



# HOUSING COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

12:30 PM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

**The Housing Committee will hold a public hearing on allowing multifamily housing in all neighborhoods of the City.**

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:35 PM

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Housing Committee was held on Wednesday, May 8, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:30 p.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Siddiqui. 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, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Present/In Sullivan Chamber  
Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber  
Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote  
Councillor Wilson – Absent\*

**Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.**

**\*Councillor Wilson was recorded as present and in the Sullivan Chamber at 12:35p.m.**

Co-Chair Siddiqui offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss allowing multifamily housing in all neighborhoods of the City. Present from the Community Development Department (CDD) was Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager, Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, and Chris Cotter, Housing Director. Megan Bayer, Acting City Solicitor was also present, as well as Councillor Nolan and Mayor Simmons.

Co-Chair Siddiqui recognized Co-Chair Azeem who introduced two panelists that were joining the meeting, Jason Furman, Aetna Professor of the Practice of Economic Policy jointly at Harvard Kennedy School and the Department of Economics at Harvard University, who was in person, and Paul Williams, Founder and Executive Director of Center for Public Enterprise, who was joined remotely. Co-Chair Azeem gave a presentation titled “Proposal for Multifamily Housing Citywide”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. Co-Chair Azeem recognized both Jason Furman and Paul Williams who offered an overview of their experience with housing and economic opportunities. Jason Furman and Paul Williams were both available to respond to questions and comments from Co-Chair Azeem, Vice Mayor McGovern, Councillor Nolan, and Councillor Wilson. The

Co-Chairs and Committee members thanked the two panelists for their comments and for making time to participate in the meeting.

Co-Chair Siddiqui recognized Iram Farooq who offered opening remarks. Jeff Roberts gave a presentation titled “Multifamily Housing Citywide”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation provided an overview of the Policy Order, solutions to act quickly, ending exclusionary zoning, promoting more multifamily housing including income-restricted affordable housing, making multifamily housing easier to build, and existing conditions.

**Co-Chair Siddiqui opened Public Comment.**

Dan Phillips, 234 Broadway, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of multifamily housing.

Allan Sadun, 237 Elm Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of multifamily housing.

Carolyn Magid, 71 Reed Street, Cambridge, MA, urged the Council to look at how this may affect low-income residents.

Justin Saif, Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of exclusionary zoning.

David Halperin, 14 Valentine, Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the approach to multifamily housing and offered suggestions on way to continue to move forward.

Beth Maloney, 510 Kendall Street, Cambridge, MA, Kendall Square Association, shared that housing is essential and important to continue to grow in Cambridge and attract people to live and visit.

Lee Farris, 260 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA, shared concerns abouts inclusionary and affordable housing on the proposal.

Dorothy Manevich, 25 Knapp Street, Harvard Graduate Students Union UAL Local 5118, shared concerns about the increase of housing and cost of living.

Doug Brown offered comments regarding the Joseph S. Ronayne et al. petition and the connection between the petition and the policy order.

Co-Chair Siddiqui recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who shared the importance of making housing intentional and affordable. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler pointed out that they would like to focus on how the City can move away from single-family zoning in a way that will be meaningful, but also creating more affordable housing in the zoning process. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked for more information on Policy Order 2024 #35 that was recently passed in Council and how it relates to the current topic in Committee. Iram Farooq and Jeff Roberts shared there has been some discussion on it but did not want to bring it to Committee today due to the amount of information that was already going to be discussed. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler shared that he and Co-Chair Siddiqui have been in conversation about building code issues and asked if they could be regulated by the City or the State. Megan Bayer shared that the City does not have authority to make any changes and that Courts have a rule that municipalities cannot have their own differing standards from what is required.

Co-Chair Siddiqui recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who shared his excitement about the ideas being brought forward for discussion. The Vice Mayor noted the importance of taking the Affordable Housing Overlay in to consideration as the discussion moves forward and thinking about how changes may impact

developers whose focus is to build 100% affordable housing. Vice Mayor McGovern pointed out that it was important to have policymakers offer their suggestions, but it is also important to speak with the developers while factoring in everything, while also sharing it is important to focus on the middle-income demographic during conversations and development.

