



AGASSIZ NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

Agassiz Community School
Agassiz Community Center

20 Sacramento Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-349-6287

12 June 1992

Re: Garfield Street MBTA site

City Manager Robert Healy
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mr. Healy:

At its June 11 meeting, the Agassiz Neighborhood Council resolved to communicate to you the following about its attitude toward the present and future use of the MBTA-owned site at the corner of Garfield St. and Massachusetts Avenue.

1. **Short-term monetary gain = bad PR.** We support Plantworks' owner Nancy Anderson's objection to MBTA rental of the Garfield St. site to one-shot vendors of holiday trees, plants and flowers. Ms. Anderson's business suffered untoward competition on Mothers' Day. Last December, the MBTA rented the site to a tree vendor who directly competed with the Agassiz Community Children's School annual Christmas tree sale only 3 blocks up Mass. Ave. Both of these neighborhood institutions -- one a valued business and one a pre-school founded (although no longer sponsored) by the Agassiz Neighborhood Council -- are dependent on income from major holiday sales. The MBTA's sporadic search for short-term financial gain from the Garfield site has a negative effect on our neighborhood. It is extremely short-sighted community relations policy on the MBTA's part. It reneges on the 15-year-old MBTA assurances that its goal was the least neighborhood disruption possible.

2. **Permanent Use of the site.** The Agassiz neighborhood supports the City's effort to secure the Garfield Street T site for a use that will have a benevolent effect on the City and on the Agassiz neighborhood. If it is not to be a school site, we hope it will be used for housing, a park, or community gardens. In any case, we seek your reassurance that this neighborhood will have a say in the eventual disposition and design of this site and that the MBTA understands that.

3. **Temporary Use of the site.** The Agassiz neighborhood would like to suggest that, if Garfield St. is not needed for a new school, the site be developed *temporarily* as a community garden or a park until a permanent use for the site is found. We are particularly mindful of the need for community gardens, but should that use be ill advised, the Garfield St. site -- with the addition of a few benches, young trees and shrubs, chess tables -- could be an appealing place for older people to sit and watch the world go by.

We will appreciate whatever you can do to convince the T to refrain from renting the site to vendors, to keep the Agassiz Neighborhood Council informed of the T's plans, and to encourage the T to permit some worthy temporary use for this site.

Sincerely,

Asrid Dodds

for The Agassiz Neighborhood Council

cc: Members of the Cambridge City Council; Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi; CDD Transportation Specialist Richard Easler; Liz Epstein, Conservation Commission; Community Gardens Coordinator Kirsten Gay; Nancy Anderson, Plantworks, Inc.; Henrietta Davis, Administrator, Agassiz Community Children's School; Cynthia Snell, ANC Bd. of Directors.

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