

City of Cambridge  
Community Development Department

# Multifamily Housing Citywide

City Council Housing Committee  
August 21, 2024



# Zoning Principles

- Zone equitably across western and eastern Cambridge neighborhoods
- Allow more height and density for multifamily housing, with a focus on getting more inclusionary housing units
- Reduce zoning barriers that add time and cost to multifamily housing
- No change for non-residential uses



# Proposed Zoning Concept

- Allow all residential use types everywhere
- Remove minimum lot sizes
- Regulate based on “stories above grade” and open space, remove density limits for residential use (FAR, lot area per dwelling unit)
- Allow up to 6 stories as the lowest residential height limit citywide
- Reduce/remove setback requirements
- Reduce/remove special permit requirements





# Today's Focus

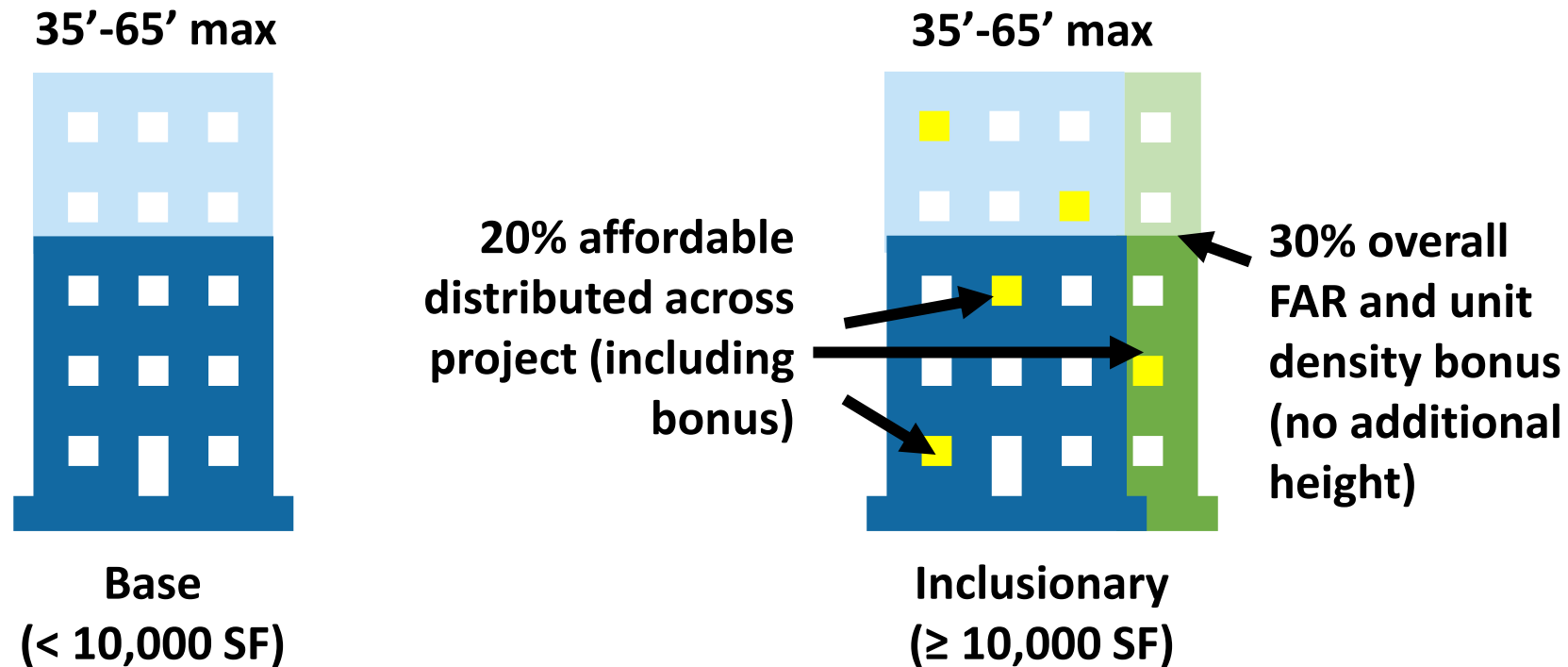
- What are the possible outcomes of this approach?
- What changes to current zoning will be needed to implement this new concept?



