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May 1, 2003

Mayor Michael Sullivan
Councilor Galluccio
Councilor Reeves
City Manager Robert Healy
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Ave
Cambridge, MA 02139

We would like to thank you all very much for taking the time to work with members of the Trolley Square Committee and the Affordable Housing Trust to develop a revised disposition report for the Trolley Square site. We know you are challenged right now by many important issues facing Cambridge city government, and appreciate your commitment to working on issues related to development of this site.

We had a couple of issues that we wanted to follow up on after yesterday's meeting. The idea that 60-70 units could be built on the site "by right" is being held out as a way to frame the requests of the neighborhood committee as unreasonably restrictive on density. We believe this argument is misleading because although 60-70 one-bedroom units might theoretically fit on the site — in a plan that would likely leave no open space for residents of the building and put parking on the ground floor on Mass. Ave — we do not believe that this is the kind of development that the AHT would actually propose for the site even in the absence of last year's input from the Trolley Square Committee or any consideration of neighborhood requests.

The real number that we think you would want to know is the number AHT *would* want to put on the site to make it a good affordable housing development. We think this number is likely to be closer to 45 units (although it would be appropriate for AHT to identify this number and tell you what it is), because AHT noted that they wanted to have: 1) a mix of 1, 2, and 3-bedroom units, 2) some ownership units which tend to be larger, 3) some open/public space (outdoor and probably indoor too) for the residents of the building, and 4) they have their own reservations about putting parking on the ground floor along Mass Ave because they acknowledged that it looks terrible.

Finally, we want to reiterate that while there are always going to be some people in the neighborhood who are adamant about a low density, many others would accept a higher density of units and even a taller building at the site if we could have a sizable park and significant indoor community arts space along with some small retail — possibly all organized around a North Cambridge Arts theme.

We think this site can accommodate all these uses. In fact, the ballpark calculation below suggests it could be done even without subsurface parking or zoning appeals.

37,645 SF	site total
- 10,000 SF	city park
27,645 SF	housing development
- 5,000 SF	surface parking – 50 cars @ 100 SF/car
22,645 SF	potential building footprint
- 5000 SF	to accommodate set backs for trees, other limitations on building
17,645 SF	likely building footprint
X 3	three floors tall building (part of building could actually be taller)
52,935 SF	potential interior space
- 10,000 SF	Art Center/Community Space/Retail
42,935 SF	residential area
div 1200 SF/unit	
36 units	

Thus, we hope that the revised disposition report can include a preference for bidders and developments at Trolley Square that maximize the park and community/arts space at the site, with a goal of 10,000 SF for each.

We also wanted to add that some neighbors have suggested the community space in this building as a new home for the Center for Families in North Cambridge. As you may know, the Center for Families lost their Rindge Ave. space a year ago and moved into the Fitz School with limited hours. Some have suggested that with the merger of the Fitz and Peabody, they may be seeking a new home. That is another potential community use that could be considered for this space.

Please let me know if we can provide you with any additional information. We look forward to seeing the revised disposition report, and again want to extend our thanks to you for your commitment to the City, this neighborhood and the Trolley Square development.

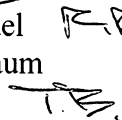
Sincerely,



Ruthann Rudel

Eric Grunebaum

Tom Buffett



cc: City Council

S-174

Communication #4

A communication was received from Tom Buffett, Eric Grunebaum and Ruthann Rudel, regarding Trolley Square Development.

In City Council May 12, 2003

**REFERRED TO UNFINISHED
BUSINESS #8.**