

RECEIVED BY
CITY CLERK

IX. The Russell School Site and Elderly Housing

The Cambridge Housing Authority has been provided funds by the Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to build eighty units of elderly housing in the City. The Authority has for several months been searching for Cambridge sites that could accommodate these eighty units. DCA criteria for site selection are, however, very stringent. No more than two sites can be used; the site must be serviced by nearby transportation and convenience retail areas; and, the site acquisition allowance is approximately \$1500.00 per dwelling unit.

The Authority has contacted local real estate brokers, municipal agencies, Harvard, M.I.T., and numerous private landholders in an attempt to find sites which could satisfy the DCA criteria. The preliminary findings of this search indicate that privately owned properties, including those of the major institutions, are not available within the established guidelines.

There are few vacant sites at all in this relatively dense city. Furthermore, a high demand for housing and a low vacancy rate tends to force land values upwards. The modest amount of DCA funds allowed for site acquisition then presents a major obstacle to acquisition of privately owned land.

There are, however, surplus municipal properties which can meet the criteria. The Russell School site is the most promising for this elderly housing program. It will support fifty-two dwelling units within the scale and character of the neighborhood; it is conveniently located to local bus routes and shopping areas; and, it is available.

Other City owned properties that can support the balance of the eighty unit award include the Putnam and Lowell School sites.

Examples of additional sites which were reviewed by the Authority include those shown in the attached charts.

SITE	Land Area	Zoning	# Units Allowed	Rehabilitation Potential	Ownership	Availability	Relocation	Services	Transportation	COMMENTS
RUSSELL SCHOOL SITE	65,000	res. B	52 d.u.	N.A.	CITY	immediate	N.A.	Good	Exc.	44 d.u. proposed 20,851 s.f. addition for neighborhood park
PUTNAM SCHOOL	14,400	C-1	24 d.u.	29 d.u.	CITY	immediate	N.A.	Good	Exc.	Parking & unit count variance required
LOWELL SCHOOL SITE	32,856	res. B	26 d.u.	N.A.	CITY	1980	N.A.	Good	Exc.	
244 COLUMBIA ST. & nearby properties	23,066	C-1	38 d.u.	40 d.u.	CRA	1980	by CRA	Good	Exc.	Availability pending relocation
LINCOLN SCHOOL	29,405	res. B	23 d.u.	33 d.u.	CITY	?	N.A.	Good	Exc.	Future use uncertain

SITE	Land Area	Zoning	# Units Allowed	Rehabilitation Potential	Ownership	Availability	Relocation	Services	Transportation	COMMENTS
41-47 Cogswell Ave.	45,285	res. B	34 d.u.	N.A.	Private	?	N.A.	Good	Exc.	Owner seeking building permit
2050-2070 Mass. Ave.	18,267	bus. C	30 d.u.	N.A.	Private	?	N.A.	Exc.	Exc.	
2143 Mass. Ave.	14,755	res. C-2	49 d.u.	N.A.	Private	?	N.A.	Exc.	Exc.	49 d.u. requires variance against F.A.R.
TROLLEY YARDS	38,800	bus. C	64 d.u.	N.A.	MBTA	1983	N.A.	Good	Exc.	
CRAIGIE BLDG.	18,750	PUD 1		59 d.u.	Private	?	59 units	Exc.	Exc.	



(617) 876-6800
EXTENSION 344

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
City Hall Annex - Inman & Broadway - Cambridge, Mass. 02139
MAY 1 12 28 PM '79
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

RUSSELL SCHOOL SITE REUSE: DEVELOPMENT IMPACT ANALYSIS

	<u>PAGE</u>
I. Introduction -----	1
II. Neighborhood 10 Description -----	2
III. The Russell School Site -----	3
IV. Zoning -----	4
V. Development Alternatives-----	5
VI. Elderly Housing Need -----	7
VII. Impact Analysis -----	11
VIII. Policy Considerations -----	15
IX. Response	

Prepared by Kathy Spiegelman and Betty Desrosiers, Cambridge
Community Development Department
March 1, 1979

I. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to describe and discuss some alternatives for reusing the Russell School site and to provide sufficient information for making comparisons among several development options. The context and configuration of the site as it exists and the zoning classification of the property remain the same for all options. The development program varies, but common to all of the alternatives suggested is the development of the site for residential use plus public open space.

II. Neighborhood Description

The Russell School site is located in the western part of Neighborhood 10, the Neighborhood bounded by the Charles River, Boylston Street, Garden Street and Concord Avenue, Fresh Pond Parkway, the B & M Railroad and the Watertown-Cambridge municipal line.

Neighborhood 10 is characterized by low-density residential development, including detached single family and 2, 3 and 4-family houses. Several high rise apartment buildings in the area raise the overall density figure for Neighborhood 10, but the 14 units per residential acre is still the second lowest residential density of any Cambridge Neighborhood.

In addition to the low residential density, Neighborhood 10 has a special feeling of openness created by the green space along the Charles River, the large yards around individual houses and the relatively wide tree-lined streets. The 58 acres of open space in Neighborhood 10 comprises about 17% of Cambridge's open space.

Although residential uses predominate (52% of the total land), Neighborhood 10 also has a significant amount of land devoted to institutional uses (15%). Commercial development in Neighborhood 10 is concentrated in Harvard Square, but also important are the small shops extending along Huron and Concord Avenues. The Russell School site is accessible by bus to several major shopping districts and is within walking distance of the commercial area on Concord and Huron Avenues. Also within walking distance is Mount Auburn Hospital.

The 1 to 4-family houses which comprise the Neighborhood 10 housing stock are for the most part 50 to 100 years old, of generally high quality and well-maintained. Vacancy rates in Neighborhood 10 are very low and in 1970 the percentage of owner-occupied dwelling units in this Neighborhood was 32% as compared to only 19% citywide.

