

Affordable Housing Overlay Amendments: Presentation to the Ordinance Committee

August 3rd, 2023

Why are these amendments needed?

- We have a housing emergency that is not going to be solved by nibbling around the edges.
- According to the Cambridge Housing Authority, there are currently over 21,000 people on the affordable housing waiting list. Of those 21,000, over 6,500 of them live and/or work in Cambridge.
- We are nowhere close to being on track to reaching our Envision goals which state that we need to build 12,500 housing units by 2030.

Why do we have to do upzoning?

- Affordable housing production (other than CHA) requires new land acquisition
- Without higher density affordable housing developers lose out to private buyers
- After buying land (with financial help from the city) it takes years to finance, design and build a project
- Additional density means that each project can produce more homes for people
- Additional homes means we can clear more people off the waiting list sooner!
- We have millions of \$ in the Affordable Housing Trust and this is the best way to put them to work quickly.

AHO Amendments Process Timeline

Process Thus Far

- November 21st, 2022 - Introduced - November 21st, 2022
- February 8th, 2023 - Housing Committee Hearing #1
- March 8th, 2023 - Housing Committee Hearing #2
- March 22nd, 2023 - Neighborhood & Long Term Planning Hearing
- April 13th, 2023 - Housing Committee Hearing #3
- May 1st & May 8th - Policy Order Asking CDD for Amendments
- June 12th - CDD Returns Amendments and Forwarded to Ordinance
- July 31st, 2023 - Ordinance Committee #1
- August 3rd, 2023 - Ordinance Committee #2

Why we chose corridors & squares

- Direct transit options and the most plausible/potential “soft” sites
- Many recent AHO “missed opportunities” were on main corridors
- Smaller side streets not as conducive to land acquisition projects; focus on giving AHO developers the greatest possible market advantage where they need it most
- Corridor network runs through every neighborhood



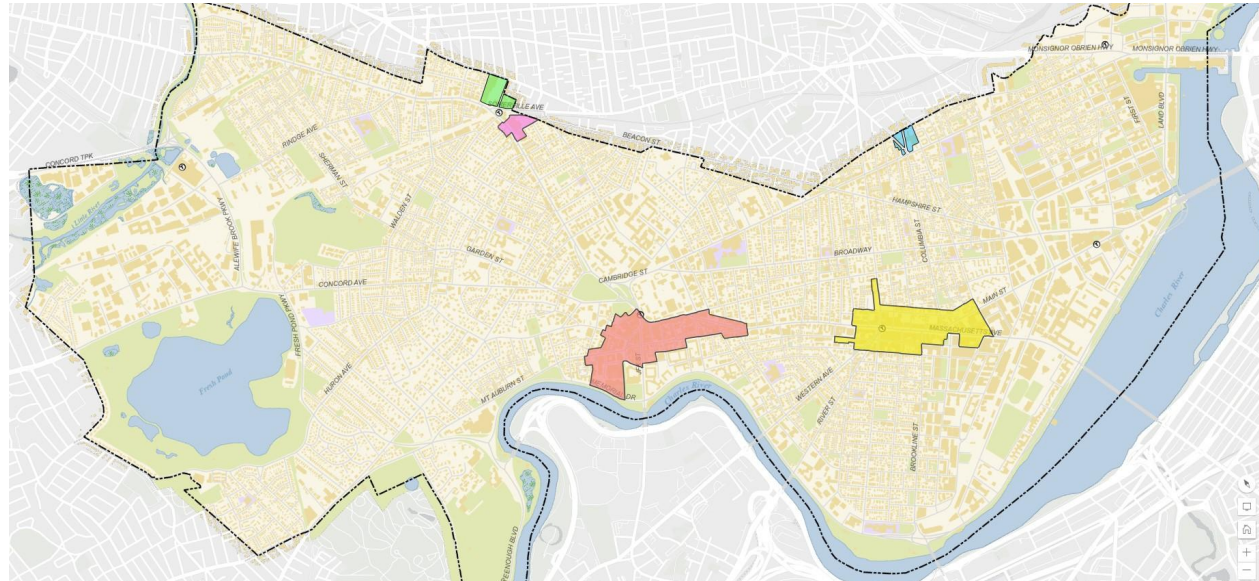
Summary of Proposed Zoning Changes

- We are proposing a number of changes to the dimensional requirements of the AHO ordinance.
 - Building height
 - AHO projects can now be up to **9 stories** (up from 6 in the original AHO) or **100ft** in areas where the maximum allowable residential height is between **40 and 65ft** or if it is an **AHO Corridor project**.
 - AHO projects can now be up to **13 stories** (up from 7 in the original AHO) or **150ft** in areas where the maximum allowable residential height is **above 65ft**.
 - AHO projects can now be up to **15 stories** near Central, Harvard, Union, and Porter Squares
 - Density
 - The proposed amendments **remove the FAR requirements for an AHO Square/Corridor project**.
 - Setbacks
 - The proposed amendments remove side and front setbacks
 - An AHO Project with a height of **less than 4 stories or 45ft**, shall have a minimum rear yard setback of **15ft** (down from 20ft in the original AHO).
 - All other AHO projects have **no minimum rear setbacks**

