

**NORTH CAMBRIDGE STABILIZATION COMMITTEE
6 SAINT GERARD TERRACE
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02140**

7 August, 1998

City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Councilors:

On behalf of the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee (NCSC), I would like to voice our tentative support for the townhouse proposal for 2425 Mass Ave, the site of the former used car lot.

We appreciate the small-scale nature of this project and realize that the number of townhouses reflects the liveable nature of the surrounding community.

We do have a few concerns, however, not just about this project, but about housing development throughout North Cambridge.

Our first concern is that this project does not include any affordable housing units nor does it incorporate a linkage fee. In fairness to the developer, there appears to be no statutory requirement for this project to have affordable housing units. From the neighborhood perspective, though, small projects like this, and there are many of them scattered throughout North Cambridge, threaten to price moderate or low income families out of our neighborhoods. Less affluent people cannot afford the hundreds of thousands of dollars per unit that these dwellings cost and will, in time, lose their foothold in our communities, replaced by other, more well-to-do people. The onus is not, and we agree should not be, on the developer to provide all the affordable housing units our community needs, but the trend of building high-priced units with few or no mixed housing options is a worrisome one. Equally worrisome is the fact that when affordable units are put in an area, they are frequently massed in buildings that are too big for the neighborhood and focus solely on affordable housing, rather than providing mixed housing opportunities that are more socially viable. We feel that affordable housing is necessary in our community and should be constructed so as to blend as seamlessly as possible with the surrounding dwelling units. When implementing an affordable housing project, whether a mixed priced development or not, it is important to consider the whole surrounding community- the local traffic patterns, the size and design of neighboring buildings, etc.- not just the zoning requirements for the project site.

Our second concern is that projects such as 2425 Mass Ave seem to be designed more as "starter homes" or "retirement nests" than as long-term family housing. When units have only a few bedrooms and virtually no yard, it seems to us, at any rate, that they are not being built for people to raise their families in, people who plan to remain in the community for decades. While we have not done our own demographic studies and we are certain that some people will buy these units and raise their families there, it seems more probable that families with young children will move out as the kids get too big to share one of the dwelling's few bedrooms. It is difficult to have a stable neighborhood where new housing appears to be designed only for short term residents.

I would like to emphasize that the problems we've noted above are not the result of the developer's actions nor is it up to the developer to address them alone. These are neighborhood and city problems and we must

address them together. The NCSC hopes that further development in North Cambridge will more closely match neighborhood needs for affordable housing and family-friendly buildings while not swamping small neighborhoods with massive buildings. This, we know, will be a difficult combination to meet given the price of local land and structures, but we must make a start somewhere.

Please feel free to contact the undersigned at 354-8353 should you have any questions concerning this letter or any other issue involving North Cambridge.



Craig A. Kelley, Esq.
Chair

1998 AUG 11 A 11:36

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Consent Communication #31

5915

A communication was received from
Craig A. Kelley, Esq. Chair, North
Cambridge Stabilization Committee,
transmitting support for the townhouse
proposal for 2425 Mass. Ave., the
site of the former used car lot.

In City Council September 14, 1998

No Action Taken

SEP. 28 1998

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