According to the 1978 Housing Sales Study for Cambridge, the average sale price in 1977 for a 1 to 4-family house in Neighborhood 10 was \$97,000, the highest in the city. In the past sixteen years, prices in Neighborhood 10 have risen at a rate at or above that of the city as a whole. Prices in Neighborhood 10 jumped 62% from 1976 to 1977 alone.

The Neighborhood 10 profile with respect to land use and housing represents the neighborhood context within redevelopment of the Russell School site will occur.

Sources for Neighborhood 10 Description:

"Cambridge Recreational Open Space Plan,"
Cambridge Community Development Department, April 1977.

"Housing Sales Study: 1-4 Family Homes in Cambridge,"
Betty Desrosiers and Elizabeth R. Hepner of the Cambridge
Community Development Department, November 1978.

"Neighborhood 10 Profile," Cambridge Community Development
Department, 1975.

III. The Russell School Site

The Russell School site is located at 111 Larch Road. It consists of 85,851 square feet, or 1.97 acres. The demolition of the school building on the site has begun but is not yet completed. The topography of the site is marked by a distinct downward slope north of the school building towards the northern property line. There are street trees along the Grozier Road and Larch Road property lines and a large cherry tree on the northern property line which should definitely be preserved. The houses adjacent to the site and directly across the street are 2-family houses, similar in scale, style and siting. These houses were mostly built by speculative developers after the subdivision of the land into house lots during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

IV. Zoning

The Russell School site is in a Residence B zoning district. Residence B is a low-density residential district which allows 1 and 2-family houses (plus conversion of existing houses for additional units) and a density of 17 units per acre. The floor area ratio allowed in Residence B is .5. This means that the total floor area which may be built on any lot in the district cannot exceed half the square footage of the total lot area. (An exception is made for townhouses which are allowed a floor area bonus.) The maximum height for buildings in Residence B is 35 feet. The minimum lot area required for each dwelling unit is 2500 square feet. Individual lots must be a minimum of 5000 square feet except in the case of townhouses for which there is no minimum lot size.

Under these zoning regulations 11 single or two-family houses, a maximum of 26 townhouse units or 52 dwelling units exclusively for the elderly may be built on the Russell School site. These numbers are based on leaving 20,000 square feet for public open space.

V. Development Alternatives

Following are four development alternatives for the Russell School site. None are finite: that is, there is potential for modifications in each. These four development alternatives have been selected as realistic options, each desirable for different reasons, yet each deserving serious consideration.

#1. Individual house lots.

The city might sell eleven individual house lots, retaining 20,000 square feet (about 23% of the total land area) for a community park. Each lot would be just under 6,000 square feet, slightly larger than the average lot size on the block. The houses would most likely be free standing structures with ample yards reflecting the lot coverage of other buildings in the surrounding area.

The lots would be sold according to a predetermined procedure, ensuring fair competition among prospective buyers. Deeds for the lots could include a number of special provisions to discourage speculation to encourage sales to Cambridge residents, and to ensure owner-occupancy.

Within the scope of this alternative there are two possibilities suggested:

- 1a. Eleven single-family houses.
- 1b. Eleven houses each with a large principal dwelling unit and a smaller rental apartment.

For both 1a and 1b, the fair market value for each house has been estimated at a figure considerably higher than the average in the surrounding neighborhood. This is not only a result of high land and construction costs, but also reflects the limited and therefore highly valued opportunity to purchase a vacant lot and build and occupy a house in a prime residential neighborhood of Cambridge.

#2. Townhouses

The City might sell the Russell School site to a single developer for private townhouse development, retaining ownership of 20,000 square feet for a community park. Based on recent townhouse developments in Cambridge, the density of the townhouse option has been estimated at 80% of the maximum number of dwelling units permitted by the Zoning Ordinance. The greater open space requirements, the less efficient linear layout and demands for private access, open space and parking in townhouse developments make it much more difficult to build to the maximum allowed density than for other forms of multi unit buildings.

The fair market value estimated for townhouses on the Russell School site is based on the market created by recent townhouses built in Cambridge. The special attributes of both the site and the neighborhood may mean that this figure in actuality would be somewhat higher.

#3. Privately Developed Elderly Housing

The City might sell the Russell School site to a private developer to build housing for elderly Cambridge residents, retaining 20,000 square feet for a community park.

Since the neighborhood is a low-density, small scale residential district, the form of this housing would be similar to low-rise townhouses or rowhouses.

The evidence of recent private residential development in the city indicates that these units would be built as luxury units. This is particularly likely given the high market value of the land. However, it is possible that some of the units could be subsidized with HUD Section 8 rent subsidies.

The Zoning Ordinance allows an increase in the number of dwelling units for housing restricted to the elderly. The maximum number of elderly units on the site, less the 20,000 square feet for a park, is 52.

#4. Publicly Developed Elderly Housing

The City might sell the land to the Cambridge Housing Authority to develop housing units for elderly Cambridge residents, retaining 20,000 square feet for a community park.

The funding for the development option would be through the 667 program of the State Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and has already been allocated to the Cambridge Housing Authority. All of the units would be occupied by elderly citizens in need of housing assistance.

The physical appearance of this development would be very similar to the townhouse or rowhouse form of alternative #3.

VI. Elderly Housing Need

Summary

In determining the best development alternative for this site, the city must weigh social as well as fiscal considerations. One of the primary sectors of the city's population which is in need of some form of housing assistance is the Cambridge elderly. The Cambridge Housing Assistance Plan demonstrates that there is a need to provide housing assistance for 3,378 low-moderate income¹ elderly households. This figure represents 28% of the total area for low-moderate income housing assistance in Cambridge. This assistance could take the form of Rehab assistance to homeowners, rental subsidies, or the provision of new rental units. The Russell School site could offer an opportunity to provide new rental units for the elderly.

