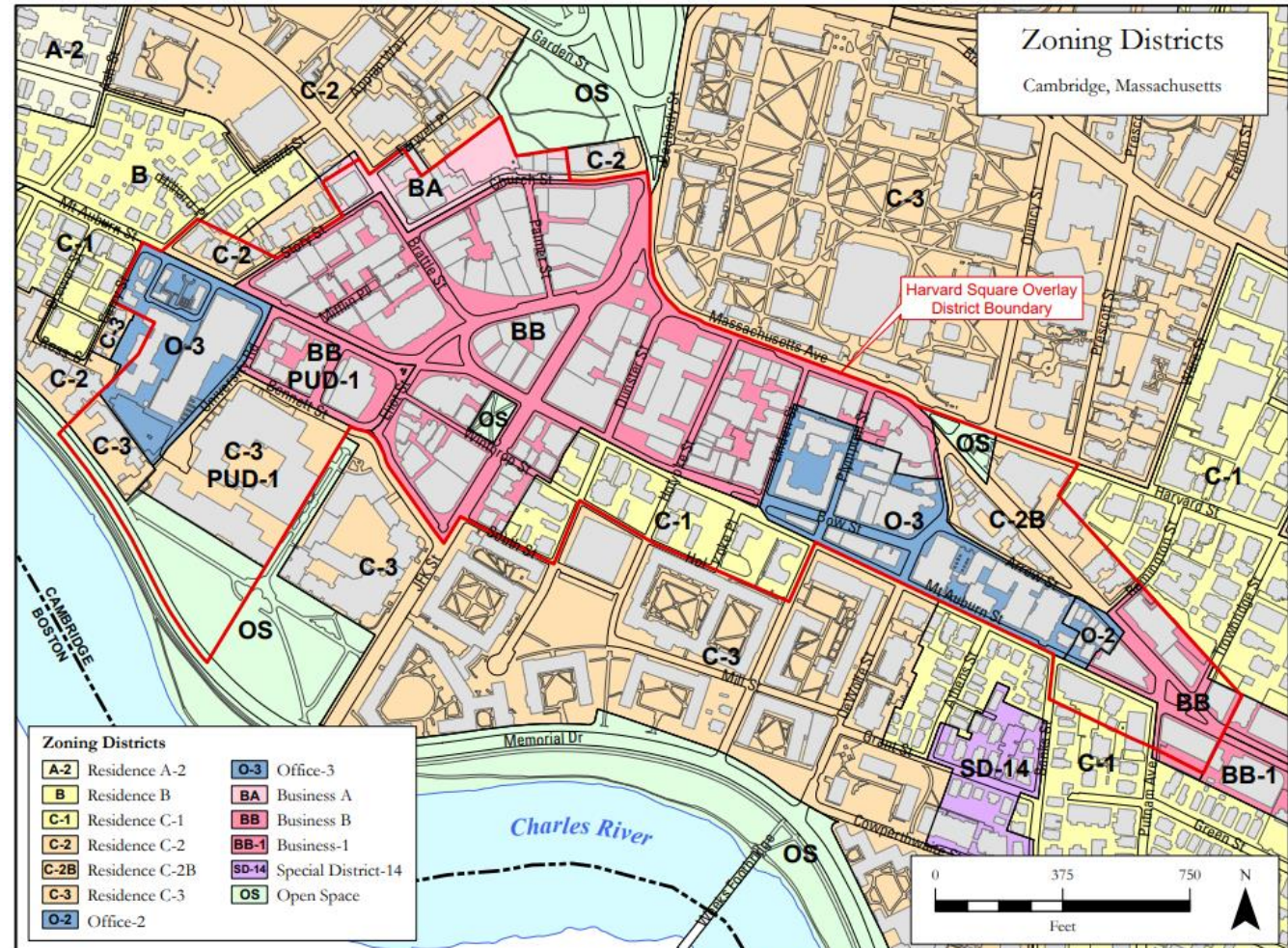
**2020:** Harvard Square Overlay District amended



# Base Zoning in the HSOD

## Zoning Districts:

- Residence C-1
- Residence C-2
- Residence C-2B
- Residence C-3
- Office 2
- Office 3
- Business A
- Business B
- PUD-1
- Open Space



Map prepared by Brendan Monroe on March 30, 2017. CDD GIS C:\Projects\Zoning\Petitions\HarvardSquareRooftop\HarvardSquareZoning.mxd



# Residential Base Zoning

Ranges from low- to high-density (i.e., FAR of 0.75 up to 3.00, height of 35' to 120').

All districts allow multi-family dwellings in addition to single-family & two-family dwellings.

Predominantly residential but allows some institutional uses such as schools and hospitals. Hotels & motels are allowed in some districts.

