

Porter Square Neighbors Association

P.O. Box 401016 ♦ Porter Square Station ♦ Cambridge, MA 02140 ♦ www.portersquare.net

Cambridge Planning Board
Cambridge Community Development Department
344 Inman Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: PB#241 - Traffic Study, Saint James Church Redevelopment

Sirs:

This letter conveys our concerns about how the traffic impact of the St. James / Oaktree condominium project was measured and evaluated. It supplements but does not replace our primary letter about the special permit application.

We share the legitimate questions that residents have about the credibility of the traffic study:

- Crash data considers only the intersection of Beech Street with Massachusetts Avenue, not with Orchard and with Elm Streets.
- Traffic counts for the project were done on June 9, which is after the college students have left town.
- The adjustment of 4% made to compensate for this uncounted population does not reflect the actual student population.
- The impact assessment appears to ignore deliveries.
- The disproportionate impact of left turns from a single travel lane is not considered.
- The impact assessment ignores other future developments such the large AIB/Lesley project only a few blocks away, the hotel at the Kaya restaurant site, and the proposed hotel on Beacon Street in Somerville at the Cambridge line.

We also object to the fact that both the scope and TPTD's recommendation to use Beech Street rather than Massachusetts Avenue were made without any consultation with neighbors and before even the preliminary draft of the traffic study report was available.

For these reasons, we believe that the traffic study for this project cannot be taken seriously and needs to be done again.

Other neighborhoods have found similar defects in traffic studies. As development continues apace, the preference to measure traffic impact as narrowly as possible willfully ignores the cumulative impact of these defects, which include:

- Lack of community input in setting the scope of the studies.

- Criteria for triggering mitigation requirements which use percentage increase over baseline levels when the baseline is already excessive.
- Failure to consider concurrent projects. All nearby projects, either permitted or under construction, must be included even if they are not located in the city of Cambridge.

We believe that it is past time for the Planning Board (or if necessary, the City Council) to revamp the process by which traffic impact studies are scoped and evaluated, and how their findings are used.

Respectfully yours,

John Howard, President
Susan Hunziker, Vice President
Porter Square Neighbors Association