

A.C.I.D. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

February 2002

The Agassiz Committee on the Impact of Development (A.C.I.D.) is a community-based committee organized by Agassiz residents who are concerned about the myriad of development projects proposed by Harvard University and other entities over the next several years.

The neighborhood is facing 2, 5, 10, 15 years of relentless excavation, construction and vibrations. The natural result of the planned development is a loss of open space, light, greater urban densities, more cars, and more pollution. We are concerned with the complete development cycle: from making it clear that the health and safety of the community must be an integral part of the planning process, to mitigating the impact of construction activities and to ensuring that the final development is consistent with the values of the neighboring community. The goal is to reduce public health hazards and stress on the community and to negotiate development plans that are *beneficial to the neighborhood*.

Working alongside of A.C.I.D., we hope, will be many sub-committees of interested Agassiz residents focusing on specific projects like the demolition of the cyclotron, the construction of the underground garage, campus green-space planning and the identification of development goals that are compatible with the neighborhood. The hope is that by sharing information and brainstorming together as a community, Agassiz can respond to the individual *and* cumulative impact of these projects.

We recommend a new way of working with Harvard and other institutional developers, that lets the community **actively participate in the university's planning and development processes**. This new approach requires a *collaborative, interactive* process by which the Agassiz neighborhood has a direct say in its own destiny.

The Agassiz community faces 15 years of massive development by our institutional neighbor. We have no choice but to be *active partners* in the development process otherwise we will lose control of our neighborhood's future.

A.C.I.D. Committee Members
February, 2002

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Environmental and Health Issues Related to North Campus Development

The proposed development of Harvard's North Campus presents a number of challenges to the community. The development of the area entails the demolition of the cyclotron research facility, the excavation for an underground parking garage and the expansion of Harvard's biological and other laboratories to the edge of the neighborhood. The nature of the site and the proposed development should be treated from a public health perspective as the renovation and expansion of an industrial/laboratory complex rather than the extension of an academic campus. The problems posed by the development plan are on multiple levels:

- 1) public health and environmental issues during the initial demolition and excavation process;
- 2) neighborhood safety and quality of life during the construction phase;
- 3) hazards associated with the intended use of the new development.

Due to the duration of the project and the nature of the intended use of the space, Harvard's plans will dramatically and adversely affect the quality of life of neighborhood residents during the construction period. Depending on the final configuration of North Campus the neighborhood may be permanently altered in ways that are detrimental to the residential environment and that are not consistent with neighborhood values.

Concerns Regarding the Cyclotron Demolition

The decommissioning and demolition of the Harvard cyclotron facility is being planned for the immediate future in order to allow for the construction of an underground parking garage. The safe removal of the cyclotron is a complex procedure that requires great care in its planning and execution. The cyclotron has become significantly radioactive over the period of its operation and secondary contamination of the instrument's protective concrete vault may also have occurred. There is a concern that the requirements of the Harvard construction schedule is accelerating a process that should only be undertaken with due deliberation. The cyclotron is located directly adjacent to a residential neighborhood and any mishap or miscalculation in the removal process would have consequences for the health and safety of the people living in the area.

Cyclotron as a Radiation Source

The cyclotron is a nuclear research facility that uses radioactive materials to generate focused proton beams to study the effects of radiation on materials and devices. The radioisotopes that are used for the beam source are highly radioactive and the beam targets become radioactive in the course of the experiments. Over the fifty years of its operation parts of the cyclotron instrument have become contaminated. Furthermore radiation scattered from the beam's target area has led to an undetermined amount of contamination in the protective concrete vault. The background radiation in the neighborhood generated by the storage of radioisotopes in the building and internal secondary contamination has probably not been measurably elevated by the contamination. However, the demolition process poses containment problems since contaminants that are now well shielded in a monitored environment will be disturbed.

Removal Hazard

The three types of exposures that are of concern are associated with: 1) the removal of the highly radioactive instrument from the protective vault; 2) the transport of inventoried radioactive materials and wastes from the site; 3) the releases of activated concrete dust (specifically Cesium, Europium and Cobalt isotopes) and other un-inventoried forms of contaminated waste in the course of the demolition. The risks and process controls associated with each of these hazards needs to be well documented and be based on data on the levels of contamination. So far the neighborhood has not been given access to detailed plans of the demolition process that address the removal hazard. A developed plan would include: 1) a full site survey of radioactive contaminants; 2) a description of proposed protective protocols; 3) contamination release monitoring plans; 4) remediation plans and estimates of health and environmental impact if accidental releases occur.

