

RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK
SIMPLEX STEERING COMMITTEE
274 BROOKLINE STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139
MAY 26 7 AM '85
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

March 24, 1985

The Cambridge City Council
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: "Simplex Development Area"
Cambridgeport Industrial District

To the Honorable; the City Council:

On February 20, 1985 Forest City Rental Properties (FCRP) submitted a letter and attachments concerning development on a portion of the Cambridgeport Industrial District. Though vague, almost fatuous, the materials are being used by Forest City to establish certain assumptions and to generate press coverage.

As residents and as members of the Simplex Steering Committee, we disagree strongly with the apparent direction of MIT and Forest City. Therefore, we must respond. We do so by analyzing Forest City's "concept" materials; even though, after Forest City has been MIT's designated developer for more than two years, it strains our credulity to accept these materials at face value. For your convenience, we order our comments according to Forest City's letter of February 20th.

Community Participation

MIT and Forest City have attempted to narrow the range of discussion to office, R & D, and upscale retail development. Open space and residential uses are incidental to their plans. Their own Environmental Notification Form (ENF) claims planning is only 5% complete. At present FCRP's "concept" is:

Office / R & D:	2,000,000 - 2,500,000 sf
Retail:	150,000 - 200,000 sf
Rental Housing:	110 - 130 units
Parking:	3,500 - 3,750 spaces

(Source: ENF, p.1)

Even those who support FCRP and MIT, should pay particular attention to these figures. Assuming that it will be mostly first floor space, 200,000 sf of retail constitutes

a mall. Perhaps the true impact of this number comes across better in acres: it is more than 4 acres of shopping space. 2,500,000 sf of office space translates into 10-12 office buildings like those in Kendall Square.

It is upon this basis, and this basis alone, that residents and local business people are asked to participate. To us, being led by the nose down the wrong path is not participation, it is co-optation.

The stated ranges also draw our attention. After two years of study by Forest City, we find it hard to believe in, much less rely on, such ranges. For office / R & D, 500,000 sf is more than two major office buildings. If this is the best precision that MIT/FCRP can generate, the final figure may just as well be 3 million sf of office space. We ask that MIT/FCRP provide their best estimate and state where and what they plan to build.

Traffic Impact

FCRP's letter and ENF say little. They do expect cars, however, and are planning 3,750 parking spaces. It is appropriate to consider the Draper garage and its impact on Neighborhood 4 -- multiplied 5 or 6 times -- because MIT/FCRP place parking next to housing.

MIT/FCRP have in hand a study by Vanasse/Hangen Associates. We ask that this study be made public in full. On the basis of what has been made public in the ENF, a traffic increase of 32% is projected.

Without the study, we do not know how Vanasse/Hangen reached the "existing condition" of 71,500 trips per day in the area. We are certain, however, that objective analysis will show severe traffic impacts which cannot be handled by existing streets. We are equally certain that the true percentage increase of traffic generated by the MIT/FCRP plan over traffic generated by existing uses is much, much higher.

What is worse is the fact that there are situations where even a 5-10% increase in traffic pushes daily volume over a road's capacity. Streets in the Simplex area and adjacent to it may be at that point. From time to time we get trial balloons about widening Sidney Street and making it a mini-boulevard, or about totally reconfiguring the Main Street/Sidney Street/Mass Ave intersection.

Who is going to pay for street improvements made necessary by this scale and type of development? How do these vehicles get in and out of the area, the neighborhood, the city? Why accept high-traffic uses such as office, R & D, and retail? If these questions are not answered, residential streets in Cambridgeport will pay the price.

Housing

From their initial announcement to this day, FCRP and MIT have been taking credit for some existing housing in their "new" construction figures and ignoring housing demolition.

There are 16 units of rent controlled housing in the Cambridge Furniture Building; 12 units of rent-controlled housing exist on Blanche and Green Streets; 3 units of housing exist on Blanche Street at Mass. Ave.; and 16 units of rent-controlled housing exist at 11-15 Green Street. The total is 47 units. It is 100% low- and moderate-income housing.

The MIT/FCRP plan calls for demolition of all but the Cambridge Furniture Building; here are accurate numbers:

	<u>Stated</u> <u>Units</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>Units</u>
Original MIT/FCRP proposal:	100	84
Revised MIT/FCRP proposal:	126	110

Demolition:		31
Low/Moderate Housing @ 25%:		28

The low- and moderate-income figure will not even replace existing units. For this neighborhood, for this City, the MIT/FCRP housing "concept" is completely unacceptable.

