

MID-CAMBRIDGE Neighborhood Association

419 Broadway Cambridge Massachusetts 02138 47-8936

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

April 10, 1984

Dear Resident of Mid-Cambridge:

The Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University is proposing to build a bridge over Broadway to connect the Fogg Building with the new Sackler Museum. The University has asked our association to consider this proposal in the hopes of winning neighborhood support when and if they seek the approval they need from the Cambridge City Council. We are sending the enclosed information on the proposed bridge, or gallery connector, to all residents of the neighborhood because this is an issue that potentially affects everyone who lives in the area directly east of Harvard Yard -- whether or not they belong to the association.

Everyone who has seen the plans for the bridge agrees that if it is built it would transform the landscape in an area through which tens of thousands of people travel every day and in which several scores of people live. We therefore asked two groups of neighborhood residents with different views of the bridge to state the arguments pro and con. Their statements are presented in the next two pages.

We urge you to read these as well as Harvard's illustrated presentation of the proposal, which is also enclosed. A model of the bridge is on display in the Public Library. For those who want more information, representatives of Harvard will also be making public presentations of their proposal -- see their brochure for details.

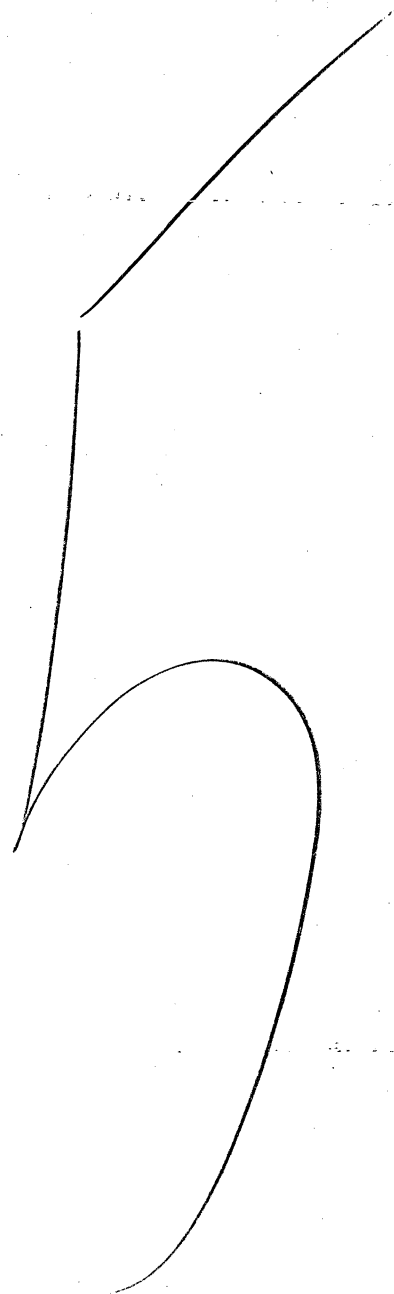
In order to reach a broad neighborhood consensus on the proposed bridge, the association will hold a Neighborhood Meeting open to all residents on Tuesday April 24, at 7 P.M. in the ~~Main~~ *High School* ~~Public Library~~, on Broadway. At this meeting representatives of the Fogg Museum will make a full presentation of their plans and members of the association will vote on the position that the association will take before the City Council.

We urge you to attend this meeting.

Sincerely,

John Pitkin

John Pitkin
For the MCNA



THE FOGG MUSEUM

PRO:

Our neighborhood museum, which is one of the finest small museums in the world, is entering into the final stages of construction that will soon result in the doubling of public gallery space. For those of us in Mid-Cambridge who cherish the Fogg and its collections this is an exciting prospect.

From the earliest discussions about the museum expansion, we have been aware of the Fogg's desire for a bridge to span Broadway. We had concerns about possible unsightliness, bulk, shadowing, wind problems, etc. The final sketches for the bridge have allayed those concerns.

