

At the May meeting the Association also authorized the subcommittee to take the next step toward an accepted plan for the area and to enter into discussions with Harvard for the purpose of developing a mutually acceptable plan, or "guidelines." There was considerable discussion at the meeting about the nature of the desired product of these proposed talks. There was agreement that the "plan" should be based on and much more specific than the Principles but need not be a fully detailed plan complete with drawings and the like; and it would need to be approved by the membership. At the subcommittee's suggestion, the Association agreed that it would be acceptable for these specifics to be framed as "guidelines."

Obviously, our members do not yet know even the broad outline, let alone the details, of the design for the Knafel Center that Harry Cobb, Harvard's architect, will unveil on the 15th. Residents are looking for a design they can live with. At the same time, they need assurances about future University expansion in the area. They wonder, how many more projects will follow this one? For this reason, the Association seeks a credible plan for the transition area and would oppose any major construction without a plan or other acceptable assurances about the University's intentions for the future of the affected area.

The Task Force will be contacting you in the near future to start the proposed planning discussions. The Association very much hopes that you and other decision-makers at the University will support the goal of an accepted, common vision for this very important part of our city. Everyone, residents and University alike, will benefit if we can achieve greater predictability and an end to the *ad hoc*, piecemeal planning that has produced so many mistakes in the past. We invite you to work with the Association, as neighbors, through the subcommittee, toward this goal.

Sincerely,



John Pitkin  
President, for the Coordinating Committee

cc: Joint Committee for Neighborhood-Harvard Consultation  
Cambridge City Council  
Beth Rubenstein, Community Development Department

enclosure

# Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association

P.O. Box 907

Cambridge, Massachusetts 02238

June 7, 1999

Mary Power  
Office of Government and Community  
Affairs  
Harvard University  
2 Garden Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

To: The Honorable Cambridge City Council  
From: John Pitkin for the Mid-Cambridge  
Neighborhood Association

June 10, 1999

For City Council Meeting of June 14

re: Copy of letter to Mary Power, Harvard  
University, regarding the urgent need for a better  
plan for the area of Prescott Street, Sumner Road  
and the proposed Knafel Center project and an  
invitation for Harvard to work with an MCNA  
subcommittee toward such a plan.

Dear Mary:

I am writing to invite the University to enter into discussions with representatives of the MCNA about a plan for the Prescott Street-Sumner Road district and transition area between the University campus and the Mid-Cambridge residential neighborhood. We hope these discussions can be in the spirit of the on-going neighborhood-Harvard consultations, exemplified most recently by joint talks about preserving the Swedenborg Chapel. Our aim is to look at the entire area with the same seriousness of purpose and urgency as the continuing effort to preserve the Chapel.

The Association's interest in a planning statement for this area was first put forth in January at a membership meeting, at which the Association addressed residents' concerns about several changes proposed for the area, including Harvard's proposed Knafel Center for international studies, and the desire for a more comprehensive, overall plan for the area. At that meeting, a subcommittee, the Neighborhood Stewardship Task Force, was created to address these concerns. The Association's goal is to maintain, and hopefully improve, the residential character of the area in the future by assuring that any development in the transition area occurs only within the bounds of an agreed-upon "plan."

As a first step towards a plan, the Association asked the new subcommittee to propose an interim planning statement for consideration at the MCNA's annual meeting on May 19. After four months of hard work, the subcommittee has successfully completed this assignment. The interim planning statement, which is comprised of ten principles for future development in the district, was put before our membership and approved.

Please find attached a copy of these "Principles for Development." These principles are a statement of residents' justified interest in the future of their neighborhood and are grounded firmly in the City's planning policies. They also clearly recognize Harvard University's interests and importance as the largest land owner in the area.

Consent Communciation #39

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A communciation was received from  
John Pitkin, President, Mid-  
Cambridge Neighborhood Association,  
transmitting a letter regarding  
the need for a better plan for the  
area of Prescott Street, Sumner  
Road and the proposed Knafel  
Center project.

In City Council June 14, 1999

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