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December 13, 1981

City Council, City of Cambridge

Before the end of December the city council will consider zoning changes which could do a lot harm to Cambridgeport and to Central Square. These changes could move the Central Square alcohol problem into the middle of Cambridgeport. They could replace jobs with expensive condos in a virtual expansion of the MIT campus. They could create a new retail district in competition with struggling Central Square merchants.

I am very deeply concerned about the unpublicized fine print in the MIT and Community Development Department proposals for the eastern part of Cambridgeport, the Cambridgeport Industrial District. The more I read these proposals, the more I find hidden in them. It is distressing that MIT/CDD supporters have been publicizing the proposals without telling people what harm they could do.

The MIT/CDD proposals will permit the expansion of the Central Square retail and alcoholic entertainment district a third of the way into Cambridgeport. In this area development of stores and bars is now illegal. Before various MIT and CDD proposals no one supported creating competition for struggling Central Square merchants, let alone putting that competition in the middle of Cambridgeport. No community resident has ever supported expanding the Central Square alcoholic entertainment district; but MIT and the CDD repeatedly permit that in the fine print of their proposals: expansion in Cambridgeport.

The CDD proposes to legalize expensive condominiums throughout the Cambridgeport Industrial District. Almost all the area affected is now set aside for jobs. Condos are now prohibited. The CDD has pulled high-level political strings to get permission for a pedestrian crossing over the B&A railroad tracks at Putnam Avenue. This railroad crossing combined with legalization of condos are the very items needed to expand the MIT campus into this industrial area. An area which now has plenty of jobs could be changed over the next few years into luxury housing for MIT professors, staff and graduate students, if the MIT/CDD proposals are passed.

Cambridgeport residents do not want the Central Square alcohol problem moved into the middle of their neighborhood. They don't want the Central Square business district further weakened by major competition in the MIT properties. They don't want a lot of their jobs replaced by expensive condos.

Most people do not have the specialized knowledge and skills necessary to understand the extremely complicated MIT/CDD proposals. MIT and the CDD are playing a high stakes game in which one of the biggest dangers to them is that people will find out what their proposals can do. MIT and the CDD lost in June, the last time the city council considered their ideas. The very real damage possible to Cambridgeport has not changed since then. The city council should once again reject the MIT/CDD ideas.

Robert J. La Trémouille
Attorney Robert J. La Trémouille

Comm. from Robert J. LaTremouille, Attorney
Re: proposed zoning changes in the eastern
part of Cambridgeport and the Cambridgeport
Industrial District.

In City Council,

December 21, 1981

12/21/81

Referred to the
Planning AT 60W
ON
THIS SUBJECT