

MID-CAMBRIDGE Neighborhood Association

419 Broadway Cambridge Massachusetts 02138 547-8936

May 14, 1979

To: Members of the Cambridge City Council
From: Joan Lorentz, Presiding Officer, MCNA
Re: Hearing - Open Space in Mid-Cambridge/Longfellow School

About a year ago, a former member of our coordinating committee* informed us that the Pellrine property on West Street was for sale. The coordinating committee authorized him to write the city manager to take this property for open space for Mid-Cambridge. He did not.

On January 4, this same member organized a meeting of a prospective developer and interested people in Mid-Cambridge

As a result of that meeting, a group formed themselves to see if indeed they could get the city to acquire this property.

Last week this ad hoc committee presented their case before the coordinating committee. I am hear to report to you that the coordinating committee of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association voted to support the request of this ad hoc group to take this land on West Street for open space...to be used in conjunction with the Longfellow School. The arguments that persuaded us are the following:

1. Mid-Cambridge has the least amount of open space per person in this city.
2. The density of Mid-Cambridge has been increasing at a rapid rate because of overdevelopment.
3. This adhoc committee worked with the City Planning Dept. to find other alternative open space possibilities, but could not come up with any possibilities that would not residents to be uprooted and forced to vacate their property.
4. Mid-Cambridge's recent dense developments have added 34% to additional tax revenues,...and this does not include the two new HUGE developments of Ellery Square on Broadway and the other at Kirkland-Trowbridge....which will bring much more taxes to our city.

Mid-Cambridge is being allowed to be overdeveloped...and we are paying a very great proportion in taxes. The City can afford to give us the only non-residential piece of land available to us. Our coordinating committee asks you to take this land.

* The Coordinating Committee directs the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association

159 Hancock St.
Cambridge

May 13, 1979

To the members of the Cambridge City Council:

I am writing to you as an eleven year resident of the Longfellow School neighborhood. I owned a house on Dana Street for six years, have been a tenant at 159 Hancock since 1975. I have many roots here by now, and plan to stay.

In your present deliberations over a playground for the children in and around the Longfellow School, I urge you to choose open space and quality of life for us and our children, over the immediate but misleading financial gain of building more housing.

I write particularly as a parent who has chosen not to send a child to Longfellow. Five years ago I wanted to send my son to kindergarten and gradeschool in our neighborhood, but the physical plant and playground facilities at Longfellow were so inadequate that I couldn't do it. I think I speak for quite a number of parents who manouver school districts, move, or spend extra money in order to send their children to gradeschool outside this neighborhood. It's a shame that we have to do that, both for our children and for the school. A decision to make a playground will be an important step in stopping the continual drain of children and energy from the school and neighborhood.

I am concerned by the proposed alternative of tearing down homes to build a playground so that the open lot can be used for town houses. What kind of choice is that, to drive present residents out so that more "profitable" town houses can be built? It's a choice of profit over people, and a choice which would add to the transiency and instability that already threaten our neighborhood because of its proximity to M.I.T. and Harvard. I urge you to reject such a move.

I think that what gets called Progress these days is a real mixed phenomenon - and I think we've got to keep asking, "Progress for whom??" If we don't watch what we are doing, our lives will get increasingly cramped, hectic, fresh-airless, sunless, while a few people make a profit. I trust you as people who care about Cambridge --and who want to get re-elected!-- to think long and hard about the choice in front of you.

Sincerely,

Wendy Sanford

Wendy Sanford

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