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Planning Board
City of Cambridge

I regret that I was unable to remain at your May 4, 1982, meeting to discuss your proposed special permit decision about the Green St. yard in the 1000 Mass. project plans. I appreciate your transmitting a copy of the document to me and I wish to place my opinion on public record.

The guarantees in this decision are meaningless because the ultimate sanction has no substance.

Two years ago, this developer took part in zoning hearings which included the area that is now proposed to be a yard. The zoning appears to require housing in that area and housing was repeatedly diagrammed there for the benefit of interested people. Since then, the developer has insisted that the housing promises were meaningless because of fine print in the zoning.

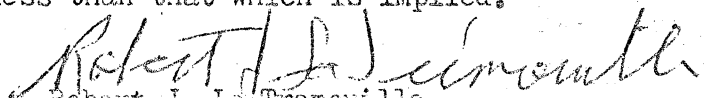
Presently a two-phase development is planned. Each phase calls for the maximum legal floor space. There will be a massive office and retail building built with a long, narrow yard on the north side of Green Street. Should the Planning Board refuse a special permit for this yard, housing would have to be developed instead. Since the developer is building as much floor space as he can, requiring housing on the north side of Green Street will mean that the floor space in the rest of the building would be proportionately reduced. The massive wall hanging over Green Street would be less massive if the planning board refused to grant the special permit for a yard on Green Street.

The 1000 Mass. decision's key words provide that, two years after the special permit is issued, "Should the Planning Board find that . . . the conditions of the permit have not been met . . . it shall revoke the permit". No one will close this building two years after it opens because its back yard is not properly maintained. The ultimate sanction is that, two years from now, the Planning Board might order the developer to put the promised housing on the north side of Green Street.

However, two years from now, both phases will have been constructed with the maximum floor space permitted under the zoning. If the Board orders the developer to put in housing two years from now, that housing will be in addition to the monstrous office and retail building. An order to construct housing will then constitute that much more profit to the developer.

Since the worst penalty to the developer is an increase in his profit, why should the developer fulfill any promises contained in this document?

Zoning technicalities make meaningless a document which gives the impression that some neighborhood wishes will be respected. The worst possible alternative for the neighborhood is the one which is now its ultimate protection. Once again, the protection delivered is considerably less than that which is implied.


Robert J. La Tremouille

cc: City Council, Mike Rooney, Phyllis Bauman, Sue Roberts, Marilyn Wellons, Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association, Riverside-Cambridgeport Community Corp., Press, Bill Noble

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S-425

Comm. from Paul E. Healy, City Clerk, transmitting comm. from Robert J. LaTremouille Re: proposed special permit decision by the Planning Board on the Green St. yard at the 1000 Mass. Avenue project.

In City Council,

May 17, 1982

5/17/82

Placed on File-