

From: James Iffland <iffland@bu.edu>
Subject: Forest City Zoning Issue/Centrral Square
Date: July 25, 2012 10:15:49 AM EDT
To: council@cambridgema.gov
Cc: dlopez@cambridge.gov

Dear City Councillors,

I am writing to you to register my most vehement protest against the attempt by Forest City to modify zoning laws so as to build a large facility to house a Bio Lab in Central Square. This is yet another step toward transforming the Central Square area into an "annex" of Kendall Square.

My wife and I have resided here in Central Square area since the summer of 1994 (I live at 248 Franklin St., between Magazine and Pearl). The changes in the physical landscape of the area have been enormous since then. While some have been for the better, many have been for the worse. First, the gutting of the heart of Central Square by the demolition of the traditional shops so as to construct the Holmes Building. Whereas before the view from my living room allowed me to see all the way out to Mass. Ave., I now have the bricks and mortar of that edifice closing me in. (Along with many other people I registered my protest against that project, and as an abutter, I held the project up for a year or so: see "John James Iffland, Jr. vs. the City of Cambridge"). I used to be able to see the *entire* Hancock Tower from a wonderful angle from living room, but then MIT built its hotel, cutting off over half of what I used to enjoy on a daily basis (especially as the sun set and reflected off the glass panels). From my back porch I could see at an angle the iconic Citgo sign in Kenmore Square, and then that was gone as the University Park building projects moved inexorably toward the river. Yes, this has always been a highly developed, and even congested area, but more and more is continually piled on as the years go by. The Forest City project is just another manifestation of this whole "vision" of the Central Square area. While it won't further block the (albeit limited) views I used to have out of my condo, increasing the feeling of being "barricaded" by relentless construction, it will add to the "anything goes" ethos that seems to be the norm nowadays.

And forget the issue of building height, etc., etc.: what kind of work is going to be carried out that site? What chemicals will be used? (I have two daughters, aged 16 and 12...) What kind of noise is going to be generated? As you surely must know, this is one of the most densely populated areas of Cambridge--indeed, *the* most densely populated area. Yes, many of the inhabitants belong to the lower income ranks of society, but they, too, deserve to live in a healthy environment. Clearly part of the strategy here is to continue to engage in large-scale development projects precisely because real estate prices are lower and because developers know that lower-income groups will not push back as hard, say, as people living on Brattle St. Do be aware, however, that the demographics of the area are changing, and there are more people like my wife and I now living in the area (my wife teaches at Harvard and I teach at BU). As this trend increases, I can guarantee you that there will be more push-back as this development agenda plays itself out in Central Square. (Again, there was a very big hole in the ground for a very long time right in the heart of Central Square because of my legal action as an abutter...)

I'm curious as to how many of you Councillors actually live in the area being affected by this development trend. Not many, if I recall correctly. None of these projects affects you directly, so it's easy to do a thumbs-up without much reflection on your part on the impact of what you approve. And yes, virtually all of you define yourselves as "politically progressive," "environmentally friendly," "concerned about the less privileged members of society," "ethically concerned about America's role in the world" (our sister city agreements) etc., etc., *but from what I've seen in* my 18 years living in the city, most of the time you tend to buckle when confronted by business interests. You're very good at talking the talk, but not so good at walking the walk.

In this case, I would love to be surprised by your collectively taking the right decision: that is, to deny the petition put forward by Forest City. **WAIT UNTIL THE CENTRAL SQUARE PLAN IS DEVELOPED AND DISSEMINATED.** (As a resident of Central Square, living 2 blocks from the T station, I'm really curious about that one.) Consider how this project will fit into that larger strategy (whatever it might be: yes, I realize that it could envision a cloning of Kendall Square--never enough bucks to be made...)

I will base my voting in the next City Council elections ***solely*** on this issue (nota been: my wife and I always vote). Anyone who votes against the Forest City petition will receive my vote; anyone who votes for it will not. I will encourage my neighbors to do the same. (I'm the guy who mobilizes people on the block when issues like this arise.) While a number of you seem to have sinecure on the Council at this point, there are sporadic readjustments of the membership, as we saw in the last election, for example.

I am sorry to have to be so blunt about this whole matter, but quite frankly, I'm **FED UP** with much of what I've seen (and been subjected to) over the last two decades. Central Square has a heart and soul that are unlike anything else in this city, and there seems to be a concerted effort to tear them out--all in the name of "progress" (defined from a very specific--i.e. big business-friendly--angle).

Sincerely,

Dr. James Iffland