Most types of commercial land uses, such as offices, laboratories, & retail business, are not allowed.



# Commercial Base Zoning

Ranges from low- to high-density (i.e., FAR of 1.00 up to 3.00, height of 35' to 120').

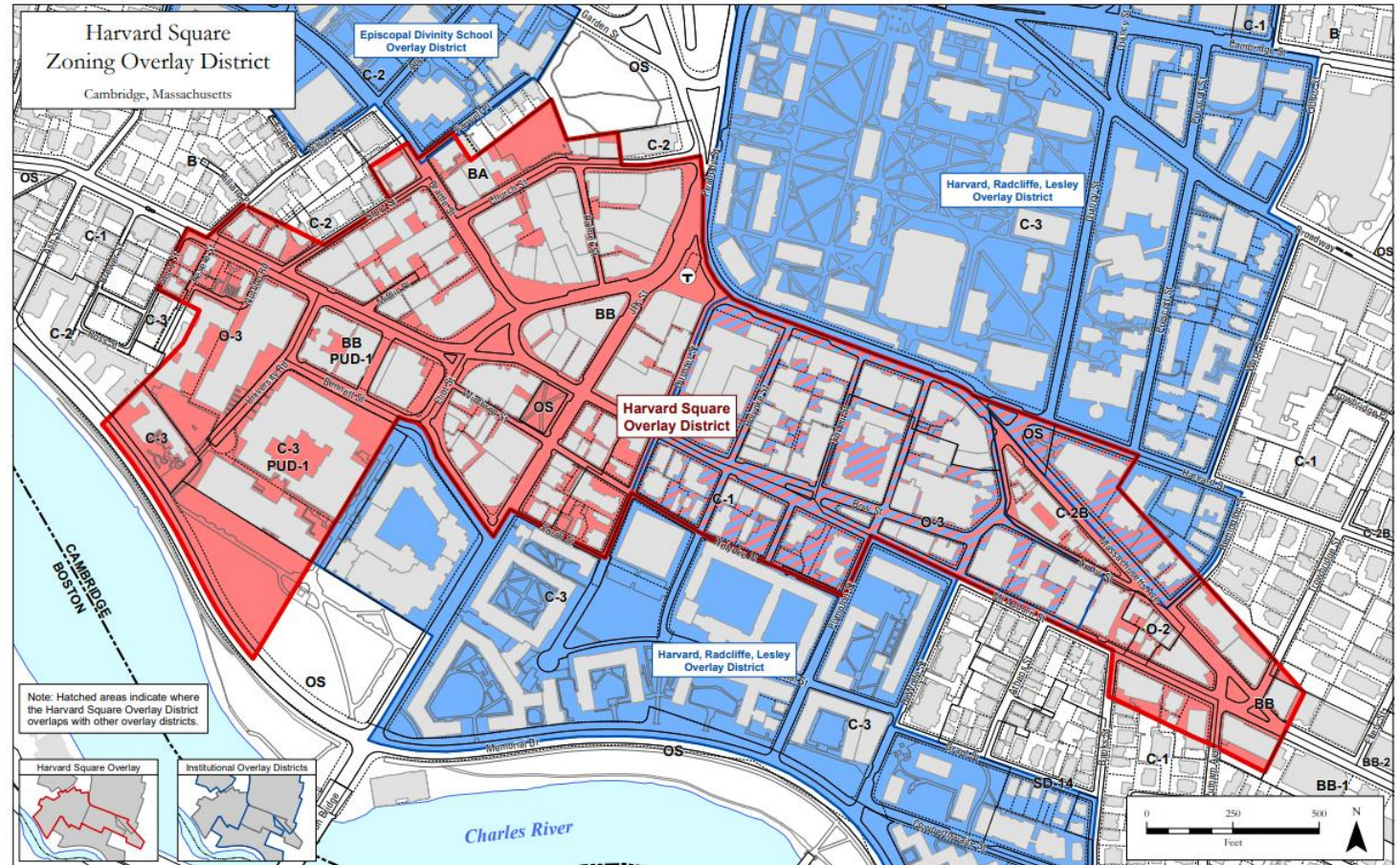
Office districts allow an eclectic mix of business and professional office uses as well as all types of housing & institutional uses as-of-right. They restrict various retail & industrial uses.

Business districts allow a wide range of typical neighborhood business uses, such as convenience stores, pharmacies, and restaurants, as well as office & residential uses. They also allow all types of housing & institutional uses as-of-right. Fast Order Food Establishments can be allowed by a BZA Special Permit.