Open Space

Cambridgeport residents and others concerned about open space should be clear about the MIT/FCRP plan: FCRP's own summation of the project (see above) lists no open space. The reason for this contradiction with claims of open space available to the community (a possible tot lot aside) is that in Forest City's thinking, open space is useful only to

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The cornerstones of our approach to this area have been homes, jobs and parks. It is our belief that emphasizing jobs in Group V, "Precision Production, Craft and Repair", will redress the imbalance created in the CID and in the city by the current rush to construct Crystal City on the Charles.

This approach will not generate as many jobs, but the total number of jobs is not the only important factor in evaluating the worth and appropriateness of industry to the needs of Cambridgeport and Riverside residents. We need a combination of: total jobs, diversity of jobs -- vast majority blue and white collar, non-professional for non-college graduates --, and jobs with good pay, benefits, mobility, and educational/ training opportunities. Generating these kinds of jobs will require companies whose primary activities are assembly, production, or light manufacturing. And, as we have noted on many previous occasions, attracting such companies will require special zoning for those uses.

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When we read the marketing overview, three points appear crucial: (1) a 780,000 sf project is being proposed in North Cambridge, (2) rents have climbed above \$30/sf, and (3) office space (includes R & D) available in 1985 is 5 - 6 times what was available in 1979. Those numbers summarize what is happening to this city.

MIT and FRCP hope, quite simply, to profit from a trend. They do not ask whether the trend is good, or bad. They do not ask whether it is desirable. Marketing, in this way of thinking, becomes nothing more than continuing and confirming an existing trend. Since the universities have been largely responsible for the trend, they are right at the trough to get their piece of the action.

Marketing for office and R & D ignores perhaps the most significant source of new space demand: existing companies. Of course, MIT has been allowed to pursue a policy of evicting productive industry so that past and present CID companies -- Charles River Publishing, Acme Electric, Cosmos Press, Jim Clark Trucking, Boston Volvo, Seymour Chevrolet, DeLeo Autobody, Simplex Wire & Cable, John Cain Co., Delbrook Engineering, E.C.R.M., Computek, K.L.H., Century Motors (among others) -- have been and will be forced out, rather than offered space to expand.

At Kendall Square marketing people made a few designed-to-fail efforts to find industrial tenants and then proclaimed that industry wasn't interested in the area. Of course, industry was interested in the area; it was developers and owners who weren't interested because in block-busting from industry to office they make more money.

We do not wish to add another area to the list of markets discussed in office / R & D marketing reports. To us it is very clear that simply because office space has been constructed and leased is no reason to continue building it. If there is any point to planning done by the city and thoughtful consideration of the area's future by neighborhood residents, then it must lie in consciously directing development -- not in extending trends.

We ask that a thorough survey of existing companies be conducted quickly, before MIT forces or buys more firms out, to determine their space needs. In addition, a balanced marketing study must be done to provide information on industrial space demand and what it would take to attract light industrial/manufacturing firms to the CID.

Environmental Notification Form

We are responding to the ENF separately and will keep the Council fully informed of our objections. It is worth noting here, however, that we believe FCRP filed on the basis of a 5% complete concept to test the waters and see if they could get waivers or approvals broad enough to cover any conceivable

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Conclusion

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Housing (30% Low & Moderate):	450 units
Park:	3 acres
Industry (special district area):	300,000 sf
Retail (at Mass Ave.):	75,000 sf
Office / R & D:	400,000 sf

In other areas -- Alewife, Lechmere, Harvard Square -- Cambridge is being transformed for the benefit of a few at the expense of the many. Residents must move out so "yuppies" can occupy decontrolled 2- and 3-family houses, so rent-control means nothing more than "somewhat less than market", so University City can displace diversity. Residents must put up with high volume traffic so suburban office workers can get to office/R & D parks. The picture is now too clear for anyone to ignore.