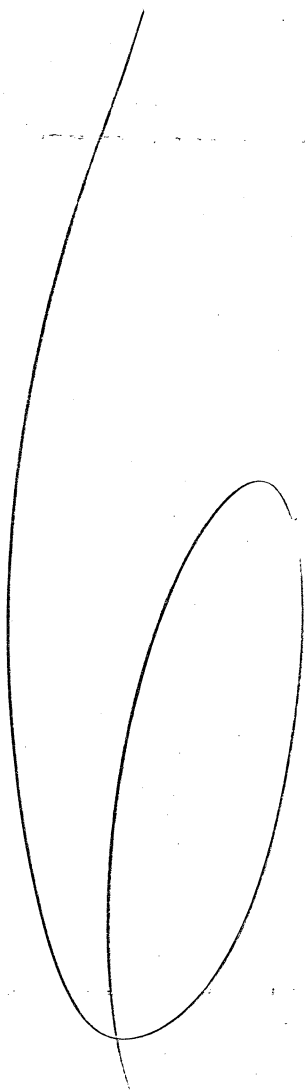
We believe the bridge as currently proposed will be an attractive and functional addition to its location, and a true asset to Mid-Cambridge. The Broadway/Quincy location is a major artery into our neighborhood. It is currently an unsightly, neglected, disfunctional intersection. The proposed bridge will reverse that negative impact. Its dramatic central circular window and vigorous design will provide an attractive visual frame at the place where Broadway begins. It will be a transition point in the streetscape and an appropriate place for a marker at the gateway to our neighborhood. The bridge will give coherence and drama to the space which is currently a jumble of buildings and uncoordinated walkways. The bridge will speak a great welcome to our neighborhood.

Local landscape architect Carol Johnson's plans for improvements to the streetscape will give new definition to the area. The Fogg proposes to spend \$300,000 toward the implementation of her plans, which will create a small plaza and a new avenue of trees.

In addition to its architectural merits, the bridge serves both the museum and the neighborhood. Internally, it will allow us as visitors to the museum to move from one part of the museum to another without inconvenience. It will also permit art treasures to be moved without risk of theft or damage. Externally it will reduce congestion at street level and permit traffic to flow more safely.

The proposed bridge really does seem to work well in its surroundings, a result many of us initially did not anticipate. In the absence of overriding arguments to the contrary, the improvement to the streetscape, the fine design of the bridge, and its obvious benefits to the museum visitor as well as to the motorist justify our support. The Fogg is a great museum that adds to our enjoyment of life in Mid-Cambridge, and we believe that the bridge will substantially enhance that enjoyment.

Our support is not without one reservation. The City's agreement to permit the bridge should be written tightly. Our support assumes continued participation throughout the drafting of such an agreement to ensure that it contains adequate provision not just for financial compensation to the City, but also for the architectural detail and landscaping that make the bridge an attractive proposal for Mid-Cambridge.



DGE: PRO & CON

CON:

The construction of bridges over our public ways to connect buildings is inherently inappropriate. The proposal for the connector between the Fogg and Sackler Museums is even more inappropriate; it calls not for the construction of a bridge, but rather a structure large enough to contain a series of galleries. This structure would be built over Broadway at Quincy Street. It is important to be aware of the physical dimensions of this proposal. This gallery connector would be 150 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 20 feet high. Its mass and volume can readily be seen from the photos and models of the project.

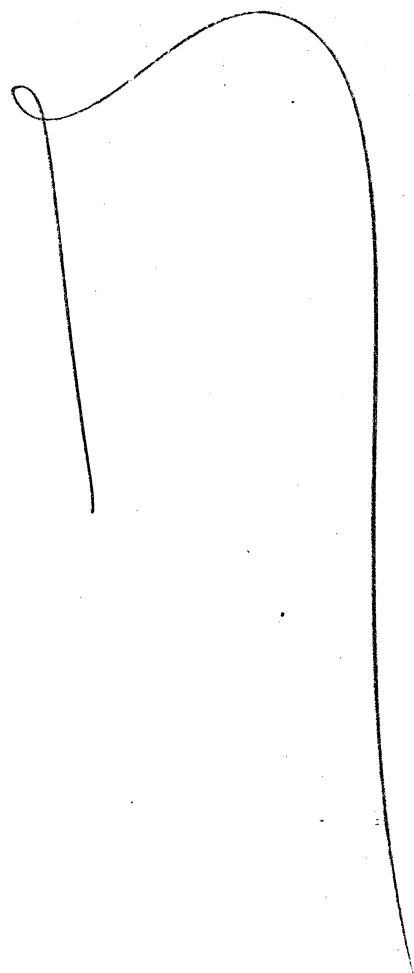
The proposal calls to build this massive building-connector by utilizing the air rights which are owned by all the citizens of Cambridge. This is, unfortunately, not an isolated request. If granted, this structure would be the second to be built over Broadway alone. It would be the first to be built in a residential neighborhood. Requests of this sort must be denied if we are to preserve the nature of Cambridge as we know it.