Concerns Regarding Parking Garage Excavation

The site of the parking garage is known to contain soil contaminants. The initial measurements reported by Harvard indicate low levels of PCB and heavy metal contaminants. The excavation parking garage will entail the removal of large quantities of material. The major concern is the in the course of removal contaminants will become airborne and represent an inhalation and secondary hazard. The construction process will entail frequent daily trips by large trucks removing the contaminated material and supporting construction activity. Clearly traffic safety, diesel and noise pollution will affect the neighborhood.

Short-Term Recommendations

- Harvard and the neighborhood should coordinate with state and city public health officials to ensure full regulatory oversight and compliance and ensure appropriate surveillance as the project progresses.
- Reports on the contamination, including toxic chemicals and irradiating particles, should be available to the community for review before any mitigation action is taken. The community should have an opportunity to review the quality of the studies and to provide input into further analysis of the site, if needed, to assess fully the nature of the contamination prior to any action being taken.
- The community should have input into the following: any plans for removal of materials from contaminated sites; the current state of the art for mitigating any potential contamination; and methods of mitigation including possible tenting of the site to prevent particles from becoming airborne.
- The community should have input into the plan for truck routes used in the removal of radioactive and contaminated materials from the site, and the methods used by truckers to prevent debris from becoming airborne or being deposited on Cambridge roadways during transport. Trucks removing debris should not be using local streets, but should be sent on major roads.
- The community should have input into compliance/surveillance measures that will be used to insure the implementation of a mitigation plan.

- A compliance/surveillance officer should be on the site at all times. This officer should be accessible to members of community and should address any concerns about the mitigation plan and the health and safety of the removal activities.

Task Force on Traffic and Parking

Agassiz: A Community Under Siege

A.C.I.D. believes the increased traffic, parking, and urban density issues associated with Harvard's proposed development plans for the North Campus pose a significant threat to the health and quality of life of the Agassiz community.

As a densely-populated residential neighborhood, Agassiz has been working for years with the City to attempt to implement traffic calming measures that would lessen the impact of motor vehicle traffic on the neighborhood. Yet we remain a community under siege by motor vehicles. Excessive motor vehicle speeds and volumes, dangers to pedestrians and bicyclists, parking issues, trucks, noise, air pollution, etc. – there is a litany of community concerns, especially considering:

- ❑ the narrow width, density, and heavy pedestrian and bicyclist volumes on Oxford
- ❑ the use of Oxford as a thoroughfare alternative to Mass Ave
- ❑ significant parking constraints inherent in the neighborhood that make it impossible to handle any more incoming cars, find parking at night, etc.
- ❑ the impact of Harvard and Lesley as institutional neighbors in a residential neighborhood
- ❑ the presence of an elementary school and tot lot right in the middle of our neighborhood
- ❑ sewer separation and flood control work on Beacon Street over the next 2-3 years which will increase traffic down Oxford
- ❑ the prospect of 6-8 more years of the sewer separation project in this neighborhood

Our comments here focus *only* on the first project on Harvard's drawing boards: the Oxford Street Underground Garage. This garage represents the tip of the iceberg of what's to come.

Questions for Harvard re Underground Garage

- ❑ Harvard says it is not increasing its pool of parking spaces in Cambridge, but shifting 140 existing spaces within its campus over to the garage. *Where are those additional 140 spaces being shifted from?* Harvard says they are being “relocated from other surface parking lots on Harvard's campus.” Is this from the North Campus or from an entirely different area, which means 140 additional commuters will enter the Agassiz neighborhood who now do not? Please provide detailed site map showing original locations of these 140 spaces.
- ❑ Has the City officially reviewed and/or approved the moving of these 140 spaces to the Oxford Street underground garage?
- ❑ How does the additional traffic implicit in this and other proposed projects square with the official *Oxford Street Traffic Calming Program* approved by the City and sitting in the CDD dept., ready for implementation?
- ❑ Will the extra 140 garage spaces be filled to capacity instantly (consumed by the new Data Center) or are you “over-building” in anticipation of future parking needs?

