



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER,
*Assistant City Manager for
Community Development*

December 15, 1994

To: Robert Healy, City Manager
From: Susan Schlesinger, Assistant City Manager for Community
Development
Subject: Response to City Council Order #34 of 9/12/94

The City and the MDC have initiated a process for working together on master planning for the Cambridge bank of the Charles River. In November and December meetings, representatives of the Community Development Department, the Environmental Program, and the Conservation Commission met with MDC planning staff to consider the range of issues that would be involved in the creation of such a plan. It is very timely that the MDC is about to engage the services of a consultant to produce a Charles River Basin Management Plan, which will be focused on renovation and maintenance issues, and will take into account the needs of a wide variety of users for the entire basin.

There are numerous design questions, such as how much of the green space should be manicured and how much should be in a more "wild" state. In addition, the question needs to be explored of whether special events, like the Fourth of July celebration, should be encouraged or accommodated. The City has been involved in early discussions of a possible pedestrian and bicyclist connection along the upstream face of the Museum of Science, providing a safe and attractive park connection between Cambridge and Boston; this has been designed in a series of options that still need review and for which funding has yet to be secured.

From the MDC's point of view, the Basin is the centerpiece of the entire regional park system; on the other hand, from the City's perspective, the Basin is an important local amenity as well. Since the study has yet to be detailed, the City was invited to submit a letter outlining any issues or concerns that should be addressed in the Basin Master Plan from Cambridge's viewpoint.

Particular concerns of the City include not only the Museum walkway, but also the riverfront from the BU Bridge to Harvard Square. In the light of the

Stop & Shop controversy and the heavy use of Magazine Beach as a recreation amenity for Cambridge residents, it is clear that a number of issues need to be worked out in that area. There is also concern about the need to improve Magazine Beach as a recreational facility that serves its neighbors in Cambridge, and there is related interest in extending the existing Riverbend Park up to the BU Bridge. Furthermore, there is support for a Riverbend Park treatment of the Cambridge Parkway, near the Sonesta. To help consider all these possibilities in the context of the Basin Plan, the MDC has committed to form a Citizen's Advisory Committee for the Basin, and Cambridge representatives will be involved. In addition, to ensure that progress will be made in all of these efforts as well as other concerns of common interest, the City and the MDC staffs will meet on a regular monthly basis.

All of this planning and design work will also be coordinated with an ongoing City study of the development potentials along the riverfront. For some time, the Planning Board and the Community Development Department have been discussing the need for height limits and better zoning controls along the river. The Board and Staff made a tour of this area early this fall to consider what heights might be appropriate to encourage or mandate, as well as other design review and dimensional requirement modifications that might be desirable. Further consideration will be undertaken over the next few months.



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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

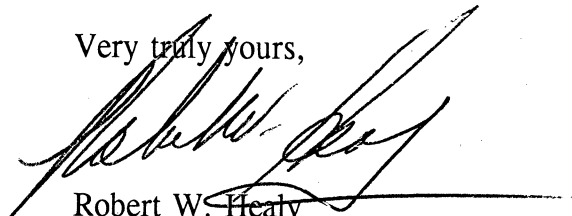
RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

December 19, 1994

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 14, regarding designing a Master Plan with MDC for the Cambridge side of the Charles River, received from Susan Schlesinger, Assistant City Manager for Community Development.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachment

Consent Agenda # 5

S-585

Response to Awaiting Report Item Number
Fourteen regarding designing a Master Plan
with MDC for the Cambridge side of the
Charles River.

*For original order see
1994 - City Manager Requests
289*

In City Council,

December 19, 1994

Plans on file