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April 27, 2015

Dear Mayor Maher, Vice Mayor Benzan, and City Councilors,

I am here to express my strong support for the Normandy Twining petition. I am particularly pleased about the increase of affordable units to 20% and the doubling of low-income units.

As I watch housing prices in Cambridge continue to skyrocket at an extraordinarily rapid rate, the addition of the housing units that the Twining Normandy development will bring cannot be more important. We are desperately in need of additional housing, and I urge you to move this proposal forward so that this additional housing will be created as soon as possible.

Not only will Normandy Twining bring much needed housing, but the very best thing about this development is the inclusion of 47 additional units of affordable housing. I am grateful for the responsiveness of the developers to increasing the number of affordable units to help meet this incredibly pressing need.

As a Board member of Cambridge Neighborhood and Housing Apartment Services, I have seen at 808, 810 and 812 Memorial Drive how effective mixed income housing is in using market rate rents to support rents for low and moderate apartments and to create a community for families of different income levels.

I have heard concerns about the fact that the building height is greater than that proposed by the C2 Committee. As a member of the C2 Committee, I was a participant in conversations with my fellow members, shortly after our work was completed, about concerns that our proposed density was insufficient, given housing and construction costs, to adequately incent developers to build the affordable housing we felt was so important. That was also the issue that derailed the C2 zoning proposals to the Planning Board. The Board requested that the Community Development Department study the issue and return with a report on what density would be needed to meet our goals -- a report that we are still waiting for.

For me, this is not about one development, but about what kind of city I want to live in and what kind of city I want to leave for generations to come. This development will provide much needed housing and desperately needed affordable units in a location that will provide access to public transportation, promote walking and biking to work and play, and provide a market for the kind of retail neighbors are currently lacking.

For all of these reasons, to work towards a sustainable, diverse and vibrant community for today and tomorrow, I am here to register my strong support for the Normandy/Twining petition.

Esther Hanig
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