



HOUSING COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Thursday, April 13, 2023

9:30 AM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Housing Committee will hold a public meeting to continue discussing potential amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay district as outlined in the November 21, 2022 policy order adopted by the City Council

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
E. Denise Simmons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dennis J. Caralone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Housing Committee was held on Thursday, April 13, 2023. The meeting was Called to Order at 9:30 a.m. by the Chair, Councillor Simmons. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the role.

Councillor Simmons – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote

Councillor Caralone – Absent

Vice Mayor Mallon – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor McGovern – Present/Remote

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

Councillor Simmons gave opening remarks (Attachment A) and noted that the call of the meeting was to continue discussing potential amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay district as outlined in the November 21, 2022 policy order adopted by the City Council.

Councillor Simmons introduced Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD). Iram Farooq was joined by her team Daniel Messplay, Acting Director Zoning & Development, Chris Cotter, Housing Director, and Cassie Arnaud, Housing Planner.

Iram Farooq and her team gave an overview of their response memo titled "Supplemental Information Regarding Proposed Affordable Housing Overlay Amendments" (Attachment B). The memo provided information in response to questions and concerns that were brought up by City Council members at previous Housing Committee meetings on the proposed amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) zoning.

Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor Azeem and Councillor McGovern who gave a presentation titled “Affordable Housing Overlay Amendments, Housing Committee – Hearing #4” (Attachment C).

Councillor Simmons recognized Michael Johnston, Executive Director for Cambridge Housing Authority, who offered comments on the proposed AHO amendments and stressed that the AHO should be used as a tool that has been provided to assist in the creation of affordable housing.

Councillor Simmons recognized Carl Nagy-Koechlin, Executive Director for Just-A-Start, who shared that stable housing and any unit that developers can build is life saving and a great economic opportunity for people.

Councillor Simmons recognized Sara Barcan who shared that it is important for developers to be able to use the resources that CDD and the AHO provide because all those resources are used to get housing built.

Councillor Simmons recognized Vice Mayor Mallon who had a question on site control and how the affordable housing trust process works in relation to it. Chris Cotter shared that CDD works closely with developers and will collaborate with them if there is a feasible development that is possible. CDD then would review what the process will look like while working with the developers who are using the trust as a resource. Chris Cotter stressed that it is an active effort with all agencies. Vice Mayor Mallon highlighted the importance of being more aggressive with the trust and the conversations around it when it comes to different sites throughout the City.

Vice Mayor Mallon offered comments on the type of heights that are being discussed and shared that she does not believe that there is a real need to create a one corridor system.

Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor McGovern who offered comments on how he and other Councillors came to the decision on adding more height within the zoning, sharing that with additional height, there would be more opportunity and flexibility when developing affordable housing.

Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor Azeem who had a question for Vice Mayor Mallon regarding her thoughts or conversations that could potentially happen with CDD concerning heights of buildings. Vice Mayor Mallon shared that she believes CDD will have a lot of great points and feedback where improvements to the AHO could be the most impactful to help the City move forward.

Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor Nolan who asked on how costs compare to the market rate unit development and if any per unit costs for buildings would be available or found out from the City. Iram Farooq shared that there is no requirement for a developer to talk about development costs with the City when they come for a special permit. Councillor Nolan offered comments and stressed the importance of the City beginning to purchase multi-family homes to use to provide affordable housing.

Councillor Simmons opened public comment.

Neil Miller, 102 Pearl Street, Cambridge, MA, shared that they were in favor of more affordable housing.

James Zall, 203 Pemberton Street, Cambridge, MA, shared that housing has been reported as the number one problem by residents for years now.

Hurst Hannum, 9 Walden Mews, Cambridge, MA, shared they agreed with comments made by Vice Mayor Mallon and amendments to the AHO should be more thought out.

Arslan Aziz, 195 Park Drive, Boston, MA, shared their support for the proposed AHO amendments.

Gabriel Malseptic, 31 Wendell Street, Cambridge, MA, shared they were not in favor of the proposed amendments and agreed with comments made by Vice Mayor Mallon.

Robert Camacho, 24 Corporal Burns Road, Cambridge, MA, shared they were in favor of AHO #1 and not the proposed amendments and agreed with comments made by Vice Mayor Mallon.

Lisa Dreier, Cogswell Avenue, Cambridge, MA, shared that they were in favor of Vice Mayor Mallons recommendations to make modest revisions that are being requested by developers.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor McGovern who made a motion to extend the meeting by fifteen minutes.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the role.

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Carbone – Absent

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

Public Comment continued.

David Halperin, 14 Valentine Street, Cambridge, MA, shared it is important to take strict and bold action to help those who need affordable housing.

Norma Wassel, 175 Richdale Avenue, Cambridge, MA, shared they were opposed to the proposed changes to the AHO.

Suzanne Blrier, 5 Fuller Place, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns about building affordable housing and suggested that the City focus on State and City land that would work to the City's benefit.

