

Remarks on Normandy-Twining Petition 4/27/15

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Spot zoning is generally a terrible practice, since it undermines and contradicts the reigning zoning regime, and signals that existing zoning is largely meaningless. In the Main Street Normandy-Twining case, this spot zoning petition is particularly odious, since it not only goes 2 ½ times higher than current zoning allows, but even goes 40% (55 feet) higher than the proposed C2 upzoning for Central Square, which has not been adopted. Furthermore, it builds a 195-foot high wall blotting out the sun for part of the Area 4 residential neighborhood. Adoption of the petition would clearly signal that the approving counselors care little for existing residents and are primarily concerned with pleasing life sciences businesses developers.

The rationale that the project should be approved because it provides 40 moderate and 7 middle income units is a phony rationale, since those units could be provided by increasing linkage contributions, inclusionary zoning requirements and spending general revenue dollars on affordable housing. The accelerating loss of children, families, moderate and middle income people from the Cambridge community continues to testify that building higher to get more affordable housing adds far less affordable housing that is taken away by continuing wholesale gentrification. If the council really cared about existing residents, it would already have increased linkage and inclusionary exactions and would be spending general revenue dollars on affordable housing.