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Lopez, Donna

From: Tracy Licklider [licklider@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, April 05, 2013 6:09 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Lopez, Donna; jpickett7@yahoo.com
Subject: I oppose the MIT building expansion (PUD-5)

From what I read and see, there are far too many loose ends to the plan, especially regarding public benefit from the proposed undertaking.

In particular, I feel that the issues of low and moderate income housing, parking, congestion, and MIT student (especially graduate student) housing are inadequately worked out.

This should be an opportunity for a world class, visionary addition to Cambridge and MIT, but, instead, I am completely underwhelmed by the plan. It should be something that people come to Cambridge to see, and it should be a refreshingly new model for town & gown collaboration on making something fabulous for residents and the University.

For me, there is no excitement; there is nothing that I look forward to. I just see an uninspired sketch of, at best, something marginally better than average.

Cambridge deserves much better than average.

I say go back to the drawing boards. Get it right. Rushing this thing through with so much unresolved is a disservice to Cambridge and its citizens.

--Tracy Licklider

12 Ellery Square

Cambridge MA 02138

p.s.

Please, if possible, incorporate my statement into the record.

Thank you.

Lopez, Donna

From: Tracy Licklider [licklider@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, April 07, 2013 11:00 PM
To: Kelley, Craig (home); City Council
Cc: Lopez, Donna; jpickett7@yahoo.com
Subject: Additional thoughts on the MIT Kendall Square PUD-5 Plan

Craig,

Below are my thoughts on what could change with more time at the drawing board and other issues. I have taken the liberty to send this to the Council and MCNA as well.

First, I think there should be a clear understanding about MIT graduate housing before approving the proposal. As it stands now, once the City approves the proposal there is no leverage to have MIT solve the graduate housing problem. They say that they have put a panel together, but creation of a panel or committee, as has been demonstrated countless times, is not the same as arriving at a commitment to implement an acceptable plan.

Second, I have qualms about the proposed 250-300 foot tall building. While this may be one rational solution to the existing problems, I think it will mark a radical shift in building heights in Cambridge. What is the City going to say to companies (especially bio-tech, green energy, and others that this plan proposes fostering) when they ask to build buildings at the same height as this plan envisions? Over time, this will, I feel, lead to the Manhatannization of, at least parts of, Cambridge. I think the City should have a long think about raising building heights that much. The decision to do so should not be forced by pressure to approve one developer's plan. I also wonder what impact these tall buildings will have on Cambridge Fire Department and other City service expenses.

Third, I am nor clear on the degree to which the plan will reduce automobile traffic and, presumably, increase public transportation use. The plan, I think, is supposed to be transit-oriented (meaning, I think, that it will promote public transportation and decrease use of automobiles.) I cannot tell whether this plan does so. I did not see a count of currently available above-ground parking places and a count of post-proposal parking places underground.

While ,in general, I support reducing traffic and emissions, doing so can have serious ramifications for public and alternate transportation. If parking spaces do not decrease in number, then I do not see how this proposal is transit-oriented/friendly. To the extent that net parking spaces decrease, I do not feel that transit changes are adequately addressed, at least in what I have seen. The City does not control expansion of MBTA services, which I assume will bear the brunt of carrying the people who no longer park at MIT. (This will be true in Central Square too if parking lots are converted to buildings with a net loss of parking spaces.) While the CambridgeSide Galleria operates a shuttle between the Galleria and Kendall Square and EZ-Ride may provide connection, there is no T service, that I know of, that connects the Lechmere and Kendall T

stations. This would force the no-longer-driving-to-Kendall traffic onto the EZ-Ride and the Red Line. I do not know who would bear the cost of expanding the EZ-Ride or what the T would commit to in terms of additional service. At rush hour, the Red line is pretty jammed. I ride it. Also, the existing bus routes (1, 64, 68, 85, and CT2, I think) would need additional capacity and increased frequency. While EZ-Ride may provide it, EZ-Ride service to North Station would probably need to increase.

I also think it would be useful to have an estimate of the likely increase, if any, in ridership. How many MIT people will lose a parking space (and presumably be forced onto the T)? During construction, how many construction workers will have to ride the T? When the plan is completed, how many new riders will be added by the increased employment opportunities? The City probably has information on how people who work in Kendall Square get there (and what transportation and routes they use to get there.) Information about this and a forecast of its increase would help inform this plan's discussion.

Likewise, thought should be given to increased bike parking space.

I cannot see whether this proposal contributes to a greener Cambridge or public transportation use (and reduction in automobiles and emissions.) To the extent that this plan does not decrease car traffic, I think Cambridge is missing an opportunity to take a baby-step towards a greener, future-friendly Cambridge. The City might impose a small (5%?) reduction in allowed parking spaces or, in the alternative, find a way to impose fees for parking spaces in excess of some allowance, which would be reduced from the currently allowed amount.

Fourth, the proposal dangles the prospect of new construction jobs and, eventually, new employment opportunities. How many of these jobs will actually be filled by Cambridge residents? I doubt many will be. I imagine most of the new MIT and private sector jobs will require a high level of technical education, personnel for which will be hard to find in Cambridge or anywhere.

Fifth, apparently, Ian Waitz, dean of the School of Engineering, wrote that the project would convert Kendall Square into a much-needed gateway between MIT and the surrounding community. "Visitors to Kendall Square," he wrote, "will see and experience first-hand the close connections between MIT and the City of Cambridge."

