

To The Honorable, the City Councillors
From CNI *Stash Rosenberg*
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The Boston Globe

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Polaroid's underdeveloped proposal

The Polaroid Corp., innovators in instant photography, should not take the same lickety-split approach toward building its world headquarters on Memorial Drive. Cambridgeport neighbors still need answers regarding traffic, soil quality, and other environmental impacts related to the 295,000-square-foot development between River and Pleasant streets.

Polaroid and its development partner, Spaulding & Slye, fit comfortably within the zoning requirements for the six-acre site. The developers aim to restore a historic building at 784 Memorial Drive and build two six-story office buildings and a 577-car garage on other portions of the parcel. Designers of the project were careful not to trigger a review under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act. But they aroused the suspicions of tenacious activists from the Cambridge Neighborhood Initiative.

The statesmanlike solution would be for the developers to submit, voluntarily, to state environmental analysis or a similar process regarding

transportation management. It would be a rare, but not unprecedented, concession. State agencies, in turn, should speed the process to ensure a summer construction schedule provided the site is safe.

The project's key drawback is the potential for severe traffic back-ups on Memorial Drive, especially where it meets Western Avenue and River Street. The garage, according to Stephen Kaiser, the traffic consultant for the neighborhood group, "would release about 250 cars an hour onto Pleasant Street during the afternoon peak hour," most heading westward to the Massachusetts Turnpike.

Neither the developers nor Cambridge officials, who are eager to keep Polaroid in the city, have wrestled sufficiently with the traffic problem. That requires careful planning with Metropolitan District Commission and even Boston city planners, given the potential for bottlenecks across the Charles River. Entrance drives, curb cuts, and timing of traffic signals are all in play.

A greater focus on traffic mitigation will result in a clearer picture of Polaroid's project.

Consent Communication #13 S-159

Communication was received from
Stash Horowitz, transmitting
an article from the Boston Globe
regarding Polaroid's underdeveloped
proposal.

In City Council March 16, 1998

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