

To: Gary Dmytryk
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Gary,

Maybe I have been missing something for months, but here we have a statement from ACN which is crystal clear, obvious and penetrating to the core of the issue :

“The East Cambridge Courthouse is hands-down the most intensely disliked building in the city of Cambridge.”

Either the citizens of Cambridge are provincials consumed by opposition to progress, or the valid will of the people is being ignored by blind state bureaucrats and greedy developers.

Now that we have a new neighborhood association in East Cambridge, with all the advantages of vigor and independence, we should respond enthusiastically to issue our own Declaration of Independence from the bureaucrats, architects, and narrow-minded developers.

Going back to our revolutionary roots, we should link up state bureaucrats with King George III, and present a list of the sins committed by the creation and the continued existence of the Courthouse structure.

1. The Court house is completely non-conforming in terms of zoning and its relationship to the surrounding neighborhoods.
2. Conversion of the structure primarily to office space adds a severe traffic and parking dimension to the impacts on the residential community of East Cambridge.
3. As the most-hated building in Cambridge, state officials and developers have failed to perform their obligations to achieve a humane status for the city, and to rid the city of past architectural mistakes which never should have been made in the first place.
4. The Big Dig project was an admission that construction of the elevated Central Artery through downtown Boston (also known as the Green Monster) was an ugly, dirty, noisy mistake that needed to be removed after almost half a century. We have taken down the elevated ugliness and built a stunning Zakim Bridge. The damaged corridor from the road through downtown Boston remains a physical wound in the urban fabric, and total healing will take years. .
5. Cambridge and state officials should make the same judgement as the Big Dig, that after a half century it is time to get rid of the monster, to admit the error of the past, to recognize that “fixing up” or “repairing” the problem is not the answer. A more dramatic and honest statement must be made.
6. Not for another fifty years will there be another opportunity like today to correct for much severe architectural damage as has been caused by the former Court House. If we do not act decisively, generations of future cambridge citizens will wonder why we failed to protest and take appropriate action.
7. For much of the 50 years I have lived in Cambridge, I have heard old-timers grumble how amazing it was that no one went to jail for the sins of the original Court House construction. The scale of the

building and the manner of its construction were so stunning in a negative way that even the notorious corruption associated with old County government did not generate corrective action from enforcement agencies. Everybody got away with it -- the old Court House crowd, the architects, the planners, the Planning Board. At the time, the City was also threatened by other issues, such as an eight-lane highway called the Inner Belt and large areas of "slum clearance" under the banner of urban renewal, in all the easterly communities of Cambridge. Citizens had reason at the time to feel helpless.

8. The amazing history is that the City did rise up and protest and win two of these battles. Joint citizen and local government action stopped the Inner Belt highway and most forms of urban renewal in the 1960s. The only battle that was openly lost was the Court House. It is time to win that battle too.

Stephen Kaiser