Justin Saif, 259 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, shared strong support for the expansion of the 100% Affordable Housing Overlay and to move the proposal forward.

Helen Walker, 43 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA, agrees with comments made by Vice Mayor Mallon and noted that design review is an important part of the process.

Cathleen Higgins, 345 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA, echoed comments made in support of the AHO amendments and shared there could be many creative projects if they were to move forward.

John Pitkin, 18 Fayetteville Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comment on affordable housing and noted that the shortage of housing is a statewide problem.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Vice Mayor Mallon who made a motion to extend the meeting by ten minutes.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the role.

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Carbone – Absent

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

Public Comment continued.

Marie Elena Saccoccio, 55 Otis Street, Cambridge, MA, shared that they would like to see health and livability within the neighborhoods.

Joan Pickett, 59 Ellery Street, Cambridge, MA, shared they agreed with comments made by Vice Mayor Mallon and a more targeted approach is what's needed towards affordable housing. Michael Monestime shared that they fully support the AHO amendments.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons recognized Councillor McGovern who made a motion to close public comment.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the role.

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Carlone – Absent

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

Councillor Simmons shared that she wanted to acknowledge the concerns that were brought forward during the meeting and noted that she planned on recessing the meeting to continue discussions going forward in Committee. Councillor Simmons noted that by doing this it would help with the flexibility of bringing the proposed amendments to the Ordinance Committee.

The Chair, Councillor Simmons made a motion to recess the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the role.

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Councillor Carlone – Absent

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Opening remarks from Councillor Simmons

Attachment B – Presentation titled “Supplemental Information Regarding Proposed Affordable Housing Overlay Amendments”

Attachment C - Presentation titled “Affordable Housing Overlay Amendments, Housing Committee – Hearing #4”

Attachment D – The City Clerk’s Office received thirteen written communications.

Clerk’s Note:

The Amendments to the AHO discussed at this meeting have been further discussed in the Ordinance Committee and are currently before the full City Council and are eligible to be ordained on October 16, 2023.

The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record.

The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/483?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=2cd7c59bca7e53c00c3ec83f6c5169aa

Amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay.

A communication was received from Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Iram Farooq, transmitting Supplemental Information Regarding Proposed Affordable Housing Overlay Amendments.

A communication was received from Councillor Azeem, transmitting Affordable Housing Overlay Amendments.

OPENING REMARKS FOR HOUSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 13, 2023 at 9:30 am

Zoom link: <https://cambridgema.zoom.us/s/97895847144>

Good Morning –

I want to thank everyone for tuning in and attending this morning's meeting of the Housing Committee. The Housing Committee previously met to discuss the proposed amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay Ordinance on February 8, and then again on March 8. I will apologize for the early hour of *today's* hearing – normally I do try hard to hold these in the afternoons or evenings, but the City calendar has been getting crowded and this was the only way we could fit this hearing into the first half of April, which many of us felt was of critical importance.

We have a great deal of material to get through today, I want to use our time wisely, and therefore I am going to keep my opening remarks very brief. I don't imagine that those who are viewing this meeting need a recap of the ground we've already covered in our previous hearings – but for those who DO need that refresher, you can visit the City's website and either read the meeting minutes of our prior hearings, or view the videos of those hearings. Today, we are going to dive right in: at our last hearing, some Committee members raised some questions that have subsequently been forwarded to the CDD and to the Affordable Housing Developers, and my hope is that those questions shall be discussed and answered today.

The flow of the meeting, after I conclude my opening remarks, will be as follows:

- Responses from the Community Development Department to Councilors' Questions
- Brief Presentation from Councilors McGovern, Azeem, and Zondervan
- Opportunity for Input from Affordable Housing Providers (CHA, Just a Start, and HRI)
- Discussion from Committee members
- Public Comment
- Final Comments From Committee Members

And at the end of our two hours, my *hope* is that we will at the point where we will be ready to vote this out of Committee, and then we shall adjourn.

I am going to ask everyone to be mindful of the clock and keep your questions and comments brief, direct, and concise. With that, I would like to hand the floor over to the CDD to ask that they provide responses to the questions that had been posed by our Committee Members over the past month. Ms. Farooq, the floor is yours.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

IRAM FAROOQ

Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE

Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

KHALIL MOGASSABI

Deputy Director
Chief Planner

To: The Housing Committee
 From: Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community
 Development
 Date: April 13, 2023
 Subject: Supplemental Information Regarding Proposed Affordable Housing
 Overlay Amendments

The Community Development Department (CDD) has put together the following information in response to questions raised during recent discussions of the Housing Committee on the proposed amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay ("AHO") zoning.

1) *What is the justification or documented developers' need for 13-25 story building heights?*

[Alternate question]: What is the need for the height and density in the proposed amendments? Based on the examples given of recent projects in previous meetings, the need seems to be for the flexibility for several additional feet or at the most 1-2 floors, and some open space issues which is inconsistent with the amendments requested.

