



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

To The Honorable, The City Council

Date February 3, 1988

From Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk *JEC*

Reference

Subject Enclosed Communication from James B. Cox

Please be advised I am in receipt of this communication today, after the Council held its hearing relative to the Central Square Action Plan.

I enclose a copy for your review.

JEC/mh

Enclosure: Letter of James B. Cox, dated February 2, 1988

James B. Cox
454 Green St.,
Cambridge, 02139

RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

Feb 2, 1988

1988 FEB -2 PM 3:46

CAMBRIDGE MA.

To the Cambridge City Council:

re the proposed Central Square Action Plan:

My name is James Cox. I have been a citizen & resident of Cambridge for forty-four years. In 1985 I bought condominium rights to the second floor of a triple-decker at 454 Green St., a property which directly overlooks the YMCA parking lot on Green St.

The building is thus located on the border of a C-I zoned area (of which 454 Green St. is the eastern limit) and a C-2 zoned area (of which the YMCA parking lot is the western limit).

I have never doubted that development would come sooner or later to the parking lot, designated not surprisingly a "soft area" for potential development by the Central Square Action Plan committee (map p. 25, lot number 51). And I have read recently in the Cambridge Tab (I Sept. 87, 15 Dec 87) that the YMCA has been planning something for the lot, perhaps to be announced in the spring. I await this announcement with anxiety.

Ideally, though perhaps not very realistically, any development on the parking lot would extend and enhance in an easterly direction the residential and neighborhood scale, look, and texture of Green St to the west. Or at least such development of the lot would ease the transition from the business area just beyond it to the east (Pleasant St.) in a manner gentle to and respectful of the small-scale family-oriented character of C-I zoned Green St to the west.

The parking lot is currently zoned as C-2. Though not entirely happy with the controls on height, FAR, and setbacks the present C-2 zoning requirements impose on development of the YMCA parking lot, I regard them as better than nothing, as offering at least some protection against the raising of structures there the basic principle of whose design, scale, and massing is the production of maximum return on investment in the shortest possible time, to hell with the consequences (for an example of the brutal crushing of the fragile quality of neighborhood street life, consider the Green St garage belonging to 872 Mass Ave)

It has now come to my attention that certain elements & recommendations of the proposed Central Square Action Plan would actually weaken and undermine even these poor small ^{RESTRAINTS} on large-scale development: I am referring to

(a) the "establishing of incentives to build mixed use development [permitting retail business] ... in the Overlay District," in which district is included the YMCA parking lot directly adjoining my home (CSAP booklet, p. 48)

and (b) the recommended changes in Height, FAR, and "setback" requirements for the same District (ibid. p. 44).

I am strongly opposed to these elements & recommendations of the proposed Central Square Action Plan.

454 Greent St is not for me an "investment opportunity" (I bought it at precisely the "wrong" time for that: at the height of the "boom" in real estate prices). I have

lived in Cambridge all my life and would like to continue to live here the rest of my life. 454 Green St is simply for me a place I want to live in. It may in certain senses appear selfish but I hope it will at least appear natural that I should want my immediate surroundings to support rather than contradict my aspirations for neighborhood life . I look with dismay at the prospect, next door, of the kind of overdevelopment the Central Square Action Plan permits; the very conditions of life in a large many-storied multi-unit structure - featureless, impersonal, impermanent, managed from afar - positively prohibit the growth of a sense of neighborhood and neighborliness.

Much of the Central Square Action Plan committee report works in what appears to me to be the right direction; but it has critical flaws and in its present form must be rejected.

Sincerely

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Comm. from Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk
enclosing a comm. from James B. Cox dated
February 2, 1988 commenting on the Central
Square Action Plan.

February 8, 1988