Mid-Cambridge is an exceedingly dense neighborhood. We must not encourage increased density by permitting construction over our public ways. We have worked together to decrease the density of our neighborhood on many occasions. We must not reverse our direction on questions of density and should stand firm in our opposition to this and all similar proposals.

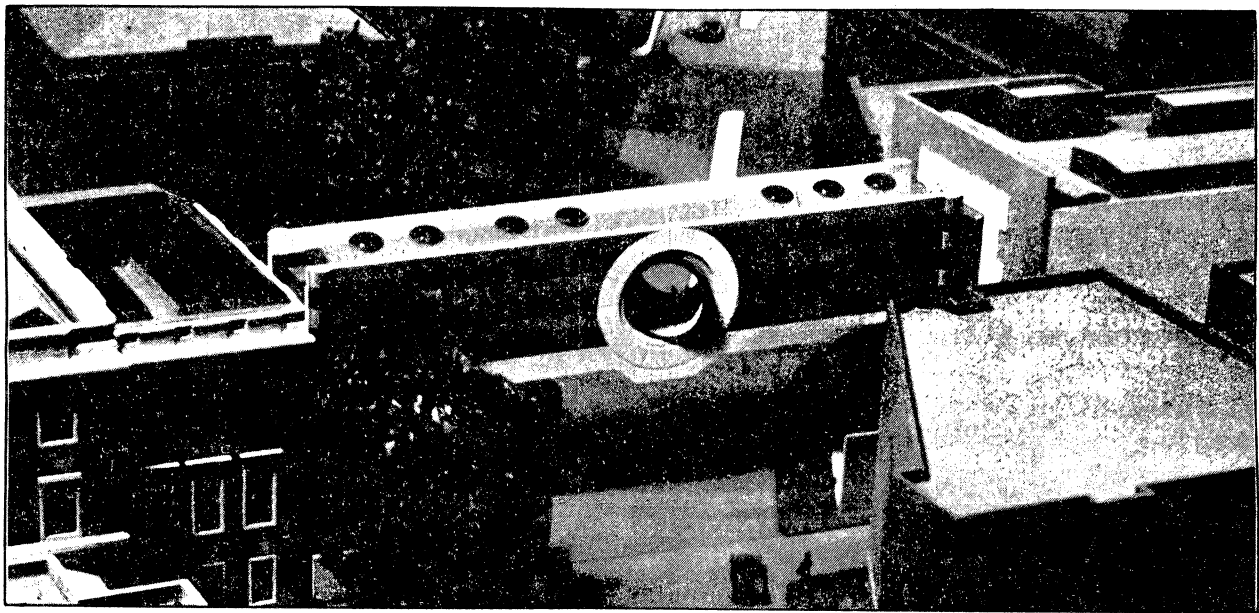
The advantages to be gained by Harvard's museums if this proposal were to be approved are far outweighed by the intrusion on the neighborhood that it represents. We would look at, walk and drive under this connector every day. It is also clear that if, in fact, this gallery-connector were an essential element of the new design, approval would have been sought long before construction had begun. The connector would be a convenience; it is not a necessity.

Several additional objections can be raised to this particular project. There is the issue of safety. Such an imposing structure may distract drivers in what is already a dangerous intersection. Environmental questions are also raised. Residents of the apartment building at 84 Prescott St. will suffer substantial loss of views and sunlight. As you view the models and sketches of the project, other objections will probably occur to you.

In recognition of the fact that air rights are owned by the public, the University would "rent" the right to build this connector from the city for about \$16,000 per year. This amounts to approximately 16¢ per resident of Cambridge! Let us forego this bounty and stand united in opposition to the gallery-connector. If you share our view that this proposal is detrimental to our neighborhood, it is essential that you come to the meeting on Tuesday evening, April 24. Join us in voting against Harvard's proposal and send our city council the message that we value the character of our neighborhood too much to allow such structures to intrude on our lives.



The Fogg Museum Connector Proposal



Model of the connector looking south along Broadway.