The proposed amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay initiated from a Council zoning petition. This question relates more to the Petitioners' intent, and we would not be able to speak to it directly; however, developers of affordable housing may provide additional information related to development and cost constraints that may necessitate a taller building in specific areas of the City.

In the initial AHO proposal, staff did not specifically study building heights over seven (7) stories, but the AHO is designed to accommodate taller heights if the underlying zoning permits it.

2) *What is the current total available financing for Affordable Housing from all sources?*

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) began FY23 with a balance of \$111,778,914. In FY23, the AHTF has received \$5,040,627 in Incentive Zoning Contributions and \$38,705,750 in funds from the FY23 City budget and

Community Preservation Act funding, bringing the total amount to \$155,525,291 available in FY23.

Of this balance, approximately \$2 million has been expended as of December 31, 2022. An additional \$99 million is committed to current affordable housing developments and programs. These include several developments where construction is now or will soon be underway, including 116 Norfolk Street (CHA), Jefferson Park (CHA), 52 New Street (JAS), 49 Sixth Street (POAH) and 35 Harvey Street (HRI). This also includes funds committed to the City's HomeBridge and other homeownership programs.

Additionally CDD is currently reviewing requests for more than \$34 million for funding from the AHTF, and also anticipates requests of approximately \$75 million for funding needed to complete financing for:

- Sites in the development pipeline, including 1627 Mass. Ave (HRI), Rindge Commons Phase 2 (JAS), and 35 Cherry Street; and
- New development opportunities where affordable housing providers are now making offers.

AHTF Funds	\$ 111,778,914
AHT Fund Balance (7/1/2022)	\$ 111,778,914

FY23 Incentive Zoning	\$ 5,040,627
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FY23 City Funds (Budget + CPA)	\$ <u>38,705,750</u>
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Total FY23 Fund Balance	\$ 155,525,291
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Expenses & Commitments	\$ (2,040,044)
Expended FY23 (12/31/22)	\$ (2,040,044)

Committed Funds	\$ <u>(99,209,828)</u>
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Total	\$ (101,249,872)
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Current & Anticipated Requests	\$ 54,275,419
Available Balance	\$ 54,275,419

Current Requests	\$ (34,345,000)
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Anticipated Requests	\$ <u>(74,779,000)</u>
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	\$ (54,848,581)
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3) *How is a developer paid for developing Affordable Housing? (i.e. Base Fee + fee per unit?)*

Affordable housing builders are paid fees through their developments. Developer fee and developer overhead, are capped by affordable housing funders, most often by formula based on overall costs.

Developer fees, including overhead, for affordable housing developments in Cambridge range between 6%-9% of total development costs, or roughly \$35,000 to \$45,000 per unit.

The amount fee and overhead actually received by affordable housing developers in Cambridge during a development is often lower than what might be allowed by funders, as affordable housing developers often defer or forgo altogether a portion of their “allowed” developer fee in order to reduce development costs.

The amount of developer fee collected by affordable housing builders (including overhead but excluding any amounts deferred), has averaged around 6.3% of total costs in recent years, and has been as low as 2-4% of total development costs, or \$15,000-25,000 per unit.

4) *What is the average cost per unit of affordable housing, and the range among projects?*

Cost per unit varies depending on the type and complexity of the housing development project, and on external factors such as interest rates, and costs for material and labor.

A development with a large number of family-sized units will be more expensive on a per-unit basis than a comparably sized building with a greater number of smaller units. In recent years, the average total development cost (TDC) per-unit in Cambridge has been in the low to mid \$600,000s, with some outliers.

For instance, the TDC per-unit at the Finch building at 675 Concord Avenue and for new units at SquirrelWood on Market Street and Broadway in the Port were in the \$500,000s, while more recently the redevelopment of Jefferson Park State will be more than \$900,000. In recent years, costs have been increasing due to significant increases in labor and materials and more recently increases in borrowing and financing costs. We would expect the per-unit TDC for new developments getting underway now to range from the low/mid \$600,000s into the \$700,000s and possibly higher for developments with unique attributes such

as high acquisition costs for sites in more expensive areas of the city, and developments which involve expensive historic preservation or the inclusion of expensive amenities.

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

The AHO standards are primarily for residential uses, but there is an allowance for affordable housing developments to have non-residential uses at the ground floor, as long as the non-residential uses are allowed under the base zoning. This is the current zoning text:

11.207.4 Use

- (a) In all zoning districts, an AHO Project may contain single-family, two-family, townhouse, or multifamily dwellings as-of-right. Townhouse and Multifamily Special Permit procedures shall not apply.
- (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, which for the purpose of this Section shall be limited to Institutional Uses listed in Section 4.33, Office Uses listed in Section 4.34 Paragraphs a. through e., and Retail and Consumer Service uses listed in Section 4.35 that provide services to the general public.

6) *What is the status of the Walden 2 project? (Developer has paused activity for a year)*

Winn Residential proposed an AHO development to add approximately a hundred units of infill housing at the Walden Square complex. They held several meetings with staff and the community to discuss the proposal, with their last community meeting in February 2022.

