



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Craig A. Kelley
City Councilor

Robert Healy
City Manager
Cambridge, MA

RE: King School Renovation

Dear Mr. Healy:

I have recently talked with three architects about the proposed Martin Luther King, JR. School renovation. All three of them expressed independent thoughts that the discussion about whether to rehab the existing school or to demolish it completely and start anew with another building has been significantly flawed and that the City staff and architectural team have not given potential reuse of the building appropriate consideration.

These architects have spent a lot of time reviewing available documents but they have been unable to find any information that they find compelling regarding demolition of the existing structure. Among other issues, they have expressed concern that:

- it would take decades for even the most energy efficient new building to be truly 'Net Zero' or to have a better overall energy score than a renovated (and re-insulated, etc) building, when the embodied energy cost is included in the calculations.
- possibilities have not been sufficiently explored for softening the existing façade through a good renovation, including cleaning up the building, replacing windows, hardscaping and strategic planting, and simple facade modifications, such as adding windows.
- a new buildings height, mechanicals and site location, not to mention the demolition and new foundation and framing steel construction itself, will have more of a detrimental impact on the neighborhood than rehabbing the existing building.
- rehabbing the existing building may, in fact, be a much cheaper option while not sacrificing any significant parts of a new structure

Consistently, these architects have expressed the belief that a superior academically-oriented building could be created by rehabbing the existing structure and that a complete demolition may not only be unnecessary, it may be unwise. However, because they have thus far lacked access to all relevant documents, they cannot say with great certainty what possibilities might exist.

Prior to the Council's finalizing the Loan Order that will allow the MLK project to go forward, I would like to have access to all relevant documents and to have the opportunity to share these documents with these architects, my fellow Councillors and anyone else who is concerned about this project. It is this sort of independent review, one not possible for the Council to engage in given the body's lack of professional skills in this area, that will help ensure we get the best building possible for our students, for our community and for our budget. Another option would be for the City to have a peer review/2nd opinion done on the architects' feasibility study. Or both. Eighty million dollars, give or take, is a lot of money to say 'yes' to without having a better understanding of what is going on.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Kelley

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Kelley" followed by a stylized email address "ckelley@dc". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.