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Comments Made in Public Testimony Cambridge City Council 7/30/12

My name is Richard Goldberg. I live at 170 Harvard St., and I serve on the leadership of the Area 4 Neighborhood Coalition.

I urge that the City Council not grant Forest City its requested upzoning. I still have many questions, as you should too, and I hope you can help me understand why granting their petition is in the community's interest.

My first questions is why Goody-Clancy were hired as consultants and the Central Square Advisory Committee formed if mammoth projects like the Novartis/Pfizer "campus" and the Forest City All Asia site get to be judged outside of that planning process?

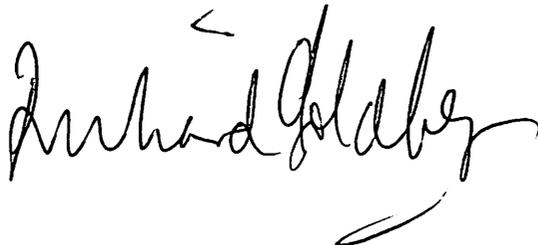
My second question is why Forest City is experiencing significantly more opposition to its project than Novartis/Pfizer/MTMko did in theirs? Is it because Goody Clancy is asking more and harder questions? Is it because Community Development has learned that the word "community" exists in its name and presumably its mandate? Or is it because an aroused community has become incensed about zoning changes and projects that would endanger Newtown Court, build a 14 story residential structure on dedicated greenspace, and allow a developer to build out its office park complex far in excess of permitted zoning, not within the confines of its Landown-Sidney Street canyon but on the more public space of Massachusetts Avenue? Forgive me. That question wasn't a fair one because I think I know the answer to it already.

My third area of questions has to do with community benefits. Are these supposed benefits really for the "community" or for the whole city? Is there any process in place for deciding how the affected communities closest in proximity to development would choose to spend those funds? Are we even certain the "benefits" really are benefits? Is it a proven fact that ~~that~~ permitting existing zoning to be exceeded will result in a more socially and economically diverse city? Or will greater density, upscale business creation, and job growth in Central Square not benefit existing residents nearly as much as highly educated young professionals who will work and recreate here, and who might even discover that this is a pretty cool place to live, thus promoting greater pressure on rents? Moreover, since MIT has chosen to cannibalize its own campus to the needs of Big Pharma, won't it seek to expand beyond its current footprint? How is that growth going to benefit the neighborhood?

Explain to me what the height of a building is. Isn't it highly misleading to say that a building is only 95 feet tall ~~if~~ its mechanical "penthouse" exceeds 120? I am unclear why the height of the historic Necco building justifies the height of the not-yet-designed building on the All Asia site? If there is some good zoning reason for that height, then shouldn't every other new building in Central profit from that precedent? If the proposed height on the All Asia site is desirable for a purely commercial building, what would be the best and most beneficial height for buildings including residential units?

Final question. What's the rush? If Central Square is so hot, can't you wait to consider the results of upzoning, not just in Central Square but in the whole city? How smart is "smart growth" if there is no plan for how development in one part of the city affects the rest of it? Maybe we don't need these answers but can wait for a strategically placed article in the Boston Globe for a definitive answer. If you truly wanted community participation, and not just the pretense of it, you would seek it, not end it today. Let's have the people of Cambridge decide its future, not big institutions, corporations, and the developers.

Thank you.



COM 2012 #335

Communications #72

A communication was received from Richard Goldberg, 170 Harvard Street requesting the City Council not to grant Forest City upzoning petition.

In City Council July 30, 2012

REFERRED TO THE PETITION