

## **MENU of TALKING POINTS for City Council meeting, April 7, 2014**

**A New Opportunity:** We have arrived at a special moment in the history of our city. We have elected a new City Council, a new city manager has been hired, and the city is facing major changes. The time is right to pause and take stock of the path we are on. We support the Carlone-Mazen-Simmons order because it asks our City Councilors, as our elected officials, to take an active role in launching a democratic and inclusive assessment of the future of our city. It calls for the City Councilors to set the broad policy context within which the Master Plan can be developed with full participation from the neighborhoods and residents that live here.

**A Master Plan** is required by state law: According to MGL Ch. 41 Sec 81D, it must include nine elements: goals and policies, land use, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, traffic and transportation, and implementation schedules. The components of a Cambridge Master Plan that do exist are partial and outdated.

**Proceed Intelligently:** Cambridge is the 5<sup>th</sup> densest city with a population over 100,000 in the country. We have had millions of square feet of new development over the past 10 years. We are facing some 22 million possible additional square feet of commercial and residential development from the period between 2010 and 2030 or so. Yet most of these proposals for development have proceeded piecemeal, without a comprehensive Master Plan showing the impact of each on the overall economy, infrastructure, traffic patterns, and quality of life in our city. The city's major entry and exit roadways such as Route 2, the BU Bridge, and Prospect Street are already heavily congested. The Red Line offers valuable opportunities for transit oriented development but will require major new investment from the Commonwealth to handle the large increases in ridership

**Affordable Housing:** Many thousands of longtime Cambridge families have been priced out of the city since rent control ended in 1994. A Master Plan needs to squarely address the displacement and gentrification that have already taken place and is likely to heat up under the current wave of development. Plans for many thousands of new residential units are underway in different parts of the city, but 88% of these are for market-rate and luxury housing. Only a small number of affordable units will result from these proposals, as required by the inclusionary zoning ordinance. This massive construction of market rate units has ***a ripple effect on the surrounding neighborhoods, pushing up rents and housing prices*** and continuing to drive out low- and middle-income residents.

A Master Plan could call for the required inclusion of affordable units to be raised from 11.5% to *at least* 25% (a recent MAPC report for Somerville recommended 35% to avoid displacement); it could combine city-owned land and creative funding mechanisms to build 100% affordable housing on some lots; it could call on MIT to build dedicated housing, on land it already owns, for the majority of its 5000 graduate students and post-doctoral fellows who do not currently live on campus.

**Sustainability:** Cambridge should be a leader in the fight against climate change. All policies developed as part of a Master Plan should emphasize the many different aspects of a sustainable city. Since buildings account for 80% of the carbon emissions of the city, only the tightest emissions standards for buildings should be followed. We have supported Net Zero emissions for large developments and will continue to do so.

**Flawed Planning to Date:** Some areas of the city seem to have been developed with almost no planning. Others, such as Kendall and Central Squares, have had deeply flawed planning processes that were not truly democratic or inclusive, and did not take into account the informed views and needs of neighborhood organizations and residents. Advisory committees were dominated by development forces that had a direct economic stake in the outcome, with a few additional individuals hand-picked by the city manager and the Community Development Department (CDD).

**Thanks to** Councilors Dennis Carlone, Nadeem Mazen, and Denise Simmons for bringing forth this policy order calling for a Master Plan process in this city. It has kicked into gear a significant new process. Many neighborhood groups and individuals have been calling for a pause in major up-zoning proposals until we were able to have an inclusive citywide discussion about the pace, scope and nature of development in this city.

**By the Cambridge Residents Alliance**  
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