# Projected Outcomes

# Current Zoning

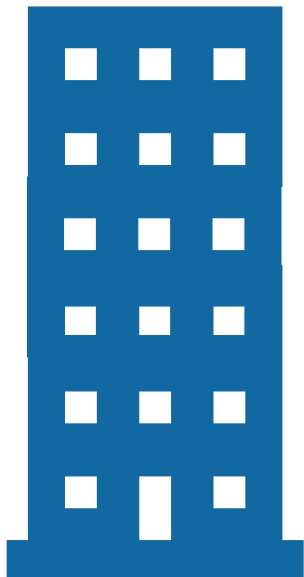
Res. A-1, A-2, B, C, C-1, C-1A, C-2B, C-2A districts



# Proposed Zoning – 6 stories

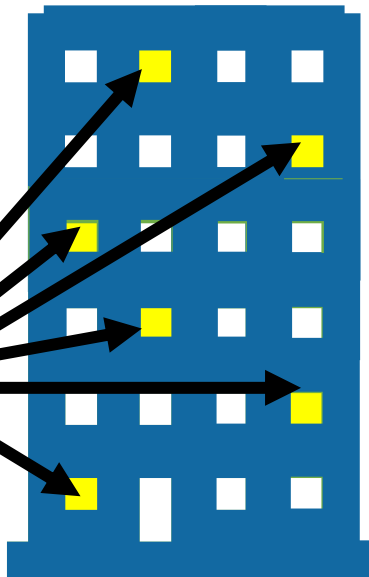
Approach: remove FAR and unit density limits for residential use, regulate stories above grade

6 stories max



Base  
( $< 10,000$  SF)

6 stories max



20% affordable  
distributed across  
project (including  
bonus GFA)

Inclusionary  
( $\geq 10,000$  SF)

# Methodology | Citywide Multifamily Analysis

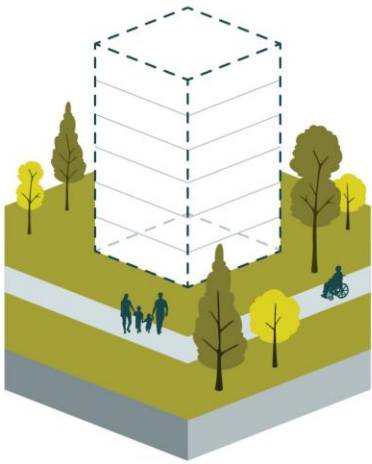
For redevelopment to be viable:

**GFA Delta** > 5,000 SF

**GFA Ratio** > 50%

Parcels were **analyzed** for redevelopment **only if**:

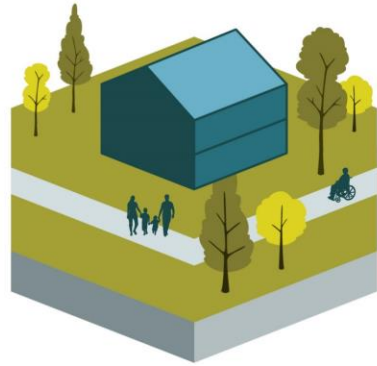
- Had a single listed property owner
- Were located in residential zones (A, B, or C zones), even if they are primarily residential in use
- Are not hospitals, higher educational institutions, public housing, schools, or other public uses



**CAPACITY**

Allowed gross floor area under zoning

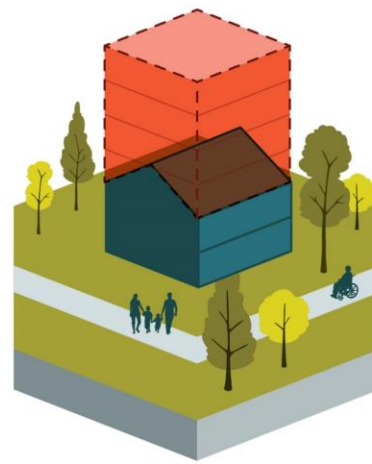
For Example: 20,000 SF



**EXISTING**

Existing, as-built gross floor area

8,000 SF



**REDEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL**

**GFA Delta**

12,000 SF

**GFA Delta**

**EXISTING**

**GFA Ratio**

12,000 SF

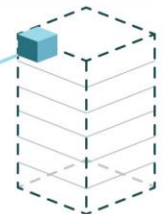
8,000 SF

150%

- GFA = Gross Floor Area
- Capacity calculations informed by zoning overlays and zoning districts.
- Existing GFA calculated with assessors data and land use data.

# of units calculated as:

Total GFA / 1,000 SqFt





## **Summary** | Citywide Multifamily Analysis

The analysis explored two scenarios...

### **1. Current Zoning**

- Reflects current single-family, two-family, and multifamily zoning citywide
- Inclusionary bonus of 30% additional density if 20% of units are provided as affordable

### **2. Proposed Zoning - 6 Stories**

- Allows for multifamily use in all zones citywide
- Allows up to 6 story construction in all zones citywide
- Inclusionary requirement of 20% affordable units if the building contains 10+ units total

# 2030 Projections | Citywide Multifamily Analysis

The following projections are estimates:

## 1. Current Zoning

by 2030...

