



498-9034

#17

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
City Hall Annex - Inman & Broadway - Cambridge, Mass. 02139

January 7, 1985

Mr. Drew Leff
Forest City Rental Properties
314 Dartmouth Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Dear Mr. Leff:

Thank you for presenting information at the recent community meetings regarding the future of the Massachusetts Avenue/Sidney Street area. Even though there is no formalized review process at this time, I think it is very helpful to have this kind of discussion. I hope Forest City will give its attention to the many points raised, and consider modifying its plans to more closely meet community objectives.

You stated that the City's Cambridgeport Revitalization Plan has been useful in your work. Although your proposal does respond in some ways to the suggestions in our urban design plan, there are several important differences. At the broadest level, the total amount of development is significantly greater, which raises issues of traffic generation, as well as bulk, height, and other physical impacts. A broader mix of uses is one way to improve the impact of your development. In particular, the 50 to 100 units of housing proposed is not a sufficiently important residential component for the long-range plan. While we applaud your interest to build some housing early, the "Phase I" housing shown along Brookline Street appears very tentative; in later phases of development, the edge looks even less successfully integrated with the rest of the area. We encourage you to consider as much as doubling the number of housing units and including provisions for low and moderate income households.

As in the City's plan the street pattern you propose builds on the existing system, which is a very logical starting point. The "Gateway" and street tree pattern is also similar to ours. However it is rather disconcerting to view the intensity of the proposed development without transportation improvements external to the immediate development area.

Another major difference with the City's plan for the area is the proposed system for open space. Your open space plan is less generous and appeals to offer little to the neighborhood. Our analysis of recreational needs and opportunities suggested a large area with active recreational potential. Comments at the recent meetings reasserted this community desire. Although such a component may not be demanded by the market you seek to serve, we are anxious to find ways that large scale development plans can incorporate elements of more than incidental benefit to the residential community.

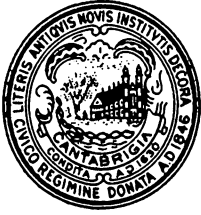
I offer these preliminary observations hoping that they will be of use to you as you consider modifications to your plans. We will continue to review your plan with the intent of finding specific suggestions for changes and helping you understand the ideas behind our planning and design effort.

We would like to arrange a follow up meeting in early February to continue the public discussions we've now begun. I am distributing this letter to everyone who attended the various meetings to facilitate communication among the many participants. Again, thank you for your openness and willingness to meet with the community.

Very truly yours,

Kathy A. Spiegelman
Assistant City Manager
for Community Development

cc: The City Council
The Planning Board
Those in attendance at meetings in December



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

January 14, 1985

To the Honorable, the City Council:

With respect to Awaiting Report Item No. 17 relative to the development of the Simplex Development Area, enclosed please find copy of a communication from Kathy Spiegelman, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, to Mr. Drew Leff of Forest City Rental Properties.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

5-51

Re: response to Awaiting Report Item No. 17
regarding the development of the Simplex
Development Area.

In City Council,

January 14, 1985

1/14/85

Placed

on

File-