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## FAX INFO

TO: CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCILc/o CITY CLERK

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From: Richard Clavey  
NLSC

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2 PAGES FOLLOW

Please place the attached 2-page  
communication on the City Council's  
Consent Agenda.

Thank you,  
Richard Clavey  
(By Michael Brandon 617-364-3520)

## NORTH CAMBRIDGE STABILIZATION COMMITTEE

November 10, 2003

Rev. Charles E. Collins  
Saint John the Evangelist Church  
2254 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02140

Re: **Disposition of Saint John and Our Lady of Pity properties**

Dear Father Collins:

Thank you for your letter inviting the Stabilization Committee's written input regarding the potential reuse of the North Cambridge church properties currently being offered for sale by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. Please share this response with the Chancellor and the Real Estate Manager of the Archdiocese as they requested. Our group meets regularly and would like to renew our request that you or a representative of the Archdiocese accommodate us by attending a meeting as soon as possible.

The Stabilization Committee's public forum on October 22 drew an unusually large crowd of residents whose properties abut the church-owned properties on Rindge Avenue that are being sold — both the Saint John School campus and the Our Lady of Pity Church campus.

During the discussion, it was noted that these properties are located in the Residential B zoning district and cannot be significantly altered, redeveloped "as of right," or used for multifamily housing or new nonresidential purposes unless the district is rezoned less restrictively by the Cambridge City Council or zoning relief is granted by the Board of Zoning Appeal with the consent of nearby property owners.

Concerns about traffic congestion, parking shortages, lost green space, noise, and a range of other potential negative impacts were raised by nearby residents. Although neighbors of both campuses share such general concerns, differences in potential impacts were also identified. Consequently, the abutters and other nearby neighbors have reorganized the North Cambridge Neighborhood Group, which will now meet jointly as the NCNG and separately as NCNG/Our Lady and NCNG/Saint John. These locally focused North Cambridge neighborhood organizations share the views expressed herein and are therefore submitting this letter jointly with the Stabilization Committee.

A consensus of neighborhood opinion emerged during the October 22 NCSC forum:

1. Neighbors are very concerned about the future of the church-owned properties and would like the Archdiocese, the real estate broker, and potential buyers, developers, and tenants to inform and update the community regularly about pending proposals, prospective sales, or other possible changes in the status of these properties. In particular, we ask the Archdiocese to respect the community by obtaining specific neighborhood input before formally accepting any particular offers or final bids.
2. Neighbors generally prefer redevelopment proposals that will preserve, upgrade, and reuse the existing buildings over plans that involve extensive architectural alteration, demolition, excavation, and reconstruction.

3. Neighbors strongly prefer proposals that will preserve and enhance existing trees, lawns, yards, and other green and open space.
4. Neighbors also prefer proposals that will not increase existing building heights or density, reduce existing property line setbacks, or generate additional traffic or overflow parking on nearby streets.
5. Neighbors would like to participate with the Archdiocese and potential owners in developing a comprehensive plan for the coordinated development and reuse of these dominant North Cambridge properties. For instance, the existing buildings are particularly suitable for use by small cultural, religious, arts, and educational groups and nonprofit organizations. Several that already serve the local community attended our meeting and expressed interest in jointly acquiring or sharing use of the properties. Neighbors hope the Archdiocese will extend the bidding deadline, encourage such groups to pool their limited resources, and allow them time to meet with the neighbors, develop a coordinated proposal, and submit an acceptable offer.
6. In addition, neighbors urge Archdiocese representatives to meet immediately with the two abutters' organizations to address illegal activity and ongoing nuisances associated with the current uses and the lack of on-site security, especially at night. We believe the risks of vandalism to church property and possible assaults on passersby have significantly increased recently.

We thank the Archdiocese for inviting the North Cambridge neighborhood to communicate concerning these properties, and we look forward to a mutually congenial relationship as we work together in the days to come.

Sincerely yours,

*Richard D. Clarey*

Richard D. Clarey, Acting  
Chair

NCSC

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cc:

David W. Smith, Chancellor, Archdiocese of Boston

Dudley Mulcahy, Real Estate Manager, Archdiocese of Boston

Rev. Christopher S. Coyne, Community Relations Secretary, Archdiocese of Boston

James Elcock, Meredith & Grew

Robert W. Healy, Cambridge City Manager

Cambridge City Council

Boh Rubenstein, Asst. City Manager for Community Development

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**Communication #5**

A communication was received  
from Richard Clarey, regarding the  
disposition of Saint John and Our  
Lady of Pity properties.

**In City Council November 17, 2003**

**PLACED ON FILE**