**± 480**  
total units created

Resulting in...

**± 120**  
net new units

Including...

**± 10**  
affordable units

## 2. Proposed Zoning - 6 Stories

by 2030...



% of total projects

Current Zoning scenario based on historical housing start data, multifamily scenarios apply a 0.25% redevelopment rate.

## 2030 Projections | Citywide Multifamily Analysis

The following projections are estimates:

### 1. Current Zoning

by 2030...

± **480**

total units created

Resulting in...

± **120**

net new units

Including...

± **10**

affordable units

**1%**  
Inclusionary

**99%**  
Market-only

% of total projects

### 2. Proposed Zoning - 6 Stories

by 2030...

± **1,860**

total units created

Resulting in...

± **1,630**

net new units

Including...

± **310**

affordable units

**60% (± 55)**  
Inclusionary

**40% (± 35)**  
Market-only

% of ± **90** total projects

# 2040 Projections | Citywide Multifamily Analysis

The following projections are estimates:

## 1. Current Zoning

by 2040...

± **1,440**  
total units created

Resulting in...

± **350**  
net new units

Including...

± **30**  
affordable units

## 2. Proposed Zoning - 6 Stories

by 2040...



% of total projects

Current Zoning scenario based on historical housing start data, multifamily scenarios apply a 0.25% redevelopment rate.

## 2040 Projections | Citywide Multifamily Analysis

The following projections are estimates:

### 1. Current Zoning

by 2040...

± **1,440**  
total units created

Resulting in...

± **350**  
net new units

Including...

± **30**  
affordable units

**1%**  
Inclusionary

**99%**  
Market-only

% of total projects

### 2. Proposed Zoning - 6 Stories

by 2040...

± **5,570**  
total units created

Resulting in...

± **4,880**  
net new units

Including...

± **920**  
affordable units

**60%** (± 160)  
Inclusionary

**40%** (± 110)  
Market-only

% of ± **270** total projects

## 2030 and 2040 Comparison | Citywide Multifamily Analysis

The following projections are estimates:

### 1. Current Zoning

by 2030...



by 2040...

± **480**

total units created

± **1,440**

total units created

Resulting in...

± **120**

net new units

± **350**

net new units

Including...

± **10**

affordable units

± **30**

affordable units

**1%**

Inclusionary

**99%**

Market-only

% of total projects

### 2. Proposed Zoning - 6 Stories

by 2030...



by 2040...

± **1,860**

total units created

± **5,570**

total units created

Resulting in...

± **1,630**

net new units

± **4,880**

net new units

Including...

± **310**

affordable units

± **920**

affordable units

**60%**

Inclusionary

**40%**

Market-only

% of total projects



# Zoning Changes



# Overview of Main Zoning Changes

1. Map changes – A-1, A-2, B, C districts to C-1
  - Delete standards/references to those districts throughout Ordinance
2. New Table of Dimensional Requirements (5.30, footnotes in 5.40)
3. Revised Dimensional Standards (5.20):
  - Lot area per dwelling unit (5.11 &c.) – delete
  - Lot size/width (5.21) – delete except citywide min. 20-foot frontage
  - Open Space (5.22) – requirement based on Total Open Space as combination of Permeable, Private, and Publicly Beneficial
  - Height (5.23) – Stories Above Grade limit applies to housing
  - FAR (5.25) – no limitation for housing





# Overview of Main Zoning Changes

4. Delete extra requirements/restrictions on housing
  - Multifamily/townhouse special permit (4.26, 10.47)
  - Townhouse regulations (11.10)
5. Amend Project Review (Art. 19)
  - Amend Project Review Special Permit threshold to 75,000 SF for housing
  - Create Planning Board Advisory Consultation for 50,000+ SF projects that don't need special permit (adapted from current AHO procedures)
6. Amend Nonconformance Rules (Art. 8)
  - Allow all conforming residential additions/alterations as-of-right



