

Another Tower

Did you know that a 10-story "elderly" building is being planned for your neighborhood? Yes, Anthony Ferraro, L. H. McIsaac Co., and Hunneman Realty have gotten together and are about to begin construction of another high-rise on Franklin where the old Hertz garage is -- across from Soden St.

Ferraro is the policeman who owns the big apartment building at 10 Soden. Although this "luxury" building is only about 7 years old, is full of roaches and mice, carpets are worn out, and the electrical system is breaking down. Ferraro raises rents in violation of rent control and threatens to bring in his fellow cops when tenants try to organize. It is commonly known by neighbors and cab drivers that Ferraro uses several apartments there to keep prostitutes. He also owns a building at 34 Chatham, a miserable slum where wiring has never been installed, and his "temporary" wiring hangs from walls and ceilings. When tenants there refused to pay illegal increases, Ferraro obtained eviction certificates from Rent Control Administrator Corkery without a hearing, as required by law. He owns the land on which the project will be built.

Hunneman Realty is well known in the area as manager of Harvard Properties. In addition, it owns and manages a lot more Cambridge real estate. When Rent Control was passed Hunneman received a "hardship exemption," a category invented by Acting Administrator Cronin for his friends. Hunneman began as a slumlord in the Roxbury ghetto, where he continues to reap high profits. This background is his qualification for his seat on Radcliffe's Board of Trustees. Hunneman will be managing this new enterprise.

It's true that we need housing. It's also true that the housing crisis hits the elderly especially hard. But that's not why Ferraro and his buddies want to build. They are interested in making money for themselves. And they've found that there are tax give-away schemes that will give them the money they need to build the project. The high rents they plan to charge and tax write-offs will provide for continuing profits.

"So what if they do make a buck for themselves, as long as they build the housing we need?" we may ask ourselves. But that's just the problem: nobody will benefit from the monster Ferraro, Hunneman, and McIsaac have in store for our neighborhood. Very few poor people will be able to afford it, even though the speculators are getting government subsidies for "low and moderate income housing." Look at the rent schedule that has been approved by Mass. Housing Finance Agency:

24 efficiencies (one room) at \$131	} specially subsidized by HUD
37 one bedroom apartments at \$157	
23 efficiencies for \$200	
38 one bedroom apartments at \$270	
1 two bedroom apartment at \$350	

(For 31 of these the tenants will pay only 25% of their income for rent, but the development corporation will lose nothing because it will get a subsidy to make up the difference.)

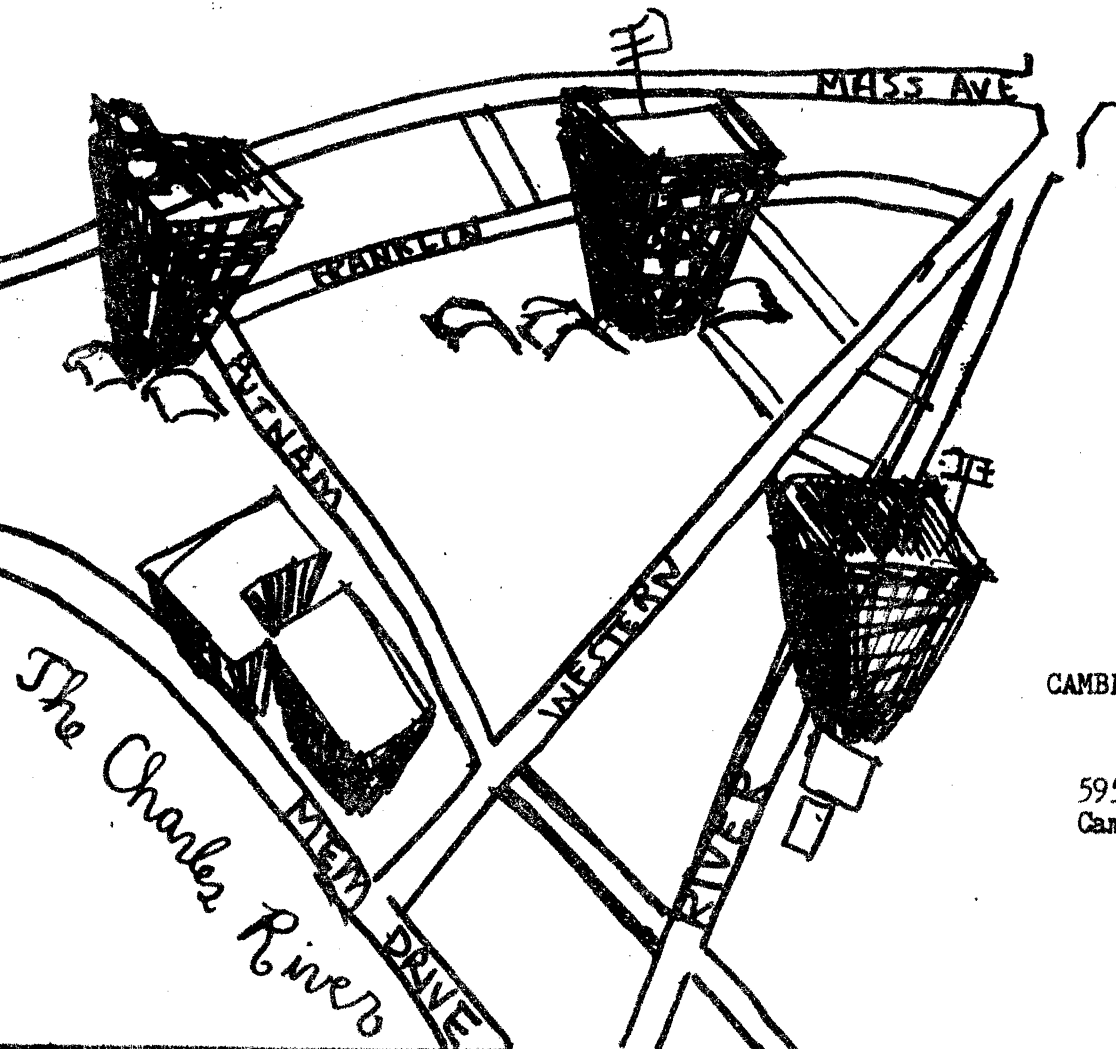
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Just how is anyone going to pay \$270 a month on Social Security! And since Rent Control will not apply, these rents can go up still more, just as they have at Rindge Towers, Mystic Towers, and other FHA projects. Of course, once the building is built, the owners will be under no obligation to rent to poor elderly people if they can't afford those rents. So, in fact, what is being planned is not housing for the elderly at all, but apartments for young, high income professionals who come to Cambridge to work for the universities and their spin-offs.

