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JEFFREY M. FREEDMAN

January 30, 1970

Mr. James L. Sullivan
City Manager
City of Cambridge
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Re: Proposed Church Street Extension

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

I am writing to you on behalf of the developers of 44 Brattle Street, William J. Poorvu and Sert, Jackson and Associates.

It has come to their attention that certain citizens of Cambridge are now pressing for an extension of Church Street across Brattle Street to Mt. Auburn Street, and across Mt. Auburn Street to Memorial Drive.

Quite obviously, this is not in the private interest of our clients, who would not only lose a property which is presently valuable, but as to which there are advanced development plans for a new building. By advanced plans, I mean that existing tenancies have been terminated, tenancies for the new building have been signed up, and the architects are in an advanced stage of development drawings.

Apart from this private interest, which the City of Cambridge would wish to at least consider, we think that the extension proposal is against the public interest for the following reasons:

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1. Taking expenses. This road extension would require the taking between Brattle Street and Mt. Auburn Street alone of a strip approximately 500 feet by 60 feet in an area of extraordinarily high land cost, since this area is highly developed as the present 44 Brattle Street development indicates and as the nearby The Architects Collaborative, Design Research, and Brattle Theatre parcels demonstrate -- not to mention the development south of those locations. We would estimate the taking costs for a Church Street extension to run in excess of \$1,500,000.

2. Loss of tax base. Taking account of the 44 Brattle Street property, as redeveloped, and tax yields on other parcels in the path of the extension, the City will lose approximately \$150,000 per year in taxes.

3. Detriment to surrounding neighborhood of Church Street extension. The above-mentioned costs and tax loss, while a questionable expenditure of money even for a proposal of some planning merit, are altogether unjustified since the proposed Church Street extension causes harm to the existing Church Street - Brattle Street area. Existing Church Street, rather than being a secondary street, would become a major thoroughfare. All properties along the street would suffer from what would be through traffic rather than shopping or local traffic. We understand the Unitarian Church at the corner of Church Street and Massachusetts Avenue has already expressed itself on this subject.

A through Church Street would isolate Design Research, would isolate and make less usable the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, and would effectively cut off the Brattle Square area from points west of the proposed extension.

4. Destructive traffic pattern. Since the proposed Church Street extension would be attractive as a bypass route, it would tempt increased vehicular traffic into the Harvard Square area, which is anything but desirable. The Church Street - Brattle Street intersection would probably have to be a signalled intersection and it requires little imagination to imagine the backup on Brattle Street and on Massachusetts Avenue as a result of traffic moving along an extended Church Street. On Mt. Auburn Street, the same difficulty would occur.

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Since the flow on Mt. Auburn Street would be disrupted, the intersection would have to be signalled, and the MBTA busses would have trouble getting out of the Mt. Auburn Tunnel without an additional signal at that location. Lastly, the through traffic on Church Street from Mt. Auburn Street to Memorial Drive would have to mix with the heavy loads anticipated from the Baird Atomic development and the Kennedy Library, creating another point of congestion. In other words, the proposed extension of Church Street instead of alleviating traffic congestion, will only create several new tieups in areas already carrying considerable volume of traffic.

5. Destruction of pedestrian quality. The best planning opinion has urged discouraging vehicular traffic in the Harvard Square area and encouraging pedestrian use. The proposed Church Street extension would have the reverse effect. By contrast, the proposed development at 44 Brattle Street, designed by Sert, Jackson & Associates, adds to a pleasant pedestrian quality in the block bounded by Brattle Street, Story Street, Mt. Auburn Street, and Mifflin Place. It is intended that the pedestrian arcade of Design Research be doubled in width and extended eventually to Mt. Auburn Street, making a logical and interesting connection.

Measured against these drawbacks, which present themselves in just a surface consideration of the proposal, I think the expenditure of over a million dollars in public moneys plus the loss of considerable tax dollars at a time when there are so many other pressing municipal fiscal needs is -- to understate it -- ill-advised.

You will understand that our clients feel strongly about this issue; the more so, because their development plans have been a matter of general knowledge in the area for years, but it was not until those development plans were fixed in conformity with the existing zoning regulations, with decisions taken as to tenants, financing and so forth, that this matter of Church Street extension was introduced. In all fairness to our clients, the issue should be put to rest.

The matter is of sufficient gravity to our client, in view of development expenditures he is currently incurring,

BROWN, RUDNICK, FREED & GESMER

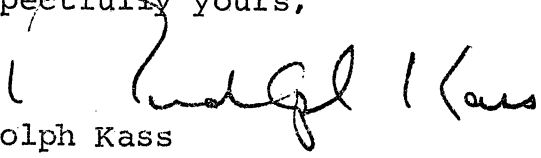
Mr. James L. Sullivan

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that we urgently request an appointment with you next week for the purpose of discussing this proposed road extension -- to the end that our client may have an opportunity to respond to questions you may have concerning the subject and that he may have some reliable notion of what is and isn't on the wind.

Respectfully yours,


Rudolph Kass

RK:js

cc: Paul Healey, Acting City Clerk ✓
Philip M. Cronin, Esq., City Solicitor

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January 30, 1970

Mr. Paul Healey
Acting City Clerk
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mr. Healey:

I enclose a copy of a letter I wrote today to
Mr. Sullivan, the City Manager.

Would you be kind enough to transmit copies of this
letter to the members of the City Council.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,


Rudolph Kass

RK:js

Enclosure

9. 24
Communication from Rudolph Kass transmitting copy of a letter he sent to the City Manager relative to the proposed Church Street Extension

February 9, 1970

1/9/1970
Placed on File -
Copies to ALL COORDINATORS