# Consistency Amendments

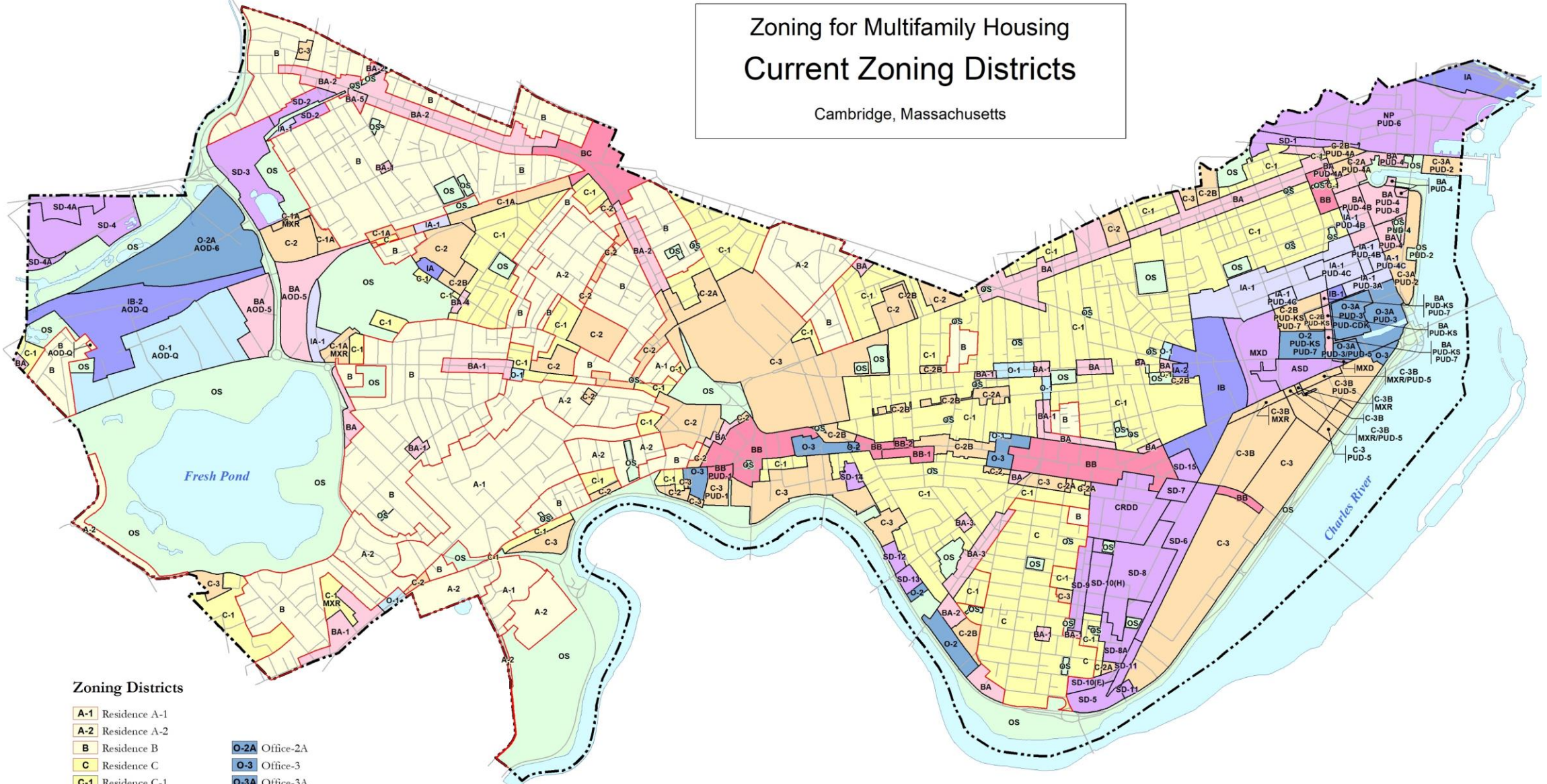
- Inclusionary Housing and AHO
  - Inclusionary “bonus” modifications (11.203.5) no longer apply if there are no limitations on floor area or dwelling units
  - Amend AHO review procedures to be consistent with new Article 19 procedures (but no Project Review Special Permit required)
- Definitions (Art. 2) – update as needed
- Consistency review across entire ordinance
  - E.g., special districts and overlay districts will need to be reviewed and possibly amended (maybe not in all cases) to align with changes to citywide base



# Zoning Map Changes

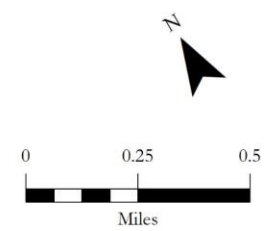
# Zoning for Multifamily Housing Current Zoning Districts