AHO Squares

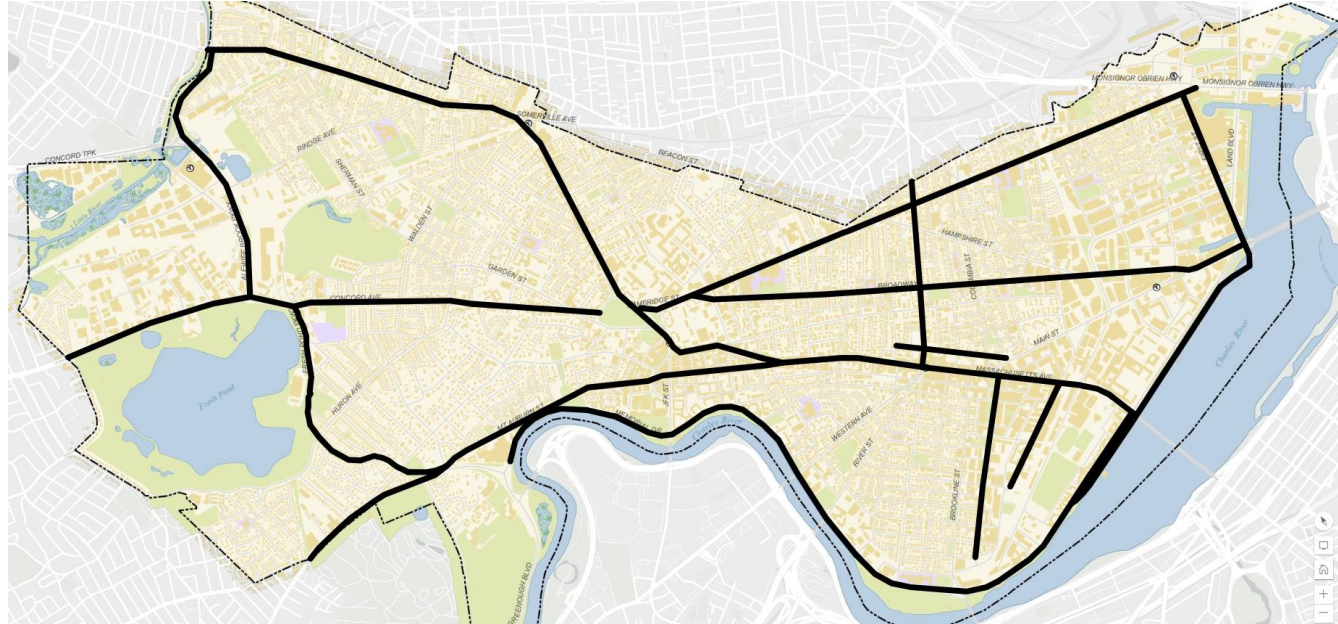
For the purposes of this Section, the phrase “AHO Square” refers to the Central Square, Harvard Square and Lesley Porter Overlay Districts, as well as any Lot or directly adjacent Lots owned by the same entity, where at least one of the Lot Lines abuts the northern side of Massachusetts Avenue or Somerville Avenue between Davenport and the city border (just west of Acadia Park), or either Webster Avenue or Columbia Street, north of Cambridge Street.

- An AHO Square Project shall have a maximum height of twenty-five (25) stories, or two hundred and eighty (280) feet, except as further limited below.



AHO Corridors

“AHO Corridor” refers to Albany Street, Alewife Brook Parkway, Bishop Allen Drive, Broadway, Cambridge Street, Concord Avenue, First Street, Fresh Pond Parkway, Massachusetts Avenue, Memorial Drive, Mount Auburn Street, Prospect Street, and Sidney Street. For the purposes of this Section, the phrase “AHO Corridor Project” shall mean an AHO Project on one or more directly abutting Lots owned by the same entity, where at least one of the Lot Lines abuts an AHO Corridor.



Open space amendment

More flexibility on building height in exchange for additional open space

Language allows for more height but not more density

CHA has analyzed how this would have impacted their recent projects, with very positive results



Highlight from CDD Amendments

Where an AHO Project may have various applicable Building Height and Stories Above Grade limitations as specified in 11.207.5.2.1, the most permissive height limitations shall generally control. Notwithstanding the provisions set forth in Section 11.207.5.2.1, **an AHO Project may match the height of an existing building on an adjacent lot.**

Will AHO projects use the great heights & density?

We've a shortage of affordable housing in our city and are short of meeting our goals. Increased heights along corridors will allow us to build more housing. *We can hear directly from CHA, HRI, others here.*

- This petition would legalize 2072 Mass Ave
- Cross Laminated Timber allows for affordable construction to 12 stories in MA (18+ internationally)
- Open Space adjustments would make other projects more viable.
- Projects would be viable on smaller lots and be able to preserve more open space

What are unit costs as you go taller?