Co-Chair Siddiqui recognized Councillor Wilson who shared that she appreciates the conversation as a learning opportunity of where the City was, where it currently is, and where it can go moving forward. Councillor Wilson pointed out that there can always be unintended consequences around decision making and that it is important to be intentional about actions that are taken during the decision making and discussion process.

**Co-Chair Siddiqui extended the meeting by fifteen minutes at 2:30p.m.**

Co-Chair Siddiqui recognized Co-Chair Azeem who shared his excitement about the many conversations and work that has been done to bring affordable housing to Cambridge. Co-Chair Azeem shared that he had a motion he was going to bring forward. Co-Chair Siddiqui recognized Councillors and staff for discussion and reviewed the key points that were brought forward during the conversation. Iram Farooq shared that she and her team look forward to working with the Housing Co-Chairs.

**Co-Chair Siddiqui recognized Co-Chair Azeem who made a motion that The City Manager is requested to direct the Community Development Department to work with the Co-Chairs of the Housing Committee to turn their vision of multifamily housing citywide into zoning language. Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

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

**ORDERED: The City Manager is requested to direct the Community Development Department to work with the Co-Chairs of the Housing Committee to turn their vision of multifamily housing citywide into zoning language.**

**(Policy Order 2024 #62, in City Council on May 13, 2024, adopted as amended.)**

**Co-Chair Siddiqui made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

**Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:40p.m.**

Attachment A – The City Clerk’s Office received five written communications.

**Clerk’s Note:** 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 these meetings can be viewed at: [https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/745?view\\_id=1&redirect=true](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/745?view_id=1&redirect=true)

**That the City Manager is requested to work with the chairs of the Housing Committee to create zoning language that effectively promotes multi-family housing, including income-restricted affordable housing with the goal of having viable housing for everyone especially lower-income residents. CHARTER RIGHT EXERCISED BY COUNCILLOR PICKETT IN COUNCIL MARCH 18, 2024**

**A communication was received from Councillor Azeem, transmitting a presentation regarding multifamily housing.**

**A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, transmitting a presentation on multifamily housing citywide.**

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Beth O'Neill Maloney <beth@kendallsquare.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 12:05 PM  
**To:** City Clerk  
**Subject:** Kendall Square Association Submission: May 8 Housing Committee Public Hearing

Good afternoon,

On behalf of the Kendall Square Association, I am submitting this statement in support of the proposal for Multifamily Housing Citywide.

The Kendall Square Association and its members care about housing, housing is shelter, it's essential. We also care about housing because it's essential to our economic competitiveness here in Kendall Square, and throughout Cambridge and the Commonwealth.

We need to continue to grow, attract, and retain people to Cambridge who want to improve the human condition through life science, through climate tech and innovation of all kinds. We cannot afford to have people leave Massachusetts at the current rate. The recent [BU Study on Outmigration](#) makes the case plainly that a concerning number of people are leaving Massachusetts, and that they are moving to states where the cost of housing and the housing burden (the proportion of household income allocated to housing costs).

To attract and retain the people we need to do the innovative work we do here in Cambridge, we need housing. Increasing density helps. Cambridge has done a great deal over the years, through the Affordable Housing Trust, and through the AHO last year.

This is an opportunity to do more. I urge everyone to think about what Cambridge wants to be, I hope that is a vibrant, welcoming community.

**Beth**

**Beth O'Neill Maloney**

[Kendall Square Association](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | *she/her/hers*

[510 Kendall Street, Cambridge MA 02142](#)

M: 617 460-5181





## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Kelly Dolan <kelly.dolan.kd@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 9:06 AM  
**To:** Wilson, Ayesha; City Clerk  
**Subject:** Single Family Housing Data  
**Attachments:** E805B26B-5B7B-4B65-B165-6E64B984CCF6.jpeg;  
72A011E6-3138-4328-8081-0C999E5B19AD.jpeg

Hello Housing Committee

Thank you for once again putting Multi Family Zoning on the Agenda for the Housing Committee.

