

Mass+Main 2nd Hearing: Carolyn Fuller's Statement

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City Clerk Agenda

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

Mayor Maher and Councilors,

At the end of this email is my letter to the editor of the Cambridge Chronicle. Since writing that letter, I've seen even more evidence that we need more housing in Cambridge and we need it now! (actually years ago but I'll settle for now). So what is my latest evidence that Cambridge is suffering from a severe housing crisis?

Yesterday, as I was watering my tiny garden, a line began to form on the sidewalk beside me, outside of what use to be the cheapest of the cheap absentee landlord apartment buildings. The line was composed of people wanting to view an apartment that I was assuming would be available on June 1. But no. They were there to see an apartment that would not be available until September 1!

For the vast majority of the 35 years I have lived in my present home on Douglass St, the occupants of 8 Douglass St were starving artists or folks who were down on their luck. But there was no one on that sidewalk yesterday who came close to being described as a starving artist or someone down on their luck. Far from it, this line was universally composed of young, well dressed (and I assume well paid) professionals. They certainly looked like they would be able to afford the luxury units that Mass+Main is proposing to build. But those units aren't available to them. So what do they do? They go after whatever is available. They line up 4 months ahead of time to get a shot for an apartment in 8 Douglass St!

PLEASE - We are in a HOUSING CRISIS. Not building 230 units of new housing will have a serious impact on the lives of my neighbors.

Ok - Now my letter to the editor.

I write this letter from the perspective of a Mass+Main abutter. I live in the heart of Central Square and very literally in the shadow of these proposed buildings and have done so for over 35 years. I welcome my new neighbors at Mass+Main.

I so wish my erstwhile friends who oppose this project would acknowledge that many of Mass+Main's closest neighbors welcome new residential development and trust me, it is not because we think our home values will go up. In fact the very opposite. When this tower & it's lower sister building go up, I will be losing precious sun that in the dead of winter streaks from one side of my house to the other. I will grieve for the loss of that sun but the benefits for all of us in Cambridge far outweigh my personal loss.

Home and rent prices are skyrocketing TODAY, long before ground has broken on the Mass+Main project. Just a few weeks ago a tiny, tiny 300 sq ft studio condo in my neighborhood received over 20 offers in just a few days and many were well above asking price but the offer that clinched the deal was OVER \$400,000 in cash! The idea that these buildings will "cause" rents to go up is just not true. Rents ARE going up. They have been going up since the loss of rent control, long before new housing was ever built. It is easy to look at something new and blame it for things changing, but things in Cambridge have been changing for a long time, and if we don't start increasing our housing stock then that change will be much greater and come much faster. According to the most recent Greater Boston Housing Report Card for 20014-20015 issued by the Dukakis Center at Northeastern, the lack of housing stock combined with the increased demand has allowed landlords to raise rents to incredibly high amounts. It is true that pent-up demand for housing in Cambridge far outstrips the increased supply that Mass+Main's 230 units will bring to the table. Mass+Main will not fix our housing crisis but stopping this development will most definitely drive up rents faster, exacerbating our housing crisis. This debate shouldn't be about how much money the developer will make or should the building be 15 stories or 19 stories, it should be about how do we increase our housing stock and especially our affordable housing stock. This project will bring 47 units of affordable housing that will be available to people earning as little as \$32,000 per year. Without those units, someone at that income could never afford to remain in our city. Pure and simple, if you care about diversity and affordable housing, then you should care about this project and support it.

Sincerely,

5/14/2015

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