The Cambridge Housing Authority has a current waiting list of 498 elderly households. Cambridge residents comprise 63% of this list. In 1978, the Authority placed 84 elderly households, 65 (or 77%) of whom were Cambridge residents. It is difficult to determine how many of the non-Cambridge elderly who are either on the waiting list or were placed during 1978 are former Cambridge residents that wish to return to the city.

The rapid increase of condominium conversions in Cambridge has clearly added pressure to the rental housing market. Since 1976, 300 elderly tenants have had to relocate because their units were being converted. According to a recent study on condominium conversion² by the Community Development Department, about one-fourth of the conversions have affected elderly tenants. 83% of this elderly group earned less than \$10,000 and all had lived in Cambridge for more than ten years. The study also found that the elderly tenants took 3-6 months to find new housing as compared with two months for those non-elderly tenants affected. This is perhaps not so surprising given that Cambridge has a vacancy rate of .5% and that the elderly have fixed incomes and generally need to live near transportation and other services. While condominium conversions do offer many benefits to the city, the process of conversion has been especially difficult for those elderly tenants affected.

The following is a brief demographic sketch of the elderly population in Cambridge based on the 1975 Mid-decade Census for Cambridge.

¹The term low-moderate income refers to 80% or less of the median income for the standard Metropolitan Statistical Area of Boston.

²Condominium Conversions: A Profile of New Owners and Former Tenants, Cambridge Community Development Department, 1978.

Population

According to the 1975 Mid-decade Census, there were 10,105 adults age 65 and over living in Cambridge. The elderly represented 10% of the city's population. Additionally in 1975, there were approximately 5,920 adults between the ages of 55-64, representing 6% of the city's population. Concentrations of elderly living in private housing are found in Neighborhood 6 (Mid-Cambridge) and neighborhoods west of Harvard Square. In 1970, Neighborhood 10 had a higher proportion of elderly (17.2%) residents than any other Cambridge neighborhood.

Income

In 1975, 52% of the elderly in private housing had incomes less than \$7,300 and a full 79% earned less than \$10,000.

Housing

In 1975, 63% (or 6,366 households) of the elderly rented and 37% (or 3,739 households) owned their homes. For the city as a whole, 80% of the population rented while 20% were owners. According to federal guidelines for subsidized housing, any low-moderate income family or person whose gross rent exceeds 25% of gross family income is in need of some form of housing assistance. Of the Cambridge elderly population living in private housing, 31% (or 3,133 households, pay in excess of 25% of their income on housing costs.

Publicly-Assisted Elderly Housing Requirements

Income Ceilings

	<u>CHA-667 Proposal</u>	<u>Section 8</u>
1 person household	6,000 adjusted income	10,100 gross income
2 person household	6,300 adjusted income	11,500 gross income

Total assets must be less than \$10,000.

Age

<u>CHA</u>	<u>Section 8</u>
65 or handicapped	63

Rent Levels

<u>CHA</u>	<u>Section 8 New Construction</u>	
25% of adjusted income	\$402	1 bedroom
	\$470	2 bedroom

No residency preference is currently allowed under either program. The Cambridge Housing Authority is preparing a proposal to the Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs and HUD to allow preference to Cambridge residents.

Publicly-Assisted Elderly Housing

Inventory

I Cambridge Housing Authority

Waiting List (12/15/78)

498 households

63% (or 316) Cambridge residents

37% (or 182) non-Cambridge residents

Elderly Developments

<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Development</u>	<u>#Units</u>	<u>Total</u>
1	Truman Apts.	67	
1	Millers River	304	
4	J. F. Kennedy	88	
4	116 Norfolk St.	39	
5	L. B. Johnson	181	
5	Manning Apts	199	
7	Putnam-Mt. Auburn	94	
11	Weaver Apts.	20	
11	Burns Apts.	200	
		<u>1192</u>	

Family Developments

Elderly units in family developments	<u>169</u>	1361
--------------------------------------	------------	------

II Private Developments

<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Development</u>	<u>#Units</u>	
3	Harwell Homes	16	
3	Inman Square	81	
5	808 Memorial Drive	34	
5	411 Franklin St	61	
6	929 Mass Ave.	30	
9	Briston Arms	20	
9	Walden Square	8	
11	Rindge Towers	117	
13	Huron Towers	62	
		<u>421</u>	

TOTAL PUBLICLY-ASSISTED ELDERLY HOUSING

1790

VII. Impact Analysis

The four development alternatives described above have been analyzed with respect to potential impacts on the neighborhood and the city as a whole. The following charts compare the impacts of the four alternatives, including number and size of dwelling units, population estimates, traffic generation and fiscal effects.

RUSSELL SCHOOL SITE REUSE - IMPACT ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES:
 DENSITY, FLOOR AREA, TRAFFIC

DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES	#1 Individual Lots		#2 Private Townhouses	#3 Private Elderly	#4 Public Elderly
	(a) single family	(b) houses with rental units			
DENSITY					
Number of dwelling units	11	22	20	52 ¹	52 ²
Population estimates (based on number of units and types of units)	44	66	50	78	78
SQUARE FOOTAGE OF FLOOR AREA PER DWELLING UNIT	3000 Φ	3000 Φ per house	1975 Φ	633-760 ³ Φ	633-760 ⁴ Φ
TOTAL FLOOR AREA FOR ALL UNITS ON THE SITE	33,000 Φ	33,000 Φ	39,500 Φ	32,900 - 39,500 Φ	32,900 - 39,500 Φ
TRAFFIC					
Number of parking spaces required	11	22	20	13 ⁵	13 ⁶
Average number of vehicle trips per day ⁷	95	150	130	156	156