This issue has been repeatedly discussed and researched going back to a request from the City Council in November 2021, followed by various meetings with the Planning Board with a report to the Council in April of 2022, which was again discussed in chambers in September 2022.

The original Policy Order 11/21 was clear in its direction toward moderating the City's Zoning Code to promote multi-family housing, its exact language below.

Since then some members have introduced competing demands about affordability issues. These two goals are completely separate issues with different variables and solutions and conflating the two is preventing the city from moving forward on allowing multi-family zoning across the entire city.

According to the City's own Neighborhood Profile reports of 2019 and 2023, attached here, there are currently 4,832 single family houses in Cambridge, 9.3% of all housing units. That number has grown since 2019 when single family homes were 6.9% of our housing stock at 3,420 units. Clearly this is not the direction the city wants to encourage, and the first step needs to be amending the Zoning Code to make Multi Family Housing allowable across the entire city.

The current disparity in our zoning code feeds an unfair narrative that Cambridge is discriminatory and exclusive, and it's time for that to end.

Looking forward to some concrete and meaningful actions on this issue.

Sincerely  
Kelly Dolan  
Upland Rd

"That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to direct the Community Development Department to work with the chairs of the Housing Committee on zoning language that effectively promotes multi-family housing, including inclusionary units, citywide, and hereby is requested to report back to the Housing Committee on this matter as soon as possible."



**Land Area** 4,087 acres (6.39 sq. mi.)

Persons per Acre 28.6

Dwelling Units per Acre 12.7

**Population** 116,892 residents

In Households 99,969 (85.5% of total)

In Families 54,880 (46.9% of total)

In Group Quarters 16,923 (14.5% of total)

Persons per Household 2.09

Persons per Family 2.80

17 Years or Younger 14,512 (12.4% of total)

65 Years or Older 13,218 (11.3% of total)

Diversity Index<sup>1</sup>

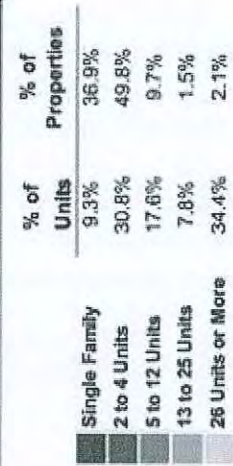
White / Black / Asian / Other 0.61

Black / All Others 0.19

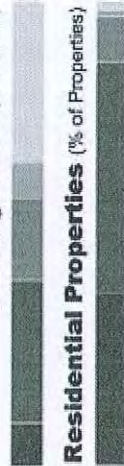
**Households**

Households 47,777

Families 19,584 (41.0% of total)



**Housing Stock** (% of Units)



**Residential Properties** (% of Properties)



**Housing Occupancy**

Dwellings 51,966 (12.7 per acre)

Owner-Occupied 15,958 (30.7% of total)

Renter-Occupied 31,819 (61.2% of total)

Market Vacant 1,297 (2.5% of total)

Other Vacant 2,892 (5.6% of total)

1. The Diversity Index, as it is used in this report, represents the probability that two individuals chosen at random from a given population belong to different groups. A higher Diversity Index value indicates that a population is more diverse. This measure takes into account both the number of groups and the number of individuals in each group. For example, a large population with two groups of equal size would have a Diversity Index of 0.50. For more information, please see the "About the Data" section.





