

Lopez, Donna

From: Julian C [juliancmail@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, April 07, 2014 3:44 PM
To: Benzan, Dennis; Carlone, Dennis; Cheung, Leland; Kelley, Craig; Maher, David; Mazen, Nadeem; McGovern, Marc; Simmons, Denise; ttoomey@ambridgema.gov; Lopez, Donna
Subject: Support for Master Plan Initiative

Hello City Councilors,

As many of you know me or have spent some time working briefly with me the past 2+ years, I just wanted to reach out about the idea for a Master Plan, which I support.

While I'm not 100% sure as to what the CRA or ACN or any other group has proposed or invasions for a Master Plan, I wanted to speak on my behalf as a highly informed, sane, educated, and local resident who resides in Central/Kendall sq. I am on the Leadership/board of the Area 4 Coalition and have connections and ties with other groups in town. I am exclusively discussing my thoughts briefly here today.

Quick Key thoughts as to why I believe a Master Plan is valuable and important:

1)With so much growth now and for the foreseeable future, it's in all parties best interest to have a more clear, defined, and structured plan for development, safety, public awareness, etc.

2)The fundamentals or framework for compensation, community funds, etc. hasn't been resolved, so these elements amongst the broader issues, can be finally over time and through an intelligent process, come together as one clear cohesive product/plan.

3)Many major cities around the world, use and need Master Plans. Cambridge specifically, needs a Master Plan more than most. This is a city that was really more of a town that is now seeing billions of dollars be poured into it every single year. We also have severe limitations: there's only so much one can do with Mass Ave., Broadway, Main st., Cardinal Medeiros, Memorial Drive, etc.

- It's essential then, that organizing, prioritizing, and allocation through zoning play an even bigger role than most cities would have to plan for.

4)I prefer that the City Council have ownership of the Master Plan. That is not a knock on Richard Rossi, CDD, or the previous Healy administration at all. They have and do phenomenal work and are quality people.

- The primary issue here is, the residents and industry employs the council, the city manager, and the city government. However, the residents of Cambridge deserve to be part of that process and the best way to do that is through the City Council having most if not all of the control here.

The City Manager works at the behest of the City Council, the residents, and the remainder of the tax base in Cambridge.

5)Safety - today and tomorrow, Cambridge faces massive public works and safety issues. Normally I would never mention this.

- MBTA, roads, parking, public egress, etc. must be done with a concerted "team" effort with the MBTA, City, State, and Developer.

- Climate change, flooding, emergency evacuations, etc. are not a joke. Cambridge is already too dense and too concentrated logistically speaking.

- It's incumbent that we not overlook major upgrades and concerns in this area. I'm all for development, growth, billions a year poured into the city. It's important that the City and a Master Plan work with and at times, forces the other actors involved to "do right by the public's need for safety and egress through the city."

6) A Master Plan can solve lots of open questions, problems, concerns, etc. It can also make much if not all of the future growth here a lot easier for industry, universities, and developers.

- It's important to have the framework done right and down now, no matter how long it takes. I and most people are not suggesting it take a long time, but it get done right, the first time.

- Once the Master Plan is done, much of the future growth and questions/issues of resident and developer/industry can move forward with less friction, uncertainty, and understand the costs associated with that growth. A clear roadmap at some point for all parties/stake holders is both necessary but common sensical.

7) A Master Plan allows the City to do what it does best, the residents of this great city, Industry/Developers do what they do best.

- In the end, lets be honest. A small dense city like Cambridge has real upgrades, challenges, and struggles.

- A Master Plan should be able to let the largest stake holders - the residents and industry/developer to understand their responsibilities and their partnership/payment to ensure all the "not sexy" vital infrastructure and organizational work that needs to be done to make this small dense expanding city grows with a "well rounded" approach.

Example - if industry/developer knows that they have to put X dollars into community benefits, Y into an infrastructure plan, Z for MBTA/transportation, set aside a % for open space, etc. that is essential.

When they also know that their money, land, and overall compensation is going towards making the major structural improvements to the City and not into waste or a black hole, they are going to in the end, be thrilled with that.

No major group - residents/neighborhoods or developers/industry is in denial of the need to upgrade many "not sexy" infrastructural components as we expand. But knowing what needs to get done, knowing what both sides commitments are, and knowing that when you make sure the "foundation of the house" is secure, it's in everyone's best interest.

8) I, many neighbors, friends, students, and neighborhoods I've spoken with, are concerned about the structural and foundational elements to the City's enormous growth.

- There's not a day where I am not asked "I want to know more of what is going on", "how can we grow when we have narrow roads, etc.", "it's not a question of if, but when there's a hurricane Katrina or Sandy in all major sea level cities."

Their concerns are valid and real, unfortunately. A Master Plan should and could resolve, budget, and allocate the right parts of town for parking, housing, industry, egress, etc. We probably need to make some big tough changes and re-organize some parts of the city. A Master Plan seems to be the only acceptable way and the right process to do that. Not a CRA or BRA, a Master Plan driven by the City Council.

- The City Council's job is 3-fold: Work for the Residents/neighborhoods, Industry/Developer/Growth sector, and guide the City Manger/City/State/MBTA to making the key improvements come together AND to actualization.

**9) Lastly, with such an unusual situation that Harvard and MIT are the largest land owners in Kendall, Central, and Harvard Sq. area, there's an even greater need to have a Master Plan. There's also individuals and companies like Boston Properties, Alexandria, and Alex Twinning whom own a considerable % of Cambridge land.

- It's exclusively because so few parties own so much land in such a small and dense city, that a Master Plan needs to be.

- I think all of those groups have a conscious and vested shared interest. They care deeply about this area and they know this is not any old city USA.

- They have been and continue to be, good stewards of the city, the public, the people they lease land to and employ themselves. The key here is, they need to play and PAY a portion of the structural changes and growth.
- They will, can, and generally speaking want to do so. All the major players here know they're going to do very very very well financially and get most of what they want done.
- They, like residents/neighborhoods, and the powers that be in government, need to make sure that the safety, growth, and "not sexy" infrastructure be put in place over time and be budgeted for.

A Master Plan seems like an essential thing for all of the above reasons, but even more so since a handful of organizations own effectively ALL OF THE LAND. They care and want things do correctly, as does the city, as do the residents/visitors/neighborhoods.

There are many other important issues here and many other invaluable Pros for a Master Plan. I will not run through all of them, but this is a good sample of some of the most important ones.

Protecting neighborhoods, use of City owned land, and many more can happily be discussed as well.

I look forward to continuing my support and this process to ensure a Master Plan comes to be.

Sincerely,
 Informed, passionate, loving resident of Cambridge:
 Julian Cassa
 109 Windsor Street, 02139

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