

Cambridge City Council Testimony
April 8, 2013
Ordinance Committee report – MIT Zoning

49

Gerald Bergman
82 Elm Street



I believe that elected political representatives have a moral obligation to build community by voting to provide equitable, affordable and accessible education, health care, food, public safety and housing.

There is no moral obligation to support the maximization of corporate profits, especially when those profits come at the expense of building community.

Because MIT has chosen corporate development and profit over the building of housing which is necessary to support an influx of workers, and has thus far chosen to house thousands of its students in adjoining neighborhoods rather than on the MIT campus, a decision which has made affordable rental housing in adjoining Cambridge neighbors an impossibility, I ask that the City Council unanimously vote to lay this MIT up zoning on the table.

MIT can refile their petition when and if they decide to meet their obligations toward the community's need for affordable and middle income housing for new workers as well as affordable housing for their students. This past weekend I attended a presentation of innovative housing design and development in New York. Architect Amie Gross presented a full-scale model unit. When it comes to innovative design and flexible and adaptive housing, the MIT proposed housing flunks the test.

Individual councilors have asked for a variety of sweeteners from MIT, each of which is supposed to provide cover for their final support of this destructive up zoning. A guarantee of union work. A minimal apprenticeship program. Cash to quiet the nonprofits and community organizations. Giving up a parcel that has been land banked for years. An additional six to ten units of affordable housing. Walkways. Innovation space.

One councilor called the increase of up to 9 additional units of affordable housing a significant step. With some 2,500 new jobs in Kendall Square and no guarantee of increased graduate housing, the concept of "significant" seems to have taken on a meaning not before seen in housing advocacy.

For years, as an active Area 4 (Port) resident, I have joined others in actively advocating that MIT stop land banking on Cherry and School Street. Over the years we were ignored, but now when it is necessary to win a particular councilor's vote on a 2M square foot development, MIT has come to the table and made an offer. We

were never sure when this land would be used as a bribe to secure what MIT wanted. Now we know.

Community groups and non-profits are already lining up and jostling to secure a piece of the miserly community benefits (bribe) money that MIT is handing out. That is what happens when Cambridge becomes a company town for the universities and the biotech corporations. Even good people have clouded vision when it comes to fighting for the community we really need and want.

Instead of City Councilors that can only see their role as one of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, I would like to see a majority of the councilors take up their moral obligations toward building a diverse and equitable community. It is time to steer the ship in a new direction.

The MIT rezoning must be put on the table.