WALDEN SQUARE APARTMENTS
21 Walden Square Road · Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140 · TEL (617) 492-3020 · FAX (617) 492-3112 · TTY (800) 439-2370

January 27, 2022

Mayor Siddiqui
City of Cambridge
795 Massachusetts Ave
Cambridge, MA 02139

Vice Mayor Mallon
City of Cambridge
795 Massachusetts Ave
Cambridge, MA 02139

Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust
City of Cambridge
795 Massachusetts Ave
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: Concerns regarding Winn Management property at Walden Square

Dear Mayor Siddiqui and Vice Mayor Mallon:

Please accept this letter as our response to your letter dated January 20, 2022. WinnResidential is committed to providing our residents the highest quality property management services and housing and will take all necessary steps to address each of the items noted. We would like to note that, during the past 22 months of an unprecedented, deadly global pandemic, the health and safety of resident households at Walden Square has been the top priority of our staff. With this focus, there is no doubt that some of our normal maintenance procedures have been occasionally impaired to align with vital public health restrictions.

The following details our responses to each of the issues noted in your letter.

Egregious and unresolved pest infestation issues over several years (Inspectional service Department has documentation of this)

WinnResidential provides extermination services to the residents of Walden Square on a weekly basis for any resident who reports an issue. Our extermination contractor is on site approximately six hours each week performing these services. In addition to the weekly treatments, a comprehensive inspection of all units was performed during the last week of October and first week of November 2021. Any units found to have activity were treated. Units noted requiring additional attention by our exterminators were treated again as recommended. Our practice is to make sure that units with persistent issues continue to be treated until it is determined that no

further action is necessary. To continue combatting the pest issues at the site, we are scheduling another inspection for all units during the first week of February 2022. We will continue to perform quarterly unit clean-outs to ensure all pest issues, reported or observed, are addressed. Please note that many of the reports of pests that you reference may stem not from Management's inactivity or unwillingness, but rather, in documented cases, from tenants who have repeatedly refused access to their unit for treatment, do not prepare properly for such treatments or are in need of personal housekeeping assistance. This is a serious reality that affects neighbors as well as the property itself. Resident attention and cooperation are critical to ensure that pest control services are effective over the long term (see attachment). However, we pledge to renew and step-up our efforts to secure cooperation from such residents, now and in the future, until the concerns expressed in your letter are fully rectified.

In addition to the interior pest control services, WinnResidential has had the exteriors of the buildings and dumpster areas at Walden Square baited for rats. The exterior bait stations are serviced on a bi-weekly basis. In November of 2021, after receiving a report from Inspectional Services relating to trash issues, we increased the number of trash pick-ups from 3 to 4 days a week. The property has historically had a weekend cleaner on Sundays to deal with weekend trash. We added an additional four hours of cleaning service on Saturdays exclusively dedicated to trash pick-up. To best of our knowledge there are no outstanding Cambridge Inspectional Services reports for extermination or any other maintenance related items. We hope this increase to the above industry standard of 4 days a week trash pick up will continue to be successful and result in no further complaints around this issue. We are happy to continue to monitor this issue with your staff as appropriate to make sure its continued success.

Lack of appropriate communication from management to the residents (not accommodating of diverse language needs, posting notices at the last moment, poor attitude of office staff, unresolved work orders)

Management acknowledges that current practice has been to send all notices out in English. Until this time, we have not received any requests to distribute notices in any other language. To address this concern, we will conduct a survey of all Walden Square residents to determine the additional translations residents would like going forward. Upon completion of the survey, all community notices will be in multiple languages whether they are posted or sent directly to residents.

It is WinnResidential's policy to send notices out to residents 24 to 48 hours prior to relevant activity occurring at the property. In some cases, that is not possible, Recently, for example, our sprinkler contractor had to cancel a service at the last minute and reschedule due to a permitting issue. The abrupt change made it impossible to notify residents within our policy timeframe. Other than this one instance, we are not aware of providing less than adequate notice to our residents. We have reiterated to the site team the importance of ensuring proper notice is provided to the residents of Walden Square.

