

Save Our Neighborhood

June 1, 1994

Ms. Margaret Drury
Cambridge City Clerk
City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

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CAMBRIDGE MA.

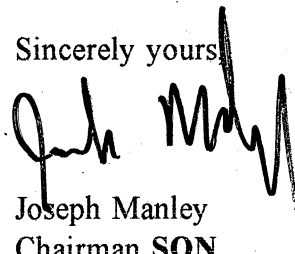
Dear Ms. Drury:

I hereby request that the enclosed letter to the City Council and attachment be incorporated into the permanent records of the Cambridge City Council.

I would also like to thank you for your courtesy and helpfulness during my telephone inquiry today.

As always, we appreciate your assistance and cooperation.

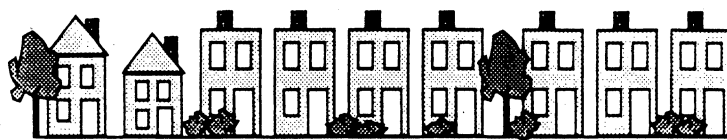
Sincerely yours,



Joseph Manley
Chairman SON

Attachments

JPM/hd



Save Our Neighborhood

May 31, 1994

Cambridge City Council
City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I am writing to you regarding the Cambridge Hospital's proposed takeover of Camelia Avenue. This involves the discontinuance of the street, purchase of 10 Camelia Avenue, and the permanent transfer of numbers 8 and 10 Camelia Avenue as well as the street in front of them into the Hospital's property.

The obvious purpose of the takeover is to subvert zoning protections established by law in Cambridge. The Hospital simply wants to build 12,000 more square feet than is allowable. This artificial enlargement of the Hospital's lot would enable it to do so.

The other reasons given are nothing more than pretexts.

- 1) The idea of a birthing clinic is demonstrably an afterthought, and simply a clever piece of packaging to sell this zoning maneuver. There is no genuine guarantee there will be a birthing clinic there within a few years time.
- 2) Neither is this maneuver a humanitarian attempt to let the 10 Camelia owners out of their property before construction.

If that were the case, the Hospital would purchase the property now and resell it on the residential housing market after project completion or termination.

Because the project proposes to make considerable improvements to Camelia Avenue that would make 10 Camelia a more desirable property--including the removal of the unsightly asphalt parking lot--this transaction might even turn a profit for the City of Cambridge.

Single family homes are a rarity in this neighborhood. Even more rare is a large and affordable single family house like 10 Camelia that can easily accommodate a growing family. The one downside--being near the Hospital--is exactly what makes it affordable. The present owners would never move out were it not for the noise and disruption of the construction project.

There is a great dearth of affordable family housing in this city and in this neighborhood. There is no comparable scarcity of places for women to have children. We do lack good places for those children to live after they are born. Let's keep our priorities straight.

*19 Leonard Avenue • Cambridge, Massachusetts • 02139 • Tel. (617) 491-5122
15 Cooney Street • Somerville, Massachusetts • 02143 • Tel. (617) 491-5122
Fax (617) 864-1666*

SON Letter of May 31, 1994 to the Cambridge City Council

Page Two

Most devastating of all is that, once the Hospital gains possession of all Camelia Avenue properties, there is no way to prevent the decay and loss of Leonard Avenue as a residential neighborhood.

There is no legal way of preventing the Hospital from engaging in all uses allowed in a Hospital zone by the zoning code. Many such Hospital zone uses would be obnoxious enough to make adjoining Leonard Avenue properties unlivable.

The domino effect this would trigger would in not many years end this area as a residential neighborhood and make it a Hospital and institutional district.

There are endless examples in the greater Boston area of how hospitals and universities do this once they start acquiring housing.

Residents of Longwood Avenue and Mission Hill were often told "Oh, this project doesn't affect you. It involves just a small part of the neighborhood." Now their houses no longer stand. Even closer to home is the example of Hovey Street in Cambridge.

Any agreements or promises to the contrary can be broken in the future with impunity. This or any future Hospital administration can simply say, "Sorry, circumstances have changed." Indeed, the Hospital grounds are littered with the broken promises of the past.

It would be irresponsible to propose trading meaningless agreements for the zoning protections and the housing stock to which this neighborhood is entitled.

The Hospital has already stated in the Cambridge Chronicle that it can and will build without the Camelia Avenue square footage--despite the fact that it has now decided to change its story.

The Camelia maneuver also dooms any prospects for broad-based acceptance of the project in the neighborhood. It moves in the opposite direction from compromise with neighbors.

