

14 July 1994

The Honorable Kenneth Reeves
Mayor, City of Cambridge
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Mr. Robert Healy, City Manager
City of Cambridge
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mayor Reeves and City Manager Healy:

We the undersigned residents of Cambridge write in regard to a problem of great neighborhood concern, the proposal by the Traffic Department to improve safety and traffic flow in Arsenal Square (the intersection of Concord Avenue, Garden and Follen Streets) by closing off the first block of Concord Avenue ("Little Concord Avenue") and Follen Street from Garden Street, thereby making Follen and Little Concord Avenue a U-structured connecting three-block one-way street.

Although this proposal has been under discussion in the neighborhood for two months, the City failed in a major way to notify residents of the Waterhouse Trust Complex (encompassing over 140 apartments at 1 Waterhouse Street, 19 Garden Street, 3 and 5 Concord Avenue). Instead, primary communication was to Follen Street residents, who have a priority interest in Follen Street enhancement, and through certain of those individually to a few Waterhouse Trust residents.

Despite the lapse in time and the progress made in plans to implement the Arsenal Square proposal, the residents of the Waterhouse Trust Complex must be brought into the discussion and have their concerns heard before any action of closure. We the undersigned residents and representatives of the Waterhouse Trust Complex do have objections to the proposal of closure, and we write to make our objections known, as follows:

- 1/ The City did not properly and officially notify all residents of the proposal of Arsenal Square closure and provide an opportunity for residents to participate in discussion about it.
- 2/ We believe that the Traffic Department in its proposal for Arsenal Square is undertaking to solve one neighborhood problem of safety and traffic flow by creating others, potentially serious, which are improperly and inadequately addressed.

We believe, first, that the U-structured street, with all traffic exiting at Follen-Waterhouse, will create another serious hazard at that intersection with traffic entering Waterhouse from Little Massachusetts Avenue.

And we believe, second, that the closure of Little Concord Avenue to through traffic, primarily from east and north Cambridge to west and south Cambridge, will create a serious backup problem of that traffic at the Waterhouse-Garden Street intersection, particularly at peak periods. We believe the planned signal at the Arsenal Square intersection will not be sufficient to relieve backup and safety concerns at the Garden-Waterhouse intersection, resulting in increased traffic and pedestrian hazards at an already hazardous intersection.

- 3/ We believe that the U-structured, one-way Little Concord Avenue/Follen Street will create serious blockage problems (no matter what traffic direction) from garbage trucks, recycling trucks, oil deliveries, moving vans, U-hauls, snow plows, taxis and other vehicular blockage. Mr. Preston of the Traffic Department thinks this will be minimal, but even some Follen Street residents are deeply concerned. In a discussion on July 12 Mrs. Detlev Vagts, 29 Follen, complained of snow removal blockage and said, "We are blocked all the time" by oil delivery trucks (at the rear of 1572 Massachusetts Avenue).

Ms. Eleanor Williams, 33 Follen Street, in the same discussion, said: "There is blockage every day at 50 Follen Street. It is a distinct danger and persistent. No ambulance could possibly get through. There are 90 apartments in that building, and there are always moving vans, always U-hauls. It is a problem now for every resident of Follen Street. That's why I have a phone in my car, to call the police. You ask the kids to move, and they just give you the finger."

- 4/ We are greatly concerned about possible loss of parking spaces in the neighborhood as a consequence of attempts to solve such problems.

We repeat, to us as residents of this neighborhood these problems have not been addressed to the satisfaction of the Waterhouse Trust Complex (140-plus apartments). We believe that the only way that the analysis and opinions of the Traffic Department can be evaluated is by a trial period in advance of any finalization of plan. The proposal of Arsenal Square closure should be confirmed as workable before put in place. For a trial period to be effective, it should

- 1/ be given appropriate temporary signals in Arsenal Square as well as barriers;
- 2/ be in September (not in August) when street traffic will be at its fall and winter maximum and the Longy School of Music will be in session;
- 3/ be at least one month in duration;
- 4/ be properly and fully publicized to all area residents;
- 5/ provide opportunity for the residents of the Waterhouse Trust Complex to participate in evaluation of the trial.

We respectfully request that the Traffic Department be instructed to arrange the month-long trial in September to ascertain the essential facts to assess the proposal of Arsenal Square closure.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues and of our request.

MATHER COURT TENANTS ASSOCIATION

Vera Bissell
Vera Bissell, 1 Waterhouse Street

WATERHOUSE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Roberta C. Cummie
Roberta Cummie, 3 Concord Avenue
Elizabeth Smith
Elizabeth Smith, 3 Concord Avenue

Respectfully yours,

Carolyn Piszczak
Carolyn Piszczak, 19 Garden Street
Karen Dorn
Karen Dorn, 19 Garden Street
William R. Crout
William R. Crout, 5 Concord Avenue
John O'Reilly
John O'Reilly, 5 Concord Avenue

cc: Members of the City Council (Nine)
Mr. Lauren Preston, Traffic Department

/wrc

S-354

Consent Communiatiom #17

A communication was received from Water House Trust Complex addressed to Mayor Reeves and Robert Healy regarding Arsenal Square (Concord Follen and Garden) traffic and safety issues.

In City Council August 1, , 1994

8/1/94 Placed in file