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February 14, 1998
page 1 of 3

To The Honorable, The City Council:

As shown by the annexed *Boston Globe* article dated Sunday, Feb 8, we are continuing to protest Starbucks Coffee Corporation's presence at 655 Massachusetts Avenue, Central Square, Cambridge.

Starbucks is an aggressive and predatory corporation headquartered in Seattle, WA. With a strict policy against franchising stores, Starbucks is the quintessential example of a corporate chain store that takes profits out of the local community.

The presence of this upscale chain store at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Prospect Street (the heart of Central Square) is both a symptom of—and more importantly—a causal agent of the gentrification of Central Square. As I am sure you are aware, this gentrification is tearing the Central Square community apart, displacing both locally-owned businesses and long time residents.

Therefore, I ask the City Council to support the boycott of Starbucks Coffee Corporation at this location.

Thank you,



Jeff Duritz
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20-1

Local Flavor League

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page 2 of 3

They have grounds for discontent

Central Sq. residents want Starbucks out of the area

By Bryan Wagoner
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

CAMBRIDGE - In most parts of the country, people eagerly line up for Starbucks coffee concoctions, but the new location in Central Square seems to be somehow different. For many, the store is a bad omen of things to come.

"Essentially, Starbucks is the perfect symbol of what is going wrong in Central Square," said Jeff Duritz, 27, a Central Square resident. "It symbolizes the process of neighborhood gentrification to a 'T.' The rent goes up and the stores no longer serve a need. Starbucks won't even franchise their stores, so the bulk of the profits go back to Seattle."

Since Starbucks opened Dec. 2 at 655 Massachusetts Ave., protesters, including Duritz, have picketed out front on numerous occasions. They carry signs that say "Save Central Square" and "Starbucks has no local flavor," and they implore potential customers to instead patronize local cafés. They have termed their protest the "Local Flavor League."

Katt Hernandez, another protester, believes the group has been reasonably successful in talking people out of going into Starbucks.

"Some days, we've gotten it completely emptied out for 15 to 20 minutes, even during morning rush hour," said Hernandez, 23, of Somerville.

Duritz said about 25 people have been actively involved in passing out fliers and another 65 have expressed interest in helping out.

Duritz and others say the uniqueness of Central Square lies in its diversity and in the plethora of languages spoken there. They say they lived in or came to Central Square precisely because of its individuality and diversity. They say they value the local coffee shops such as The Phoenix, 1369, and Carberry's.

Stores "like these are endangered species," said Hernandez.

'Essentially, Starbucks is the perfect symbol of what is going wrong in Central Square.'

JEFF DURITZ
Central Square resident

Boston Sunday Globe

FEBRUARY 8, 1998

CITY WEEKLY

Hernandez, Duritz, and others decry development proposals such as the residential and retail complex known as the Holmes Realty Trust project, which is slated for the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Magazine Street.

"A large percentage of Central Square residents are lower-income people and immigrants who will not be able to afford the higher rents which will come" with development, Duritz said. "While City Council says that they are interested in the rebirth of Central Square, which sounds great, in real terms that means that property taxes will rise and the unique mix of residents will no longer be able to afford their own neighborhood."

The changes in Central Square have already seen the closing of several businesses that many felt were

STARBUCKS, Page 8

Residents say no to Starbucks

■ STARBUCKS

Continued from Page 1

neighborhood institutions, including the Emily Rose Shoppe, Golden Donut, and Harvard Do-Nut Shop.

George Madrid, 28, a Somerville resident who works in Central Square said, "I'd hate to see this as an area where residents and small businesses can no longer afford their own neighborhood."

While Starbucks and other newcomers may make the square look nicer, Duritz wonders, "Nicer for whom? Nicer for people who don't live there yet. Where will the people who live there now go? Where can they go?"

With nearby Harvard Square seemingly overrun by chain stores, many residents and merchants in Central Square are eager to retain their neighborhood's character.

20-2

"We feel like Starbucks did not consult the community before opening," said Hernandez. "We want them to leave. If a chain like Starbucks closes, others will think twice before coming here."

