

Howard D. Medwed
58 Washington Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02140

September 18, 1986

Cambridge City Council
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Councillors:

I would like to express my support for both the North Cambridge (Massachusetts Avenue) rezoning petition and the rezoning petition filed by Frank Duehay relating to the residentially zoned portions of the former Sears parking lots.

The Committee which produced the North Cambridge rezoning proposal worked long and hard to produce a product which represents the diverse interests in the various neighborhoods concerned with Massachusetts Avenue zoning. It would be a shame to have their hard work come to no effect. I think that their proposal is basically sound. I am concerned that, if the North Cambridge zoning proposal does not pass, we will all be the loser. I am particularly concerned that, if the proposal does not pass, the neighborhoods will not have the protection that they need against unrestrained development, and responsible developers will be unable to proceed with beneficial projects as a result of the stalemate which is likely to develop. I foresee that the City Council will be continually faced with restrictive zoning proposals which will have the effect of creating uncertainty as to development without providing meaningful zoning protection. The Council should take advantage of the consensus which the community was able to achieve and support the North Cambridge rezoning proposal. The proposal has many virtues in terms of encouraging a vibrant street life on Massachusetts Avenue, encouraging reasonable residential development and protecting established neighborhoods.

Although I support the North Cambridge rezoning proposal, I do not feel that it is perfect in every respect. In particular, I am concerned that the North Cambridge rezoning proposal only had a minor effect on one of the largest pieces of undeveloped property in the area, the residentially zoned portions of the former Sears parking lots. These lots are currently zoned

Residence C-2 (and would be zoned Residence C-2B under the North Cambridge rezoning proposal). Except for the Massachusetts Avenue side of these lots, the lots are entirely bounded by Residence C-1 or B districts. Furthermore, the character of the surrounding districts is more akin to Residence B than Residence C-1. In fact, if you pass the North Cambridge rezoning proposal, a substantial portion of the area near the former Sears parking lots will become Residence B. The general thrust of the North Cambridge rezoning proposal is to confine commercial development along Massachusetts Avenue on the southwestern side to a 100 foot corridor in this area and establish more restricted residential zoning outside the corridor. As such, the failure of the North Cambridge rezoning proposal to downzone the former Sears parking lots significantly stands out as glaring spot zoning.

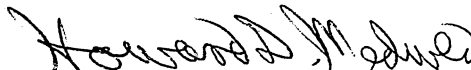
I am particularly concerned at the abuse by the landowner in this instance of his quasi-public position as a member of the sponsoring committee to achieve less restrictive zoning of his land in the face of desirable public policy. Accordingly, I think that the error with respect to the former Sears parking lots the North Cambridge proposal should be promptly corrected by passing the Duehay petition to downzone the Sears parking lots.

The North Cambridge rezoning proposal, by creating a new Residence C-2B zone, only changed the zoning for the parking lots by altering the height limitation from 85 feet to 45 feet. This change is unlikely to have any impact on the nature of the development that takes place in the former parking lots. As rezoned, the former parking lots would still be buildable to the extent of approximately 68 dwelling units. If the Duehay petition were passed after the North Cambridge rezoning proposal, the maximum number of dwelling units would be approximately 34. Furthermore, the floor area ratio would be substantially reduced. Thus, the bulk and density of any future project would be greatly reduced. The Duehay proposal would downzone the lots from C-2 to C-1. This would insure that the City carries out its mandate under State law of making districts uniform, decrease the bulk and density of any future development, and assure that any future development would be more consistent with the surrounding residential areas. These neighborhoods need to be protected from the congestion and development currently going on in the Porter Square area.

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I respectfully urge the City Council to support the North Cambridge rezoning proposal and then to support the Duehay petition to downzone the former Sears parking lots.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Howard D. Medwed". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Howard D. Medwed

HDM/jb

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Comm. from Howard D. Medwed, 58 Washington Ave., in support of the petition of Charles R. Lavery, Jr. & the North Mass. Avenue Advisory Committee to rezone North Mass. Ave.

SEP 19 11 11:29
CAMBRIDGE MA.

In City Council,

September 22, 1986

Referred to the Petition