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For the Planning Committee Meeting

28 April 2015, City Hall Annex

I am speaking in favor of the Mass & Main Project.

Here's what I see happening; years ago the City was not doing very well, so it encouraged new business to come here. New businesses came, building on open spaces; then new people came to work at those new businesses . . . and here we are with a high demand for housing and less space for it, which makes the available land really expensive.

So a developer buys a parcel in Central Square. He listens to what the city wants, housing. But built below market rates so less affluent people can live here. That's a really nice thing about Cambridge! They don't want to drive out the less affluent and middle income people, so they ask developers to make 15% of the units built affordable.

At one level this is an artificial arrangement as this plan interferes with the natural market forces. On the other hand, this arrangement is compassionate and ensures diversity, which is really nice to have in a neighborhood.

However, the cost of land must enter the developers' equation. If you have X much space, and you want X number of units under market value, then you have to go up. Developers like Twining are not altruistic, but they can be responsive to our special demands, and I feel they have been. No one can build three-deckers in Cambridge any more; if they do, they won't include affordable units.

I have to say I'm excited by the prospect of this new landmark building at the corner of Mass Ave and Main Street.