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May 28, 1998

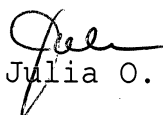
To the Honorable City Council  
City Hall  
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear City Councillors:

Attached is a letter which some of us opposed to the Bullfinch Development sent to Camp, Dresser & McKee. Included with the letter were the signatures of 449 people supporting the Gregory downzoning petition.

We have written to the Community Development Department asking their assistance in finding an appropriate site for Camp, Dresser & McKee. I recall in the past that when the City has been desirous of keeping certain companies in the city that special inducements have been offered.

Sincerely yours,

  
Julia O. Gregory

20 May 1998

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Thomas D. Furman, Jr., President  
Camp Dresser & McKee Inc.  
Corporate Headquarters  
One Cambridge Center  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142

re: your proposed move to 205 Broadway

Dear Mr. Furman,

We live in the neighborhoods adjacent to CDM's proposed new headquarters at 205 Broadway. Many of us have long hoped to see the empty part of this site developed in a way that would complete the built edges of Hampshire Street and Broadway and enliven the neighborhood with new activity. So we received the news of CDM's interest in the site with some optimism. Alas, having studied and debated the Bulfinch Companies' plans, we are deeply concerned that their proposal is simply not appropriate for this site.

In short, we'd love to have you as neighbors, but you've apparently grown too large to fit here. In their attempt to satisfy your space requirements, Bulfinch's architects have proposed a building that will harm rather than improve its surroundings. Its four above-grade parking levels and its lack of substantial retail or housing uses will create blank, impenetrable edges on Hampshire Street. Its height and mass will cast winter shadows hundreds of feet into the residential neighborhood to the north. Its occupants will add automobile traffic at rush hours to a street system that is already inadequate to carry its current peak loads.

Among Cambridge's attractions for you and for us are its safe and lively streets. The edges of those streets are lined with windows in which an office worker might discover a present for his wife or spot colleagues eating lunch, windows in which a child might see engineers at work designing the inner workings of her city, windows through which the watchful eyes of residents and shopkeepers help prevent danger at all hours. Your proposed edifice shirks its responsibility to return the favor. Save for a small lobby entrance, it presents to Hampshire Street only garage doors and blank walls churlishly masquerading as arcaded storefronts; it interrupts the sidewalk with three curb cuts. The retail space facing Broadway is a token, far too narrow to accommodate the kinds of extended-hours uses (convenience store, pharmacy) that the adjoining office and residential zones desperately need. Above, parked cars occupy the edges of the next three floors. (At the very least, human occupants at second and third floor windows provide a sign of life and some measure of surveillance for the sidewalks below. Empty automobiles don't care what happens down there.) You need look no further than the US Trust Building on Portland Street or the office block at 201 Broadway to see notorious examples of dysfunctional street edges created by similar architectural arrangements. To amplify these mistakes is inexcusable.

If built on this site, the quantity of parking and office space you require will not only crowd out any uses that might contribute to a reasonable streetscape, it will generate a building of height and mass matched by few others in even the densest parts of this city. Again, the proposed building fails to continue the successful urban patterns that are the very reason we all choose to be in Cambridge. Despite Bulfinch's laudable decision to preserve the existing one-story building on the site, the new tower will cast broad winter shadows hundreds of feet long across the blocks of houses to the north. (And, like its neighbor at 201 Broadway, it will intensify the wind at ground level on Hampshire Street and on Broadway.) We understand that whatever is built here will block some winter sun; as environmental engineers, you can surely understand that many of us find this building's microclimatic impacts excessive.

The project's effects on traffic are equally troubling. While the cars in the proposed garage will add only a negligible fraction to the total daily vehicle count on Hampshire Street, they do represent a significant input at rush hour. At the end of the work day, traffic on Hampshire, Broadway, and Cardinal Medeiros usually comes to a bumper-to-bumper standstill for well over an hour, crawling fitfully to Inman Square, Prospect Street, and Cambridge Street. Leaving 205 Broadway at 5 PM will be much more difficult than exiting the garage at Ten Cambridge Center, which is served by two four-lane streets and intersections with left-turn lanes. (Compare these with the two lanes of Hampshire Street and the congested intersections along Portland Street.) And you will no longer be only one block from a rapid transit station.

Despite ADD Inc.'s efforts to dress your new headquarters attractively, it is not a good building. Its size and form are inappropriate for its location. Its shortcomings make a convincing case for the recommendation of the Cambridge Planning Board that this site be developed at about half the density and sixty percent of the height proposed by Bulfinch.

What makes this situation particularly frustrating is the continued existence in Kendall Square, University Park, and Alewife of several vacant parcels, any of which could accommodate CDM with many advantages and no negative impacts. Served by rapid transit, parking garages, and wide new roads constructed by the city expressly to serve the needs of companies like CDM, either of these alternative sites would afford your architects the opportunity to create a building that would make a positive contribution to its surroundings and provide a better working environment for your employees.

Staying in the city rather than moving to a suburban office park is a commendable demonstration of CDM's commitment to Cambridge and to the regional environment. It would be ironic indeed if your choice of location led to the creation of a building that was a blight on its immediate urban neighbors. Camp, Dresser, & McKee has worked for decades to improve the quality of life in cities around the world. It deserves a headquarters it can be proud of, a tangible demonstration of its commitment to thoughtful, innovative, skillful solutions to environmental problems--including the problems of building livable cities. We urge you to find another, more appropriate site nearby, and would gladly support your efforts to do so.

cc: Robert Cabral

Respectfully yours,

*Barry Zevin* BARRY ZEVIN 67 HAMPSHIRE ST. CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

*Elissa Carlson* ELISSA CARLSON 111 HAMPSHIRE ST. CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

*Lee Farris* LEE FARRIS 269 NORFOLK ST. CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

*Peter J. Berry* PETER BERRY, 18 WORCESTER ST CAMB. 02139

*John B. Levine* JOHN B. LEVINE, M.D. 111 HAMPSHIRE ST CAMB 0213

*Nancy Seymour* NANCY SEYMOUR 170 HARVARD ST. CAMBRIDGE 02139

*Yoon Lee* 139 Ours ST. Camb, MA - 02139

*Julia O. Bragun* 11 Market St. 02139

Consent Communication #22

4065

A communication was received from  
Julia O. Gregory, transmitting a  
letter of opposition to the Bulfinch  
Development sent to Camp, Dresser  
and McKee.

In City Council June 1, 1998

*Referred to the Petition*