

Mass + Main

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Fri 4/24/2015 8:42 AM

City Clerk Agenda

To: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; Lopez, Donna <dlopez@cambridgema.gov>;

City Councilors,

I first want to express my anger and dismay at the accusations of corruption and bias being directed at you by Councilor Carlone and Mazen's allies in the community. I know that these discussions bring out passionate reactions among people, but some of these tactics I find completely inappropriate. I think it would do a lot of good for Cambridge if the councilors could reach out to their supporters, most notably Paul Steven Stone, and ask them to tone down the rhetoric and cool it with the truly dishonest and desperate fear mongering.

I have already emailed expressing my support for the proposed Mass + Main project before you. The recent accusations and propaganda being pushed through our community have pushed me to contact you again to reiterate the importance of approving the petition.

Rather than going through the details and addressing some of the complaints as I did previously, I want to point out that at its core this project is about providing desperately needed housing in Cambridge.

Our inability to add to the supply of housing not just in Cambridge, but the entire metro area has reached crisis levels. This threatens our ability to maintain diversity within our communities and makes it more and more difficult for citizens at all but the highest rung of the income ladder to build a life in Cambridge. Admittedly, this project will not solve our affordability crisis, but we have to start somewhere. Delay after delay and distraction after distraction thrown up by the anti-housing anti-density forces in our city will only make it worse.

In addition, I ask you to think of the 47 individuals and families that will gain an important and stable place to live within Cambridge with the subsidized units. Yes, we need more housing for all types in the city, but that is a sizable number and the developers should be commended for that.

You are going to hear from people that the building is too tall, or that the shadows will ruin the area, that adding housing to the area will drive up rents (which is not actually true). Basically the anti-housing forces will always find a reason for this and any other building to not be built. If you approve the petition I'm sure there will be new accusations of corruption and attacks on your integrity which have already started. I suspect that if the proposed upzoning passes there will be discussion of legal action from the Cambridge Residents Alliance (sorry, the "Friends of Lafayette Square") regardless of whether they have a case. If height and density are not appropriate here than Cambridge is in trouble in its ability to provide adequate housing to the population. Personally I like a mix of heights and enjoy living in an urban neighborhood that includes buildings of all types.

Yes, there is more we need to do including the Master Plan and C2, but we have a real proposal in front of us and we must not let this opportunity pass.

This building will not displace anyone. Beyond the 47 affordable units it will be bring a welcome addition of new housing

near the soon to be open Novartis headquarters. Yes those market rate units will be expensive, but our housing already is. That is not a reason to say no. If we do not build this or if we end up with less housing both affordable or market rate that is only going to increase the pressure on existing rents once those employees come to Cambridge.

Just last weekend a two bedroom unit for sale in Area IV received 17 offers and will likely go for 100K over the ask. This is a supply crisis. While this dynamic benefits incumbent homeowners it hurts the young, the poor, the future families and citizens of Cambridge who are not already rich. It pushes people farther away from the city, increasing sprawl, traffic, and pollution. It also speeds the gentrification of other low income communities displacing more and more people.

I am not a homeowner in Cambridge though I wish I could be. I will also likely never qualify for any subsidized units in this building or any future proposals. Without allowing projects like these in currently underutilized spaces it will only further speed the displacement that the anti-Mass+Main forces claim they want to stop.

Finally, outside of the overall issues of adding to our housing supply and increasing density near areas well served by transit, I believe this project would be a great addition to the vibrancy and economic vitality of Central Square.

Not with just more local businesses, but with more customers for those businesses. The Quest buildings as they are now are a dead zone outside of the square and far from ruining the park I believe this project will add to the activity and strength of the area and our community.

Saying no to this proposal does not mean that we are going to get a more "neighborhood scale" building with more affordable housing. It means that the Quest buildings will sit empty for longer, the pressure on the existing housing stock will increase at a faster pace, or even worse, lab space will be built as of right. All of these are less desirable than the project before you that provides numerous community benefits.

Stay strong.

Thank you again for your service,

Alec Papazian

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