At greater heights builders change to different building codes and construction becomes more expensive, but the land cost is divided by more units and so total unit costs still go down.

CDD Statement: “Examples include going from all wood-frame to wood-frame over steel podium where 7 stories may be more cost effective than 5-6 stories, to going from wood-over-steel to light gauge steel where 10-11 stories may be more cost effective than 8-9 stories, and to all steel buildings where 16 or more stories may be more cost-feasible than 12-15 stories.”

How long is the Affordable Housing Waitlist?

The Cambridge Housing Authority waitlist has **22,537 households** with **6,501 applicants** have a local preference.

Of these 6501: **4,488 live in Cambridge**, **2,912 work in Cambridge**, and **327 are Veterans**. There is some crossover so these numbers are not additive.

Are mixed-use projects eligible for the AHO? (For example Rindge Commons, a 40B)

An AHO can be mixed-use in a mixed use district.

11.207.4 B) “An AHO Project may contain active non-residential uses on the ground floor as they may be permitted as-of-right in the base zoning district or the overlay district(s) that are applicable to a lot...”

Suggestion Motions

1. Motion to move adoption of CDD Amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay
2. Motion to vote on any amendments by members of the ordinance committee
3. Motion to send the amendments back to city council

Dimensional Requirements - Building Height (11.207.5.2.1)

- (a) Where the District Dimensional Standards set forth a maximum residential building height of more than forty (40) feet but not more than ~~sixty-five (65) fifty (50)~~ feet, an AHO Project shall contain no more than ~~nine (9) six (6)~~ Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of ~~one hundred (100) sixty-five (65)~~ feet, as measured from existing Grade, except as further limited below. ~~For AHO Projects containing active non-residential uses on the ground floor, the maximum height may be increased to seventy (70) feet but the number of Stories Above Grade shall not exceed six (6) stories.~~
- (i) Except where the AHO Project abuts a non-residential use, portions of an AHO Project that are within thirty-five (35) feet of a ~~parcel subject to paragraph (a) district whose District Dimensional Standards allow a maximum residential building height of forty (40) feet or less~~ (a) shall be limited by the provisions of Paragraph (a) above, except that if the AHO project parcel extends into that District, then the height limitation shall only extend thirty-five (35) feet from the property line.
- (b) Where the District Dimensional Standards set forth a maximum residential building height of more than ~~sixty-five (65) fifty (50)~~ feet, or if the project is an AHO Corridor Project, an AHO Project shall contain no more than ~~thirteen (13) seven (7)~~ Stories Above Grade and shall have a maximum height of ~~one hundred and fifty (150) eighty (80)~~ feet, as measured from existing Grade, except as further limited below.
- (c) An AHO Square Project shall have a maximum height of twenty-five (25) stories, or two hundred and eighty (280) feet, except as further limited below.
- (d) ~~(d)~~ The Height Exceptions set forth in Section 5.23 of this Zoning Ordinance shall apply when determining the building height of an AHO Project.
- (e) For an AHO Project with more than one base zoning district, the base zoning district that covers the majority of the lot shall apply.

Dimensional Requirements - Residential Density (11.207.5.2.2)

- (a) Where the District Dimensional Standards establish a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of less than 1.00, an AHO Project shall not exceed an FAR of 2.00. Otherwise, there shall be no maximum FAR for an AHO Project. **There shall be no maximum FAR for AHO Square or AHO Corridor projects.**

Dimensional Requirements - Setbacks (11.207.5.2.3)

- (a) Front Yards. An AHO Project shall have ~~a minimum front yard setback of 15 feet, except where the District Dimensional Standards establish a less restrictive requirement, or may be reduced to the average of the front yard setbacks of the four (4) nearest pre-existing principal buildings that contain at least two Stories Above Grade and directly front the same side of the street as the AHO Project, or may be reduced to a minimum of ten (10) feet in the case of an AHO Project on a corner lot. Where the District Dimensional Standards set forth different requirements for residential and non-residential uses, the non-residential front yard setback requirement shall apply to the entire AHO Project if the Ground Story contains a non-residential use as set forth in Section 11.207.4 Paragraph (b) above; otherwise, the residential front yard setback shall apply.~~no minimum front yard setback requirement.
- (b) Side Yards. An AHO Project shall have ~~a minimum side yard setback of seven and one-half (7.5) two and one-half (2.5) feet, or may be reduced to the minimum side yard setback set forth in the District Dimensional Standards for residential uses that is not derived by formula if it is less restrictive.~~no minimum side yard setback requirement.
- (c) Rear Yards. An AHO Project with a height of less than 4 stories or 45 feet, shall have a minimum rear yard setback of ~~fifteen (15) twenty (20)~~ feet or may be reduced to the minimum rear yard setback set forth in the District Dimensional Standards for residential uses that is not derived by formula if it is less restrictive. **For all other AHO projects, no minimum rear yard setback is required.**