Φ = square feet

RUSSELL SCHOOL SITE REUSE - FISCAL IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES	#1 Individual Lots		#2 Private Townhouses	#3 Private Elderly	#4 Public Elderly
	(a)single family	(b)houses with rental units			
ESTIMATED SALE PRICE FOR THE LAND	\$385,000 ¹ (11 x \$35,000)	\$385,000 ² (11 x \$35,000)	\$600,000 ³ (20 x \$30,000)	\$385,000 ⁴	\$78,000 ⁵
FAIR MARKET VALUE USED FOR ASSESSMENT	\$125,000 ⁶ per house	\$130,000 ⁷ per house	\$110,000 ⁸ per townhouse	\$358,800 ⁹	(CHA makes no tax payments in the DCA 667 program.)
ASSESSMENT FORMULA	22% ¹⁰	20% ¹¹	25% ¹²	30% ¹³	
ESTIMATED TAXES GENERATED PER ANNUM	\$58,080 \$5280 per house	\$53,900 \$4900 per house	\$105,600 \$5280 per unit	\$20,370	
ESTIMATED SCHOOL COSTS PER ANNUM ¹⁴	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$6400	NONE	NONE
ESTIMATED COST OF PUBLIC PARK ¹⁵	\$58,200	\$58,200	\$58,200	\$58,200	\$58,200
NET AMOUNT TO CITY IN FIRST YEAR ¹⁶	\$368,880	\$364,700	\$641,000	\$347,200	\$19,800
NET AMOUNT TO CITY SECOND YEAR ¹⁷	\$42,080	\$37,900	\$99,200	\$20,370	0

RUSSELL SCHOOL SITE REUSE - FOOTNOTES

FOR CHART ON IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES: DENSITY, FLOOR AREA AND TRAFFIC

- 1 Increased density allowed by special permit for elderly housing, maximum of 52.
- 2 Increased density allowed by special permit for elderly housing, maximum of 52.
- 3 Greater floor area allowed if townhouse bonus is used.
- 4 Greater floor area allowed if townhouse bonus is used.
- 5 Reduction in parking requirements allowed by special permit for elderly housing. (Ordinance says Cambridge Housing Authority elderly housing, but distinction should be eliminated.
- 6 Reduction in parking requirements allowed by special permit for CHA elderly housing.
- 7 These figures determined by estimates used for different types of housing in impact analysis manual published by the MASSACHUSETTS Department of Community Affairs.

RUSSELL SCHOOL SITE REUSE - FOOTNOTES

FOR CHART ON FISCAL IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

- 1 Based on information from Cambridge Assessors' Office.
- 2 Based on information from Cambridge Assessors' Office.
- 3 Based on information from Cambridge Assessors' Office and from townhouse developers.
- 4 Fair market value based on figure for individual lot sales, not maximum from townhouse option.
- 5 Based on amount provided in DCA allocation.
- 6 per house land cost plus per house construction cost based on estimate from Home Builders Association, Massachusetts.
- 7 Per house land cost plus per house construction cost based on estimate from Home Builders Association, Massachusetts.
- 8 Developer's sale price for townhouse.
- 9 Assessment based on gross annual rental income. Estimate of gross annual rental income based on land acquisition cost and market rents of \$550-600 per month for one to two bedroom apartments.
- 10 Based on information from Cambridge Assessors' Office.
- 11 Based on information from Cambridge Assessors' Office.
- 12 Based on information from Cambridge Assessors' Office.
- 13 Based on information from Cambridge Assessors' Office.
- 14 Based on type of housing, Census information on percentage of children enrolled in public schools and figure of \$3200 per child per annum.
- 15 For each development alternative, it is assumed that the city will pay for the park. It is possible that other funding mechanisms - private or public - could be used.
- 16 These figures reflect the proceeds from the sale of the land, plus the taxes per year, less the estimated school costs and less the cost of the park.
- 17

These figures reflect the tax revenues per annum less school costs.

VIII. Policy Considerations

The City's dispensation of the Russell School site for redevelopment raises several important policy considerations related to both the process used for selecting a development option and the priorities used to determine the most important benefit which the reuse of the site might provide. The relationships among the city's fiscal, social and development policies are important factors effecting the decisions made for this single site. It is suggested that all Cambridge citizens interested in participating in the discussion about the reuse of the Russell School site, also consider the broader implications of establishing policies for future city action.

- What is the most important benefit the city should derive from the Russell School site?

Maximum tax revenue?

Maximum price for the land sale?

Use of available publicly-owned land to fulfill city's housing needs?

Whatever emerges as a neighborhood consensus?

- Should official review of the site plan be mandatory for any development proposal? How about design review?

- How do you see your role in the development decisions?

If you are interested in responding further to the development alternatives discussed, please fill out the form on the next page, detach it and leave it with the Community Development Department staff. If you need more time to consider your response, please mail the form to:

Cambridge Community Development Department
57 Inman Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

Be sure to include your name and address. If you mail the form, we suggest that you do so within one week and that you mark the outside of the envelope "Russell School Site Reuse" to ensure that it is recorded promptly.

NAME

ADDRESS

Please rank the following development alternatives in order of preference, using "1" for your first choice.

- 1. Individual House Lots
 - a. Single Family
 - b. Two Family
- 2. Private Townhouses
- 3. Private Elderly Housing
- 4. Public Elderly Housing
- 5. Other (please specify)

COMMENTS: _____



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

RECEIVED BY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK
City Hall Annex Inman & Broadway EXTENSION 344

MAY 4 12 29 PM '79

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

To The Planning Board

From Community Development Department
Betty Desrosiers, Kathy Spiegelman
Subject Russell School Site Reuse

Date March 27, 1979

At the March 1, 1979 neighborhood meeting to discuss the reuse of the Russell School site, a ballot was distributed asking people to register a preference among the various development alternatives and to comment on that choice. Attached is a chart showing the tally of the ballots we received. Also attached is a sampling of the comments we received which represent some of the more frequently expressed opinions.

