

Cambridge City Council  
City Hall, Cambridge  
Massachusetts



Dear City Councillors,

April 4, 2013

As documented in the attached letter to MIT President Reif, there are pressing environmental issues raised by MIT's Kendall Square Initiative that have not yet been adequately addressed by MIT.

Because of its location, at the river's edge on former marshland susceptible to flooding from storm surge and the rising sea level, timing, ahead of the broader K2C2 proposal, and ownership, by an institution created to meet society's most pressing technological challenges, MIT's proposed development is on the front line of global efforts to cope with climate change. None of the developments proposed by K2C2 will be sustainable or smart unless they meet the net-zero fossil-fuel-derived energy standard and we meet the challenge of coping with already inevitable sea-level rise. MIT needs to be fully engaged with both of these challenges, and we urge the Council to expect and require nothing less.

We must hold MIT and other major developers to a higher standard when it comes to building efficiency. LEED Silver, and even LEED Gold are not adequate for an institution with the resources available to accomplish true net-zero energy construction. While the current proposal makes many promises of sustainability, the community has no recourse if these promises are not met. In the age of climate change, major development proposals must be verifiably sustainable, and the city of Cambridge must have enforceable means to hold developers accountable to ensure that our sustainability goals are met, including appropriate financial penalties for non-compliance, to benefit the city's climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

While we see development of surface parking lots in Kendall Square as generally a positive step, this particular proposal by MIT raises significant concerns and creates a unique opportunity to set a new course for sustainable development in Cambridge. Let's take this opportunity to set a new direction, not just for this development but all major new development in the city to ensure we meet not only our economic goals but also the urgent and paramount demands of climate sustainability.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Q. Y. Zondervan".

Quinton Y. Zondervan  
President  
Green Cambridge

Cc: Cambridge City Manager, Cambridge Planning Board

Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Office of the President  
77 Massachusetts Ave.  
Cambridge, MA 02139



Dear President Reif,

February 14, 2013

As an MIT alumna and a Cambridge resident, I am glad to see MIT's continued investment in Cambridge, and Kendall Square in particular. MIT's Kendall Square zoning petition includes many positive aspects, including a commitment to LEED Gold and establishing a community fund for open space. The removal of surface parking lots, and the proposed development's proximity to the Kendall Square T stop provide many opportunities to reduce automobile traffic and to increase public transportation usage.

Pleased as I am by these positive aspects, as a climate activist, my job is to ask you to do even more. MIT has made many contributions to the scientific understanding of climate change and has taken significant steps to reduce its emissions. Unfortunately, these steps do not go far enough. Compared to Harvard University's efforts, MIT seems to be falling behind. The MIT sustainability web page is unimpressive and incomplete by comparison to Harvard's.

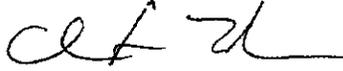
In particular, with regards to the Kendall Square Initiative, we at Green Cambridge have three concerns:

1. We would like to see MIT construct net-zero energy buildings. Given the dire state of our climate, an institution as wealthy and resourceful as MIT should lead the way in showing the world how this can be done.
2. We need to engage in a regional conversation about protecting our shorelines from rising sea levels and more frequent, powerful storms, and this development is a great opportunity for MIT to help lead that conversation. In light of the climate data and recent storms, as community activists we expect you to express deep concern about the future of the MIT campus, and to demand a regional planning initiative to determine how to best protect MIT's assets, and, by extension, the city as a whole. The current proposal does not even mention climate change, let alone any concerns about its effects on the new buildings and people to be placed in harms way.
3. We would like to see a greater commitment to quality of life improvements in Kendall Square, including more housing, more green-space and more community oriented development. In comparison to Central Square, Kendall Square is a ghost town at night. It's getting better, and it could be much better still. We would really appreciate any effort in that direction.

As President of Green Cambridge, a membership organization representing many residents of Cambridge, I commend MIT on its commitments to environmental stewardship and climate change mitigation and preparedness. I hope you will double down on those commitments and strive to do even more. Our future depends on it!

Green Cambridge meets monthly and we would love to host a representative from MIT to discuss the Kendall Square Initiative and MIT's other sustainability efforts. I look forward to a response to this open invitation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Q. Zondervan', written in a cursive style.

Quinton Y. Zondervan  
President  
Green Cambridge

Cc: Cambridge City Council, Cambridge City Manager, Cambridge Planning Board