Photograph: Rick Stafford

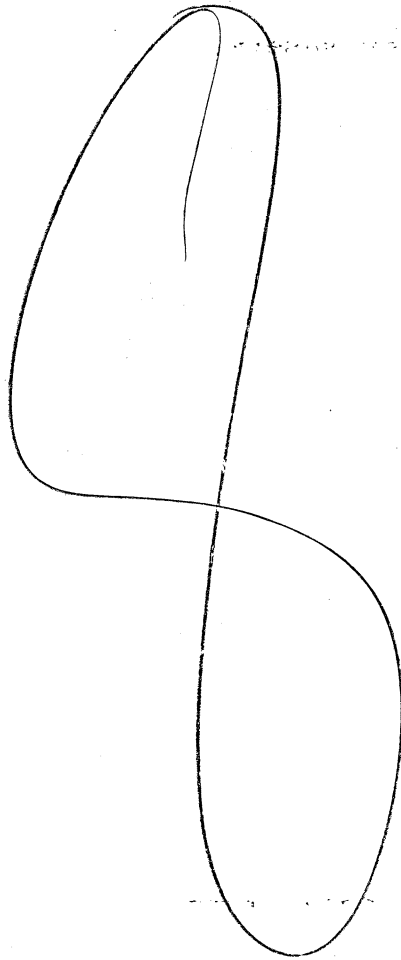
Late in 1982, Harvard University razed the Allston Burr Lecture Hall at the corner of Broadway and Quincy Streets, and began constructing a new building to provide additional galleries and offices for the Fogg Art Museum. The new museum, named for its principal benefactor Arthur M. Sackler, is nearing completion and is scheduled to open to the public in the spring of 1985. The new galleries will permit the public display of far more of Harvard's outstanding art collections than ever before; important masterworks of Western painting and sculpture will finally be on permanent exhibition.

Museum officials have proposed the construction of a bridge over Broadway connecting the Fogg Museum with the new one. The design for the Sackler Museum, by the noted British architectural firm of James Stirling, Michael Wilford, and Associates, makes allowance for the operation of the new building with or without a connector. However, a connector would greatly enhance the convenience of the public using the museums, improve the efficiency of operations, and insure the safety of works of art and people crossing between the two buildings.

Some members of the mid-Cambridge community have questioned whether a bridge is desirable or necessary. They have raised questions concerning the suitability of the bridge's design and whether the University has explored alternatives such as a tunnel.

Staff from the Fogg and the University's Community Affairs office have been meeting with neighborhood representatives in an effort to clarify the connector issue. In the following sections, the University responds to the questions that have been asked most often.

A model of the proposed connector will be on display at the Cambridge Public Library on Broadway from April 19 to April 23. Museum officials will be available to discuss the model at 7:30 p.m. April 19 and at 5:30 p.m. April 23.



Q. WHY IS A BRIDGE OR CONNECTOR BEING SOUGHT?

A. When the new museum opens, visitors, students, and staff members are expected to cross from one building to the other about 1,000 times a day to view exhibits, move art works, attend classes, and conduct museum business. A bridge would allow the safe passage of works of art without the risk of having to pack and send them by truck across the street; it would also enable the public to view the collections without interruption.

The Fogg and Sackler Museums will operate as a single entity, with a single director and a unified program. Each will contain galleries open to the general public, storerooms for art works not on display, a library, classrooms, and faculty offices. Most museum service departments (such as Photography, Registrar, and Carpentry) will be in the Sackler Museum.

Q. DID THE UNIVERSITY EXPLORE OTHER ALTERNATIVES SUCH AS A TUNNEL? IF SO, WHY WERE THEY REJECTED?

A. The Fogg staff carefully explored the possibility of connecting the two buildings by means of a tunnel, and was forced to reject it on the grounds of impracticality and high cost.

Because of utility lines (water, telephone, sewage) buried beneath Broadway, a tunnel could be no more than eight feet high and would be placed so deep underground and be so difficult to get to that the general public would not be able to use it; moreover, its inconvenient location would limit its usefulness in museum operations. Given these shortcomings, the very high cost of a tunnel could not be justified.

Q. CAN THE MUSEUMS FUNCTION WITHOUT A CONNECTOR?

A. They can, but with considerable difficulty and inconvenience to those who visit, work, and study at the museums. Significant added time and expense would be required to pack a priceless work of art to move it outdoors and across Broadway. Inconvenience and commotion might result if a group of elementary school students viewing the museums' collections had to walk back and forth between buildings on a cold winter day or during heavy rain.

