

Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge Ma. 02139

January 28, 2019

Dear Cambridge City Councilors,
Attention: Mayor Marc McGovern,
City Manager, Louis A. DePasquale

RE: 55 Wheeler St.

Knowledgeable professionals are discussing the questionable path chosen by 55 Wheeler St. developers in their December 2017 Design Plans to remove the property Courtyard trees which were missing from the original "Special Permit" requests. The number of actual courtyards is not one but two. According to Dr. Abt, previous owner, engineer and landscape designer who commissioned the existing underground parking garage, it consists of a 4 foot thick foundation and heated ramp. It would be extremely costly and unnecessary to remove it. As an example of the 'missing' courtyard trees, the mature birch grove was planted in 1969 by Dr. Abt and notes that tree caliper is up to 15 inches and very beautiful.

MIT Architect of the main building which stands over the underground foundation was Professor Imre Halasz. Builder, George Macomber, built the underground garage Foundation of the ABT building.

In 1999, Clark Abt applied for a 5 story solar powered building on the north side of the lot, but was denied the project by the Conservation Commission because it was designated as wetland of the watershed, and the Company would have been required to dig up the 3 acre tree lined parking lot and many surrounding trees for regenerated grasslands.

The Thoreau Society Inc. of Concord, 915 Walden Street, directed its attention to the Northwest Cambridge address and selected the building and 2 internal courtyards for 2 esteemed awards. Earlier, In 1979, a Society plaque was given and is available on the walls at the present Abt Associates location at 10 Fawcett .

In conclusion, the new owners failed to preserve large diverse native canopy that existed within the buildings' courtyards, and failed to utilize the existing and operational underground parking foundation for tenant parking and for needed future apartment buildings.

We ask the Council, Planning Board and Conservation Commission to withhold further permits and review the new owners "Special Permit" to protect these highly valued amenities for our city and for adjacent residents and businesses, and for the benefit of future tenants who will live in the 55 Wheeler Street buildings.

All Comments and Questions to Clark are welcome at 617 852-8524

Clark C. Abt, Chairman Emeritus, Founding CEO of Abt Associates
Ellen Mass, President, Friends of Alewife Reservation