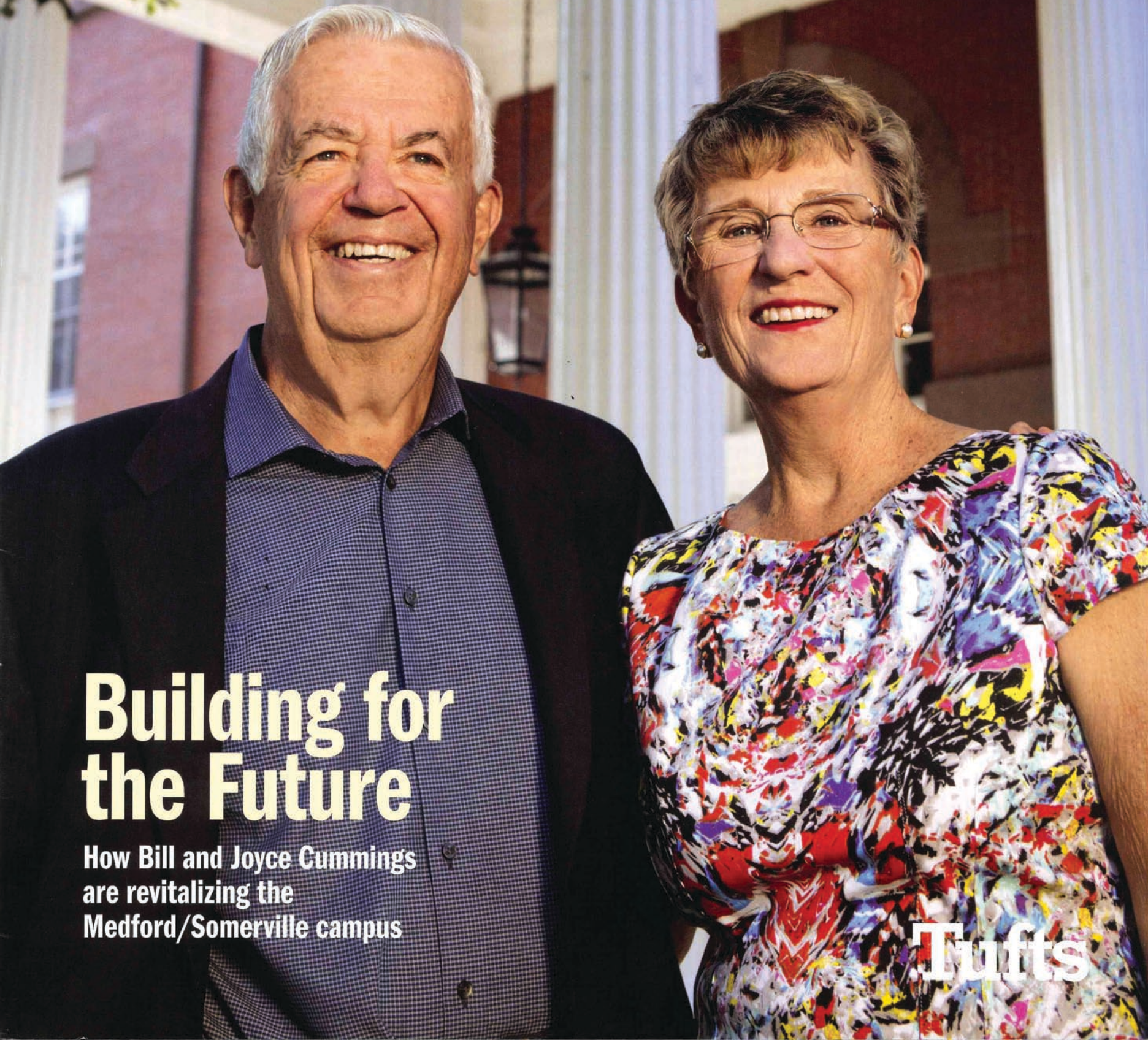


# BLUEPRINT

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FOR TUFTS UNIVERSITY



## Building for the Future

How Bill and Joyce Cummings  
are revitalizing the  
Medford/Somerville campus

**Tufts**

An architectural rendering of the proposed academic building and footbridge



Medford/Somerville

# New Building, Footbridge Planned

Cummings family supports construction over proposed T station **BY LAURA FERGUSON**