Cambridge, Massachusetts



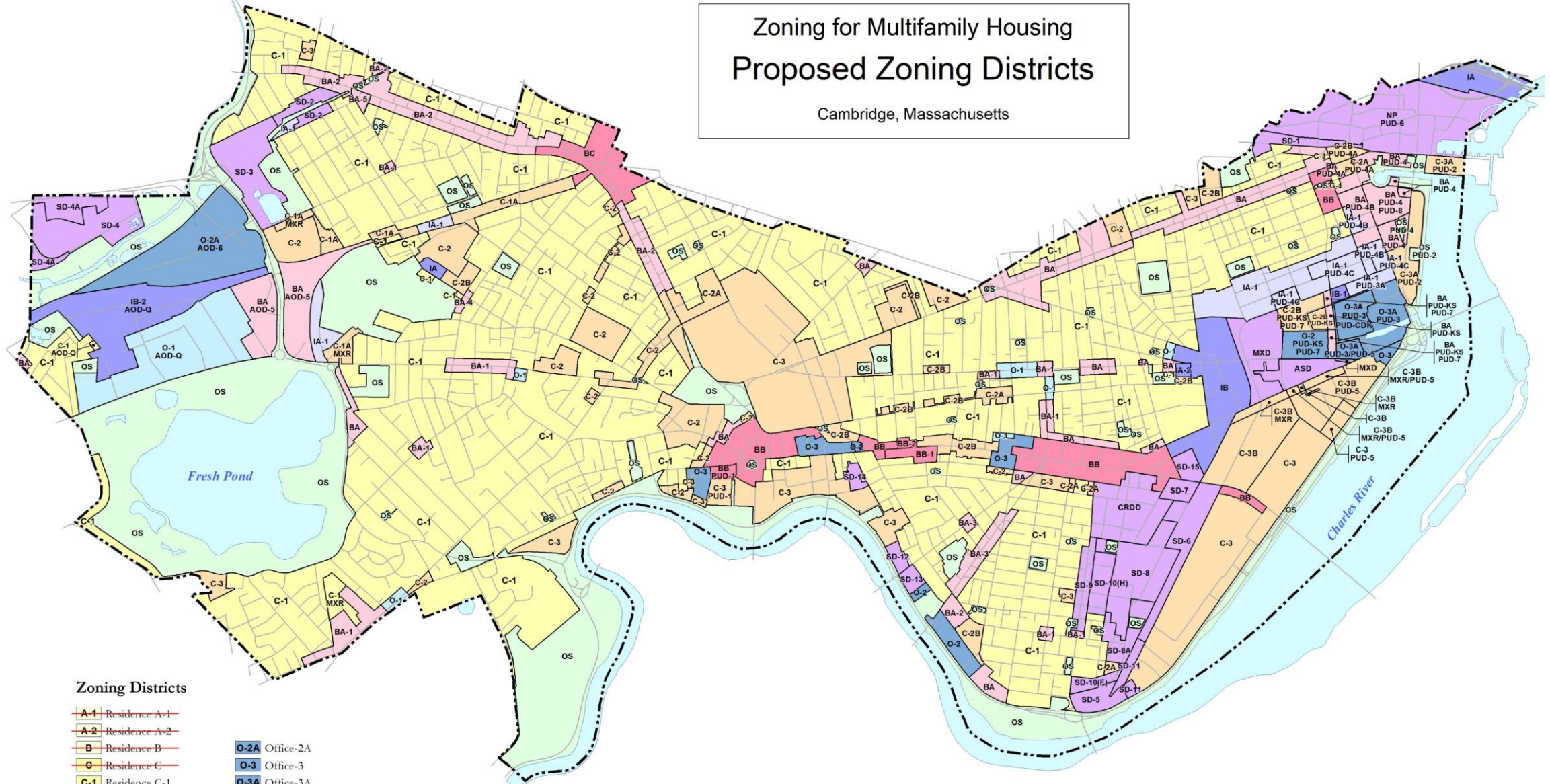
## Zoning Districts

- |                            |                          |   |                                  |  |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>A-1</b> Residence A-1   | <b>O-2A</b> Office-2A    | <b>MXD</b> Mixed Use Development                              | <b>SD-2</b> Special District-2   | <b>SD-9</b> Special District-9         |
| <b>A-2</b> Residence A-2   | <b>O-3</b> Office-3      | <b>ASD</b> Ames Street District                               | <b>SD-3</b> Special District-3   | <b>SD-10(F)</b> Special District-10(F) |
| <b>B</b> Residence B       | <b>O-3A</b> Office-3A    | <b>AOD</b> Alewife Overlay District                           | <b>SD-4</b> Special District-4   | <b>SD-10(H)</b> Special District-10(H) |
| <b>C</b> Residence C       | <b>BA</b> Business A     | <b>PUD</b> Planned Unit Development Overlay                   | <b>SD-4A</b> Special District-4A | <b>SD-11</b> Special District-11       |
| <b>C-1</b> Residence C-1   | <b>BA-1</b> Business A-1 | <b>MXR</b> Mixed Use Residential Overlay                      | <b>SD-5</b> Special District-5   | <b>SD-12</b> Special District-12       |
| <b>C-1A</b> Residence C-1A | <b>BA-2</b> Business A-2 | <b>NP</b> North Point District                                | <b>SD-6</b> Special District-6   | <b>SD-13</b> Special District-13       |
| <b>C-2</b> Residence C-2   | <b>BA-3</b> Business A-3 | <b>CRDD</b> Cambridgeport Revitalization Development District | <b>SD-7</b> Special District-7   | <b>SD-14</b> Special District-14       |
| <b>C-2A</b> Residence C-2A | <b>BA-4</b> Business A-4 |   | <b>SD-8</b> Special District-8   | <b>SD-15</b> Special District-15       |
| <b>C-2B</b> Residence C-2B | <b>BA-5</b> Business A-5 |   | <b>SD-8A</b> Special District-8A |  |
| <b>C-3</b> Residence C-3   | <b>BB</b> Business B     |   |                                  |  |
| <b>C-3A</b> Residence C-3A | <b>BB-1</b> Business-1   |   |                                  |  |
| <b>C-3B</b> Residence C-3B | <b>BB-2</b> Business 2   |   |                                  |  |
| <b>O-1</b> Office-1        | <b>IA-1</b> Industry A-1 |   |                                  |  |
| <b>O-2</b> Office-2        | <b>IA-2</b> Industry A-2 |   |                                  |  |
|                            | <b>IB-1</b> Industry B-1 |   |                                  |  |
