

March 27, 1993

Margaret Drury
City Clerk,
City of Cambridge
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

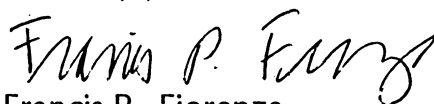
Dear Ms Drury,

At Monday's (March 22, 1992) public meeting about the City Hospital's Proposal for expansion, Mayor Reeves announced that in view of the abbreviated speaking time, individual speakers could send the text of their full presentations to the City Clerk for distribution to the City Council.

I enclose a copy of my text for distribution to the Mayor and the City Councilors.

I thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,



Francis P. Fiorenza
1520 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

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In Favor of a Downsized Expansion: An Abutter's and Mid-Cambridge Opinion

I speak in several capacities. [1] As a Cambridge resident and user of the Hospital; [2] as an immediate neighbor and abutter--I live on Cambridge Street directly facing the Emergency Entrance [3] As a recent member of of the CAC and involved in production the Report of Study Committee

First: A need exists for renovation and expansion at the Hospital cite. Anyone with personal experience of the hospital knows that. The Emergency Room and Intensive Care Units need renovation and expansion.

Second, The memorandum of understanding is important to the neighborhood. I and other neighbors appreciate John O'Brien's work with the neighborhood to establish procedures for the mitigation the expansion's impact. His contributions to working out the memorandum have been stellar and have gone far to remedy some of the bad feelings that might have existed between the neighborhood and the hospital in the past. The memorandum is important because it projects a significant ongoing cooperation between the hospital, neighborhood, and city to mitigate design, construction, traffic impact. I urge you, members of the Council to support the memorandum with its projected conditions, cooperative committees, and enforcement provisions.

Third: The proposed expansion should be downsized as not to require a zoning variance. Honorable Mayor and Councilors, I hope you view your decision not simply as a yes or no vote, but as a one about the degree of expansion. The crucial question is not yes or no, but how much. One hears: either the hospital expands or it dies. That is not the question, but **what is the most reasonable expansion that takes into account the interests of all parties:** of the hospital, of the neighborhood, and of the City. Such a reasonable resolution might entail that all participants compromise their ideals to appropriate satisfaction of other interests and parties.

The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association went on record with a public vote that expansion should be within the present limits of zoning. The hospital downsized its original plans, not so much to accommodate the neighborhood vote, as in response to the financial feasibility analysis of Ernst and Young. There has not been a serious attempt to elaborate a concrete alternative proposal based upon the neighborhood's vote for the zoning boundaries.

As Councilors you might ask: Why limit expansion to the limits of present zoning laws? After all, are not zoning laws arbitrary and kept more in the breech than not. And you might rightly question: what is the advantage of making zoning the maximum if it requires only a **fifteen percent reduction.** Such a limit does mean a lot to the abutters, the neighborhood, and to the city at large, and maybe even the hospital for the following reason.

REASONS FOR DOWNSIZING TO ZONING LIMITS:

First, For the abutters: a mere 15 to 20% downsizing safeguards the quality of life in the abutting neighborhood. It might mean three rather than four floors of the new building--keeping the size close to that of neighboring homes. It might mean an increased buffer zone or set-back between the building and Line Street--important for Somerville residents. It might mean an oasis of grass and a tree or two could remain amidst the massive expanse of brick and mortar. It would involve a decreased traffic/parking congestion. Such a congestion remains, for despite mitigation attempts, congestion largely depends upon quantity of visitors to a residential area where traffic and parking already overdense.

Second, for neighborhoods in general: A decision to limit expansion zoning limits signals other institutions to keep all new construction within limits and thereby safeguards

the City Cambridge as a livable and residential area for families. I work in a Cambridge institution that needs to expand. Some argue to apply for a zoning variance; other argue, myself included, we should expand where we do not need zoning variance even though it divides the location of staff. If you approve a downsized project, then would signal that you as members of the City Council are serious about density of buildings because you want a livable Cambridge. Your decision would signal other institutions that if they want to expand, they limit expansion within zoning. If the City itself asks for zoning variances in its projects, then it sets an example to the private institutions and businesses to do likewise. In the face of the increasing departure of families from Cambridge, the decision to stay within zoning limits would signal that the City Council wants Cambridge to be more than a place, where professionals live, or, where one works, but lives elsewhere. It would welcome families to stay in Cambridge because Cambridge seriously respects problems of density and strives to preserve the family and neighborhood character of the whole city.

Third, such a decision to limit expansion to present zoning limits has its financial advantages for the city, especially in view of the debt/resources ratio. If one assumes that downsizing approximately fifteen or more percent might reduce the costs by approximately five million dollars, then the loan for which the Citizens of Cambridge are ultimately responsible is reduced from twenty million to fifteen million. **Every five million that the project is downsized entails a twenty-five percent reduction in the proposed debt responsibility for the taxpayers of Cambridge.** If 120 Beacon Street is obtained, and one floor less of parking is needed, one might even reduce the debt by fifty percent--and almost make the expansion a financial possibility without debt. The real estate and development boom is over. The limits of proposition 2 1/2 are almost upon us. The uncertainties of immediate and significant radical changes in managed health care, reimbursements, make it financially reasonable to vote for a downsized renovation and expansion. In view of the debt to expense ratio, any such downsizing would be financially advantageous.

Fourth, such a decision to downsize to zoning is an advantage for the hospital in this risky time of radical change in health care and leaves room for future growth. If the hospital expands within zoning limits, or even stops five or so percent below zoning, then if in fifteen years, a future expansion is necessary then it will not be necessary to go from a building density mildly beyond zoning to one wildly beyond zoning. Moreover, with all the impending changes in financial health care, if the hospital or city would look for cheaper opportunities, for example, like Beacon Street, if the increased reimbursement or increased patronage from HMO's does not take place one be in a less risky status.

Conclusion: The question: is what is the degree of expansion. This is not a yes or no vote. I have suggested **four advantages for all parties for a downsizing within the limits of zoning** so that Cambridge can be a place where one is proud and happy not only to work, but also to live with one's family and children.

Francis P. Fiorenza
1520 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

Consent Comm. #

8-161

Comm. from Francis P. Fiorenza, 1520
Cambridge Street, regarding the Cambridge
Hospital's proposal for expansion.

In City Council,

April 12, 1993

Placed on file