During the past year, we did have an office staff member about whom residents had lodged complaints. That employee left the company on December 30, 2021, after company efforts to address behavior issues. All remaining members of our site team will attend customer service

refresher training course conducted by WinnResidential's Learning and Development Department in the weeks ahead. We take customer service very seriously and pride ourselves on delivering great service.

Over the past 12 months, the Walden Square maintenance team received 1,719 work order requests and completed 1,716 for a 99.8% completion rate (see attachment). As of this date, there are three (3) open Resident Service Orders. Two have been open one day or less. The one work order that has been open for more than a day will be completed when the necessary parts are delivered. The affected resident has been notified of the delay.

It is also important to note that all Walden Square residents receive anonymous satisfaction surveys *on a 3rd party software program*, at least once a year so that they can rate various aspects of the property on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the best possible score. In the most recent surveys conducted during 2021, respondents gave maintenance of the property an average score of 4.67 out of 5. In 2020, the average maintenance score was 4.44 out of 5. In 2019, the average maintenance score was 4.55. Overall, Walden Square residents have scored WinnResidential's management of the property in the mid to high 4s during the past three years

We will be reaching out to all residents to remind them of our Service Orders procedures. In addition, we will conduct a survey of all residents asking them to report to us any unresolved maintenance concerns in their units and in the common areas. Upon completion of the survey, we will address all unresolved items that residents bring forward.

We believe that rectifying the language barrier issue correctly identified by your letter will resolve much of the perceived issues among certain tenants. And we pledge to attack that issue right away so communication is made in native languages.

Environment of intimidation and suggestion that residents leave if they are dissatisfied, which is not a viable option given the lack of affordable housing options in Cambridge

Response – WinnResidential does not condone this type of attitude among our team members. As noted above, team members who consistently fail to meet our standards for customer service are subject to discipline up to and including termination. We believe the upcoming customer service refresher training for all site staff will be valuable in ensuring that our team is working meet or exceed the high standards we set. In addition, as noted above, we believe the rectified communication in native languages will serve to address this miscommunication issue as well.

To better address all the concerns brought forth by residents and outlined in your letter, WinnResidential is committed to funding an additional Resident Services staff person at the site. This staff person would be dedicated to the day to day concerns of the resident population, working directly with residents to listen to and resolve requests or questions and to connect them with appropriate services, as needed.

In addition, it is important to note that the site benefits from the presence of the Walden Square Community Association (WSCA), a resident-led organization with a core mission to represent residents of the property. The WSCA provides programming to the residents, including operating

a computer lab on site and coordinating programs for family households. **WinnResidential will work with the staff and resident board of the WSCA to build their capacity to represent the residents and create an environment of open communication.** WinnResidential will meet at least monthly with the WSCA board to understand any improvements that can be made at the site or with management staff. We acknowledge that some residents may have concerns that they do not feel comfortable bringing directly to the property management company. The WSCA serves as an additional resource for those residents, providing another avenue for issues to be addressed by our team.

WinnResidential has proven itself extremely committed to the residents of Walden Square. Since we acquired the buildings in 2001, we have completed several significant upgrades, including installing new roofs and HVAC systems to rectify issues inherited when the property was purchased. Since 2018, we have implemented a multi-year capital plan where we have spent $3.5 million on improvements to the site, including accessible unit upgrades, new toilets and doors, and common area finish upgrades in the nine-story building.

To ensure we fully understand and are addressing the specific issues of the Walden Square residents, we would like to schedule a meeting as soon as possible with residents who have raised concerns to your office as they chose not to bring their concerns to the established WSCA Tenant Board whom we regularly interact with. It is our goal to meet and exceed the needs of our residents whenever possible. We look forward to working together constructively with residents to listen to, discuss and resolve any concerns they bring forth. We also look forward to creating much needed deed-restricted additional affordable housing units for families at Walden Phase 2 which will address so many of the housing cost issues plaguing Cambridge.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

John Kuppens, Executive Vice President
WinnResidential

Cc:

Chris Cotter
Cassie Arnaud
Gilbert Winn
Lawrence Curtis
Michael O'Brien
Matthew Robayna