As far as I can see, the plan does not make Kendall Square into a "much needed" gateway any more than Kendall Square already is. Yes, it will have a new building and perhaps some new, spiffed up shops and some new landscaping, but that a gateway does not make. Also, it is inconceivable to me, that visitors to Kendall Square will see or experience any connection, much less close, between MIT and the City. This comment and other MIT comments seem to belie a view that MIT is separate and walled off from the City and that it is not in "the surrounding community." A portcullis or gateway befits a walled castle. Kendall Square is part of Cambridge not part of MIT. Development there should benefit Cambridge and its residents.

As I see it, the chief benefit of this proposal to Cambridge is about \$10 million, eventually, in new tax revenue before any additional costs to the City. There will be some new jobs created, which will mainly be filled by non-Cantabrigians. Yes, some of the new workers will buy coffee and lunch here, a boon to some merchants, and possibly improved tax revenue from those establishments.

Also, I believe that the presumed benefit of new shops and restaurants in the area should be discounted from this project because they involve rezoning that might be accomplished independently of this plan.

Sixth, when I look at the drawings, I see an uninspired, it-looks-like-your-common-office-building-you-could-find-anywhere new building on Main Street and a humongous building for Ames Street, which looked, to me, as though it was done in a post-World-War II, Eastern Bloc architectural style. I'd like to see something innovative, daring, new – that bespeaks the emphasis on entrepreneurialism, new technological discovery, and “vibrance” (as is so often used in the MIT material.) Cambridge leads the world in education, technology, and innovation. Where is the innovation here? And, while we are at it, where is the art, where is the humanity, where is the inspiration. (OK, maybe MIT is not renowned for the first two (of those), but they could have hired someone who could do better.) The people who drew the pictures certainly knew how to dress up Main Street with vibrant color and crowds of people. I do not see how this particular plan will add the color; it may add to the crowds. I wish they had spent their time adding color, interest, and innovation to the buildings instead.

The Kresge “orange-peel” and the no-right-angles building at MIT are innovative, fun, and unique. They are places that people remember when they come to MIT. The MIT dorm on the railroad tracks that sports brightly colored panels strewn about its facade is something that you notice – something different, not just another concrete block like some of the student housing at BU.

The open space plans seem vague, and it appears that they will be worked out during or after construction of what MIT wants. I would be happier with a plan now.

I also think there should be some year-round space that Cambridge residents could sit down in and allow them to mix with and interact with MIT students, staff, and faculty – this might be a cafe sort of place with coffee and soft drinks but no obligation to buy anything. There likely would be some time limit for staying there.

In particular, I imagine a place where Cantabrigians, including high school students, could go to get help from volunteer MIT students on understanding MIT's online courses and on resolving issues in the coursework that individuals had problems with.

This kind of place might also be a place where Cambridge high school students could go for MIT volunteer student help with math, science, technology, and special projects (such as robotics, computer-building, science fair projects, green projects, and bio-tech projects). Conceivably, such a space could be part of the Cambridge Library system -- built-for Cambridge at the developer's cost. The space might have publicly usable computers with higher-speed (higher than residents

normally have access to through Comcast, FIOS, or other commercial means) Internet connections so citizens and students could view and study very high quality video, computer models, and dynamic visualizations of NASA space data, CERN Higgs data, videos of protein folding, weather data, bio-tech processes, and green technology. Ideally, this would be with an MIT volunteer or informed community member, who would help explain what people see.

In addition to that or in the alternative, MIT might provide a high-speed Internet connection to the high school or to the Cambridge Main Library so that the above could be viewed at those sites. Conceivably, this kind of undertaking could also be linked to Cambridge Adult Education, Cambridge Public Television, and or the Museum of Science. This could also be a vehicle for bio-tech, green-tech, and other MIT-adjacent commercial entities to present educational videos – in layman's terms – about their work, enabling Cambridge residents and students to understand better the work the organizations are doing and to see the (and their own) technological future possibilities.

Also, since this proposal focuses on innovation and entrepreneurialism, I think it would be good to provide some mechanism for getting MIT's insights into these key areas to Cambridge residents and businesses.

Also this proposal might include Kendall Square-wide free WiFi for Cambridge residents and visitors (with adequate capacity for present and future use.) I imagine that this might be especially valuable in Washington Elms, Newtowne Court, and the proposal's low and moderate housing.

I think a proposal to re-do Kendall Square should emphasize further integrating MIT into Cambridge in a way that Cambridge residents can access the excitement of technological innovation and entrepreneurialism, be inspired, and have opportunities to be better educated generally and as a future-oriented work force. Likewise, I believe that for MIT, greater interaction with the broader community and its residents can benefit MIT and its students. Keeping in touch with the real world is critical for successful entrepreneurs and technological innovators. It can help defeat the illusion that the Ivory Tower is the world.

Well, these are just some of my thoughts, perhaps not very well written.

I want to emphasize that I like MIT. My dad was a professor there. I just taught a C++ computer programming course there. As a young kid, I spent many Saturday mornings in a my dad's basement lab in the Sloan building. I drank a lot of kiddie-cocktails in the Faculty Club. My mom acted in many MIT Community Players productions at the Orange peel. I was even in one of those plays. My sister was married in the MIT Chapel. In my view, as an institution, MIT is a gift to the Universe.

All I really wish for is a better, clearer plan – one that leaves fewer loose ends, fewer we'll-deal-with-that-when-we-get-there items, more flair, and more integration of MIT with Cambridge. If it suits the Council, this email could be entered into the record.

Thank you for your time.

--Tracy Licklider

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From: Craig Kelley [<mailto:craigkelley62@verizon.net>]
Sent: Saturday, April 06, 2013 6:49 AM
To: 'Tracy Licklider'
Subject: RE: I oppose the MIT building expansion (PUD-5)

Do you have any suggestions, Tracy. I am having trouble visualizing what would change with more time at the drawing board.

Thanks.

Craig