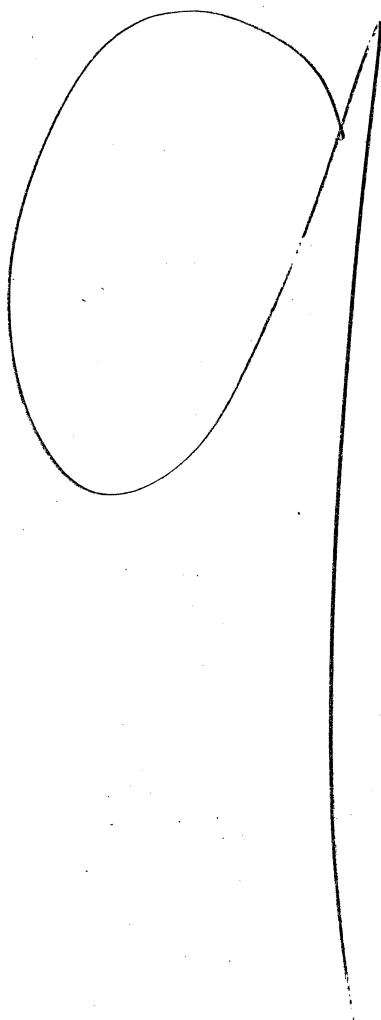
Q. WHAT WILL THE CONNECTOR LOOK LIKE?

A. Architect James Stirling, in designing the proposed connector, has met with a subcommittee of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association. Several major changes proposed by that group have been incorporated into the current design. (For an illustration, see photograph of model on front page.)

Rather than a strictly utilitarian bridge such as those built over highways and at airport terminals, Stirling has proposed a structure that will serve as an architectural accent for the area where the neighborhood and University meet. Measuring about 18 feet wide, 20 feet high, and 150 feet long, the bridge will house galleries as well as a public lounge by the large windows. On the outside of the connector, wide bands of stucco will be colored buff and red to harmonize with the colors of the Fogg and Sackler Museums.

Q. HOW WOULD THE CONNECTOR AFFECT THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY?

A. University officials have discussed the connector with the City Manager and the heads of various city departments. From these discussions, it has been learned that the project poses no





**FOGG ART MUSEUM
BROADWAY STREET VIEW**

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Carol R. Johnson and Associates
Landscape Architects / Site Planners
15 Mount Auburn St. Cambridge, Mass. 02138 9th January 1984

Connector and street planting looking south along Broadway.

technical difficulties from the standpoint of public safety or city regulations. The connector will cast an afternoon shadow on the two lower stories of the neighboring Lowell Manor apartment building from four o'clock onward in the spring and autumn; otherwise, the shadow effects will be confined to streets, sidewalks, and museum grounds.

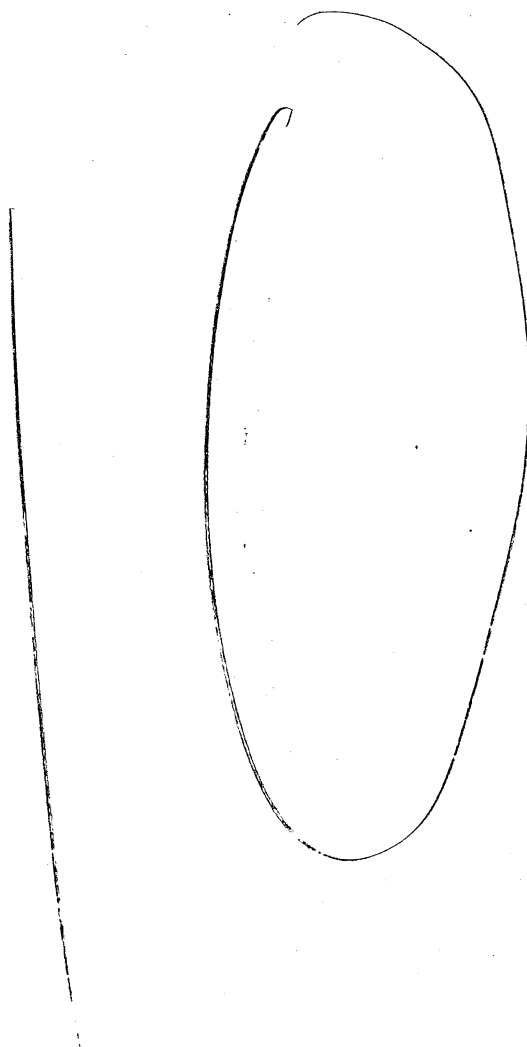
Neighborhood representatives have expressed concern that the large scale of the bridge would have a negative impact on its surroundings. To help address this concern, the University retained the Cambridge landscape architect, Carol Johnson, to prepare a landscaping plan. Johnson's designs call for a large, bricked plaza on the Fogg side of Broadway, shaded with three rows of trees and provided with seating areas and a place for a work of sculpture. Her plan also proposes that a line of the same trees be planted along the front of the Fogg and along the back side of the fire station, thus adding a park-like atmosphere to a busy intersection. In addition, trees would be planted down both sides of Broadway to the high school.

