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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS  
**PLANNING BOARD**  
CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

November 22, 1978

To The Honorable, The City Council

SUBJECT: Planning Board Recommendation on the Petition by  
Councillor Vellucci to Rezone Land in the Mellen  
Street Area

Dear Councillors:

In accordance with Chapter 40A of the General Laws, the Planning Board held a public hearing on Tuesday, November 14, 1978 on a petition by Councillor Vellucci to rezone land generally bounded by Wendell, Everett, and Oxford Streets and Massachusetts Avenue.

The Petition

The proposed amendment to the zoning map would rezone this area from Residence C-3 which is a multi-family residential district with unlimited height, a maximum F.A.R. of 3.0 and a permitted density of 144 dwelling units per acre, to Residence C-2A which is a new zoning district with the same dimensional, density and use regulations as Residence C-3 with the following exceptions: A maximum F.A.R. of 2.5, a height limit of 60 feet and special provisions to reduce the intrusion of institutional development on the edges of residential neighborhoods.

These provisions include: front yard, side yard and usable open space requirements for buildings in Residence C-2A which abut more restrictive residential districts shall be the same as the front yard, side yard and usable open space requirements for the more restrictive residential district; and on-grade parking shall be prohibited within 125 feet of more restrictive residential districts.

The Hearing

At the hearing Councillor Vellucci explained that his proposal was responding to the need to control institutional growth and to the lack of sufficient support and agreement on previous proposals for rezoning the Mellen Street Area. Councillor Vellucci stated that he believed his proposal would establish reasonable boundaries for institutional growth and that the City would benefit by plans for a legal agreement between the City and Lesley College which would spell out terms and schedules for Lesley's divestiture of properties outside of the Residence C-2A area, Lesley's payments to the City in lieu of taxes, and Lesley scholarships to Cambridge residents and in particular to women from the Agassiz neighborhood.

Councillor Vellucci requested that the Planning Board make a favorable recommendation on his petition and send it to the City Council to be debated.

In Favor:

James Slattery read a letter from Lesley College in favor of Councillor Vellucci's petition.

Harvard University sent a letter to the Planning Board in favor of the petition.

In Opposition:

Brian Kullman read a letter from the Agassiz Community Council in opposition to the petition. He asked the Planning Board to recommend the Board's own rezoning petition for the area which created a C-1 zone on parts of Mellen and Wendell Streets and a slightly different C-2A zone with potential for design review.

Paul Kolodner, a Mellen Street resident, spoke in opposition to the petition stating that it would not provide any real protection for the neighborhood and its residents.

Robert LaTremouille of Highland Avenue spoke in opposition to the petition.

Councillor Wylie sent a letter to the Planning Board in opposition to Councillor Vellucci's Petition.

Recommendation

It is the opinion of the Planning Board that the Mellen Street block has already been appropriated for institutional use as evidenced by the current pattern of ownership. The City Council acknowledged the block's institutional status when it permitted the closing of the east end of Mellen Street to facilitate Lesley's scheme for a consolidated home campus.

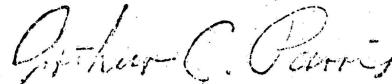
The problem of transition between institutional areas and surrounding residential neighborhoods has been identified as the central issue in the Mellen Street Area during the hearings and discussions over the past year. The Planning Board feels that both the Vellucci proposal and the amended Planning Board proposal recommended to City Council on October 18, 1978 would provide a less abrupt transition between institutional development and residential neighborhoods.

The Planning Board continues to support the amended Planning Board petition which provided for a Residence C-1 designation on a portion of the southwest side of Wendell Street as a transition to the Residence C-2A with design review potential for the rest of the rectangle bounded by Wendell, Everett and Oxford Streets and Massachusetts Avenue. The Board recognizes that Councillor Vellucci's petition has the advantage of incorporating negotiations between the City and the College with respect to the issue of divestiture which could be extremely important, but the Board also feels that the issue of divestiture is not within its purview.

Therefore, the Board recommends that the City Council favorably consider both of the recent proposals to rezone the Mellen Street area - the modified Planning Board petition which combines Residence C-1 and Residence C-2A designations and Councillor Vellucci's petition which zones the entire area in question Residence C-2A with special edge conditions and which holds the potential for negotiating Lesley's divestiture of property outside this area. The Planning Board feels that the City Council should decide which petition would be of the greatest benefit.

Respectfully submitted,

For the Cambridge Planning Board



Arthur C. Parris  
Chairman

ACP:mg

0-83

Comm. from Arthur Parris, Chairman, Planning Board, re: Planning Board's recommendation on the petition of Councillor Vellucci to rezone land in the Mellen, Wendell, Everett, and Oxford St. area.

In City Council,

December 11, 1978

12/11/78  
Prepared for the  
Hearing of 12/18/78