

5.
October 18, 1994

To the City Council,

When the subject of the new Super Stop and Shop comes up these days, many people are surprised that there is anything left to talk about. Most people, quite rightly, assume that this proposal was dealt a mortal blow when Councillors Triantafillou, Born, Toomey and Meyers voted against the zoning petition on September 12th. Yet I am writing to inform the council that this is not an issue which will simply fade away. Why? The answer is simple: the people of Cambridgeport/Riverside are without a supermarket.

To appreciate what this means take a look at a map of the city of Cambridge. The four full service Star Markets that service Cambridge are located miles from Cambridgeport/Riverside in East Cambridge, North Cambridge, and West Cambridge yet a full 27% of Cambridge's entire population lives in Cambridgeport/Riverside.

For some of the residents in this neighborhood, the loss of the Stop and Shop is no big deal. They routinely shopped at Bread and Circus or Star or the Harvest anyway. They chose to go elsewhere. How many households in Cambridgeport/Riverside do not have the luxury of that choice because they do not have the luxury of private transportation? According to the 1990 Bureau Census figures, there are 2,613 households in Cambridgeport/Riverside with no car. 29% of these, a total of 747 households, are people who are over 65 years of age. How do they get to the Star on Beacon, or the Star on Mt. Auburn or the Star in Porter Square, or the Star in East Cambridge? Are there buses arranged by the city councillors who turned down the Stop and Shop which run from our neighborhood to equivalent full service grocery markets as promised by Councillor Triantafillou? No.

With no available public transportation and no private transportation, how do people who live within walking distance of the old Stop and Shop get themselves to alternate supermarkets? Have they been forced to depend on relatives, neighbors, or the good will of friends? Do they call a cab once or twice a week at a cost of five dollars minimum each way? Has anyone bothered to find out how people who depended upon Stop and Shop, not by choice but by necessity, are managing to cope? More to the point, does anybody care?

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the city councillors who voted against Stop and Shop were highly sensitive to the concerns of one set of citizens with many choices who worried about traffic, trucks, and aesthetics. These same councillors were stone deaf to the concerns of another set of citizens with few choices who have been deprived of access to a full service supermarket. The choice of where to shop is an obvious privilege added to many other privileges of wealth. The restriction to high priced, inadequate, sparse and cumbersome shopping is, yet again, another burden placed on those who have already the many burdens of trying to survive on moderate incomes in this country.

Carolyn Boyes-Watson
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Consent Comm #5

S-454

A comm. was received from Carolyn Boyes Watson regarding the necessity of a supermarket in the Cambridgeport/Riverside neighborhood.

In City Council October 24, 1994

Placed on file