**Land Area** 4,087 acres (6.39 sq. mi.)

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In Households 93,748 (84.5% of total)

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Diversity Index<sup>1</sup>

White / Black / Asian / Other 0.51

Black / All Others 0.19

**Households**

Households 44,234

Families 19,112 (43.2% of total)

	% of Units	% of Properties
Single Family	6.9%	33.9%
2 to 4 Units	27.5%	54.0%
5 to 12 Units	11.2%	8.0%
13 to 25 Units	6.1%	1.7%
26 Units or More	48.3%	2.5%



**Housing Occupancy**

Dwellings	49,564 (12.1 per acre)
Owner-Occupied	16,034 (32.4% of total)
Renter-Occupied	28,200 (56.9% of total)
Market Vacant	1,177 (2.4% of total)
Other Vacant	4,153 (8.4% of total)

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## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Kelly Dolan <kelly.dolan.kd@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 9:01 AM  
**To:** Azeem, Burhan; Siddiqui, Sumbul; McGovern, Marc; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Wilson, Anthony; City Clerk  
**Subject:** Single Family Housing Data  
**Attachments:** E805B26B-5B7B-4B65-B165-6E64B984CCF6.jpeg;  
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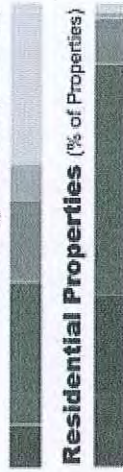




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**Housing Stock** (% of Units)



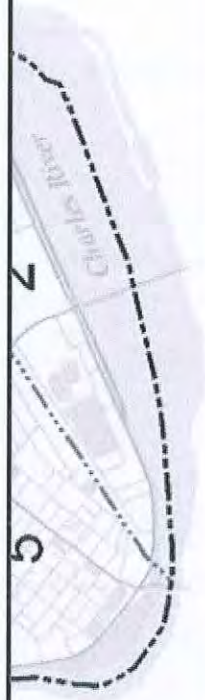
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## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Andy N <anash18@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 10:30 PM  
**To:** City Council  
**Cc:** City Clerk; City Manager  
**Subject:** Housing hearing on multi-family housing

Dear Councilors,

I am writing about the upzoning proposal up for discussion at tomorrow's hearing.

Ending exclusionary zoning is necessary but not sufficient for redressing the displacement of low and moderate-income residents out of Cambridge. Lower-income/wage workers are the ones who have been disproportionately affected by the housing crisis, so the housing solutions we arrive at should disproportionately create opportunities for them.

I don't want to live in a city that's 80% rich people and 20% everyone else, and that's the direction we're headed if we promote multifamily housing without much stricter requirements for affordability. The only way to really reverse the current trends is to build 100% affordable housing and support other methods of protecting housing stock from the predatory market (such as community land trusts or social housing).

So end exclusionary housing – yes! But don't consider it the way to redress displacement – it may mean lots of market rate/luxury six-unit buildings.

Thanks for making housing a priority,  
Andy Nash  
18 Worcester Street

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Margaret Ann Brady <margarb@bradydall.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 9:59 PM  
**To:** City Council; City Manager; City Clerk  
**Cc:** Roberto Dall  
**Subject:** Housing Committee: Allow multi-family housing citywide

Dear Housing Committee, Councillors, City Manager and City Clerk:

We are homeowners and landlords of a two-family in Porter Square, which we've owned since 1992. We are deeply concerned that the Cambridge we love will disappear in a crisis of affordability, and are writing to express our strong support of the City's efforts to promote and enable affordable housing creation through the elimination of exclusionary zoning. — and to prioritize the needs of no-, low- and moderate income households.

More and more, it's evident that simply allowing more and denser development doesn't necessarily result in a greater availability of affordable units unless we make it an intention and a priority — in many areas, it's exacerbated displacement, and in a territory as constrained as Cambridge, it's not likely that simply increasing the availability of market-rate units will result in less pressure on prices.

On our little dead-end street, we've already seen longtime owners make the decision to cash out and sell at the highest price to developers, who have flipped half the units on our street into 2 bedroom condos priced above \$1M each. We dearly love our neighborhood, and the people who work in the stores we shop in, who drive the buses, our first responders and more — we want to ensure they have a future here, too. We applaud everything that the City of Cambridge has done to carry out its goals of keeping people in their homes, housing the unhoused, and creating opportunities for us all to live and work here.

Robert Dall  
Margaret Ann Brady  
7 Porter Park  
Cambridge MA 02140