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December 8, 2014

Mayor Maher, Vice-Mayor Benzan, and Cambridge City Councillors,

My name is Esther Hanig, and I reside in Area Four at 136 Pine St.

As a former member of the C2 Committee, I am here in support of Council Order #6 which would direct the Ordinance Committee to hold a hearing to discuss the C2 plan and recommendations.

The C2 Committee put in a great deal of work, thought and time into formulating our recommendations. These recommendations were the result of extensive reading, presentations, public meetings and thoughtful discussion on the very important and timely issue of a vision for the future of Central Square. Not only is it simply respectful to consider this Committee's recommendations after all of our work, but not doing so would be a strong disincentive to anyone in the future who is asked to serve on a similar committee.

While not everyone will agree on every detail and recommendation, the recommendations do provide a strong foundation for moving forward for plans for Central Square. This is a critical time for Central Square. We are facing strong challenges to the supply and demand for housing because of the extensive development in Kendall Square and because more people are choosing to live in cities, particularly near public transportation. This is creating huge price increases and seriously increasing the threat to the diversity and community of the neighborhoods surrounding the square.

Housing, particularly affordable housing, may be the most compelling issue that needs to be addressed, but there are also many other challenges facing Central Square, including instituting smart growth to promote sustainability and providing retail uses to meet neighborhood needs.

We can either be victims of these challenges, or, as the C2 Committee, attempted to do, we can try to shape them to mitigate harm and provide opportunities to preserve and strengthen Central Square's diversity and community for today's residents and for the future.

For these reasons, I urge you to adopt Policy Order #6 and move this important conversation forward.