



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MASSACHUSETTS 02139 • 617-498-9090

Alfred E. Vellucci
Mayor

To the Members of the City Council:

For the past several years, we have heard debate over the relative merits of various zoning proposals in connection with the development of the so-called Simplex properties. A resolution of this matter does not appear possible if we confine ourselves to the limited choices we have been offered.

Consequently, a possible resolution is herein proposed for your consideration which responds to the issue from a broader perspective.

It is suggested that we reject the narrow focus which has been presented to us and instead, shift to a comprehensive total neighborhood context. We should view Simplex development as a part of the overall 261-acre Cambridgeport neighborhood.

It is further suggested that we expand our view from the narrow focus of zoning and shift to an approach which involves the entire Cambridgeport area. For many years, we have neglected this gateway neighborhood which, in spite of insufficient private and public sector attention, has maintained a sense of community and unity. The proposed Simplex development must be viewed in a neighborhood context if this character is to be preserved. It is important to note that one of the primary

reasons that this character has not been destroyed is the initiative of private homeowners and the striking efforts of various neighborhood organizations in housing rehabilitation activities.

This suggested new approach can be best described as a neighborhood improvement plan which addresses residential, industrial, commercial/retail and open space needs as they relate to overall neighborhood.

Forty percent (40%) of the neighborhood is residential. Some pockets of seriously deteriorated housing units require immediate attention, while other homeowners have rehabilitated their homes - or are in the process of doing so. Non-conforming land uses have to be identified and if the community agrees, removed in order to accommodate new housing construction. New housing sites would be defined as a part of a neighborhood improvement plan. Area streets, sidewalks, parks and underground utilities have to be examined and improved, as required.

Twenty-five percent (25%) of the neighborhood is industrial. Some of the industrial area is in a state of serious decline. Existing industry must be revitalized in order to preserve and protect jobs and tax revenue.

Eight percent (8%) of the neighborhood is commercial/retail which also requires some immediate attention if the neighborhood and the City itself hopes to maintain or enhance the economic viability of the area.

Nine percent (9%) of the neighborhood is open space which is significantly below the City average and requires renewal and expansion.

Thirteen percent (13%) of the neighborhood features vacant land with the Simplex properties accounting for a significant portion. Again, the economic viability of the area, including tax and job generation, is dependent upon reasonable development of this site.

A similar approach to the one now proposed has been executed successfully by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority in the Wellington-Harrington area. Our community Development Department has conducted an urban design study which will be released soon and should provide graphic representations of the neighborhood context based on work completed by Department staff over the past three years.

What is being suggested is straight forward. The City of Cambridge, working through an appropriate agency, as selected by the community, has an opportunity to capitalize on a major investment by the private sector in the Simplex development. Reasonable development activity should be encouraged in order to reap the direct benefits as well as -- and this is important-- providing a resource for funds to help finance other neighborhood improvement activities.

Any land takings to accommodate new housing development will be focused on Brookline Street. Since these takings will involve

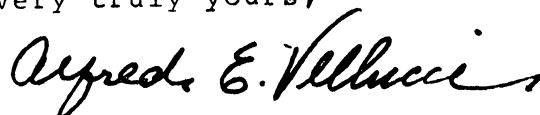
multiple properties having multiple ownerships, the involvement of the agency is required. The agency should be viewed as the City using all the resources available to stimulate and sustain economic growth in Cambridgeport.

The initial steps involve the creation of a neighborhood advisory group to work with the designated agency to prepare a neighborhood improvement plan. Concurrently, we will request the agency to work with the other City departments to identify funding sources and other forms of economic development incentives. It is important that we approach the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to review this plan of action and secure its participation. Finally, we should establish an immediate presence in the Cambridgeport area and allocate some Community Development Block Grant funds for these initial activities.

Using this approach, I believe that we can resolve the present land use controversies, meet the housing needs of Cambridgeport residents, stimulate new economic development, preserve existing jobs and create new employment opportunities and, in the process, stabilize the area.

Your positive consideration of this approach and the attached resolution is urged.

Very truly yours,



Alfred E. Vellucci
Mayor



City of Cambridge

10.

IN CITY COUNCIL

January 24, 1983

MAYOR VELLUCCI

RESOLVED:

That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to instruct the Community Development Department to poll the Cambridgeport Neighborhood so as to see whether or not the attached communication from the Mayor represents a constructive step to take on Simplex and related issues.

In City Council January 24, 1983.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of 8 members.
Attest:- Paul E. Healy, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Paul E. Healy".

Order # 10

F-18

Mayor Vellucci order re: Community Development Dept. to poll the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Re: if attached comm. from the Mayor represents a constructive step to take on Simplex & related matters.

In City Council,

January 24, 1983