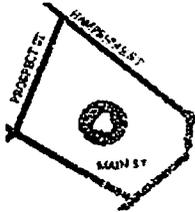


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**AREA FOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION**

September 23, 2009

Mayor Denise Simmons  
City Councilors  
Robert Healy, City Manager  
Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust

The Area Four Coalition wrote to you on May 7 about the property for sale at 131 Harvard Street in Cambridge, which is owned by Neighbors for a Better Community (NBC). We have not heard back from any city official or representative, so we are writing again. As was stated in our first letter, members of the Area Four Neighborhood Coalition voted overwhelmingly at our meeting on April 9, 2009 to endorse the acquisition of the 131 Harvard Street lot by the City, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, or a non-profit housing organization.

To provide some background, the 131 Harvard Street lot was part of a community benefit package offered by a real estate developer to NBC, which was formed to carry out those benefits. About five years ago, Area Four Coalition committee members and NBC board members met privately for many months to discuss and negotiate uses for the lot that would benefit the community. All agreed that affordable housing was the most appropriate use of the land. Plans were drawn up as to how many units could fit within the lot and where the required parking would be placed. A great deal of planning was put into place to bring those plans to the Area Four neighbors through a public community meeting and a professional facilitator was employed. At that meeting, a majority of the fifty-plus neighbors who attended voted that affordable housing was the preferred use of the property. At the end of that same meeting, NBC representatives stated that they wanted to sell the property for one million dollars, which meant that the available affordable housing developers who would be interested in purchasing the land would be limited.

NBC has never done anything with the land to provide a community benefit in keeping with its mission as a non-profit. The property has remained vacant and has been ill-maintained with weeds, broken fencing, and unsightly debris. At the present time, NBC has the 131 Harvard Street property on the market for sale.

In addition to this property, the developer donated more than one million dollars to NBC to benefit the neighbors of the Area Four Community. In the years that NBC has had control of these funds, the community has received little benefit from this money, even though NBC has very little of this money left. That is why the Coalition members voted that NBC should not receive any funds from the sale of this land.

It is because of the above-mentioned misuse of funds by NBC and NBC's poor care of the property at 131 Harvard Street that the Area Four Coalition members voted to have the City, Affordable Housing Trust Fund, or other non-profit housing organization acquire this property so

that a responsible entity can protect and utilize this land in a way that benefits the Area Four community.

To reiterate our concerns:

1. We request that the City, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, or a non-profit housing organization acquire the 131 Harvard Street lot, so that the community experiences benefits from the land as was originally intended at the time of the property transfer.
2. We request that the City ensure the sanctity of the lot's deed restrictions, with the goal that the property be used to build affordable housing units, which is one of the intended uses written into the lot's deed restrictions.
3. We are again requesting that representatives from the City make a report about the City's intentions towards the property, point by point raised above, and present that report to the members of the Coalition at the next Area Four Coalition meeting on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 7pm, at the Area Four Youth Center, 243 Harvard Street in Cambridge. In addition, the undersigned Area Four Coalition committee members representing this matter request a face-to-face meeting with City representatives as soon as possible.

Please contact Ardeene Goodridge, the Coalition's Coordinator, at 617-547-4680 x 229 to relay the City's response to the above-mentioned requests. If we do not hear back from a City representative by September 28, we will contact the City Manager's office and the Mayor's office to arrange an appointment between the appropriate City representatives and the Area Four Neighborhood Coalition committee members.

Sincerely,  
For the Area Four Neighborhood Coalition

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Lee Farris, 269 Norfolk Street

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Karen Gillespie, 167 Harvard Street