- ❑ When is Harvard planning to submit its Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Plan to the City? What will we learn about the garage or other future Harvard projects in this Plan?
- ❑ Will Harvard's PTDM Plan be asking for additional parking spaces within the City of Cambridge, and specifically in the Agassiz area?
- ❑ What about the cars in the existing 590 surface spaces – where will they be parked while you build the garage? Our streets currently do not have room for them. And both the Broadway and Everett Street garages are already at maximum capacity. Please clarify.
- ❑ How many trucks – of what size – will be carrying contaminated soil out of the garage site? What regulations govern the transport of hazardous and radioactive substances and who will monitor them? What are the truck routes? How much total emission pollution will be emitted per day?
- ❑ Will Harvard bear the cost of Oxford Street reconstruction if that's what is required to support the continuous construction projected in the years ahead? Massive truck traffic may further damage an already fragile Oxford St. that is not slated to be re-built for 6-7 years as part of the sewer separation project.

Recommendations

- ❑ **Recommendation #1: That Harvard conduct another, more comprehensive Transportation Study to assess the impact of this garage – and other proposed projects – on the Oxford Street Corridor.** This new study should be conducted along the lines of the 1993 study done by VHB for the Memorial Hall project, a study that counts MVs, peds, and bikes to see how usage will increase, the impact of 140 more parking spaces, the impact of other North Campus projects on the horizon, and the widening impact on nearby streets including Beacon Street.

Further, we recommend that the City conduct a thorough Traffic Study as well so the results can be compared.

- ❑ **Recommendation #2: That Harvard provide multiple entrance/exits in and out of the garage.** Oxford cannot handle the increase traffic alone – this burden must be shared by other areas of the neighborhood. Other entrance/exits should be built into the project (1) at Francis Avenue and Bryant Street, and (2) at Divinity Street. A full entrance/exit at Francis and Bryant is mandatory.
- ❑ **Recommendation #3: That construction-related traffic be routed to minimize vehicles on Oxford, including sharing the burden in the area behind the Divinity School.** Two truck routes come immediately to mind:
 1. Trucks must be able to enter and leave via Francis and Bryant (and out to Kirkland and Beacon Streets, etc.)

2. Trucks should *enter* via Everett, and *leave* via Oxford down to Kirkland (this was the agreement used during the Memorial Hall project and for the trucks now delivering food to the freshman dining hall)
- **Recommendation #4: That Harvard aggressively expand its alternate transportation program** to dramatically reduce the potential traffic and parking issues associated with North Campus expansion (this alternative transportation effort is mandated by the City's PTDM program). Real funding from Harvard is required here.
 - **Recommendation #5: That Harvard establish strict fines for non-compliance for its construction and demolition vendors**, and that these fines be sufficiently severe as to motivate compliance (e.g., contractors usually include the cost of fines in their bids and estimates). All fines for non-compliance should be turned over to the Agassiz Neighborhood Council for projects of our choice.

Please Note:

In a February 1, 2002 meeting between Harvard and A.C.I.D., it was agreed that the Agassiz community would have active representation on the new Harvard **Construction Mitigation Committee**. This committee will be responsible for setting and managing demolition and construction schedules, managing vendors and truck companies, and making sure the interests of the Agassiz community are safeguarded through all construction. *The Committee will be involved early and at all meaningful stages of decision-making.* It is our expectation that 2-3 Agassiz residents will be actively involved in this committee at all times.

We believe this Construction Mitigation Committee is an important first step in (1) setting the right parameters for construction up front, (2) actively following-through on compliance during the construction itself, and (3) making changes and adjustments to the mitigation plan as required to safeguard the Agassiz community.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The area at the corner of Hammond and Gorham Streets is one of the few open spaces in the Agassiz neighborhood. As a result it is presently used for neighborhood recreation on weekends: children use it as a safe place to learn to bicycle and roller skate. There are hockey games and volley ball games. Harvard's plan to build an underground parking garage on that site would end all that. In its "Town-Gown Report of 2000-2001," Harvard announced that it would offer "landscape improvements at the Mid-Cambridge neighborhood edge."

