

#23

6 Saint Gerard Terrace
Cambridge, MA 02140
23 April, 1998

City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Council Members:

The recent process to redesign northern Mass Ave displayed Cambridge's elected and appointed officials' stubborn desire to ignore neighborhood concerns and comments when implementing neighborhood development plans. North Cambridge residents, hundreds of whom signed petitions opposing the project, are not ostriches with their heads stuck in the sand, opposing anything new merely because it's different. The most vocal of us are concerned citizens who, unlike the majority of the project's proponents, have a history of working on a variety of North Mass Ave issues. We understand area traffic and development patterns better than the project's advocates who live in West Cambridge, Mid-Cambridge, Somerville and Arlington. We saw, and continue to see, serious safety and quality of life problems with this project. How will the vast development potential of Trolley Square, now facing a possible administrative upzoning that would make it even denser, affect this project? How will the project safely accommodate the dozens of cars that will now turn left across two oncoming lanes of traffic to enter and exit many of the condo complexes, apartment buildings and businesses that line the Avenue? How will the City deal with increased double parking? Will the Mass Ave median strip and parking between Porter Square and Harvard Square be reduced in years to come? We have asked these questions many times and, an equal number of times, we have been ignored.

While one Councilor praised the attendants at a recent meeting for their civility, perhaps that praise was premature. We all recognize that the City is balancing many competing needs and cannot please everyone with this project. We don't expect City officials to agree with us all the time, but we expect full, open and honest answers to our questions. When City officials, from the Council on down, refuse to even acknowledge our concerns, when Council members gather in clumps during the public hearing to gossip about God knows what, when City officials refuse to respond to written and verbal requests for information, then perhaps the time for civility has passed.

If speaking in a calm voice and making reasonable requests gets no response, then concerned citizens have only two choices. The first is to pack their bags and go home, leaving the governing of our City to its elected and appointed officials. The second is to do whatever is necessary to make City officials pay attention, even if that means not being civil.

When many of us choose the latter option and public dialogue becomes increasingly antagonistic, the City administrators and City Councilors will have only themselves to blame.

Sincerely,



Craig A. Kelley

Consent Communication #23

S-298

A communication was received from Craig A. Kelley expressing concern on the process to redesign Northern Massachusetts Avenue.

In City Council April 27, 1998

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