|                            | <b>IB-2</b> Industry B-2 |   |                                  |  |
|                            | <b>IC</b> Industry C     |   |                                  |  |
- OS** Open Space
- Red outline** Districts to be changed to C-1



# Zoning for Multifamily Housing Proposed Zoning Districts

Cambridge, Massachusetts



## Zoning Districts

- A-1 Residence A-1
- A-2 Residence A-2
- B Residence B
- C Residence C
- C-1 Residence C-1
- C-1A Residence C-1A
- C-2 Residence C-2
- C-2A Residence C-2A
- C-2B Residence C-2B
- C-3 Residence C-3
- C-3A Residence C-3A
- C-3B Residence C-3B
- O-1 Office-1
- O-2 Office-2

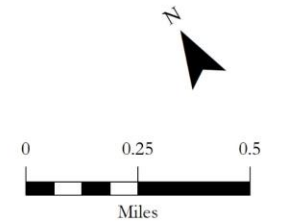
- O-2A Office-2A
- O-3 Office-3
- O-3A Office-3A
- BA Business A
- BA-1 Business A-1
- BA-2 Business A-2
- BA-3 Business A-3
- BA-4 Business A-4
- BA-5 Business A-5
- BB Business B
- BB-1 Business-1
- BB-2 Business 2

- BC Business C
- BC-1 Business C-1
- IA-1 Industry A-1
- IA-2 Industry A-2
- IA Industry A
- IB-1 Industry B-1
- IB-2 Industry B-2
- IB Industry B
- IC Industry C

- MXD Mixed Use Development
- ASD Ames Street District
- AOD Alewife Overlay District
- PUD Planned Unit Development Overlay
- MXR Mixed Use Residential Overlay
- NP North Point District
- CRDD Cambridgeport Revitalization Development District
- SD-1 Special District-1

- SD-2 Special District-2
- SD-3 Special District-3
- SD-4 Special District-4
- SD-4A Special District-4A
- SD-5 Special District-5
- SD-6 Special District-6
- SD-7 Special District-7
- SD-8 Special District-8
- SD-8A Special District-8A

- SD-9 Special District-9
- SD-10(F) Special District-10(F)
- SD-10(H) Special District-10(H)
- SD-11 Special District-11
- SD-12 Special District-12
- SD-13 Special District-13
- SD-14 Special District-14
- SD-15 Special District-15
- OS Open Space





# New Dimensional Requirements



# New Dimensional Requirements

## Concept:

- New set of housing standards based on **stories above grade** and **maximum building height**, no FAR or unit density limit
  - Non-residential standards remain the same; mixed-use buildings can be at residential heights if non-residential portions are within non-residential FAR and height limits
- Height limit raised to 6 stories where currently less than that
  - Other districts are 7-10 stories based on current height limits (approx.)
- Front setback of 0, 5, or 10 feet based on current zoning
  - No side or rear setback for housing

