

Taylor, Bernice

From: Frank Paolitto <frankpaolitto@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, April 26, 2023 5:15 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk; Diana Paolitto; Suzanne@ccccoalition.org; amanda.paolitto@gmail.com
Subject: Proposed changes in housing policies

Dear City Council,

I am greatly concerned about the changes in housing policy that would facilitate the development of high rise housing in Harvard Square and other Cambridge communities. I am not systematically opposed to whatever changes might improve the quality of life in Cambridge for the majority of its residents. However, I have not seen any convincing arguments about how the proposed changes would in fact do that. I am skeptical both of the content of these proposals, and the process involved in their being put forth. I have not seen much positive encouragement or respect for the ideas of the ordinary citizens of Cambridge, but quite the reverse i.e., a sense of unpopular ideas being pushed forward by special interests against the general negative reactions of community voices. A project with such potentially enormous impact on Cambridge and its residents would suggest as thoughtful a process as possible, with as much citizen input as possible. Progressive modern city planning addresses the potential of a rich impact on such issues as health, community development, loneliness, income inequality, climate change and a host of issues that bear on the quality of life in affected communities. I may have missed something along the way in the presentation of these proposed changes, but they do not seem to richly engage with these issues. If these issues have not been considered, why not? Building consensus with the people that will be affected would seem to be the indispensable responsibility of any city planning. Where is the coalition of citizens, civic organizations, and other interested parties in working on a design beneficial to all? Where are the arguments or guarantees that the proposed high rise proposals will actually benefit the majority of ordinary Cambridge residents, and increase their quality of life, as opposed to increase the profits of development special interests? I could not find any specific language in the proposals that would suggest guarantees that the primary beneficiaries of these changes would be the majority of Cambridge residents. As a single issue, not necessarily the most important but certainly substantial, the impact on traffic boggles the mind. Cambridge traffic is already approaching nightmare status. What would a tsunami of increased traffic, obviously a likely effect of the proposed changes, do to the quality of life? I certainly would support the amendment of Charles Sullivan, before going forward with any more radical proposal.

I have been a resident of Cambridge for over 40 years, and have a deep attachment to its welfare. I hope these comments are seen as an expression of my deep concern for its continuing to thrive in a way that benefits all its citizens.

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