**B**ACK IN 1987, Trustee Bill Cummings, a Massachusetts real estate developer, proposed a radical plan to transform the Medford/Somerville campus. If Tufts could secure rights to the airspace above the public transit tracks at the busy intersection of Boston and College Avenues, the university could construct a new building on College Avenue and then build a footbridge that connected it to the Hill.

“From the time I was a student to my many campus visits as an alum, I was constantly aware of the dangerousness of that intersection,” says Cummings, A58, H06, J97P, M97P. “As a new university trustee, I was in a better position to influence and also to financially support a solution.”

He brought schematic plans, drawn up by his senior architect, to then-Tufts president Jean Mayer, who responded enthusiastically. But another senior administrator at the time “was very pessimistic about our ability to acquire the necessary air rights,” Cummings says, and so the plans were shelved.

“I thought the project made a lot of sense for Tufts,” he says. “It was a strategic, creative, well-integrated development plan that would improve student safety and the campus appearance.”

His patience has paid off. Tufts is planning to construct a 100,000-square-foot academic building above the site of a proposed new MBTA College Avenue station, along with a footbridge connecting the facility to the campus—all at the same location Cummings proposed nearly three decades ago.

He and his wife, Joyce Cummings, J97P, M97P, have made the new building possible through generous support from their Cummings Foundation. In addition, a public-private collaboration involving the City of Medford, the MBTA, Tufts, and Cummings Foundation is expected to enhance the MBTA Green Line Extension project with public spaces that the university will maintain around the new transit stop. The planned public transit

## “When we learned that the MBTA was moving forward with the new station, it seemed like a great time to reprise the idea.” —Bill Cummings, trustee emeritus

project would extend the Green Line from its current terminus at the Lechmere Station in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the new station at Tufts.

“When we learned that the MBTA was moving forward with the new station, it seemed like a great time to reprise the idea,” says Cummings, a trustee emeritus and a former member of the medical school’s board of advisors. “It’s certainly satisfying because if it was a good idea then, it’s still a good idea now.”

Preliminary designs for the new academic space include classrooms, meeting and seminar rooms, offices, and conference and teaching spaces. Some facilities will be available for use by the community. There will also be retail space, such as a coffee shop.

Tufts President Anthony P. Monaco says he envisions the new building as a home for “outward-reaching” academic endeavors that will benefit from being near public transportation. He noted that it will foster greater collaboration between faculty and students on the Medford/Somerville campus and those on the health sciences campus in downtown Boston.

“Bill and Joyce Cummings have been wonderful friends to Tufts and to the greater community, and their philanthropy has been vital to many of Tufts’ schools and programs,” Monaco says. “This visionary project will enhance public spaces for community use and also help knit together our campuses.”

### ARDENT PHILANTHROPISTS

The Woburn, Massachusetts-based Cummings Foundation has provided significant support to Tufts in the past. After endowing the Cummings Family Chair in Entrepreneurship and Business Economics, designed to help students develop leadership skills and other talents needed to run a successful business, the foundation committed \$50 million to what is now Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. Through the foundation’s subsidiary, Cummings Institute for World Justice, it has also funded the Cummings/Hillel Program for Holocaust and

Genocide Education, which supports a student volunteer trip to the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village in Rwanda and an annual lecture by a witness of genocide.

