

RICHARD BROWN ARCHITECTS

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Cambridge City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

November 11, 1994
CAMBRIDGE MA.

Since the closing of Stop & Shop six months ago it is slowly becoming evident that changes are happening to the Cambridgeport neighborhood and it is not a pleasant sight. As an abutter and supporter of Stop & Shop I am somewhat lucky because I have a car and can drive the 15 or 20 minutes it takes to get to a decent full service grocery store (And quite frankly it is a pain in the neck). But for my neighbors who do not have a car or cannot afford one it is more than an inconvenience it is disastrous. It makes it next to impossible to live in this area.

A couple of years ago the attractive feature about Cambridgeport and Riverside was that one could live without a car and manage perfectly well. Public transportation was close. Harvard Sq. and Central Sq. were a short walk away. Three major Universities were just minutes away. And food was easily accessible. Environmentally it was ideal. Low land usage and a pedestrian based community that needed cars only minimally. It was also a situation that encouraged cultural and economic diversity (something that Cambridge has always prided itself on).

Now with the elimination of one key component of that formula, food, all that has changed. Instead of being able to walk to get food, literally thousands are forced to drive miles outside of Cambridge just to shop. Hardly a positive environmental step. For those without a car the most likely option is that they will have to move. And certainly nobody without a car will ever consider moving here. The result will be a significant change in the character of the neighborhood into a car dependent, less culturally diverse, and less economically diverse community. Hell, if I wanted that, I would have bought a house in the suburbs in the first place.

So now the question is who has to take responsibility for this situation? And the answer is those four councillors who opposed the store. It has been several months since that infamous non-vote and I have yet to see even the possibility of a viable solution come from any of them. Personally, after working on the project for 4 years I have been most disappointed by Jonathan Myers. After numerous meeting with all parties he was never able to fully comprehend the significant issues. To him the most important issue was that there would be a 1 1/2 car per minute increase in traffic on Magazine Street on Saturday mornings. Now since he lives on Chaulk Street that might have a minimal effect, but for the rest of the voters in the community getting food is much more important.

Unfortunately, I do not have any answers either. Recently in talking to the vice-president of Stop & Shop, Charles Richards, he said that they were closing in on a 15 year deal to lease the Memorial Drive site. Even if the city did come back and say that they wanted the grocery store he said it would be almost impossible for Stop & Shop to consider it, simply because they do not want to come back to Cambridge City Council. It is an organization that has totally lost any credibility. How can a company deal with an organization where one member after four years cannot make up his mind and another says that she will support the store only to change her mind minutes before leaving for vacation.

Fortunately next November I am sure that the voters will change that situation.

Sincerely ;

Richard Brown
cc. Cambridge Chronicle

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Consent COmmunication #3

A comm. was received from Richard Brown regarding the Stop & Shop on Memorial Drive.

In City Council November 21, 1994