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Cambridge MA 02141

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To the Cambridge Planning Board:

I urge the Planning Board to deny a Special Permit to the current Leggatt-McCall proposal for redevelopment of the Courthouse at 40 Thorndike St.

I have lived for the past 21 years on Fifth St. From that vantage point, even two blocks away, the courthouse is an ever-present behemoth looming over the neighborhood. The current proposal would continue to loom and in several respects would make a bad situation worse.

Among the troubling features of the proposal are:

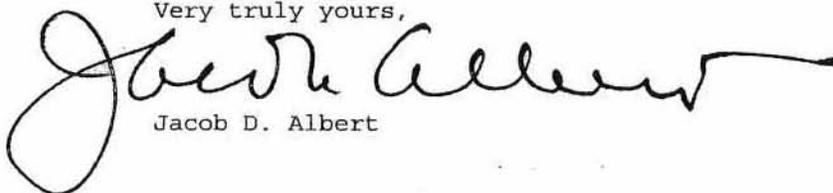
- 1) Retaining the height and bulk of the existing courthouse which drastically exceed the limits set by the city zoning ordinance
- 2) Re-cladding the tower in glass which could at various times reflect blinding beams of sunlight towards or cast a bluish pall over the surroundings
- 3) Opening the skin of the building to greater transmission of artificial light, later into the evening, out into the neighborhood
- 4) Generating more car and truck traffic in already congested streets, (notwithstanding the unconvincing traffic study)
- 5) Providing parking inadequate to the increased demands

On the positive side, the proposal would create a friendlier aspect at the base of the building. I hope any planning for this site would incorporate such thinking.

Even if all the problems noted above were solved through re-design and the good qualities retained or enhanced, the nagging question remains of the appropriateness and wisdom of turning over to a private developer land that had been permanently designated for public use.

Once again it seems that a project is being rammed through without enough regard for the public good. This project affects not only the immediate abutters but also the whole East Cambridge neighborhood, and in fact, all the residents of Middlesex County. It deserves more public involvement and discussion before approvals are granted.

Very truly yours,



Jacob D. Albert