Even they won't really benefit. The rooms are small. Most of the community space originally planned for the ground floor has been eliminated. There's very little open space, and few parking places. So, for the people who live there, it will be expensive and crowded. Those whose rents are subsidized can expect to be treated like dogs. All the tenants will be subject to continual harassment. That's the way these guys operate.

For those of us who live here in the neighborhood, the building will be a giant eye-sore. It's height will cut off sunlight. It will cause further parking problems. But worst of all, it will be another wedge driven into our neighborhood by the speculators. Buildings like this make this a less desirable place for us to live, so homeowners are more willing to sell out. And at the same time, it becomes more attractive to speculators who know that they can now get zoning variances easily for more high-rises. So rents go up.

Housing must be built for people's needs, not for speculators' profits. The Cambridge Housing Authority has been authorized by HUD to construct real low-rent housing, for families as well as elderly. Sites like this one on Franklin could be used to build the housing so desperately needed by the poor and working people who are being driven out by high rents like those proposed for this new speculative adventure.



RIVERSIDE
"TOWERS"
AREA
1973

CAMBRIDGE TENANTS ORGANIZING
COMMITTEE

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354-2064

DRAFT LETTER FROM CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL TO MASSACHUSETTS HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY

Dear Sirs and Mesdames:

It has recently come to our attention that financial arrangements between your office and 411 Franklin Street Realty Trust are nearing completion for construction of a ten-story tower on the site of the old Hertz garage and parking lot. Although there is a critical need for low-rent housing in the City of Cambridge, we stand in opposition to this project for the following reasons:

- (1) The project has been designed not to meet the housing needs of the people of this city but to yield the greatest possible return from the lowest possible investment by the developers. The rents, ranging from \$131 for one room studies to \$270 for one bedroom apartments and \$350 for a two bedroom apartment, are beyond the means of the elderly for whom the tower is supposedly designed. As a result, the building will necessarily be rented to young, high-income professionals. Furthermore, our greatest need now is not for elderly housing, but for family size apartments.
- (2) This project will be destructive to the neighborhood, which is predominately two and three story, owner occupied housing. Its height will cut off sunlight. It will cause further parking problems, overload utility lines, and vastly increase the density. But worst of all, it will be another wedge driven into the Riverside area by the speculators. Buildings like this make this a less desirable place for families to live, so homeowners will be more willing to sell out to speculators. And it becomes more attractive to the speculators who know that they can get zoning variances easily for more high-rises. So pressure is put on the rent market.
- (3) There has been no community input into the planning. In fact, the planning has taken place very quietly, with community organizations, residents of the neighborhood, and even official City bodies such as the Planning Department and this Council unaware of what was happening until recently. The planning has indeed been so quiet that changes from the specifications in the building permit, such as an increase of 1,500 sq. feet, have been made without informing the appropriate agencies.

For these reasons we request that you reconsider sponsoring the projected development at 377-417 Franklin St.

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