

Lesley Porter Overlay District

THIS IS A DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION AT THE JANUARY 2009 PSNA MEETING

20.200 Lesley Porter Overlay District

20.201 Establishment and Scope

There is hereby established the Lesley Porter Overlay District which shall be governed by the regulations and procedures specified in this Section. The District encompasses property constituting Lesley University's Porter Square campus and has a Business-C District base zoning designation.

20.202 Purpose

It is the purpose of this Section to augment existing zoning regulations to respond to issues associated with institutional uses and unique planning opportunities immediately adjacent to Porter Square's MBTA station. These regulations are intended to allow for the establishment of an emerging art district associated with the University, to enhance the vitality of Massachusetts Avenue by encouraging ground floor uses that will serve the needs of abutting neighborhood residents and enhance the established streetscape, to create a more harmonious and consistent character for the development along Massachusetts Avenue and where such development faces or abuts low density residential districts, and to encourage the retention and appropriate reuse of buildings of historic value.

20.203 Applicability

The Lesley Porter Overlay District shall be an Overlay District on the Zoning Map of the City of Cambridge established in Section 3.20.

20.203.1 The buildings and land uses within this district shall be controlled by the pertinent regulations of the applicable base Business C zoning district and the Massachusetts Avenue Overlay District, Section 20.100 except as modified by the requirements of this Section 20.200. Where regulations differ among the several applicable zoning districts, the provisions of this Section 20.200 shall apply.

20.203.2 Floor Area Ratio Limitations

1 Institutional Uses

.

Notwithstanding the FAR limits set forth in Article 5.000 or elsewhere in this ordinance, the maximum FAR permitted in the Lesley Porter Overlay District shall be 2.5 for all educational institutional uses set forth in Article 4.33.b, after the granting of a special permit from the Planning Board, subject to the following conditions and limitations:

- a. Notwithstanding the definition of Lot in Article 2.000, a development project in this Lesley Porter Overlay District may consist of non-contiguous lots and lots separated by streets, which lots are held in common ownership. In calculating the gross floor area (GFA) permitted for a development consisting of institutional uses, the area of noncontiguous lots held in common ownership within the Overlay District may be combined. The resulting permitted Gross Floor Area may be located on or transferred to any one of the constituent lots without limit as to the FAR on any individual lot.

However, for those lots located westerly of Massachusetts Avenue, the authorized Gross Floor Area constructed on the lots shall not exceed an FAR of 2.0 for all uses.

- b. Any Special Permit issued by the Planning Board that includes development rights involving any of the lots located westerly of Massachusetts Avenue shall result in a prohibition on dormitory uses on said lots.

2 Retail Uses

The area of a building abutting Massachusetts Avenue that is occupied by retail uses set forth in Section 4.35 that are located on the ground (first) floor and basement of that building, which is otherwise at least 50% occupied by institutional uses, shall be exempt from the requirements of FAR and shall not be counted as Gross Floor Area.

20.203.3 Height

- 1 Height shall be that permitted in the base Business C Zoning District and shall be measured from actual grade.

However, the height of any historic structure (determined to be a Preferably Preserved Significant Building by the Cambridge Historical Commission under the provisions of Ordinance No. 965) shall be exempted from the provisions of Article 5.33.2 and 5.43.

- 2 For lots located westerly of Massachusetts Avenue, the maximum height shall be limited to 45 feet and shall be measured from actual grade.

20.203.4 Setbacks

Setbacks shall be the same as required in the base zoning district (Business C) provided, however, that historic structures shall not be subject to the yard requirements of Article 5.41 and 5.42, including if all or a portion of such structures is relocated on the same lot in the Overlay District.

20.203.5 Parking and Loading

Any new gross floor area authorized by Special Permit in the Lesley Porter Overlay District that results in the elimination of existing parking spaces on the lots located westerly of Massachusetts Avenue or in the parking lot at the rear of University Hall shall not be permitted unless replacement parking is provided.

Above ground parking facilities shall not be permitted in the Overlay District, with the possible exception of the existing surface parking lot abutting Roseland Street, but only after a determination by the Planning Board that the parking facility will be architecturally and visually well integrated within the overall development. In order to make such a determination the Planning Board must find the following:

1. Any above grade parking shall be located along the MBTA tracks.
2. Any parking shall be in a structure containing other uses.
3. Portions of the building containing parking shall be architecturally screened along Roseland Street.
4. The portion of the building where parking is located does not have an adverse effect on the architectural character of the proposed building.
5. Portions of the parking facility are located below grade where feasible.

20.203.6 Open Space

The Overlay District has open space opportunities that assist in making the district responsive to surrounding community desires and at the same time address Lesley campus goals. They include: 1. Areas along pedestrian active and passive streets and 2. A mid-block 'open to the sky' pedestrian way.

Minimum Ratio for Usable Open Space to Lot Area shall be:

1. Ten (10) percent for the proposed Art Institute site located at the Massachusetts Avenue and Roseland Street site, and
2. Fifteen (15) percent for the area located behind University Hall bordering Roseland Street and the MBTA train tracks.

For purposes of calculating open space on the proposed Art Institute site, the following areas may be included:

1. Area that is open on three (3) sides with a height of at least twelve (12) feet, and
2. Area that is ten (10) feet or more in any dimension.

20.203.7 Special Permit Criteria

In granting a Special Permit under this Section 20.200, in addition to the other criteria specified in Section 10.40, the Planning Board shall take into consideration the following and make appropriate findings related thereto:

- 1 Contribute to emerging Porter Square art district by concentrating academic . activities that will provide publicly accessible uses including arts libraries, galleries and a wide range of activities and classes and that will have positive spillover effects on the retail environment of the Square.
- 2 Contribute to Porter Square's vitality, identity and sense of place by . removing existing on-grade parking lots and constructing new structures that spatially define and enrich Massachusetts Avenue and incorporate active ground floor uses and buffering them from the activity and noise along Massachusetts Avenue.
- 3 Minimize adverse impacts on abutting low-density housing by . appropriately designing and programming new structures' location on the lot, massing, scale, use and operations.
- 4 Preserve, reuse and highlight historic structures as integral, publicly . accessible parts of the overlay district.
- 5 Provide retail activity that serves local residents' and Lesley community . needs, strengthens the corridor's existing retail base and provides a more dynamic, mixed-use image.
- 6 Minimize vehicular traffic and demand for on street parking in the . residential neighborhood by concentrating activity near the T station, maximizing a mix of uses that reinforce each other, and enhance the pedestrian environment.
- 7 Provide inviting open space at the center of the Art Institute's . Massachusetts Avenue frontage of at least 20 feet in depth and totaling approximately 3,000 square feet in size. The design shall include places for rest and gathering with an appropriate public art focus.
- 8 Provide urban 'campus-like' open space along Roseland Street, which . would include an entry forecourt along the axis of neighboring Frost Street, and a well-defined pedestrian walkway through University Hall's existing parking lot.