

Report from the Housing & Land Dev. Com.

June 20, 1972

TO: The Honorable Sandra Graham, Chairwoman
Council Committee on Housing and Land Development
City of Cambridge

FROM: Rehabilitation Subcommittee

SUBJECT: Recommendations to Housing Policy Coordinating Committee

The Rehabilitation-Conservation Subcommittee is pleased to submit herewith four basic recommendations for a city-wide comprehensive rehabilitation-conservation program.

Although the recommendations herein stated have been kept as brief and concise as possible, this Subcommittee has spent many hours investigating and evaluating the many rehab programs that we know to exist. In this light, the Subcommittee would be pleased to be able to respond, in depth, before the City Council or other appropriate body.

All members of this Subcommittee are deeply committed to programs which effectively improve and maintain the existing housing stock of this city. We would, therefore, be pleased to be kept informed as to the progress of our and other recommendations.

Rehabilitation-Conservation Subcommittee:

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June 20, 1972

RECOMMENDATIONS TO HOUSING POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The City of Cambridge should undertake an overall strategy for housing, and as a first step, it is recommended that a new and separate commission be formed: HOUSING DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION (H.D.I.C.). This Commission shall be directly accountable to the City Manager. Responsibility and authority of this Commission should be broad-based and equal to existing departments.

NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY RESIDENT COUNCILS should be formed to work in conjunction with the H.D.I.C. and represent their respective neighborhoods. These Councils shall facilitate citizen participation in all phases of the rehabilitation-conservation activities.

Specifically, the H.D.I.C. should work in three major areas:

1. Financial Resources and Program Implementation

First, the newly formed H.D.I.C. should pursue the various resource programs available to neighborhoods for rehabilitation. It is strongly urged that two federally funded programs be developed and implemented with two Cambridge neighborhoods as soon as possible; i.e.: Neighborhood Development Program and Concentrated Code Enforcement Program. Both programs offer assistance directly to property owners through the 312 3% loan or 115 grant funds. Also, ancillary benefits accrue to the city by way of street, utilities, landscaping, etc., improvements. Direct grant programs such as Homeowner's Rehabilitation Program should continue and be enlarged.

It is important that multiple rehabilitation-conservation programs be made available to the citizens, both public and private. The H.D.I.C. shall, therefore, simultaneously implement a variety of rehabilitation programs in a variety of neighborhoods. All programs which might be brought into the city must place maximum emphasis on rehabilitation and avoid, as much as possible, demolition and land clearance.

2. Department Coordination and Cooperation

A second key area of responsibility of the H.D.I.C. would be to lend direct support to, and provide stability for, residential property owners. The city must demonstrate to its citizens that it is a concerned and dependable city. Through the vehicle of departmental policy review, new practice and procedures should be implemented which stimulate and support the various improvement and rehabilitation processes.

One element which would help accomplish this would be the coordination

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of the various departments -- assessing, zoning, building, rent control, city services, housing inspection -- so that the citizens have a clear and complete picture of the rehabilitation game.

Presently, it is hard and often times confusing for property owners to improve their property. Doubt exists in the minds of many as to what the city will or will not allow. Doubt exists to the point that many owners are unwilling to do anything.

3. Ancillary Resources and Services

In order to support the varying rehabilitation-conservation needs in each neighborhood, it is essential that the Commission have authority to develop and administer several types of resources and service programs.

Resources needed not only include incremental rehabilitation financing, such as Homeowner's Rehabilitation Program, but all federal assistance found in grants, Turnkey II and III, Sections 235 and 237, or other grants, private or conventional financing services of various types, property management counselling, rent subsidies, public housing leasing allocations on a regular basis, and other resources.

Services that will be needed through the rehabilitation program include: training and work-study programs, volunteer labor, where possible, and skill development programs for owners and tenants, and other services.

Programs of acquisition write-down and resale of homes to Cambridge residents, sweat-equity programs such as Better Rochester Living, and possibly community operated remodeling services for the neighborhoods.

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Report from the Housing & Land
Committee

C. Graham

In City Council

October 2, 1972

*Prepared by the City
Manager for Report
within 2 weeks*