Initially, local merchants said that they felt the presence of Starbucks, but most thought interest was waning because Starbucks simply cannot provide the personal touches that a local coffee shop can.

Jason

Drews, a manager of the Phoenix coffee house, said that when Starbucks opened. "At first, in the mornings, we lost a bit of business, but we're fine now. I think it was curiosity, really. Interestingly, our evenings have been a lot busier. The picketers, even though we're not affiliated with them, have brought more business to us."

Drews, a former Starbucks employee, added, "I didn't like the 'stuffed-shirt' atmosphere" of Starbucks. He felt a locally run coffee shop like the Phoenix has much more to offer than any chain could.

"We are the only coffee house in Central Square that allows smoking," said Drews. "We offer a full lunch, and we also offer entertainment with poetry five nights a week."

According to John Berosh, manager of the 1369 coffee house, "Our business hasn't been hurt at all. If anything, it has made our customers more loyal. They realize that their dollar is helping to keep Central afloat, not the corporate headquarters somewhere else."

"I think what makes Central Square unique is that it is Cambridge, but it's pretty down home and integrated. Central Square fulfills the very best that an urban neighborhood can be. I think it's sad that the rents are creeping up and the mall look is coming in."

'We try to make each site fit the neighborhood. It is designed to be a neighborhood place as well as a place to get great coffee.'

James Williamson, a 27-year resident of Central Square, commented, "I don't know why people wouldn't walk one block when they could go to a place with better coffee where there are people with connections and roots in the community."

Starbucks officials feel they have been singled out in this protest. Pamela Miller, manager of the Central Square store, believes her chain has been unfairly targeted.

"We're the wrong company to target," she said. Starbucks is by no means the first coffee shop chain in the square; as she pointed out, Central Square already had an Au Bon Pain, Dunkin' Donuts and 10,000 Villages before Starbucks arrived.

Miller believes the protesting is largely due to the proposed apartment and retail complex across the street from Starbucks, which, if it comes about, will force more than a dozen businesses to close, at least for a time.

"In the beginning, several of the protesters were violent and verbally abusive to some of the employees," said Miller. "Several female employees felt the need to have friends escort them from work."

Late last month, five Cambridge police officers responded to the manager's complaint of a "suspicious person," according to Frank Pasquarello, Cambridge Police Public Information Officer. "The manager called regarding a protester who came in the store," he said. Pasquarello said protesters have a right to be there as long as they are not blocking the entrance or causing a disturbance.

"I sought out Starbucks" as an employer, Miller said. "I wanted to choose a company that I believed in. Starbucks is environmentally proactive; we recycle everything and you will never see Styrofoam in our stores. It

also provides great benefits and is a great place for women. I was looking for someone who gave back to the community and I found that at Starbucks."

Starbucks officials maintain they are committed to the neighborhood. They buy some of their pastries from Carberry's, a nearby coffee shop and bakery. Miller also said all the employees of the Central Square Starbucks are local residents.

A list of charities posted on the door of the Central Square store seems to attest to Starbucks' interest in the community. Corporate policy is to support local charities through each of its branches in the broad areas of literacy, art, AIDS research, and children in need, according to Lynn Schulte, East Coast marketing director for the chain.

Each Starbucks store also supports a charity chosen by the manager. Miller's choice is a church-run homeless shelter in Cambridge, which she preferred not to name. She said Starbucks makes daily donations of coffee and pastries to the shelter and occasional monetary donations to it and other charities.

"We try to make each site fit the neighborhood," said Schulte. "It is designed to be a neighborhood place as well as a place to get great coffee."

Duritz said protesters are committed to sticking with the protest until Starbucks leaves Central Square.

"I honestly believe that we can close that store," he said. "I'm not going to stop until they close."

20-3

Consent Communication #20

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Communication was received from Jeff Duritz, Local Flavor League, asking the City Council to support the boycott of Starbucks Coffee Corporation at 655 Massachusetts Avenue, Central Square.

In City Council February 23, 1998

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