

January 31, 2003

2003 FEB -7 A 11: 17

Mass Senior Action Council

To whom it may concern,

CLERK
J. J. ARNETTS

As members of the Massachusetts Senior Action Council, and on behalf of all seniors living in Cambridge, we are writing to express our concern and disappointment that Harvard University seems to be treating the affordable housing at 2 Mount Auburn Street as a bargaining chip in its citywide development plan. The building is owned by Harvard, but it was built with federal financing, under the agreement that it would be used as affordable housing for seniors. Over 100 seniors and people with disabilities live at 2 Mt. Auburn Street, and pay one-third of their income in rent. The federal government makes up the difference between what the residents pay and the market rate. Living on fixed incomes, most of the residents will be in real trouble if Harvard forces them to move out, but that is exactly what the University seems willing to do.

The original contract between Harvard and HUD is set to expire in 2012, and the residents are afraid that Harvard will turn the building to some other use at that time. They have asked the City Council for help. Back in early November, Councilor Galluccio and the Housing Sub-committee asked the University to provide some written assurance that the building would remain in use as affordable housing for seniors and people with disabilities even after 2012, so long as federal funds remain available. This would allay the fears of residents and take their homes off the bargaining table. Harvard refused. In fact, its only response to date has been from university representative Mary Power, who issued a verbal threat that the building would be used for student housing if the City blocks other Harvard initiatives.

Meanwhile, the building's federal funding has run out. Other funds may be available, but Harvard and the Cambridge Housing Authority must work together to secure them. This is not an easy time to secure federal funds for housing. We are worried that Harvard may be willing to let the funding disappear completely and use the building for something else. *This could become an immediate crisis for more than a hundred seniors and people with disabilities.*

In the long run, this problem affects every Cambridge resident. In the last

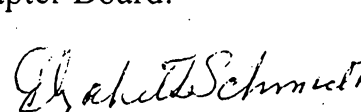
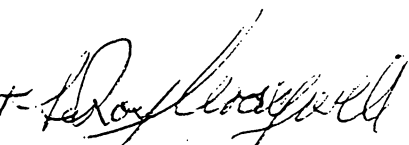
census, Cambridge was the only town in the region whose senior population actually shrank in the last ten years, and that is because there are precious few places we can afford to live in this town. The 94 units at 2 Mt. Auburn Street are a vital resource for all of us, young and old.

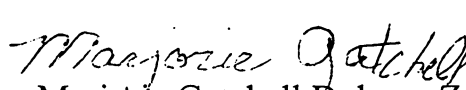
We members of the Mass. Senior Action Council are worried. Seniors and people with disabilities are not pawns. Our well-being should not be balanced against zoning and parking and other issues where the city and the university disagree.

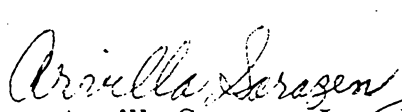
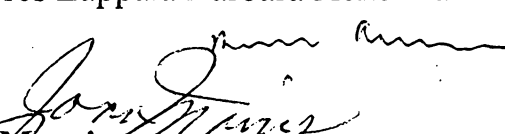
Harvard officials should stop playing games and assure us all that they will preserve 2 Mount Auburn Street as affordable housing for seniors and people with disabilities. Our City Councilors should continue to press Harvard for a guarantee. We should all speak up so that we do not lose this vital community resource. For more information or to get involved, call William Cobham at (617) 864-1071.

Sincerely,

MSAC Cambridge Chapter Board:

  
William Cobham, Pres. Elizabeth Schmidt, VP LeRoy Cragwell

 
Marjorie Gatchell Dolores Zappala Barbara Ackermann

 
Arvilla Sarazen Joan Morris

S-63

Communication #3

A communication was received from Massachusetts Senior Action Council, Inc., regarding the tenants at 2 Mount Auburn Street.

In City Council February 24, 2003

PLACED ON FILE.