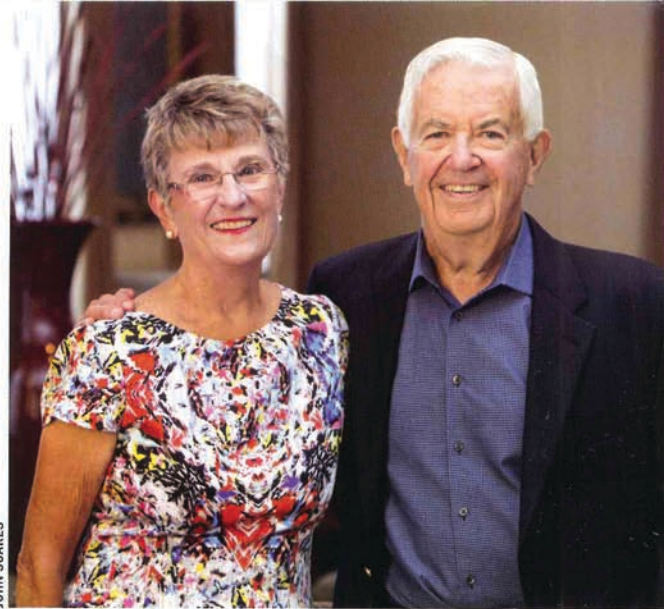
Cummings, a self-made entrepreneur who started out as a sales trainee for Vick Chemical Company, maker of Vicks VapoRub, and then spent three years with Gorton’s of Gloucester, grew up in Medford’s Haines Square. He fondly recalls his Tufts days as a commuter student, walking down College Avenue to class. He majored in business administration through the economics department and remembers eating “an awful lot of cheeseburgers” at the student hangout known as “The Kursaal,” located in the basement of Curtis Hall, just across the street from the future MBTA station.

“Joyce and I have always wanted to do more for Medford and for Tufts,” Cummings says, “and this project is the perfect opportunity. We are thrilled to support a project that better integrates the university with the surrounding neighborhood. The new train station will eventually serve as a stunning, key entryway to the university, and the building will certainly provide Tufts with more visibility.”

Cummings says he is also pleased that the project will fulfill another personal goal: naming a building for his wife. Joyce Cummings is a graduate of the University of Alabama, but she has formed a strong connection to Tufts over the years, he says. It would be difficult not to in a family with three Jumbos—Bill and their two daughters, Marilyn Cummings Morris, M97, and Patricia Cummings, J97.

“Being a modest, down-to-earth person, Joyce was reluctant on previous occasions to be honored in such a public way,” says Cummings. “But we, as a couple, would not be in the position to do the things we are doing now if we had not spent the past 50 years together, with her supporting me so much and for so long in my work.”

After graduating from Alabama in 1962, Joyce Cummings headed north for a dietetic internship at Massachusetts General Hospital. She crossed paths with her future husband at



Bill Cummings, A58, H06, J97P, M97P, is pleased that the new building will be named after his wife, Joyce. They’ve been married nearly 50 years.

Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary. Bill had recently purchased a Medford company that made fruit punch concentrate, and the hospital was a customer.

“Bill tricked me into our first date in April 1965,” recalls Joyce. He invited her to an evening event at the new Prudential Center. “Other women were in ball gowns, and there I was in my hospital whites—I was mortified. But when he dropped me off at home, he asked me to go out again on a real date. I thought, Why not give it another chance with street clothes?”

The couple, who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary next year, are committed philanthropists. “Joyce and I have all that we need and want,” Bill says. “We prefer to funnel our financial resources to philanthropy. How we enrich the lives of others is the real measure of our wealth.”

Cummings Foundation, which they established in 1986, has grown into one of the largest philanthropic organizations in New England. They were the first Massachusetts couple to join The Giving Pledge, founded by Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett to encourage the world’s wealthiest individuals to give away most of their money to charity.

For now, they are eager to see the new academic building and footbridge take shape and await the opening of the new College Avenue station. “I am gratified that our initial idea has not only survived but grown, thanks to a collaboration between private and public institutions,” says Bill Cummings. “Partnerships have always been important to my own success in business; ideas are always made stronger when they are shared.” ■