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June 10, 2009

Cambridge City Council
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

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OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Dear Councilors,

I am writing to express my support for the Lesley University petition to change the zoning on their properties adjacent to Porter Square, through an overlay district, to allow the construction of a new building for The Art Institute of Boston.

I am an employee of The Art Institute of Boston, but have been a resident of Cambridge for much longer (over 20 years). Aside from my obvious bias towards having my employer move closer to where I live, I feel there are strong advantages for Cambridge in allowing this project to move forward. The grouping of development and density near the Porter Square T station is a good planning move, the strengthening of an existing educational institution in Cambridge is consistent with the character of the city and this particular neighborhood, and the addition of an art school and its ancillary public programming (gallery shows, lectures, library facilities) is also a good thing for the neighborhood and the business district.

There are many steps in the process beyond this zoning decision, including special permitting and historic evaluation of any plans for changes to the existing church. The University has been scrupulous in its efforts to involve neighbors in planning and development decisions, and can be counted on to be responsive to the city and its residents as plans move forward.

Cambridge is a vibrant city that I enjoy living in and would doubly enjoy working in. Its vitality comes from the combination of educational and cultural institutions, businesses, and residential neighborhoods mixed together. Arts organizations are an important part of this mix, and I urge you to support the zoning change that will allow Lesley to build its new art school on Massachusetts Avenue, in this location close to Porter Square.

Sincerely,