We understand that Winn has spent the last year working to address issues and make improvements to the existing housing at Walden Square, and that Winn plans to restart the planning process for Walden Square II to create new affordable housing at the site. Given the time that has passed since the last AHO community meeting over a year ago, Winn will restart that process with a new set of community meetings.

7) *Should the AHO revision include a provision for flood zones, where if you have to raise the bottom floor by 5ft due to flood regulations, you can*

extend the upper limit of the building by the same amount? (would help New Street)

The Climate Resilience Zoning Amendment adopted by the City Council on February 27, 2023, contains a provision to allow an as-of-right increase in height when the ground story of a building is raised to provide greater resilience from predicted future flooding, based on the City's projections. The increase in height is equal to the distance between the site grade and the ground floor, with a maximum increase of 4 feet. The rationale for the 4-foot limitation is to provide flexibility without effectively increasing the number of stories above grade that can be built.

This provision applies to all buildings, including AHO developments. This is the current zoning text:

5.23.2 If the Ground Story of a building is elevated to meet the Flood Resilience Standards in Section 22.80 of this Zoning Ordinance, then the allowed height of buildings and structures as set forth in this Zoning Ordinance may be increased as-of-right to compensate for the difference between the Ground Story finished floor elevation and the Grade elevation. However, the allowed increase in height shall be no greater than the difference in elevation between the 1%-Probability Long-Term Flood Elevation as described in Section 22.80 and the Grade, or four (4) feet, whichever is less. The City Engineer shall certify that the Flood Resilience Standards in Section 22.80 are met prior to issuance of a building permit for a building or structure utilizing the provisions of this Section 5.23.2.

8) *What are the costs per unit of market rate housing over the last five years and how does that compare to AHO projects?*

We do not have access to information about the total cost of creating market housing units as market-rate developers do not typically share cost data publicly. We can say that most affordable housing developments involve use of funding from multiple public sources including local, state and federal agencies. Each funding source has its own constraints and requirements, which can add cost and complexity. Market-rate developers may also have other costs for materials, finishes, and amenity space which differ from affordable housing buildings.

9) *What are the costs per unit for construction based on number of stories?*

There is not a simple way to estimate the per unit cost per number of stories as there are many variables at play, but we can outline how we expect different

types of costs to interact as building heights change. Unit size will have an impact on unit cost, as three-bedroom units have more floor area, and are thus more expensive than one-bedroom units. Construction type will also affect cost.

The components which make up most of the cost of an affordable unit are: acquisition costs, soft costs and fees, and construction costs. Acquisition is a fixed cost so the addition of more stories will reduce the cost per-unit as the fixed acquisition cost is spread across more floor area and units. The impact of more stories on soft costs and hard costs is more complicated as some soft costs are fixed and some are not, such as design, engineering, permits, borrowing costs, etc. The extent to which an increase of economies of scale offsets other increases in soft costs will depend on the specific attributes of the project.

Construction costs are also site-specific and will vary based on factors such as site constraints and the size, shape and efficiency of the building's floorplate, as well as construction method. Holding site characteristics constant, we would expect a comparison of the per square foot construction cost across different heights to follow a curve whereby a building becomes more cost-efficient as the design maximizes the advantages and economies of scale which different construction techniques can provide. For example, the incremental cost of triggering a more expensive construction method might be cost prohibitive until enough additional floor area is achieved to average the higher cost over enough floor area to provide a benefit. 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.

10) What is the capacity in a sample of 3-5 parcels along a major corridor if built to 6 or 8 stories? I know we can't do the capacity of the whole length of corridors, but to assess a few would give us all a sense of what is possible.

The Petition refers to a "Major Corridor" as 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.

Many of these corridors run from one side of the City to the other, and consist of hundreds of parcels. These corridors also consist of multiple zoning districts – sometimes as many as ten or more districts in a single corridor – that each have unique dimensional standards. One challenge here is how to determine what might be considered a representative parcel in a corridor given how diverse the corridors are.

The City has previously utilized 3D modeling to illustrate the potential build-out of representative parcels as part of a zoning change under consideration. In this case, similar modeling could be done but would require additional time and discussion so that there is a clear understanding of what staff might produce that would be helpful to the Committee.

11) What are the most recent and complete information on wait lists? The numbers cited were at odds with a CDD presentation from a few years ago, which showed about 1500 people living in Cambridge on housing waitlists.

[Alternate Question]: What is the most accurate waiting list information? The waitlist should indicate the number of people on waitlists who live in Cambridge, those who work in Cambridge (not double counting – so only those who work and are not already included in the live in Cambridge list). Also, of those who [work] in Cambridge where they are currently living.

[Alternate Question #2]: For the waitlists, there should be a waitlist for inclusionary, and for other affordable housing – and if people are on both, that should be noted – so we know how many unique individuals are on each list. Also, confirm if waitlists are individuals or households – meaning if a family of three people is on the waitlist, that is 3 not 1 person, correct? Which means it would be helpful to know the number of households on the waitlists.

