



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

BETH RUBENSTEIN

Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SUSAN M. GLAZER

Deputy Director for
Community Development

TO: Robert W. Healy
City Manager
YBR

FROM: Beth Rubenstein, Assistant City Manager
for Community Development

DATE: July 10, 2002

RE: Response to Council Order #8, dated 6/10/02
How City Processes Take Account of Cumulative Growth, Activity
and Issue of Access to Various Sites

In response to this order, which grew out of concerns about future development of Harvard University's North Campus in the Agassiz neighborhood, the following summarizes ways in which city processes currently address issues of cumulative growth, traffic and site impacts in a neighborhood. In addition, I am suggesting that you form a working group of neighborhood representatives, city officials and Harvard representatives to address planned and future changes to the North Campus.

Citywide Rezoning

In 2001, the Cambridge City Council adopted a number of revisions to the zoning ordinance following a multi-year, community-based planning process. These changes were intended, among other things, to address concerns about the amount and character of development in the city, provide opportunities to increase the supply of housing, and provide ongoing opportunities for public review of large projects. Of particular concern were transition zones, like the one between Harvard University and the Agassiz neighborhood, where fairly dense development is located next to small scale residential areas.

Article 19:000 Project Review

The Citywide Rezoning, adopted in February 2001, instituted a permanent process for public review of large development projects in all areas of Cambridge. Through Article 19:000 of the ordinance, the city adopted a special permit procedure requiring Planning Board review of the traffic and urban design impacts of projects meeting certain thresholds.

For university facilities, the trigger for preparation of a traffic study is creation of 150 new parking spaces or the relocation of 250 existing parking spaces.

The traffic review process requires project proponents to complete a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) which is then reviewed by city staff and the Planning Board. Traffic studies typically describe traffic impacts (both daily and peak hour), expected impacts on pedestrians and bicyclists, points of site access, intersection level-of-service impacts and other major areas of impact. Where certain impact thresholds are exceeded, mitigation commitments are made by the proponent to ensure that any traffic "exceedances" are addressed in the future. Even when a traffic study is not required, Article 19:000 requires an urban design review by the Planning Board of any university building to be built within 100 feet of a public way.

PTDM

In addition to the traffic impact review under Article 19:000, since 1998 the city has had a Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance (PTDM). This ordinance requires preparation of a PTDM plan by any development proponent whose project adds non-residential parking spaces, bringing the total of such spaces to twenty or more. The plan must be approved by the city before a building permit can be issued. The purpose of this requirement is to make sure that the developer is taking reasonable, active steps to reduce the proportion of "drive alone" trips to the project site, especially at peak hours. When both Article 19:000 and PTDM apply, the review of PTDM plans is well coordinated with review of the TIS. Generally the Planning Board will make compliance with PTDM a condition of the special permit granted by the Board.

Universities may relocate parking spaces without triggering PTDM, provided their total number of spaces in the city does not increase.

Hammond Street Rezoning

As part of the Citywide study process, a number of key transition areas in the city were looked at, among them the Hammond Street edge in the Agassiz neighborhood. Harvard initiated a study process with Agassiz neighbors, which resulted in rezoning of the Hammond Street edge to provide a better physical transition. This zoning change, adopted by the city council in spring 2002, created a 100 foot transition overlay zone in which building heights were reduced (generally to 35 feet), minimum setbacks were increased, and breaks in building massing were required to create a more neighborhood "feel" at the edge.

Suggestions for Additional Analysis in Agassiz Neighborhood

In addition to all of the processes noted above, I recommend that additional actions be taken as Harvard plans the future of the North Campus. It would be beneficial for a working group made up of representatives from the neighborhood; the Community Development, Traffic, Parking & Transportation, and Public Works Departments; and Harvard to meet regularly to make sure that important issues concerning traffic and other impacts are being addressed. The goal would be to ensure that both short-term (Hammond garage) and long-term plans for the North Campus do not overwhelm or cause negative impacts to the surrounding neighborhood. This group would also provide another forum for public input into Harvard's plans for the North Campus.

The planning of the interior Harvard campus is appropriately the work of the university. However, the city can play an important role by providing peer review of traffic analysis, providing information on the latest TDM and other mitigation measures and making sure the best possible traffic and construction impact information is provided to the wider community. We have discussed this proposal to form a working group with officials from Harvard and would propose that such a group be appointed by you and begin meeting this summer.



5.

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

July 10, 2002

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 02-60, regarding a report on how City processes take account of cumulative growth, activity and issues of access to various sites, received from Assistant City Manager for Community Development Beth Rubenstein.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #5

Awaiting Report Item Number

02-60, regarding how City processes take account of cumulative growth, activity and issues of access to various sites.

In City Council July 29, 2002

PLACED ON FILE.



4.

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

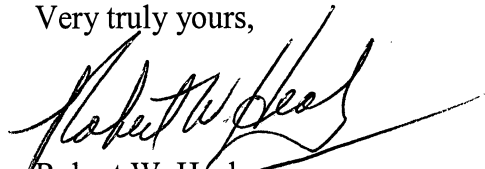
July 29, 2002

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item No. 02-51, regarding a report on the development of an enhancement of the request system that will allow members of the public to enter their requests electronically, please be advised of the following:

As part of the re-evaluation of the Hansen System, the MIS Department is looking at newer technology that will allow the City to move the Customer Service Management systems to the Internet. When the best technology to support the City's needs is determined, the City will have to consider the resources required to support this system in responding to all issues, requests and complaint entered into the system. The increase in the number of requests entered into the system will be significant. It is anticipated that the re-evaluation of the Hansen System and review of newer technology will be completed by the end of this year.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec

S-24

Consent Agenda #4

Awaiting Report Item Number

02-51, regarding a report on the development of an enhancement of the request system that will allow members of the public to enter their requests electronically.

In City Council July 29, 2002

**REFERRED TO
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE ON MOTION OF
VICE MAYOR DAVIS.**