

City Council Testimony – September 8, 2014
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The Carlone Petition:

I urge the Council to pass the Carlone petition to a second reading as you continue your deliberations about how elected and appointed officials of Cambridge must take in hand our process for granting large project special permits. While study committees are formed to examine the Planning Board's procedures and interpretations of criteria for granting permits for massive buildings in questionable areas, the Council must provide a layer of review that assures residents of a responsible and accountable overview.

In particular, as you know, the Fresh Pond/Alewife area has been made vulnerable already to over-development, construction on brownfields and flood plains and a traffic nightmare that none can deny. Some projects that developers declare "transit-oriented" are either not accessible to transit or are requesting additional large parking facilities. The Planning Board has not seen the larger context as within its realm of decision-making and in the short term we residents do not seem to be able to influence their interpretations.

Additionally, without your input, the proposed – and likely illegal -- re-development by a private conglomerate of the Sullivan Courthouse could move forward in the very near future. As long as this petition is on the table, large developments at 40 Thorndike Street, 75 New Street, and 88 CambridgePark Drive will be subject to your oversight and review

We residents need your help. The Carlone Petition has been the only vehicle to bring rational conversation and a responsible way forward for intentionally designing the city of the future that is safe in every way and planned for the well-being of all residents as the Zoning Ordinance requires.

Please pass the Carlone Petition to a second reading so we can continue the real community conversation.

Policy Order 0-10 to request that the City Manager report back to the City Council on work underway to recommend changes to the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance with the goal to increase the ratio of affordable units and implications of such an increase.

More than one year ago, the Cambridge Residents Alliance put forth in our platform a proposal to "Increase the inclusionary zoning formula to require that 25% of *all* units in new developments be affordable*, rather than the current 15% of *base* units in new developments. (Do not increase the allowed density bonus.) Of this 25% -- 20% of the units should be set aside for low- and moderate-income residents and 5% should be for middle-income families. All the middle-income units should be family-sized, two or three bedroom units." We put this proposal forward to every candidate and have continued pressing Council members since the election to take up this issue and, perhaps in your wisdom, raise the percentage even higher.

Policy Order 0-10 brings the Inclusionary Zoning ordinance back to the City Council's attention for which many of us are grateful but wary. Hopefully by passing this order, the Council endorses more than the

“exploration” of an increase – Somerville’s planning process definitively called for increased affordability up to 35%. This order asks for an update on work underway to recommend changes – we can only hope that work is on-going because many of us following this issue closely are not aware of it and are eager to hear.

The Cambridge Residents Alliance has been very clear, and I believe other organizations around the city agree, that an increase in the inclusionary percentage should not be linked, automatically, to an increase in allowed density and height. Good urban planning and design will tell us how to structure (or restructure) our zoning to obtain maximum affordability while making certain our neighborhoods are built or rebuilt on a human scale with attention to the physical and social aspects of community-building.