

Alvin Helfeld's talk to the Cambridge City Council - 10/20/2014

- 1. Hello, my name is Alvin Helfeld. I have lived at 417 Concord Ave for the last 34 yrs, and I also bike every day except in the winter.
- 2. On ~~9/5/14~~ ^{Sept 5th}, at the block party given by the city contractors, I saw the Arts Committee's plan for Fern St.
- 3. I discovered to my amazement that the plan eliminated all 18 parking spaces on Fern St. I was very upset by this and spoke to several neighbors.

~~4~~ I went home and wrote up a petition for a compromise plan that included a pedestrian path, a two-way bike path, single vehicular lane and a parking lane on the left side (west), safely away from the bike lanes. **351 residents have signed this petition.**

~~5~~ I started this petition because I believe that the plan itself and the process of developing this plan have some serious mistakes.

~~6~~ I spoke to a number of people and I would like to briefly summarize the process: The city approached Fern St. with several agendas: 1. Eliminate all the parking, 2. Make Fern ST a site for an Art Project, 3. They set up a committee of people who were either chosen by the city or were self-selected.

~~7~~ We believe several serious ^{errors} ~~mistakes~~ were made in the planning process:

- 1. City assumed that because there were no residents living on Fern St, the neighborhood didn't care about it;
- 2. The plan was created by a group of people who did not represent the surrounding neighborhood;
- 3. This committee made a crucial decision for the neighborhood, removing 18 parking spaces, without getting feedback from the surrounding neighborhood;
- 4. It is one thing for a committee to choice trees and art; it is another thing for a committee to make a drastic decision that will disrupt people's lives.

9. We were told that the rationale of the plan is as follows:

The staff of the Tobin School and some parents from N. Cambridge want ^a safe walking and biking route connecting the Tobin School and Danehy park for younger children so they can walk and bike to school independently and safely without parental supervision.

10.

The only thing that makes Fern St dangerous is crossing Concord Ave or Field St. There hasn't been an accident on Fern ST in the last 34 yrs.

11. Who uses Fern St? 1. Residents without off-street parking routinely use it for overnight parking. 2. Parents who attend Little League games, 3. Residents who cannot park on Concord Ave during snow emergencies and when piles of snow reduce parking on neighboring streets; 4. ^{During} ~~On~~ street sweeping days.

12. Fern St serves as a safety valve for all of these occasions.

13. The plan offered by the Fern St. petition is a very good compromise with the present city plan. Our plan provides for pedestrian and bike riding safety, attractiveness and art with the availability of 18 parking spaces.

12. Please help create a plan for Fern St. that meets the needs of all the people in the neighborhood.