# New Dimensional Requirements

## Concept:

- Open space ratios remain the same, but combine Permeable, Private, and Publicly Beneficial Open Space

Current Zoning Concept	Proposed Zoning Concept
Requirement is only Private Open Space applicable to housing (exception: C-1 where Permeable Open Space is required)	Requirement is Total Open Space (Permeable, Private, and Publicly Beneficial) based on total lot area
Private Open Space above grade can only count for 25% of requirement	Private Open Space can be at grade or above; Permeable Open Space must be at grade
Green Factor applies	Green Factor applies



# New Table of Dimensional Requirements (DRAFT)

District	All Uses	Residential Uses				Non-Residential Uses				
	1. Min. Total Open Space Ratio (5.22)	2. Max. Stories Above Grade (5.23)	3. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	4. Min. Front Yard Setback (5.24)	5. Min. Side or Rear Yard Setback (5.24)	6. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	7. Min. Front Yard Setback (5.24)	8. Min. Side Yard Setback (5.24)	9. Min. Rear Yard Setback (5.24)	10. Max. FAR (5.25)
<b>5.31 Residence Districts</b>										
<b>Res. C-1</b>	30%*	6	<del>35</del> -75	10	none	35	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	0.75
<b>Res. C-1A</b>	15%	6	<del>45</del> -75	10	none	45	10	Formula*	Formula*	1.25
<b>Res. C-2B</b>	15%	6	<del>45</del> -75	10	none	45	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	1.75
<b>Res. C-2A</b>	10%*	6	<del>60</del> -75	5	none	60	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	2.5
<b>Res. C-2</b>	15%	7	85	10	none	85	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	1.75
<b>Res. C-3</b>	10%	10	120	5	none	120	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	3.0
<b>Res. C-3A</b>	10%	10	120	5	none	120	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	3.0*
<b>Res. C-3B</b>	10%	10	120	10	none	120	10	none	none	3.0*

\* With applicable footnotes

# New Table of Dimensional Requirements (DRAFT)

District	All Uses	Residential Uses				Non-Residential Uses				
	1. Min. Total Open Space Ratio (5.22)	2. Max. Stories Above Grade (5.23)	3. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	4. Min. Front Yard Setback (5.24)	5. Min. Side or Rear Yard Setback (5.24)	6. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	7. Min. Front Yard Setback (5.24)	8. Min. Side Yard Setback (5.24)	9. Min. Rear Yard Setback (5.24)	10. Max. FAR (5.25)
<b>5.32 Office Districts</b>										
<b>Office 1</b>	15%	6	<del>35</del> -75	10	none	35	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	0.75
<b>Office 2A</b>	15%	6	<del>70</del> -75	10	none	60	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	1.25
<b>Office 2</b>	15%	7	85	10	none	70*	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	1.50
<b>Office 3</b>	10%	10	120	5	none	90	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	2.0
<b>Office 3A</b>	10%	10	120	5	none	90	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	2.0

\* With applicable footnotes

# New Table of Dimensional Requirements (DRAFT)

District	All Uses	Residential Uses				Non-Residential Uses				
	1. Min. Total Open Space Ratio (5.22)	2. Max. Stories Above Grade (5.23)	3. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	4. Min. Front Yard Setback (5.24)	5. Min. Side or Rear Yard Setback (5.24)	6. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	7. Min. Front Yard Setback (5.24)	8. Min. Side Yard Setback (5.24)	9. Min. Rear Yard Setback (5.24)	10. Max. FAR (5.25)
<b>5.33 Business Districts</b>										
<b>Bus. A</b>	none	6	<del>45-75</del>	none	none	35	none*	none*	Formula*	1.0
<b>Bus. A-1</b>	none	6	<del>35-75</del>	none	none	35	none*	none*	Formula*	1.0
<b>Bus. A-2</b>	none	6	<del>45-75</del>	5*	none	45*	5*	10*	20*	1.0
<b>Bus. A-3</b>	30%	6	<del>35-75</del>	10	none	35	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	0.75*
<b>Bus. A-4</b>	none	6	<del>35-44-75</del>	10*	none	35*	Formula*	Formula*	Formula*	1.0*
<b>Bus. A-5</b>	none	7*	<del>80-85</del> *	none	none	80*	none*	none*	none*	1.0*
<b>Bus. B</b>	none	7	<del>80-85</del>	none	none	80	none*	none*	none*	2.75
<b>Bus. B-1</b>	See note*	8	<del>90-95</del> *	none	none	55*	none*	none*	none*	1.50
<b>Bus. B-2</b>	See note*	6	<del>45-75</del>	none	none	45	none*	none*	none*	1.50
<b>Bus. C</b>	none	6	<del>55-75</del>	none	none	55*	none*	none*	20*	1.25