Wait list information cited most frequently comes from the Cambridge Housing Authority. CHA maintains wait lists for CHA-owned housing as well as CHA housing voucher programs. Many affordable units in all-affordable buildings owned by non-profit and private affordable housing providers are accessed via CHA's wait list for vouchers.

CHA regularly provides information about unduplicated applicants across all its waiting lists. The most recent data wait list data CHA has shared show that there

are 22,537 unduplicated households on CHA wait lists. Of these, 6,501 applicants have CHA's local preference, which gives priority to applicants who:

1. live in Cambridge; or
2. work in Cambridge; or
3. are veterans.

Separately, CDD maintains waiting pools for inclusionary rental housing. There are currently 3,772 total unduplicated households who have applied for inclusionary rental housing, including 1,283 applicants who live in Cambridge, and an additional 461 applicants who work but do not reside in Cambridge. Almost half of non-resident Cambridge workers in the inclusionary rental waiting pool live in Boston (149) or Somerville (60).

This combined total of 1,744 inclusionary rental housing applicants who live or work in Cambridge compares to CHA's 6,501 applicants with CHA's local preference.

CHA's wait list numbers are most frequently referenced as CHA programs include applicants across all CHA programs including applicants seeking housing vouchers and to be housed in affordable units in all-affordable buildings.

Both CHA and CDD maintain distinct applicant pools. We would expect that there is some overlap between rental applicants but cannot say to what extent. We cannot fully analyze overlap due to limitation in sharing personally identifiable information about applicants.

Other non-profit and private affordable housing providers also may have separate and distinct wait lists for their buildings. However, as noted above, many units in all-affordable buildings are accessed through CHA.

Wait list data reflects applicant households, not individual household members.

Affordable Housing Overlay Amendments

Housing Committee – Hearing #4

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

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 and go higher
- Cross Laminated Timber allows for affordable construction to 12 stories in MA (18+ internationally)
- CHA would be interested in expanding Miller's River
- 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...”

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment 1>

From: Hadley, Shelagh <shadley@bu.edu>
Sent: Thursday, April 13, 2023 9:45 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk; City Manager
Subject: AHO proposal

Dear Cambridge City Council,

Like so many other Cambridge resident taxpayers, I strongly oppose the proposed 25 AHO story towers. Please do not destroy Cambridge in your haste to provide low-cost housing.

Please consider Councilor Dennis Carbone's much more sensible options to remedy the situation, and prevent councilors who are currently indebted to developers from pushing for the proposed out-of-scale towers.

Thanks, Shelagh Hadley,

longtime resident owner, taxpayer and voter in Cambridge

Erwin, Nicole

From: John Hanratty <jhanratty@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 13, 2023 9:40 AM
To: Nolan, Patricia; Carbone, Dennis; Zondervan, Quinton; McGovern, Marc; Mallon, Alanna; Azeem, Burhan; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Toner, Paul; City Manager; Erwin, Nicole; LeBlanc, Diane
Subject: AHO - a bad idea

Build affordable housing but do it responsibly. Do not shirk the city's responsibility to protect its citizens.

The proposal to change zoning to allow very tall buildings on the specified corridors is a bad idea. The addition of no parking or set back requirement is utterly insane. Please go look at the tall buildings we have on Rindge and Alewife. The parking lot and front door area are extremely busy with delivery trucks, moving vans, residents getting Ubers, or coming and going. To expect a 4-foot sidewalk to absorb this traffic is not reasonable. These vehicles and people will swap bike lane, pedestrian and auto traffic. Large buildings require infrastructure (e.g. water, sewage, green space, electricity, cable/internet, traffic flow, police, schools, fire department, etc.) These things do not appear overnight and will severely impact the neighborhood if not planned. This is the reason we have zoning.

The city should not cede its responsibility to provide adequate infrastructure and quality life to its residents. To pass these changes, means the city does not respect the welfare and wishes of all its citizens. Build affordable housing but do it responsibly.

John Hanratty
15 Mount Vernon Street
Cambridge

Erwin, Nicole

From: Teresa Cardosi <tercar1961@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 13, 2023 9:38 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: please support AHO amendments

Dear City Councillors,

Please support the AHO amendments. There is only so much property in Cambridge, and soon it will all be bought by the for-profit developers. We are in dire need of affordable housing and these amendments will help non-profit developers compete. Waiting is not an option if you want a diverse, multi-income Cambridge community.

Thank you for your time and considering my input.

Teresa Cardosi
7 Woodrow Wilson Court, #47
Cambridge, MA 02139

Erwin, Nicole

From: Catherine Zusy <cathzusy@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 13, 2023 8:53 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Cc: Huang, Yi-An
Subject: No to the Proposed Amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay

To: Housing Committee
Re: No to the Proposed Amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay

We certainly need more middle income housing in Cambridge, but blanket upzoning of our squares and corridors is not the answer. Allowing buildings to be as tall as developers choose and without front, side (and almost) backyard setbacks would result in the destruction of cohesive neighborhoods and detract from the City's charm.