# Harvard Square Overlay District

## Section 20.52 General Purpose

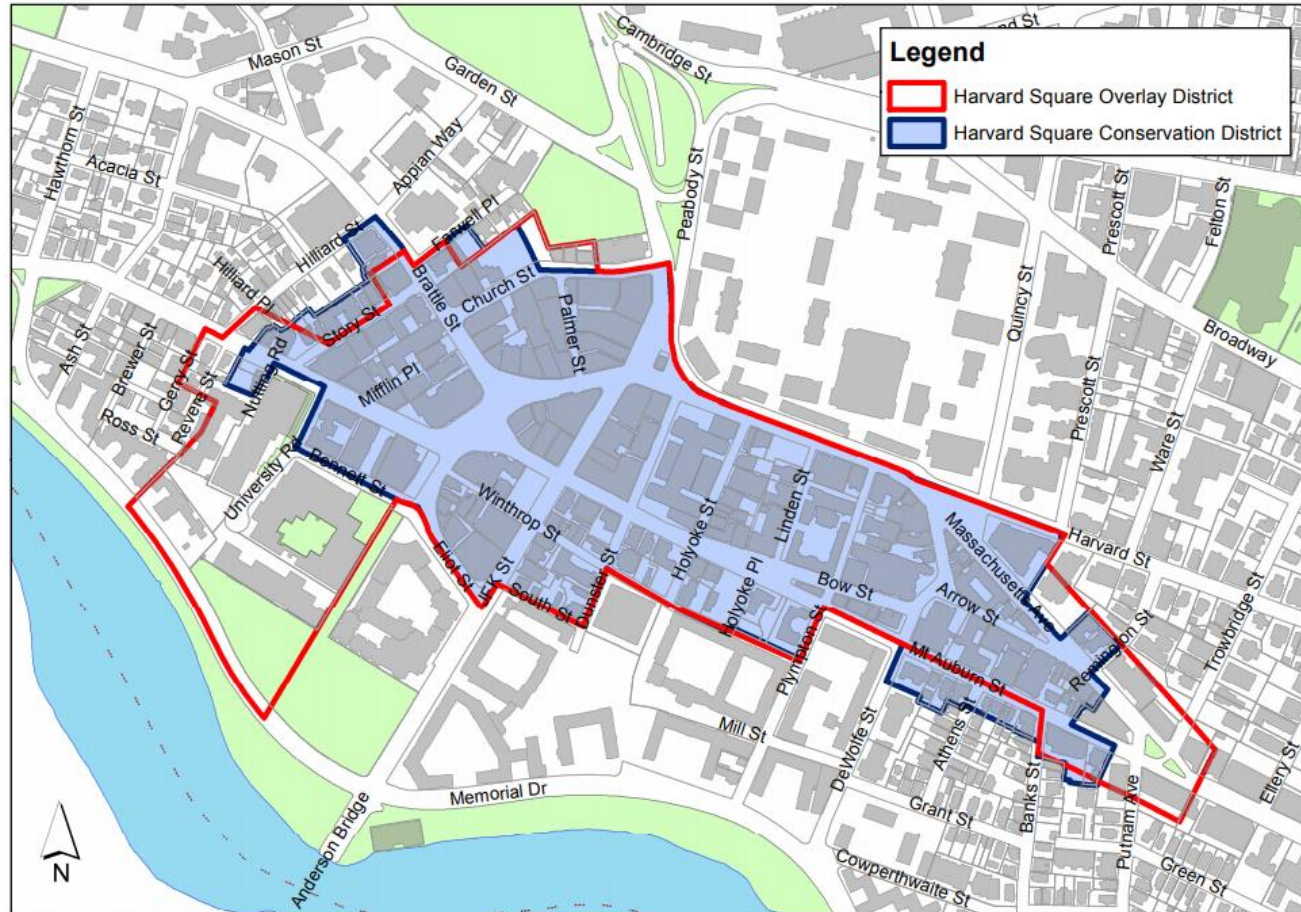
"It is the purpose of this Section 20.50 to augment existing zoning regulations to respond to the unique problems and pressures for change particular to the Harvard Square area."



# Harvard Square Historic Overlay District

## Section 20.51 Establishment & Scope

"The Harvard Square Historic Overlay District shall be that portion of the Harvard Square Overlay district that is encompassed by any historic district...or any Neighborhood Conservation District...All provisions of the Harvard Square Overlay District & all references to it in this Ordinance shall apply equally to the Harvard Square Historic Overlay District except as set forth below."





# How the HSOD Modifies Base Zoning

Height

Use

Parking & Loading

Setbacks

Bulk/Massing

Signage



# How the HSOD Modifies Base Zoning

## Height

### 20.54.2 Building Height Limitations.

- Sets a maximum building height of 60' (except in the case of more restrictive base zoning).
- Allows a height increase to 80' by Planning Board Special Permit (with provisions for setbacks and bulk control planes).



