

7

Lopez, Donna

From: Doug Brown [douglas_p_brown@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, April 28, 2014 5:29 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Lopez, Donna
Subject: Support for Tonight's Master Planning Policy Order

Importance: High

Dear Councilors,

I am writing today in support of the Master Plan Policy Order to be discussed at this evening's City Council meeting. For a number of reasons, I believe that this new order does a great job of merging the best of both Councilor Carlone's and Councilor Maher's prior proposals.

In addition to my general support for this new Order, I would also like to draw specific attention to a problem with past planning efforts. Simply put, I am concerned with the large discrepancy between what planning studies have called for in the past and what has actually been delivered in the present.

In the Concord-Alewife area with which I am most familiar, I fear that our building-by-building approach to project approvals has left us with little to show for our efforts over the past decade. Yes, we have been remarkably successful at developing new housing. For that, we should all be proud of what has been achieved over the past ten years.

However, our results in other areas that were championed by the Concord-Alewife Planning Study (enhancing infrastructure, reducing traffic, creating vibrant, mixed-use developments, generating new public spaces, improving flood control) have been much less impressive. In fact, none of the improvements mentioned by the Study (a pedestrian overpass across the railroad tracks from the Quadrangle to Alewife Station, a central boulevard within the Quadrangle, and a new storm water control feature within the Quad to name a few) have yet come to pass, despite more than 2 million square feet of new development in the area.

So I would respectfully ask that going forward, any new Master Planning effort pays greater attention to the effectiveness of the mechanisms created to promote these identified goals. As we have seen in Alewife, the financial incentives created for developers have yet to create anything other than new housing. While housing is itself of great value to our community, the Concord-Alewife Planning Study (which acts as the de facto Master Plan for our neighborhood) has many other important goals which we are only now realizing have gone unfulfilled. In short, it is now clear that any Master Plan is only as good as the methods used to bring its noble goals into being.

In the end, I think it is important that we have the best Master Plan possible, reflecting both wide and deep discussions of what we want as a community. Our City deserves that much. At the same time, I think it is equally important that we also learn from our past experiences with planning, so that in the future, we can better achieve what it is that we initially set out to do.

Thank you for your time in this important matter. I trust that you will collectively do what is best for our wonderful city.

Sincerely,

Doug Brown
35 Standish Street