As Councilor Dennis Carlone has argued, we need a thoughtful plan for building housing that is in sync with our neighborhoods, historic architecture, open space and trees. The plan must be nuanced and site specific. In my own neighborhood of Cambridgeport, I can think of several places where larger buildings for affordable housing would have made sense: beside LBJ Apartments on Erie Street and where the Pearl Street Market once was—both now sites for atrocious looking luxury housing. To understand better: why these sites hadn't been identified by the City earlier for affordable housing.

Yes, we need to provide more housing so that our City workers, including teachers, planners, nurses, and fire and police people can live here. No, to haphazard zoning with noble intentions that will, sadly, trigger disastrous results.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Marilee Meyer <mbm0044@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 13, 2023 8:47 AM
To: City Council; McGovern, Marc; Azeem, Burhan; City Manager; Zondervan, Quinton; Farooq, Iram; City Clerk
Subject: letter against the AHO Re-WRITE
Attachments: AHO LETTER HOUSING COMMITTEE April 12.docx

Dear councilors,

Please find attached a letter against the travesty that is the AHO 2.0 re-write. It changes the intent of the original which was vetted many times and kills the golden calf.

This version is going to do great damage to Cambridge, not because it is extra housing but once again, HOW it is being done. You are inviting Somerville's Union Square into Cambridge's smaller streets with impunity. Democracy and community are being lost. All it takes is more imagination for 4 6-story buildings, 5 5-story buildings and other denomination to create more manageable housing for both the city and affordable housing builders who cannot possibly finance 25 stories.

Marilee Meyer
10 Dana St

April 12, 2023

RE: AGAINST THE NEW MISCONCEIVED AHO

Dear Council,

I implore you to reconsider your railroad job pushing through a radical re-write of the AHO's original intent only 2 years old. These are not amendments. It is such a bad reflection of what good governance is supposed to look like. What is being proposed doesn't consider context, design, scale, materials, location... anything a good urban planner or architect considers. It says "housing at any cost"- that people don't deserve attractive homes, trees, green space, human scale. **The proponents supposedly worked to develop the proposal for 11 months in consultation with housing developers** while Residents continue to be uninvited. We have yet to see the breakdown of that oft-quoted 20,000 people on the non-updated housing list. Only recently was there a suggestion that CDD has a count of 3500 Cambridge residents and 7000 people who live and work in Cambridge. What is the true count? What a shame that Cambridge is building warehouses when alternatives can be more imaginative.



There are no setbacks, buffer zones to neighborhoods and they would have no limits to density. Projects would automatically be approved with no public recourse. At the recent Long-term Neighborhood and University Relations committee where this AHO version was presented, the tunnel-vision sponsors included several existing tall buildings to illustrate their case for height. But they miss the point.

A very clear example was 929 Mass Ave. While it is a very tall building it has:

- 1) a plaza and deep setback from Mass Ave
 - 2) open first floor and see-through parking
 - 3) setbacks and balconies creating architectural rhythm
 - 4) most importantly, the back abutting a residential street drops to 4 stories in keeping with scale of the neighborhood. This transition originally included is now eliminated. A square box can sit sidewalk to sidewalk with no setbacks or green, no shadow studies. Solar panels would be rendered useless by abutters. The design devices and oversight you actually like are ignored.
- Why do buildings have to be ugly?



KEY TAKE AWAYS (Meyer Cont.)

- 25 Story AHO buildings will be allowed in all our major Squares as well as multi-lot properties that meet certain criteria. These structures may be without parking, property setbacks, or buffer zones to residential areas. One only has to look at Somerville's Union Square for a neighborhood- changing structure. Is this what you want?
- Not all the squares are the same. Central Square is a drive though with a wide boulevard. The 19 Story Mass and Main has already shattered the streetscape but it too, has space and setbacks. Other cited tall buildings are actually a block off Mass Ave on side streets.
- The triangle of Harvard Square is a bottle neck in the bow tie that is Cambridge. It is also an international tourist destination. This is not a place for a 25 story building slicing the sky and blocking iconic views. This is incredibly short-sighted concerning our tourist industry. If there was one place to compromise "in good faith", it would be to eliminate 25 stories from Harvard Square. It is too small. I would rather see 4 six-story buildings, 5 five-story or 3 eight-story buildings which are more manageable for affordable housing developers and easier for the city to supplement. 25 stories will never get financed and will open the door to 25-story MARKET RATE HOUSING INSTEAD.
- There may be places on major corridors for 10-13 stories but again, not all avenues have standardized contexts. Different districts have different flavors needing property setbacks and buffer zones between residential areas.
-
- Any project that retains at least 5% of its green space, or adds green space (even a minuscule 10' SF area) will have no height limitations whatsoever. This is incredibly wreckless.

