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BOSTON COLLEGE

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

June 11, 2009

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

Dear Councilors:

I'm writing to express my support for Lesley's petition for changes to the zoning ordinance by extending the Business C zone in Porter Square, Cambridge to include the property of the former North Prospect Church and to establish a Lesley Overlay District.

These two changes will allow the University to relocate The Art Institute of Boston, one of its four colleges, from Kenmore Square in Boston to Porter Square. In my opinion, the addition of the Art Institute of Boston, a nearly 100 year-old arts institution, to Massachusetts Avenue and Porter Square, represents a unique opportunity for Cambridge. I believe that AIB would add a significant cultural/arts destination to the business district through a year-long program of exhibits, lectures and other arts related events. It is also an excellent re-purposing of the historic church on the property.

The development itself would be a significant asset for Massachusetts Avenue. Importantly, placing this arts organization directly on Massachusetts Avenue would add significantly to the vibrancy and economic vitality of Porter Square. In contrast, placing an arts center with an exciting, dynamic architectural design in the rear of University Hall, where it would be invisible to most people, would be a lost opportunity.

Working with neighbors, Lesley's overall approach has looked beyond this one project. The Overlay District takes a long-term, smart growth approach to its future development in Porter Square. In an urban center so accessible by public transportation, increased density is appropriate and in keeping with the City's goal towards sustainable design and planning. All future development possible through the Overlay District would be an improvement over current conditions.

Further, Lesley has demonstrated that they are a good neighbor, excellent stewards of their properties, and have actively engaged with residents towards a plan that incorporates their campus as a true part of the community. I encourage you to pass this zoning proposal, and I thank you for your hard work on behalf of the people of Cambridge.

Sincerely,


Ellen Winner
Professor and Chair
Department of Psychology
Boston College



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