Whereas the Hospital claims that they are accommodating the neighborhood, this maneuver is naked aggression. It both steals away housing stock and strips zoning protections from the neighborhood. It creates a larger project than the neighborhood is supposed to bear.

Previous project "downsizings" simply eliminated square footage that is blatantly illegal under the zoning code. This is no concession to anything but the rule of law. It is no concession to the neighborhood.

SON Letter of May 31, 1994 to the Cambridge City Council

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Now that the Hospital has dropped plans to break the law, it has decided to get around the law instead. It is clearly violating the intent of the zoning code.

The neighborhood clearly opposes the Camelia Avenue maneuver. Attached hereto is a SON resolution unanimously adopted at a recent meeting. The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association on April 27 voted against the discontinuance of Camelia Avenue.

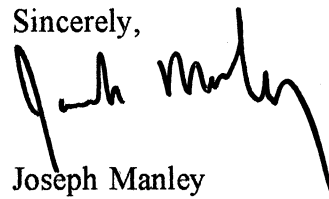
MCNA members would have opposed the takeover and transfer of the houses had not MCNA leaders falsely informed them that opposition was impossible because it would mean interference with the 10 Camelia owners' sale of their property. In actual fact, the Hospital has considered purchase and subsequent resale of 10 Camelia to be a viable option for purposes of project construction.

We shall also be providing you with further representations of neighborhood opposition to this outrageous and cynical maneuver.

On behalf of our members, and in keeping with the wishes of many of our MCNA neighbors, we respectfully ask that Councillors disapprove discontinuance of Camelia Avenue, and attach as binding conditions to the City's purchase of 10 Camelia Avenue that 1) the property be sold on the residential housing market after completion or termination of the proposed expansion project 2) The property not be transferred for any period of time into the Hospital's lot, 3) The property not be permanently used for institutional purposes, 4) The property's FAR allowance not be transferred to the Cambridge Hospital, and 5) The property not be used to in any way enhance the size of construction on the Hospital's lot.

Thank you for your attention.

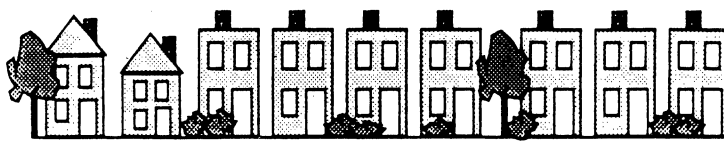
Sincerely,



Joseph Manley
Chairman

Save Our Neighborhood

cc: City Clerk
City Manager Robert W. Healy
Mid-Cambridge Conservation Commission
Cambridge Planning Board



Save Our Neighborhood

SON BUSINESS MEETING OF MARCH 24, 1994

Resolution # 1:

Whereas, as part of its basic mission to protect the residential quality of the neighborhood, **Save Our Neighborhood** opposes the conversion of residential property to institutional uses of any type;

Whereas, even the slightest change in legally allowable uses of houses on Camelia Avenue has the potential for making adjoining houses on Leonard Avenue undesirable as residential housing, thus initiating a process of decay for that street and the neighborhood in general. Such changes could be made at the whim of future Hospital administrations, regardless of the intentions of the present administration;

Whereas, Cambridge Hospital's plan to purchase 10 Camelia Ave., and transfer that property as well as 8 Camelia Ave. and part of the public way on Camelia Avenue into the Hospital property is not only institutional encroachment on residential housing, but a device to get around zoning restrictions so that it can build a larger expansion project;

Whereas, securing Cambridge Hospital guarantees against future encroachment based on a takeover of Camelia Avenue does not provide adequate protection for Leonard Avenue or the neighborhood;

Be it resolved that:

- 1) **Save Our Neighborhood** shall oppose before the Cambridge City Council Cambridge Hospital's purchase of 10 Camelia Avenue, unless the Hospital agrees to return the property to the residential housing market after project construction, FAR intact.
- 2) **SON** shall oppose the discontinuance and transfer of the public way before both the Cambridge Planning Board and the City Council, as well as any other responsible agencies or entities.
- 3) **SON** shall advocate and promote Camelia Avenue as the boundary or "red line" against Hospital expansion and encroachment, rather than a boundary between the Camelia Avenue houses and adjacent houses on Leonard Avenue.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

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S 287

Conent Communication #12

A comm was received from Save our
Neighborhoods regarding the Cambridge
Hospital and Camelia Avenue.

IN CITY COUNCIL JUNE 6, 1994

~~COE G. 2894~~

Referred to the
hearing scheduled for
June 13, 1994.