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ago, when it was a library and he was a lad being raised just up the street.

I won't ramble on. The more I think about the idea the more it appeals to me. I think some imaginative urban planning and fund raising could make it altogether feasible. I would be happy to assist the project in any way I could.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.



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June 18, 1997

As it happens, I pass by the former VFW hall every day, on my way to the T to work. So I have been most interested in the ideas floated about re-using that now-derelict building in some way.

And as it happens I have concocted a plan, which I offer to you here. I start from the premise that North Cambridge, although it is a vibrant and various community, has no real "center." The closest thing we have is the O'Neill Branch Library, which accomplishes wonders in a tragically limited space. What I propose now is the Thomas P. O'Neill Community Center.

The Center would include gallery space, performance/meeting space, and the branch library. The most recent news articles announce a sadly high price for refurbishing the building. I hope, first of all, that other opinions on the matter are solicited. Consider how the "bottom line" on the Reade Block in Harvard Square has altered over time.

But assuming that the project will indeed involve an outlay of moneys, I argue that the expense might well be shared among interested parties. We are told there are State funds for library improvement. I am told, on good authority I think, that the building was once a library -- so might the Historical Commission become involved? And would not such community organizations as the Porter Square Neighbors Association and the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee do some useful and productive fund raising. I suspect that the surrounding community could very easily be involved, both in raising moneys and in providing "sweat equity."

The result would save the building from its present decay and meet a wide number of community and City-wide needs. Hardly a week goes by without another -- and just -- plaint about the lack of gallery space for local artists. The Bookcellar Cafe, which ran a vibrant series of readings, performances, and story-tellings, has had to close that part of its operation down. The reading series at the O'Neill Branch is healthy and on-going. Efforts by such organizations as the Library 21 Committee made the lack of community meeting space all too clear.

Parking would of course be problematic -- but there is the large lot behind the Henderson Carriage Building. Finally, the name I propose would be a way of paying honor to perhaps the most renowned local figure -- who may indeed have used the building long ago, when it was a library and he was a lad being raised just up the street.

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Consent Communications #7

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Communication was received from John
Hildebidle, regarding the re-using
of the former VFW hall.

In City Council August 4, 1997

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