



CAMBRIDGE TENANTS UNION

17 October 1990

The Cambridge City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

CAMBRIDGE MA.

1990 OCT 18 AM 8:45

To the Honorable the City Council:

At the City Council meeting of 15 October 1990, Mr. Schlomming of the Small Property Owners Association presented a statistical analysis intended to show that only 30% of tenants living in rent controlled housing "really need it". Mr. Schlomming's analysis was, purportedly, based on data included in the 1987 Abt Associates' Cambridge Housing Study. In fact, Mr. Schlomming's remarks were also highly speculative and relied grossly on ungrounded assumptions that were none too clear. The result was an erratically distorted reading of what the Abt study contains. Mr. Schlomming did arrive at the conclusion he wanted to reach. I doubt that he brought along any but the already converted with him.

For the sake of clarity, I think it might be worthwhile to present the enclosed table to the City Council once again. I compiled this table when the Abt study first appeared in 1987. It relies directly and solely on data contained in the study. It makes no further assumptions and involves no speculation. Page references to the study appear in the left hand column.

What the enclosed table highlights most importantly is that more poor people (39% of poor Cambridge residents as defined by the study) and more minority citizens (36% of Cambridge minority citizens) live in rent controlled housing than in any other type of housing in Cambridge. Further, the table shows that more Cambridge families (28% of Cambridge families) live in rent controlled housing than in subsidized housing. Finally, the table also shows that nearly as many elderly residents (23% of Cambridge elders) live in rent controlled housing as in subsidized housing.

From this I think it is clear that rent control is serving precisely those citizens most sought to be benefitted by the act that established it. I think it is also clear, therefore, that precisely the poor, the elderly, minorities and families would be those most hurt if the SPOA proposal for 50% decontrol of regulated housing --masking as a so-called "means test"--were ever to go into effect.

Finally, I think it is worth noting that when I was interviewed by Channel 5 for its series on rent control, I presented this table and what it shows. No reference to it or what it shows was made during the series.

Respectfully,


Geoffrey Gardner
Steering Committee

Cambridge Housing Study - Summary of Data

The following chart summarizes data from the Cambridge Housing Study for six categories of households --elderly, minorities, families, poor, those above the median income and those earning above \$30,000 per year-- distributed among the four categories of housing the study deals with --rent controlled, subsidized, non-rent controlled and owner occupied. Page numbers indicated for each category refer to source pages in the study. The percentages in parentheses on the third horizontal line for each household category are percentages of that type of household within each category of housing.

Household category	Rent controlled	Subsidized	Non-rent controlled	Owner occupied	Total
Elderly (p. iii)	23%	27%	14%	36%	100%
	1198	1420	709	1860	5187
	(7%)	(26%)	(8%)	(21%)	----
Minorities (p.iii)	36%	30%	20%	14%	100%
	2910	2458	1628	1151	8147
	(17%)	(45%)	(22%)	(13%)	----
Poor - 50% of median income or less (p.19)	39%	36%	15%	10%	100%
	4964	4534	1850	1240	12,588
	(29%)	(83%)	(25%)	(14%)	----
Families (p. 26)	28%	21%	18%	33%	100%
	3134	2342	1959	3631	11,066
	(18.31%)	(42.87%)	(26.47%)	(41%)	----
Above the median income (p.19)	37%	1%	22%	40%	100%
	5135	219	3108	5580	14,042
	(30%)	(4%)	(42%)	(63%)	----
Income above \$30,000 per year (p. 81)	32%	1%	24%	43%	100%
	3423	164	2590	4606	10,783
	(20%)	(3%)	(35%)	(52%)	----

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Comm. from Geoffrey Gardner, Steering Committee,
Cambridge Tenants Union, transmitting a copy of
the Cambridge Housing Study Data.

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In City Council,

October 22, 1990

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