Q. WILL THE BRIDGE CREATE SAFETY PROBLEMS FOR DRIVERS OR PEDESTRIANS?

A. By removing at least 1,000 pedestrian crossings per day, the connector will reduce the level of risk and congestion at a very busy intersection. The connector would be very high above the ground and thus would not impair motorists' vision or distract them. The landscaping plan takes into account the need for improvements in street lighting, traffic signal location, and safe street-crossing paths for pedestrians. All such changes must be approved by city authorities, and the University is in the process of employing a traffic safety consultant to assist in this part of the plan.

Q. WILL THE FOGG MUSEUM PAY FOR AIR RIGHTS?

A. The Museum will pay an annual fee of approximately \$16,000 to the City of Cambridge for the right to build over Broadway.



Q. WILL THIS BE A PRECEDENT FOR MORE BRIDGES OVER CAMBRIDGE STREETS?

A. A number of bridges already cross over Cambridge thoroughfares, and permission was recently granted to the Draper Laboratories to build a connector over Broadway. However, each new request of this kind to the City Council is considered on its own merits, regardless of past precedent. The circumstances that prompt the Fogg to seek to build a bridge are quite unusual, and the University is not considering further requests to construct bridges.

Q. HOW WOULD THE PUBLIC BENEFIT FROM THE CONNECTOR?

A. The Fogg Museum will become a much more effective public institution. It has long been an important resource for the citizens of Cambridge even as it has served the educational needs of the University. For more than half a century, Cambridge people interested in the visual arts have taken advantage of its excellent permanent collections, special exhibitions, public lectures, and seminars.

Approximately thirty percent of the general public who visit the art museum are Cambridge citizens; more than 1,000 of them have memberships in the museum. In recent years, the Fogg has offered classes to Cambridge elementary school children, walking tours of local architecture, and Sunday gallery talks. The museum is used by community groups for meetings. It is open free of charge on Saturday mornings. A new docent program, starting this spring, offers guided tours for primary and secondary school groups, clubs, and senior citizens.

The Sackler Museum will greatly increase the Harvard Art Museums' ability to serve the general public. A large gallery on the ground floor will provide a modern, flexible space for special exhibitions. A new lecture hall seating 285 persons will be available for public lectures, films, and meetings. In addition, the new building will offer handsome, spacious galleries for works of art from Greece and Rome, the Ancient Near East, Islam, India, China, and Japan. The connector, by joining the Sackler Museum to the Fogg, will create a far more effective and unified public institution than is possible with two separate buildings.

Q. WHAT IS THE PROCESS BY WHICH THE FOGG MUSEUM WILL SEEK APPROVAL FOR THE CONNECTOR?

A. Only the Cambridge City Council has the legal right to approve or deny the proposal to build a connector; however, for nearly a year, the Museum has carried on extensive discussions with neighborhood groups, and will not submit its request to the City Council before a formal vote is taken by the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association. In this ballot, a two-thirds majority is required for either formal endorsement or rejection by the Association; a vote in between would result in the Association taking no formal stand on the proposal. The University will take careful account of the ballot before submitting its proposal to the City Council.

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For additional information contact the Fogg Museum Director's Office, 495-2378.

21.

S-261

Comm. from John Pitkin, Mid-Cambridg Neighborhood Association Re: transmitting information on & neighborhood views of the proposed bridge over Broadway that would connect the Fogg Museum to the new Sackler Museum.

In City Council,

April 23, 1984

4/23/84

Placed on File