August 11, 1025

To:
The Cambridge City Council
The Planning Board of the City Of Cambridge
The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority:

On June 10, 2015 Ben Lavery of Boston Properties and Kathryn Madden of the CRA addressed the ECPT with an update on the infill additions to the MXD district, and now the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority has amended the urban renewal plan to accommodate this infill, and filed a zoning amendment to allow it under Cambridge law.

Our members would like to pass along some thoughts for consideration when new zoning is under discussion.

We believe that there is recent precedent in Cambridge of a developer’s agreeing to include one parking space per dwelling unit in the rental price. This arrangement would serve to prevent the commonly observed practice of new residents opting to forgo the expense of renting a parking space and parking their vehicles in the already over used resident parking in the neighborhood. Automobile ownership rates and usage patterns should be tracked here so as to provide us with better information on which to formulate better future parking policy.

We are also concerned about the effect that the relatively rapid tenant turnover rates of many of these newly-built rental residential projects are having on the civic life of our city. Rarely do people who expect to live in a place for only a year or so engage in civic life or settle and raise families. We believe that if a home-ownership option were included in the project we all would benefit and request that a home ownership option be built into this project for those reasons. We also request that a reasonable proportion of the units be “family-friendly” sized and that they are then inhabited by families, not a gaggle of roommates.

Finally, the combination of ongoing development(Alexandria, North Point and several others), the MIT East Campus Plan, the immanent Volpe site redevelopment and this major infill plan in the MXD district will result in some five to six million square feet of new development in and adjacent to the East Cambridge neighborhood. With all of this there is a real and immediate need to assess the impact of the combined effects on the local infrastructure. Traffic, parking, are already at maximum capacity at many times and locations in East Cambridge. Public transportation improvements could help ease this burden, but there is no evidence of that besides the Green Line extension. Kendall Square transit improvements must happen for everyone’s sake. Utilities, storm water and sewage system will all be taxed. If all of this is to happen in our “back yard”, clear, comprehensive, sustainable, and sensible plans have to be made to accommodate it in such a way that the quality of life for residents is not diminished. If East Cambridge is again to bear the brunt of what we all agree is an immense boon to the city’s bottom line, mitigation needs to be, at a minimum, commensurate with scale of development.

Sincerely,
Mark Jaquith
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East Cambridge Planning Team

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