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(William S. Noble)

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SIMPLEX STEERING COMMITTEE
274 BROOKLINE STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139
MARCH 23 11 05 AM '85
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

March 24, 1985

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Cambridge, MA 02139

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(William S. Noble)

SIMPLEX STEERING COMMITTEE
274 BROOKLINE STREET
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RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

MAR 23 9 16 AM '85

MARCH 24, 1985

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When we read the marketing overview, three points appear crucial: (1) a 780,000 sf project is being proposed in North Cambridge, (2) rents have climbed above \$30/sf, and (3) office space (includes R & D) available in 1985 is 5 - 6 times what was available in 1979. Those numbers summarize what is happening to this city.

MIT and FRCP hope, quite simply, to profit from a trend. They do not ask whether the trend is good, or bad. They do not ask whether it is desirable. Marketing, in this way of thinking, becomes nothing more than continuing and confirming an existing trend. Since the universities have been largely responsible for the trend, they are right at the trough to get their piece of the action.

Marketing for office and R & D ignores perhaps the most significant source of new space demand: existing companies. Of course, MIT has been allowed to pursue a policy of evicting productive industry so that past and present CID companies -- Charles River Publishing, Acme Electric, Cosmos Press, Jim Clark Trucking, Boston Volvo, Seymour Chevrolet, DeLeo Autobody, Simplex Wire & Cable, John Cain Co., Delbrook Engineering, E.C.R.M., Computek, K.L.H., Century Motors (among others) -- have been and will be forced out, rather than offered space to expand.

At Kendall Square marketing people made a few designed-to-fail efforts to find industrial tenants and then proclaimed that industry wasn't interested in the area. Of course, industry was interested in the area; it was developers and owners who weren't interested because in block-busting from industry to office they make more money.

We do not wish to add another area to the list of markets discussed in office / R & D marketing reports. To us it is very clear that simply because office space has been constructed and leased is no reason to continue building it. If there is any point to planning done by the city and thoughtful consideration of the area's future by neighborhood residents, then it must lie in consciously directing development -- not in extending trends.

We ask that a thorough survey of existing companies be conducted quickly, before MIT forces or buys more firms out, to determine their space needs. In addition, a balanced marketing study must be done to provide information on industrial space demand and what it would take to attract light industrial/manufacturing firms to the CID.

Environmental Notification Form

We are responding to the ENF separately and will keep the Council fully informed of our objections. It is worth noting here, however, that we believe FCRP filed on the basis of a 5% complete concept to test the waters and see if they could get waivers or approvals broad enough to cover any conceivable

variations in their plans. Were we with the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), we would question the utility of analyzing nebulous concepts. In essence, EOEA is being asked to buy a pig in a poke.

Conclusion


A credible alternative to this misguided misuse of Cambridgeport land has been advocated by neighborhood residents for years in a plan proposed for the entire 130 acres of the Cambridgeport Industrial District. To make our approach comparable to that of MIT/FCRP, we provide our best estimate by use for the 31 acres targetted by MIT/FCRP:

Housing (30% Low & Moderate):	450 units
Park:	3 acres
Industry (special district area):	300,000 sf
Retail (at Mass Ave.):	75,000 sf
Office / R & D:	400,000 sf

In other areas -- Alewife, Lechmere, Harvard Square -- Cambridge is being transformed for the benefit of a few at the expense of the many. Residents must move out so "yuppies" can occupy decontrolled 2- and 3-family houses, so rent-control means nothing more than "somewhat less than market", so University City can displace diversity. Residents must put up with high volume traffic so suburban office workers can get to office/R & D parks. The picture is now too clear for anyone to ignore.

Cambridgeport can and must be developed for homes, jobs, and parks. The Council must act to protect and develop this area for the City and its residents. MIT, its sidekicks, satellites, and spinoffs, have enough. We no longer believe that people at MIT will look at anything except MIT profits. It is up to you, our elected representatives, to stop these misguided plans and get behind balanced, neighborhood development. In significant ways current trends are making city government nothing more than a housekeeper for Harvard and MIT. Lets put a stop to it here and now in Cambridgeport.

Respectfully submitted,


(for) SIMPLEX STEERING COMMITTEE

(William S. Noble)

S-248

Comm. from William S. Noble for the Simplex Steering Committee Re: Simplex Development Area & letter dated February 20, 1985 from Forest City Rental Properties concerning development of a portion of the Cambridgeport Industrial District.

In City Council,

April 1, 1985

4/1/85
Placed
on
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