

Harvard Square Zoning Petition Modification re. Frontage of Financial Institutions

WHEREAS the physical requirements of banks and other financial institutions have changed considerably over recent decades due to online banking; and

WHEREAS Cambridge already has several zoning ordinances that limit the ground floor frontage of financial institutions in key squares and avenues; and

WHEREAS Cambridge is seeking to encourage local businesses that often are competing with banks and other financial institutions for prime ground floor real estate; and

WHEREAS Cambridge is encouraging more pedestrian activity and active ground floor use and façade transparency are important in enlivening the streetscape; and

WHEREAS Cambridge City Council unanimously approved Ordinance 1420 seeking to limit the linear ground floor façade length to 25' in Harvard Square; and

WHEREAS this petition further clarifies the ordinance to conform with the guiding principles, intent, and spirit of Ordinance 1420;

THEREFORE: in order to incorporate additional specificity on criteria in the existing zoning law and its implementation, Section 20.54.9 is deleted and replaced with the following:

20.54.9 Frontage Restrictions. Banks, trust companies, or similar financial institutions as identified in Section 4.34e shall occupy no more than twenty-five feet (25') of the ground-floor level frontage of a building facing any street, aggregated over one or more streets and measured horizontally parallel to the street the wall faces. This limitation shall apply to the sum of all ground-floor frontage to a depth of 20 feet measured from the street. The Planning Board may grant a special permit to allow a minor increase in the permitted frontage upon finding that such increase would create a result that is more compatible with the unique conditions of a particular building or site and that the criteria set forth in Section 20.53.2 above are met.

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