RUSSELL SCHOOL TALLY

Citywide

Option	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Individual Lots	86 (72%)	69 (82%)	14 (21%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)
Private Townhouses	1 (1%)	8 (10%)	34 (52%)	7 (17%)	9 (23%)
Private Elderly	5 (3%)	4 (5%)	11 (16%)	23 (56%)	4 (10%)
Public Elderly	21 (18%)	2 (2%)	7 (10%)	5 (12%)	23 (57%)
Combination of Family & Elderly	7 (6%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0	0

LARCH & GROZIER ROAD

Option	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Individual Lots	61 (90%)	44 (90%)	5 (12%)	0	0
Private Townhouses	0	3 (6%)	27 (66%)	5 (20%)	5 (19%)
Private Elderly	0	1 (2%)	5 (12%)	19 (76%)	2 (8%)
Public Elderly	4 (6%)	1 (2%)	4 (10%)	1 (4%)	19 (73%)
Combination of Family & Elderly	3 (4%)	0	0	0	0

COMMENTS

"We don't need any more non-taxed property in this city."

"As far as we are concerned the only choices that will conform with the neighborhood are single or two family houses or a combination of the two types."

"Housing should conform to the character of the neighborhood as well as providing taxes for Cambridge economy..."

"Any argument concerning the tax base must consider the social costs that the elderly and society as a whole pay in not providing decent, safe, elderly housing."

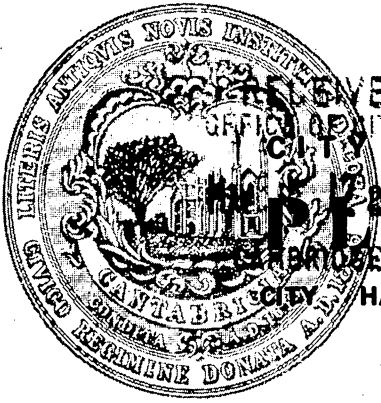
"I have lived through years of struggle to find housing for elderly sites. I believe this is a good site ..."

"... It certainly would be nice to have some public elderly housing in an uncongested area where there is transportation and good, clean air. Too much of the existing public elderly housing is already located in congested areas."

"I would look favorably on a compromise which would accomodate both the need for low-income elderly housing and the wishes of the neighborhood..."

"I would consider the possibility of a mixed-use - e.g. 6 private lots with 20 units of public elderly housing. Given tax-rate in Cambridge and the number of public housing units compared to surrounding cities and towns, I would not favor complete public elderly housing."

"Favor a mixed development of : $\frac{1}{2}$ public elderly housing and $\frac{1}{2}$ individual house lots. This proposal is based on the 1) need for elderly housing but keeping in mind the desirability of smaller rather than larger arrangements, 2) the house lots will bring some needed tax revenue to the city."



RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
MAY 29 PM '79

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

May 4, 1979

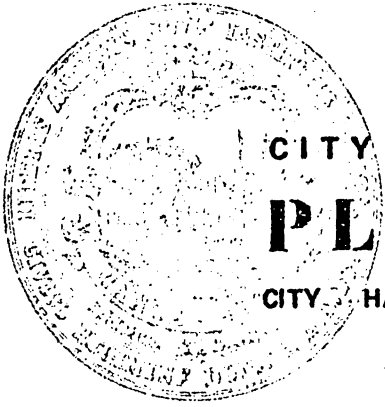
Mr. James L. Sullivan
City Manager
City Hall
Cambridge, Ma. 02139

Dear Mr. Sullivan,

Enclosed is the Planning Board's recommendation to the City Council for the re-use of the Russell School Site. We have also included for the Council's use materials that were considered in formulating our recommendation. This material includes: Russell School Site Re-use: Development Analysis, The Russell School Site and Elderly Housing, and a tabulation of the ballots which were distributed to the residents present at the neighborhood meetings indicating preferences among the alternatives suggested.

Respectfully submitted
for the Planning Board,

Arthur C. Parris
Chairman



RECEIVED BY
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD
CAMBRIDGE MASS.
CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

May 1, 1979

To the Honorable, the City Council

Re: Reuse of the Russell School Site

Dear Councillors:

Under Cambridge Ordinance No. 733, the Planning Board is required to study and report to the City Council on the sale, lease or rental of City-owned land. The Planning Board has reviewed and evaluated proposals for the disposition and reuse of the Russell School site located between Larch and Grozier Roads.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Board recommends that the Russell School site should be used for a mixture of public elderly housing, private family housing, and a neighborhood-oriented open space. Such action would be consistent with the City's ongoing Housing Assistance Plan, federal guidelines for the provision of low income housing and with local land use policies currently practiced in Cambridge. The site plan and building design outlined in the revised proposal of the Cambridge Housing Authority is acceptable to the Board. This proposal would place 40 elderly units on the site rather than the 52 originally proposed. Sale of the Russell site to the Housing Authority should be contingent upon substantial compliance with that plan.

Implementation of the Housing Authority's compromise proposal would help meet a substantiated housing need while responding to many of the neighborhood's expressed concerns. The decreased number of elderly units will result in a smaller elderly population on the site; however, this plan should not diminish the potential viability of the elderly community for organized activities and social interaction. The compatibility of the public development with existing nearby houses will be enhanced by the reduced number of units in smaller scale buildings and by the planned location of four new private houses buffering the edges of the site.