Harvard's present survey plan only indicates a unusable marginal set-back along Hammond Street, running from Oxford Street to roughly one-quarter of the way down Hammond Street. In its neighborhood meetings, the Harvard Public Relations Department has mentioned, but not promised to add a house next to the Palfrey House, bringing the landscaped edge down along roughly one-third of Hammond Street. No plans have been made for the remaining two-thirds of Hammond Street, and none at all for Gorham Street. Since the underground garage is to extend to the edge of Harvard's property, the fine row of pines along Gorham Street are doomed, as are the two sycamores at the corner of Hammond and Gorham which were given as a gift to the City. Even if Harvard were to replace the pines and sycamores with a landscaped edge of c. 15-30 feet, none of the Hammond-Gorham area is presently designated as open space. It will be the site of Harvard's proposed Industrial Science Area, with laboratories set on top of the underground garage. Although there will be public paths, there are presently no plans for a public park or any usable public space. (See the University's "North Campus Planning Study: Potential Development Sites," November 15, 2001.)

Recommendation: Representatives of the Agassiz Neighborhood Committee should be actively involved early and at all meaningful stages of decision making for the design of the North Campus Area. Its representatives should work with both the FAS and the University Planning Committees, participating in their initial and on-going discussions with the urban design firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill LLP, as well as with the firms who will be designing the landscape of the area.

THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
and
THE PEABODY MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The Museum of Natural History and the Peabody Museum of Anthropology are part of the cultural treasures and educational vitality of Cambridge. They are integrated with the science and cultural education of every Cambridge school. As part of its plan to develop an Industrial Science Center on the North Campus, Harvard has announced its intention to move these Museums away from Cambridge and across the river to Allston. In deciding to move them, Harvard University would cause irreversible damage to the cultural and civic life of Cambridge.

Some consequences of the decision:

**** The Museums could no longer offer informal scientific and anthropological programs and activities for the families of Cambridge

**** The important role that the Museums play in the science and cultural education of the Cambridge Schools would be threatened

**** The City would lose one of its major attractions to thousands of enthusiastic visitors.

**** Integrated with The Fogg Museum, the Busch-Reisinger and the Sackler Art Galleries, the Semitic and Yenching Museums and Libraries, the Natural History Museum and the Peabody form a rare concentration of mutually enhancing cultural and educational institutions. The intellectual synergy that exists between the study of art, cultural studies and natural history would be lost.

**** Moving the Natural History Museum and the Peabody Museum would deepen the "two culture" divide. It is intellectually and educationally regressive and unsound.

Recommendation: Harvard University should retain and preserve the Natural History Museum and the Peabody Museum in their present location and functions.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS RE: THE BENCE SITE AND EVERETT STREET GARAGE

Bence Site and Everett Street Underground Garage

- 1) What is the University's commitment to current retail space?
- 2) What height is projected and will there be setbacks to the property?
- 3) What is the intended use of the Bence site? Residential or administrative?
- 4) What is the timeline? (When the construction begins is of vital concern to the 4 businesses involved – see below).
- 5) Will underground construction in the garage result in significant vibrations to neighboring structures? How will that be remedied?
- 6) How does the University intend to keep neighbors apprised of developments?
- 7) How many entrances/exits are planned for the new garage?
- 8) Once the underground garage has been constructed, what is the intended use of that parcel of land?

Everett Street Garage as Temporary Facility (during construction of Oxford Street Garage)

Everett Street is a very narrow, congested thoroughfare. What clogs the street even more is the long-standing tradition of “double parking” in order to make deliveries (to Lesley University and Harvard University). There is also the bike path to consider as well as existing traffic patterns.

- 1) If a valet system is adopted while cars are diverted from North Campus parking, how will that impact Everett Street?
- 2) What effect will the “queue” system have on Massachusetts Avenue congestion during peak hours?
- 3) With more traffic on Everett Street, how will that impact noise and pollution?

Recommendations:

- The Bence site be used for administrative rather than residential (dormitory) space given the density of the neighborhood and scarcity of parking.
- The existing businesses (Looks, Three Aces, Central Barber Shop, and Crimson Cleaners) be allowed to move back to the Bence site (rather than North Hall) upon completion of construction.
- The site over the proposed underground garage (corner of Mass Avenue and Everett Street) contain open space as part of the overall design.

PETITION TO SAVE THE MUSEUMS

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Please add your name and address to this petition:

Name	Signature	Address
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