MAJOR ISSUES

- INFRASTRUCTURE: Lack of any consideration of existing or near future infrastructure needs (schools, hospitals, water, electricity, transportation)
-
- ENVIRONMENT: Further loss of trees and green spaces since there are no minimal setbacks or green yard spaces required. Climate change factors are not being addressed - rising flood level considerations, and issues of water displacement impacts with the deep footing impacts of tall dense buildings. Likely heat island impacts will also be considerable.

- (Meyer Cont. 3)
-
- SOCIAL EQUITY: These large structures will segregate lower income tenants without providing any means to build equity (by not including home ownership or other possibilities). Note many of these projected AHO residents, including minorities, are not current Cambridge residents. Nor, will tenants in these housing units be able to include grown children or others in their units as is possible in other properties.

This AHO petition is a wish list devised by an incredibly irresponsible government body. It's not even good governance because neighbors, tenants and homeowners were left out of the process as were several councilors citing the open meeting law (which tells me several were huddled in the back room). This AHO re-write (not amendments) will pass not because it is thoughtful or innovative, but because the council is a stacked court with tunnel vision and a vendetta. The AHO has barely had time to settle.

Government needs to work for ALL people, not just voting constituents.

Marilee Meyer

10 Dana St

02138

Erwin, Nicole

From: Vickey Bestor <vickeybestor@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 13, 2023 8:38 AM
To: City Council; City Manager; City Clerk
Subject: Housing

Dear Councillor Carbone and members of the housing committee and city council:

Yet again I write to ask for reasoned judgement, common sense, and informed decision making!

Do not make a decision to open up the flood gates of development with the massive upscaling of AHO overlay guidelines permitting structures of 25 stories in major squares and 9-13 stories along major corridors.

Yes we need more affordable housing, all over our city. — Build on city owned land.

Yes build affordable housing on the BBN field near Fresh Pond.

Yes the city should buy more land to affordable housing citywide

We need more deliberate and well-coordinated planning that builds the kind of infrastructure we need for the future. The 25/13 plan simply unleashes the developers — don't do it.

Vickey Bestor
149 Upland Road

Erwin, Nicole

From: Gianmarco Terrones <gterrone@mit.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 8:33 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Cambridge Green New Deal

Good morning,

My name is Gianmarco, and I am a graduate student at MIT who lives in Cambridge. I would like to express my support for the Cambridge Green New Deal. Furthermore, I believe it is important that Cambridge invest in green infrastructure and avoid reliance on carbon credits. Cambridge is a remarkable city in that innovative research goes on here that improves people's lives around the world. I think Cambridge should also strive to be remarkable in its approach to climate change, which is already having negative health and economic impacts for people around the world. From my point of view, the city can either innovate this approach or copy some other city that is doing a good job at it; what matters is that you get the job done.

Sincerely,
Gianmarco

Erwin, Nicole

From: Helen Walker <hwalker434@rcn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 10:08 PM
To: Azeem, Burhan; Carlane, Dennis; Mallon, Alanna; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Toner, Paul; Zondervan, Quinton
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Housing Committee Hearing on Amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay

Dear Members of the Cambridge City Council,

I write in opposition to the present version of the Amendments to the Affordable Housing Overlay.

Cambridge urgently requires additional affordable housing. But we can do better. We want affordable housing to be well-integrated into our neighborhoods, for the benefit both of the new residents and of the surrounding neighbors. Low- to mid-rise development is inherently more conducive to fitting in, and offers opportunities to create entry courts, stoops, and all the other transitions between private space and public space that encourage meeting and building community. It is short-sighted to spend extra money on the technologies needed to build tall, when that same money could be used instead to provide nicer details and materials for the individual apartments.

The affordable housing developers who spoke previously before the Committee did not make the case for more than one or two extra stories as helpful to improve their options for their projects.

NO project should ever be built without design review - over-scaled projects on tight sites least of all. These are people's homes we are talking about...they deserve sufficient study to make them as nice as possible given the resources available. Design review is an opportunity for improvement and should be used as such.

Councillor Carlane's vision will yield a more livable city for everyone. Please devote your energy to strategies for making low- to mid-rise development affordable.

With many thanks for your consideration,

Helen Walker
43 Linnaean Street
Cambridge, MA

Erwin, Nicole

From: Kathleen Francis <knf9478@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 9:35 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Re: Support AHO changes

Hello,

As the Cambridge City Council is about to discuss the AHO changes again tomorrow, I want to reiterate my support for these changes.

Many of my friends are looking for new apartments right now, preparing for the dreaded September 1 lease cycle, and seeing high rents and high competition for every apartment. One friend is choosing to move to New York instead of renewing her lease (with a \$300/month rent increase), and finding that apartments in Brooklyn are significantly cheaper than Cambridge. Another friend, a public school teacher, is unable to move to be closer to her job, because she's been in her apartment so long that finding a new apartment would involve a big rent increase. As a result, she has to drive to work every day instead of using more climate-friendly commuting options like she would prefer. And these are all stories from privileged young people with no children to worry about, so it's obviously only the tip of the iceberg of the real pain, stress, and hardship that Cambridge's housing crisis causes.