The Russell School site is appropriate for public elderly housing for a number of reasons. It is already publicly owned and available. It does not require any population displacement. It is large enough to accommodate enough units to create an elderly community but not so large that the new housing will substantially change the character of the neighborhood. It has adequate access to public transportation and

services. It offers a relatively safe and pleasing living location. Finally, it provides the opportunity to expand the range of housing choices for the elderly.

The Planning Board suggests that if a portion of the Russell School property is turned over to the Housing Authority for elderly housing, certain conditions should be attached to provide for public site plan review and to guarantee compliance with the crucial elements of the proposed, compromise plan. Specific information regarding the Housing Authority's plans for maintenance of the development should be submitted for public review. Site plan restrictions or provisions for public review of new development should be incorporated into any reuse plan that the City Council chooses for disposing the Russell and other school sites.

BACKGROUND

The Russell and Putnam School sites have been returned to the City by the School Committee and the Lowell School will be similarly transferred in September, 1979. Therefore, the Planning Board must review and evaluate plans for the disposition and reuse of these sites.

As instructed by the City Council, the Community Development Department arranged neighborhood meetings to discuss the future use of each site. The focus of the discussions became the proposal made by the Cambridge Housing Authority to build 80 state-funded elderly housing units on the school sites. The Housing Authority's proposal generated considerable controversy; therefore, private development alternatives as well as compromise solutions were considered. The Community Development Department prepared an impact analysis for potential residential development on the Russell and Lowell School sites.¹ This analysis examined the following development options: individual house lots, townhouse development, private luxury elderly housing and public elderly housing by the Cambridge Housing Authority.

The Planning Board held a special public meeting on March 27, 1979 to consider individual neighborhood interests in the context of city-wide planning goals. At the request of the Lowell and Putnam School neighborhood groups, consideration of the proposed plans for those sites was postponed until the respective neighborhoods have sufficient opportunity to review specific development proposals. Since the Council has proceeded with discussions on the Russell School site and since neighborhood residents have expressed their opinions, the Planning Board can now respond to the proposals for reuse of that site.

Even though the Planning Board's recommendation concerns only the Russell School site, the policy considerations here are of city-wide significance and will have a bearing on the other school sites as well.

¹"Russell School Site Reuse Impact Analysis" CCDD, 3/1/79.

Proposals for the Russell School Site

In 1976, a group of neighborhood residents petitioned the city requesting demolition of the Russell School and development of the site for private housing and public open space. Last year, the Cambridge Housing Authority requested the site for public elderly housing. The Authority's initial proposal called for 52 elderly and handicapped units with 20,000 square feet of land to be used for public park. In response to neighborhood objections, the Housing Authority has revised its plan, combining public and private housing but also reducing the size of the park to 15,000 square feet. The preliminary design done by Monacelli Associates, architectural consultants to the Housing Authority, includes four private houses, one in each corner of the site next to existing private houses. Ten residential buildings, each containing four elderly units, would line Larch and Grozier Roads between the new private houses. These ten buildings would be similar in size, shape and orientation to houses now in the neighborhood. The public park is located between the elderly development and two of the new private house lots and extends from Larch to Grozier Roads. It is this revised plan that is now being considered as the public housing alternative for the site.

HOUSING NEEDS

The City's 1979-1981 Housing Assistance Plan (HAP) demonstrates that 3200 elderly households need housing assistance. This represents 44% of all the elderly households in Cambridge.

The Housing Assistance Plan demonstrates the housing needs of low-moderate income² households in Cambridge. This need is determined by both the condition of the local housing stock and by the number of low-moderate income households paying in excess of 25% of their income on housing with the latter comprising two-thirds of the total housing need in Cambridge.

The Housing Assistance Plan is prepared annually by the Community Development Department as part of the city's Block Grant Application to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Compliance with the Plan is essential to the continued approval of the annual CDBG application. The Plan is also used as a basis for the allocation of units/funds by the State and Federal government to public and private agencies and corporations for all housing proposals and programs such as Section 8 rental subsidies, new construction activity, rehab assistance to homeowners, and modernization of existing public housing units.

The figures used in the Housing Assistance Plan serve as a common guideline for local activities and federal evaluation. The benefit to the city in fulfilling projected housing needs is both direct and indirect. The direct benefit is the provision of adequate housing for persons of

²The term low-moderate income refers to households whose income is 80% or less than the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

low-and-moderate income and households with special needs. The indirect benefit is the favorable consideration for other federal funds which results from meeting our housing obligations. Therefore, the fact that Cambridge ranks third in the Boston Metropolitan Area in fulfillment of its elderly obligations does not provide a basis for discontinuing or diminishing a strong housing assistance program.

As a target, the HAP projects that 15% of Cambridge's estimated housing assistance needs are to be met over the next three years. The three-year target conforms with figures recommended by HUD and by the MAPC. Realistically this is the upper limit Cambridge could hope to produce in the face of high housing demand, vacancy rate of virtually zero, land shortage, and high construction costs.

Housing assistance may be provided in the form of homeowner rehab assistance, rental subsidies or new rental units, but some assistance in each category is required. The provision of new units (which may also include substantial rehab of non-residential structures) for elderly households makes it easier to meet the strict code requirements for public elderly units and avoids the relocation problems frequently generated by substantial rehab of existing units.

The problems in the current housing market for elderly households on fixed incomes are worsened by the negligible vacancy rate of .5%, unusually high market rents, pervasive housing quality problems and the rapid rate of condominium conversions. Since 1976, 300 elderly tenants have had to relocate because their units were being converted. It took these tenants three to six months to find new housing as compared to two months for non-elderly tenants. According to a study done by the Community Development Department, a quarter of the condominium conversions have affected elderly tenants. This represents a disproportionate burden since the elderly constitute only 10% of the city's population.

The 80 units of state-funded elderly housing were committed to fulfill previous housing assistance targets.

