

9.

RICHARD BROWN ARCHITECTS

May 9, 1995

Cambridge City Council
City Clerk's Office
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

This weekend marks the first anniversary of the closing of the Stop & Shop supermarket on Memorial Drive. Since a year ago some things have changed and some have not.

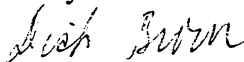
Of course the most dramatic change has been in the store itself. It is no longer a food store that serves a vital need to the Riverside/Cambridgeport area, but it is now a brand new super computer store that serves the regional Boston/Cambridge area. There are also more subtle changes. People in our community now spend more time driving Belmont, Allston and Somerville to do their food shopping. People who used to walk to get their food at Stop & Shop now either walk to Purity Supreme (not a strong option) or they are forced to ask someone else to drive them to a decent supermarket. People who used to think that Cambridgeport was a viable place to live without a car now realize that is not true anymore. Without the market the Riverside/Cambridgeport area is now auto-dependent. (For those of us that believe that an urban area is inherently more environmentally conscious than the suburbs, this is a significant negative factor.)

There are also many things that have not changed. Perhaps the most significant is that there is still an incredible need for at least one food store (and possibly more). We live in a very dense area with a lively, varied and exciting population. Clearly a community such as this needs certain things to maintain itself. Most of these such as good schools, reasonable housing, good mass-transit, exciting entertainment and safety in the form of a good police department, Cambridge makes a significant effort to provide. But also in this equation that defines a viable urban community, is the need to be able obtain basic staples, and the most basic of these staples is food. This important item is now missing and with it is the ease with which one could live in the city. It used to be that you could say "I love to live in the city, it's so easy...you just walk everywhere." That is no longer true. It is increasingly difficult to live in cities (especially if you have a family) and that is one reason there is such a flight of middle class families to the suburbs. It has simply become easier to live with a car in the suburbs than without one in the city.

This brings me to the other significant thing that has not changed and that is the Cambridge City Council itself. Last fall the Community Development office completed a very comprehensive study of food markets in the Cambridge area and submitted it to the City Council. Since that time nothing has been done. No recommendations were made. No policy was developed. And certainly no action was taken to encourage markets to come into the area. So in a sense the City Council has failed the Riverside Cambridgeport area twice. Once in failing to allow the Stop & Shop to develop their store and a second time in failing to resolve the significant absence of a store.

I would therefore request that the Council make an effort to address this problem both in city council meetings and as an issue in the upcoming election.

Sincerely



Richard L. Brown

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CAMBRIDGE MA.

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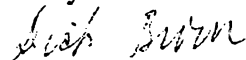
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S-175

Consent Communication #9

Communication was received from Richard Brown regarding the 1st anniversary of the closing of Stop & Shop.

5/18/95 copy sent to Food
Policy Committee, Traffic,
Transportation & Parking &
City Mgr. (de)

In City Council May 15, 1995

Referred to Food Policy
Comm., Traffic, Parking and
Transportation and
City Mgr.