All options should be on the table for alleviating this crisis, and the proposed AHO changes seem like really good options. The AHO has already been more impactful than expected, with 280 new units in the works and more being renovated. But with the 2072 Mass Ave project, we've also seen how it can fall short of ensuring affordable housing projects are economically viable, so there's clearly room for improvement. The explosive growth in this area shows no signs of slowing down, so Cambridge needs to make big moves now to mitigate the crisis and prepare for future growth. And the focus on transit-accessible areas will bring more housing to the areas that Cambridge residents need and want to live.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this urgent issue,
Kathleen Francis
56 Hancock St #5
Cambridge, MA

On Wed, Nov 30, 2022 at 9:03 AM Kathleen Francis <knf9478@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello,

I'd like to express my support for the proposed changes to the AHO to allow more height along corridors and squares. There are simply too many people who want to live in Cambridge and not enough space to avoid building up.

I currently rent an apartment in Cambridge with my husband, and we are starting to look at buying a home, hopefully in the Cambridge or Somerville area. It's been shocking to see that even with our two six-figure tech incomes, we might be priced out of the area, and in particular the areas within walking distance to the T. Cambridge desperately needs more housing, for all income levels, and creating more density around transit areas in particular is so important for allowing access to cheaper and climate-friendly transit options.

Thanks,
Kathleen Francis
56 Hancock St #5
Cambridge, MA

Erwin, Nicole

From: Mark Steffen <mark.alan.steffen@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 9:09 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Support expansions to the AHO

Hello:

Please support the proposal to expand Cambridge's Affordable Housing Overlay. Rising rents following Covid, even in the face of inflation, make it difficult to remain in Cambridge for many. Taller buildings offer a strategy for expanding affordable housing options and should be pursued.

Over the next five years, my partner and I will decide whether or not to stay in Cambridge or move to a more affordable suburb. She works in Cambridge and I have been a resident for six years. Please consider how your decision will impact the long-term plans for residents like us.

I typically vote based on recommendations from A Better Cambridge.

All the best,

Mark Steffen

Erwin, Nicole

From: John Trever <johntrever@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 4:51 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Against radical proposal for 13-25 story buildings

Councilors:

The **radical proposed revision** to the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) would allow affordable housing buildings of 25 stories in Harvard, Porter, Central and Union Squares and 13-story buildings along thirteen different avenues. These would be automatically approved ("as of right") without opportunities for public input or review.

- The proposal sponsors have stated publicly several times that the proposal was **developed in close collaboration with developers**, without consultation with other members of the community until it was unveiled to the City Council on short notice in November 2022.
- During initial hearings on the proposal, local affordable housing developers cited examples where 1-2 more stories would have been helpful to their projects. Sponsors have **failed to make the case for the extreme height increases** in their proposal.
- The AHO has been in effect for just over two years. The City has not evaluated its performance, and **Councilors do not have full visibility** on the actual scope of affordable housing need; the amount of city funding and programs available; current costs of affordable housing construction; and other key facts.

I urge you to put an end to this radical proposal.

Kind regards,
John Trever
156 Richdale Ave

Erwin, Nicole

From: Ausra Kubilius <ausmkub@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 3:39 PM
To: City Council; City Manager; City Clerk
Subject: NO to increasing height of AHO

Dear Cambridge City Officials,
Once again, I ask that you build human-scale affordable housing in safe locations (not dangerous intersections), with some greenery and parking.

Also, have any of you been commuting after 3 pm in North Cambridge? It ain't pretty. In your capacity as city leaders, would you please focus on improving the situation.

Thank you.
Ausra Kubilius
Cogswell Ave

Erwin, Nicole

From: Jesse Michel <jesse.michel@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 12:38 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: In support of Cambridge's Affordable Housing Overlay

Hello Cambridge city council members and clerk,

I'm a graduate student who lives in Cambridge and has family in Cambridge who works in tech, but cannot afford to buy their first home here. I'm writing to communicate my support for the new affordable housing plan.

Best,
Jesse

Erwin, Nicole

From: Devon Davidson <devon2020@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2023 11:08 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Support for more affordable housing

Dear Housing Committee,

As a long-time resident of Cambridge, I am writing to urge you to do whatever you can to expand affordable housing opportunities in Cambridge. More multi-family housing for people with low and moderate income will make our city more diverse and vibrant. This is why we sent our children to Cambridge public schools rather than to private ones and why I have been proud to live here.

It is a disgrace for a city as wealthy as Cambridge not to provide housing for those who are homeless.

With climate change, it is also vital that there be multi-family, affordable housing within easy walking distance of the T. Yes, taller buildings are necessary. To assert that tall buildings lead to crime is biased, to say the least. I have not heard of tall luxury apartment buildings having an increase in crime.

Having lived in Philadelphia for a few years, I rarely found parking within a block or two of my house and my quality of life was not compromised. We are spoiled to think that we all need parking right at our doors.

Thank you for your important work.

Sincerely,
Devon Davidson
65 Eustis Street, Cambridge