\* With applicable footnotes

# New Table of Dimensional Requirements (DRAFT)

District	All Uses	Residential Uses				Non-Residential Uses				
	1. Min. Total Open Space Ratio (5.22)	2. Max. Stories Above Grade (5.23)	3. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	4. Min. Front Yard Setback (5.24)	5. Min. Side or Rear Yard Setback (5.24)	6. Max. Building Height in feet (5.23)	7. Min. Front Yard Setback (5.24)	8. Min. Side Yard Setback (5.24)	9. Min. Rear Yard Setback (5.24)	10. Max. FAR (5.25)
<b>5.34 Industrial Districts</b>										
<b>Ind. A-1</b>	none	6	<del>45</del> -75	none	none	45	none*	none*	none*	1.25
<b>Ind. A-2</b>	none	6	<del>70</del> -75	none	none	70	none*	none*	none*	2.75
<b>Ind. A</b>	none	6	<del>45</del> -75	none	none	45*	none*	none*	none*	1.25
<b>Ind. B-1</b>	none	6	<del>70</del> -75	none	none	60	none*	none*	none*	1.5
<b>Ind. B-2</b>	none	6	<del>35</del> -75	10	none	35	15*	none*	none*	0.75
<b>Ind. B</b>	none	10	120	none	none	120	none*	none*	none*	2.75*
<b>5.35 Open Space Districts</b>										
<b>OS</b>	60%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	35	25	15	25	0.25

\* With applicable footnotes



# Affordable Housing Overlay Comparison

- Based on current AHO text (11.207.5.2.1), all districts would permit **AHO projects of at least 13 stories**
- Up to 15 stories would be permitted for AHO projects in “AHO Squares” (Harvard, Central, Porter, Cambridge/Webster)



# Project Review



# Project Review Changes

## Concept:

- Threshold for Project Review Special Permit (incl. TIS) increases for housing from 50,000+ SF to 75,000+ SF
  - Non-residential threshold remains 50,000+ SF or less in some cases
- New “Planning Board Advisory Consultation” similar to AHO review
  - Complements current “Small Project Review” and “Large Project Review” Advisory Consultations
- Amend AHO so that required procedures are not more burdensome for AHO than other residential development



# Planning Board Advisory Consultation

Like AHO advisory review, intent is to apply City's design objectives holistically through a public process, but without the legal burden of a special permit and risk of appeal.

- Developer conducts outreach with at least one community meeting
- Plans submitted to City, Planning Board meeting scheduled, abutters notified, plans made available
- Planning Board holds review and makes comments
- Planning Board decides if a follow-up session is needed – no more than two meetings required unless at the request of the developer



# Current Review for Housing

Project Size	All Housing	AHO
< 25,000 SF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small/Large Project Advisory Consultation (special districts)</li> <li>• Planning Board special permit (some districts)</li> </ul>	
25,000-50,000 SF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design standards applied (19.50)</li> <li>• Planning Board special permit (some districts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design standards applied (11.207.7)</li> <li>• Public/Planning Board advisory review (at least 2 community meetings, at least 2 Planning Board reviews)</li> </ul>
50,000-75,000 SF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Board special permit (w/TIS)</li> </ul>	
75,000+ SF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Board special permit (w/TIS)</li> </ul>	

# Proposed Review for Housing

Project Size	All Housing	AHO
<b>&lt; 25,000 SF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small/Large Project Advisory Consultation (special districts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small/Large Project Advisory Consultation (special districts)</li> <li>• <i>Planning Board Advisory Consultation if above base zoning (1 meeting)</i></li> </ul>
<b>25,000-50,000 SF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design standards applied (19.50)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design standards applied (11.207.7)</li> <li>• <i>Planning Board Advisory Consultation if above base zoning (1 meeting)</i></li> </ul>
<b>50,000-75,000 SF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design standards applied (19.50)</li> <li>• Planning Board Advisory Consultation (1 or 2 meetings)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design standards applied (11.207.7)</li> <li>• Planning Board Advisory Consultation (1 or 2 meetings)</li> </ul>
<b>75,000+ SF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Board special permit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design standards applied (11.207.7)</li> <li>• Planning Board Advisory Consultation (2 meetings)</li> </ul>



# Zoning Timeline

# Process Timeline



-  City Council Committee Hearing
-  Planning Board Hearing
-  Community Meeting
-  City Council Meeting