

February 20, 2014

To the Cambridge Planning Board and the City Council

Re: Special Permit #288 for the Sullivan Courthouse

Dear Members of the Planning Board:

We are writing to ask that you **deny** Special Permit #288 applied for by Leggat McCall.

We live at 100 Spring Street and have been residents here in East Cambridge for 20 years. We are active in the neighborhood and community and are proud parents of a Cambridge public school second grader. We feel very fortunate to live in the wonderful family-friendly neighborhood that is East Cambridge, and the larger community of the City of Cambridge.

We strongly oppose the redevelopment plans of Leggat McCall which would simply repurpose the colossal behemoth which currently stands at 40 Thorndike Street at its current 280' plus height, well beyond the 80' height limit applicable to this area. While the neighborhood had no choice but to bear this nonconforming structure due to its public use, now that it no longer will serve the public, the City should deny any permit application that will perpetuate the original mistake of building a building so out of scale. Not only would granting special permit #288 perpetuate the original mistake that resulted in this nonconforming structure, it will actually aggravate it as the use proposed will have much more of an impact on the neighborhood than a 20+ story courthouse ever did. With its projected 2,000+ commuters, businesses generating daily truck traffic, and longer daily operating hours in a building of this size and scale, this development will be to the detriment of the public interest as it will cause a substantial change in the established neighborhood character.

We challenge the accuracy of the studies supporting the permit application regarding the impacts on traffic; as it is, Third Street has become a parking lot. Does the study take into consideration the already increased traffic from all the other development in the area? We also note that the application does not provide for any substantial mitigation of the wind problems that are directly related to the height of the building, and the light pollution from a much more heavily used commercial space is a real concern. Granting the special permit application would be at odds with the purpose of the zoning laws.

In sum, we ask the City to enforce responsible city planning and deny special permit #288.

Sincerely,

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