The 80 units of elderly housing for which the Housing Authority currently has funding and is seeking to locate, are funded under the 667 program of the State Department of Community Affairs. These 80 units were committed to meet the 1978 projected goal of 845 elderly units of which 81 were to be new construction. The current (1979-1980) projection for new construction elderly housing is 40 units a year for the next three years for a total of 120 units. If all or any of the 80 units are not built, the goal for the next three years will increase by that amount. This could mean 200 new rental units for elderly households over the next three years instead of 120. Such targetting of greater numbers of assisted units could increase the pressures for larger developments, a result the city should avoid.

The HAP recommends that a diversity of housing opportunities be made available to all residents.

Broadening housing choices is important for all residents regardless of age or income. Cost restraints, political pressures, management problems and previous design and planning notions about concentrated, high-density public housing have all contributed to most public housing developments being built at large scale in limited areas. Design and planning concepts have been reversed and now small scale developments scattered on sites throughout the community are recommended by housing experts.

Therefore public agencies and officials charged with the responsibility of planning and providing housing assistance, should take advantage of sites--especially publicly-owned sites--in less burdened neighborhoods, and should encourage the distribution of units on several smaller sites rather than concentrating on large parcels.

The HAP specifies Neighborhood 9 and 10 as "anticipated locations for scattered site development and small elderly projects."

Federal guidelines for public housing encourage deconcentration and low density developments to alleviate the isolation of public housing residents and to diminish the potential adverse impact of excessive proportions of public housing in any one area.

In 1969, the Cambridge Planning Board issued a report entitled "Policy on Zoning and Low-and-Moderate-Income Housing." That report contained excerpts from the City Manager's "Housing Message to the Cambridge City Council" dated June 26, 1969. The Manager stated:

"We must not build more institutional 'projects,' isolated from the rest of the community, no matter how hard that is to do under restrictive Federal cost and design regulations. We must stop talking about the need for more housing for low-income families, but objecting when a site in our own neighborhood is proposed."

Both the 1978 and 1979 HAP's propose the location of new construction public housing in Neighborhood 10, anticipating the availability of the Russell School site and responding to the federal guidelines for deconcentrating public housing. Ten years after the Planning Board's policy statement, there has been inadequate decentralization of assisted housing opportunities. There is a need to reverse the trend of isolating low-income people away from higher income neighborhoods. It should be clear that implementation of the CHA's modified plan will not be strictly a "knee jerk reaction to a federal handout" but rather a step toward pursuing a policy that many have advocated for a decade.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS

The Community Development Department distributed ballots at the Russell School neighborhood meeting held on March 1, 1979. Ninety percent of

the ballots submitted by residents of Larch and Grozier Roads chose private house lots as the preferred development option. In stating their opposition to public elderly housing on the site, neighborhood residents focused on three major issues: (1) the desire for new development which is physically compatible with the existing neighborhood's character, (2) the effect of the increased number of dwelling units conditionally allowed for elderly housing by zoning and (3) the fiscal impact of the site's use on the city and in particular on surrounding properties.

New development should be encouraged in physical forms and site plans which are compatible with existing neighborhood character.

The physical compatibility of new development is a concern shared by a majority of Cambridge residential neighborhoods. In response to this concern the zoning ordinance was recently revised to more carefully regulate the physical impact of townhouse and multi-family developments, particularly in low-density neighborhoods. Furthermore, the City Council has consistently downzoned residential areas so that new construction will more closely match existing neighborhood characteristics.

It is clear that the structural form and site plans for residential development on the Russell School site must be compatible with the houses in the surrounding neighborhood. Private individual house lots would most closely resemble the traditional development patterns in the neighborhood. Townhouses or private elderly apartments would be the least likely to resemble surrounding houses. The four-unit elderly housing structures and the single-family houses proposed in the Housing Authority's revised scheme would be only marginally different from the houses on Larch and Grozier Roads. Properly executed, this plan can fulfill a demonstrated social need in an environmentally sensitive manner.

In order to develop housing within the cost restraints and feasibility requirements of the government programs, more than the maximum number of units generally permitted in a low-density zone must be constructed.

The density issue is another concern shared by most of the low-density residential neighborhoods in the city. In recent years the City has consistently granted a majority of the downzoning petitions submitted by neighborhood residents, matching zoning regulations with existing rather than potential density levels. A special permit provision allowing additional dwelling units for elderly housing was incorporated into the zoning ordinance several years ago to allow for the economic feasibility of such development in a diversity of neighborhoods. This provision also acknowledges the fact that dwelling units for elderly residents generally have lower population densities than the same number of standard dwelling units.

The population estimates for the development options on the Russell School site are as follows:

<u>TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT</u>	<u>NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS</u>	<u>POPULATION ESTIMATE</u>
Single-family house lot	11	44
Two-family house lots	22	66-88 ³
Townhouses	26 ⁴	65
Private elderly	52	78
Mixture of public elderly and private family	44	76

The chart indicates that although the Housing Authority's compromise proposal includes four times as many dwelling units on the site the estimated population is less than twice that in the eleven single-family houses.

Recent land use policy in Cambridge has stressed the development of vacant and underutilized industrial land to maximize the potential tax revenue in such areas and to relieve the development pressures on low-density residential neighborhoods.

The potential tax revenue from development of the Russell School site was frequently cited by neighborhood residents as an advantage to the private housing options. The importance of increasing the tax base in planning for land use and development throughout the city is unquestionable. However, the desire for a balanced but diverse urban environment has led to the encouragement of opportunities to generate substantial tax revenues through large scale commercial development of vacant and underutilized industrial land rather than the exploitation of existing residential neighborhoods. Regulations for residential neighborhoods have been tightened to protect the scale and character of the existing environment from the impact of more profitable but more intense and often intrusive development. Therefore, in residential areas fiscal objectives should be secondary to social and environmental considerations of creating quality living environments.

