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Comments before the Cambridge City Council
August 6, 2012

Good evening Mayor Davis and members of the Cambridge City Council. My name is Terrence F. Smith and I am the Director of Government Affairs at the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce at 859 Massachusetts Avenue and a resident at 21 Manassas Avenue. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

The Chamber submitted a letter to the Ordinance Committee on behalf of our more than 1,500 members expressing our strong support for zoning changes proposed in the Forest City/MIT petition for the area around and including 300 Massachusetts Avenue. I am here to reiterate the Chamber's support and my support and the support of Cambridge residents who support sustainable development, innovation and economic opportunity.

Your vote for this petition will allow for the long overdue revitalization of a blighted block on the City's major roadway. Redevelopment will provide needed retail, laboratory, and office space, connect University Park to Central Square, Kendall Square and MIT, and permanently protect or create more than 150 units of affordable housing. This development will allow Millennium Pharmaceuticals, a company founded in Cambridge that is working to cure cancer, to continue to grow here.

The need for additional office and laboratory space is clear. Companies in various industries--including life science and technology -- have recently left Cambridge due to the lack of space to grow. The Chamber thanks the Council for its past support of zoning changes meet the demand for space in Cambridge. Your support for this proposal will continue to demonstrate you commitment to a strong, sustainable, innovative, progressive, and vital community.

The proposed zoning changes will benefit the City, its residents and businesses.

The Council has called for the development of retail space that brings life to our major streets and squares and the proposed zoning will allow for retail development that can succeed. The Council has worked for many years to protect, preserve and create affordable housing and as part of this zoning change Forest City will permanently protect and create 188 affordable housing units and contribute to the Affordable housing Trust Fund.

Development resulting from this zoning change will bring revenue to the City, construction jobs in the short-term and permanent jobs in the new lab, office and retail space. This development will solidify Forest City and Millennium's commitment to Cambridge and create or preserve more than 1,500 local jobs. Redeveloping 300 Massachusetts Avenue will enhance the retail corridor and add more than $45 million in new revenue will allow the City to continue to provide excellent services to residents.

This site is a scar on Massachusetts Avenue that negatively impacts the neighborhood. The proposed zoning will allow for reasonable development that will positively transform this area. The development will also result in the permanent elimination of two billboards, a long-time goal of residents and the City Council.

We strongly urge you to adopt the zoning changes proposed in this petition. Adopting these zoning changes will send a clear message that the City of Cambridge supports sustainable development, innovation, affordable housing and economic opportunity.