

via email to councilor: Council@Cambridgema.gov

Cambridge City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Councilors:

We are writing on behalf of Graffito SP and the Cambridge Innovation Center which comprise the entity currently designated by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, its community advisory committee and the City Manager to develop, activate and program the Foundry Building. The parties are currently negotiating a sub-lease agreement to be able to move forward.

We would like to reiterate our approach and vision for the Foundry and also clarify certain threshold issues (and misunderstandings) about this project, the support received, and our team's specific commitment to Community Benefit uses.

First — and as those of you that have read our RFQ and RFP responses know — the three of the core principles we will embrace in this project are Design Ingenuity, Program Inclusivity and Transactional Flexibility. These principles are introduced in detail in pages 19 and 20 of our RFP response. To summarize, we will focus on designing a state-of-the art, usable, flexible canvass of spaces in varying sizes and configurations throughout the building compatible with sustainable and universal design principals. At the same time we will create an open and lively building at it's northern, southern and eastern edges. We will create a programing paradigm that seeks to educate, host, train, entertain, support and facilitate networks and collaborations between a diverse set of users from across the City with particular focus on humanizing and connecting Kendall Square to the many residents that have little opportunity to access the innovation ecosystem here in Cambridge. Through a flexible transactional system we will lower the barriers of entry to using the Foundry for a range of groups and uses by allowing for hourly, daily, weekly and monthly uses. We aspire to create a building that will continue to evolve and adapt as our community, economy, city and civic needs change. As a reminder, we are still at the very early stages of the Foundry development process. Much work remains to be done before final approvals are obtained and construction can commence.

Second — we have worked hard at this through the RFQ and RFP process and any suggestion that there is not community support for this project is not fair; nor accurate. At our final presentation to the community over the summer in the Council's City Hall Chamber, we spent several hours presenting and answering questions about both our ability to execute and our vision. It was an especially encouraging evening for those in attendance, as support was virtually unanimous. Criticism that has come to light recently at the very end of this long process needs to be considered — and further motivates us to move forward with the level of community engagement we have always anticipated. But, charges that this has not been a transparent or thoughtful process ignores the hard work put in by all the respondents to the RFQ, the RFP, the CRA, the various committees that have worked on this, and those of us in the

community that have been interested in the adaptive reuse of the Foundry since the City took possession of the building in 2012.

Third — specific assertions that the project does not meet the original, minimum requirements for Community Benefits established by the City and detailed at length in the RFP is not accurate. In fact, our proposal more than doubles the minimum requirement. This is done simply by adding up the square feet we are allocating to the maker space in the basement of the building (approximately. 12,000 SF) and those portions of the building we are committing to allocate towards other community benefit uses (be it for neighborhood groups, workforce development, retail experiments, entrepreneurship trainings, art shows, children's programs, etc.), which is another 10,000 square feet. We are happy to walk through the details of our RFP response that demonstrate this commitment. Compliance standards will be established with the CRA in our final lease to ensure adherence to these commitments.

In closing, while we respect and agree with comments that we can continue to improve our plans at the Foundry, our approach is not to start this process over, but to work together to actually achieve the best results. On behalf of a team with members that work and reside in Cambridge, allocating many more millions of dollars to this one building (and even potentially tearing it down) makes little sense. We should strive to create a network of STEAM centers across the city over the next decade. Let's use this current opportunity as a chance to experiment, tweak and leverage future opportunities. We can, together, use the Foundry to explore possibilities, while we provide low cost space for those wanting to experiment. We seek to prove out a model for a maker space in Cambridge in a public building where the rent is \$15 per square feet, a mere fraction of what market rents are in East Cambridge and Kendall. And, if there is a willingness from this Council to allocate more money to STEAM, we support and encourage such efforts. We would be pleased to identify appropriate mechanisms to inject financial support for programs and local partners into the Foundry. But, any new approaches should not be at the cost of throwing away all the hard work our team, the community and the City have put into this RFP process during the last three years.

The Foundry can be a groundbreaking project of national stature with significant community impact. This unique public/private venture has many challenges to address. However, to begin the complex effort to create a project that can be properly designed, financed and built, our team can only succeed, if there is strong support from a unified City government.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jesse Baerkahn
Founder
Grafitto, SP

Brian Dacey
President
Cambridge Innovation Center