The fiscal benefit to be derived from the sale of publicly-owned land must be considered in conjunction with social benefits and social obligations.

³The low number (66) corresponds to houses with one major dwelling unit and a small additional rental unit. The higher number (88) represents houses with two full size family units.

⁴An earlier estimate of 20 townhouse units rather than the 26 allowed by zoning has been revised. The site is large enough to likely accommodate all the units allowed in a Residence B district.

The provision of housing assistance for low-and moderate-income people does not provide direct financial gains to the city, although it does improve the chances for federal dollars for other development and social service programs. However, the achievement of financial gains is only one concern in land use planning.

The Housing Authority stated that in its initial search for sites for the 80 elderly units, publicly-owned sites were specifically sought because of the limitation of \$1500 per unit for land acquisition costs. The alternative of using the proceeds from the sale of the Russell School site to subsidize the acquisition of a privately-owned site was suggested. The use of available public land to fulfill the city's housing needs is preferable to removing private land from the tax rolls for this purpose.

Estimated revenues to the city for the alternative developments of the Russell School site are as follows:⁵

<u>TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT</u>	<u>NET AMOUNT TO CITY IN FIRST YEAR</u> ⁶	<u>NET AMOUNT TO CITY IN SECOND YEAR</u> ⁷
Single-family house lots	\$371,000	\$ 45,000
Two-family house lots	\$365,000	\$ 38,000
Townhouses	\$834,000	\$113,000
Private elderly	\$347,000	\$ 20,000
Mixture of public elderly and private family	\$173,000	\$ 19,000

If fiscal benefit was the only priority for development of this site, townhouses would be the preferred option. However, social benefits, broader land use considerations and physical impacts deserve consideration. In light of the full range of public policy objectives, the CHA's compromise solution has substantial merit.

⁵These figures have been revised since the first impact analysis prepared in March 1979. Changes reflect the revised number of townhouse units, a recent change in the assessment formula for townhouses, a more recent figure for the single-family tax assessment formula and the compromise proposal for public elderly housing.

⁶These figures represent the proceeds from sale of the land, plus the taxes per year, less the school cost estimates and less the cost of the park. They do not include city service costs such as sewers, water, fire prevention, sanitation, etc.

⁷These figures represent the annual tax revenues less school costs.

Federal guidelines for public housing encourage deconcentration to avoid serious impacts on the property values of any one area.

The issue of property devaluation surrounding public housing is difficult to document in Cambridge since so much of existing public housing is concentrated in areas which already had depressed real estate values. The federal government recognizes the potential for either devaluation or continued low valuation to accompany public housing development and has directed state and local governments to pursue deconcentration to avoid seriously impacting any one area. Recent work has also been done by federal and state government agencies to encourage small scale, low density public housing developments to decrease the level of fiscal as well as physical and social impact on the immediate area.

The revised plan of the Cambridge Housing Authority for the Russell School site proposes five four-unit structures and two-single-family houses on each street. The small number of the subsidized units and the buffer of the four private houses at the edges of the site will likely counter any anticipated devaluation of surrounding property. The extraordinarily high housing demand in Cambridge should ensure that a skillfully and sensitively designed development of 40 public elderly housing units will not negatively affect area real estate values. Neighborhood residents and the value of neighborhood properties will also benefit from the public improvements proposed for the new park.

CONCLUSIONS

The reuse of the Russell School site should reflect local policies which would bear on similar decisions in the future. The factors to consider include the fiscal, social and physical benefits related to selling surplus municipal property, methods for fulfilling stated housing needs, priorities to determine land use planning and the role of neighborhood residents in planning decisions.

One of the major problems revealed in the evaluation of development on the Russell School site, is the confusion not only of priorities for use of the site but also of the implementation of the city's overall planning policies. This has been a problem for the Planning Board as well as for the neighborhood residents who have had difficulty understanding how their desires and expectations are related to those of other neighborhoods and the city as a whole.

It is necessary to clarify the city-wide policies which inform decisions such as the future of the Russell School site. In the process of evaluating alternatives for the site, the Planning Board endorses the following policies:

1. The Planning Board supports the use of available publicly-owned land to serve public purposes over the removal of privately-owned land from the tax rolls.

2. The Planning Board favors structural forms and site plans of new development which are compatible with existing neighborhood scale and character.
3. The Planning Board supports the deconcentration of public housing.
4. The Planning Board supports the concept of small scale, low-density public housing developments while recognizing the need for a minimum number of units to make such developments economically feasible and to provide beneficial living arrangements for public housing residents.
5. The Planning Board supports the provision of a diversity of housing opportunities for low-income residents as well as others.
6. The Planning Board supports strong neighborhood involvement in local land use planning and public site plan review. The Board also recognizes that concerned neighbors should be heard but that neighborhood desires cannot completely determine the outcome of decisions of city-wide significance.

Public statements of land use, development, and housing policies in the City of Cambridge can enhance the public's understanding of how the events and decisions in individual neighborhoods are related to those in other neighborhoods and throughout the city as a whole. This will enable effective community participation and permit progress toward the attainment of city-wide planning goals.

Respectfully submitted,

For the Planning Board



Arthur C. Parris
Chairman

ACP:jp

4. e R
#7 5-409

Comm. from Arthur C. Parris, Chairman, Planning Board, transmitting the report of the Planning Board re: reuse of the Russell School site.

5/14/78 No Action Taken
on Charter Right
Rule #19 Removal from
Calendar - see order for
Hearing at Tobin School
for May 21/79
In City Council,

May 7, 1979

5/7/1979
8 PM
Hearing set for
Jensen at Tobin
School - Hold
Charter Right
By C. Franzen
on order of
L. Dickey f.m.
Hearing Date
5/21/79 Hearing Held