# How the HSOD Modifies Base Zoning

## Use

### 20.54.3 Retail, Business, & Consumer Service Establishments (Section 4.35) in Office & Residential Districts.

- Any retail use allowed in Business B as of right within the Overlay may be allowed in any office or residential district if there is a main entrance on Mass Ave, Mt. Auburn, Arrow, or Bow Streets.
- Same retail uses may be allowed elsewhere by Planning Board Special Permit per specific conditions.

### 20.54.9 Frontage Restrictions.

- Banks & financial institutions are limited to 25' of ground-floor frontage per street & 30% of total ground-floor building frontage. A minor increase is allowed by Planning Board Special Permit.

### 20.54.10 Fast Order Food Establishments.

- Allowed by right if the Establishment isn't a Formula Business.





# How the HSOD Modifies Base Zoning

## Parking & Loading

### 20.54.4 Parking & Loading Requirements.

- Uses in pre-1940 and/or historic buildings are exempt from parking & loading requirements.
- Uses in other buildings may be exempt from parking & loading requirements by Planning Board Special Permit per specific conditions.



# How the HSOD Modifies Base Zoning

## Setbacks

### 20.54.5 Building Setbacks.

- Uses in pre-1985 buildings are exempt from yard requirements.
- Uses in other buildings in any Business, Office, or Residence C-3 district may be exempt from yard requirements by Planning Board Special Permit per specific conditions.



# How the HSOD Modifies Base Zoning

## Bulk/Massing

### 20.54.6 Maximum Ratio of Floor Area to Lot Area (FAR) in the Harvard Square Historic Overlay District.

- Modifies the base zoning maximum FAR for residential & non-residential uses in the Residence C-1, Residence C-2B, Residence C-3, Office 2, Office 3, Business A, & Business B districts.

### 20.54.7 Additional FAR.

- Unlimited FAR may be granted by Planning Board Special Permit in the Business B district for certain residential and commercial uses per specific conditions.

### 20.54.8 FAR Exemption for Ground Floor Retail.

- Retail spaces less than 1,500 square feet in size are excluded from FAR calculations.



# How the HSOD Modifies Base Zoning

## Signage

20.55 Sign Regulations in the Harvard Square Historic Overlay District.

- Signs in all Business, Office and Industrial Districts, are not limited by Section 7.16.22 (i.e., total area of signage, area of individual signs, number of signs, height of signs, illumination).
- No sign on the outside of a building may extend higher than 20 feet above grade.
- Application of the Sign Frontage Formula doesn't apply.



# HSAC Review Scope

## **Large Project Review (ISD)**

Construction of a new building or an alteration of an existing building that increases the GFA by 2,000 square feet (but less than 25,000 square feet).

## **Variances (BZA)**

Proposed use or development is prohibited by the Zoning Ordinance.

## **Special Permits (BZA & Planning Board)**

Proposed use or development is conditionally permitted by the Zoning Ordinance.

## **Other**

"Any preliminary proposal for which any public agency or private interest has planned for the Overlay."



# HSAC Review Criteria

## Section 20.53.2

"...the Harvard Square Advisory Committee shall be guided by the objectives & criteria contained in the publication **Harvard Square Development Guidelines...**, in addition to the requirements of Sections 10.30 (Variances) & 10.40 (Special Permits) & this Section 20.50."



# Harvard Square Guidelines

## Harvard Square Development Guidelines (2002)

- Identifies primary & secondary development goals.
- Categorizes HSOD into six sub-districts.
- Provides guidance for alterations of existing buildings and new construction.

## Harvard Square Conservation District Goals & Guidelines (2019)

- Refinements to the goals & guidelines of the Conservation District.
- Re-categorizes HSOD area into seven sub-districts.
- Recommends incorporating the Guidelines into the zoning for the HSOD.



# HSAC Review Procedure

**Step 1:** Applicant submits application to Community Development Department.

**Step 2:** HSAC meets within 30 days & prepares a written report of findings & recommendations.

**Step 3:** Report is forwarded to the applicant & other review bodies, as applicable.





# Clarifying Questions?



# Meeting Participation



# Ground Rules

- Share the air
- Stay on topic & strive to be succinct
- Share your wisdom & expertise
- Honor wisdom & expertise of the Committee as a whole
- Elicit & honor divergent perspectives
- Advance the group process – maintain focus on what we aim to accomplish
- Welcome new members & questions they may have



# Attendance

- Be on time
- Attend meetings regularly
- Notify Sarah & Daniel in advance of a meeting absence



# Clarifying Questions?

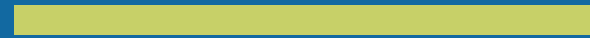


**Feedback**



# Final Questions

- What do you hope to get out of your participation on the HSAC?
- What additional resources & information would enable you to participate more fully?
- Any final thoughts or questions relative to what you've learned today?



**Thank You!**





# Contact Information

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