

Where is the Adaptation Tree Policy in Cambridge?

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It's been quite a shock for some of we West Cambridge neighbors and friends at Fresh Pond and Alewife to have recently discovered a secret and magnificent arboretum at 55 Wheeler St. just behind Trader Joes, planted by former ABT Associates founder, Clark Abt, global leader in environmental research with ABT Associates. Dozens of 60-80 year old rare evergreens, maples, ash, birch, larch trees provide multiple benefits in grand landscaped design with rock water garden, treasures among the 6 acre property. The new owners plan to build record breaking 526 units by Real Estate magnates Redgate and WestBrook Properties. Last January, they received city's special permits from the Planning Board, with attractive public plans to eventually connect the Quad to the Triangle across the RR tracks and to mitigate their impervious large scale residential dense, raised buildings with a half acre public park on the floodplain. The larger open space magnificent tree courtyard area is habitat for famed red tail hawk pair Buzz and Ruby for their 3 nesting seasons on Alewife Brook Parkway observed by many communities who saw the chicks fledge, bonding with daily parental feedings and growth stages. The adjacent courtyard is now rich with diverse bird life, and small animals.

I was directly informed by the Company that an underground garage construction required large scale clear-cutting of these fully grown trees which now bring much climate Adaptation assistance to increased climate change precipitation bringing water via their root systems into our depleted ground water. These trees are the most efficient heat mitigator that money cannot buy. Outstanding habitat and cooling is characteristic of this protected courtyard which could not be artificially replicated for a half century. A children's park with newly planted trees is planned in place of the mature acre 'arboretum' after it has been destroyed. Science shows grown tree trunks collect much greater amounts of carbon than new growth.

Owners do not have their building permit from the city. Neither the Planning Board or the Companies revealed this extraordinary garden to the December 2017 Wheeler St. Hearing last year, which should have been shown under "existing conditions".







. Abt employees have enjoyed nature and remained cooled by this extensive canopy since 1968. Legally, this removal should not be permitted. Most tree conscious cities and towns require permits for this level of cutting. The Companies have promised its plans are based on city's "Envisioning" tentative plans related to climate change vulnerabilities. The Companies have characterized the area as "hardscaped", omitting the grand 'arboretum' in all of its memos and report submissions and many special permits. Over a hundred trees abound on this flood prone area between Triangle and Quadrangle as no where else, except for Blair meadow in Highlands neighborhood. We understand from ABT records that they were denied a permit to expand based on the "floodplain" designation of their Wheeler property, but denial statement has not been located. Most soils' studies from decades indicate "low bearing capacity" with high water table as noted at 95 Fawcett where contamination was found by DEP. Former studies at 55 Wheeler showed unacceptable levels of cadmium and lead which were allowed by Researchers.

Before a building permit is issued, a moratorium should be put into effect immediately until all Redgate and WestBrook Firm efforts are made to preserve the tree canopy at 55 Wheeler.

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