

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
City Hall Annex - Inman & Broadway - Cambridge, Mass. 02139

498-9034

November 7, 1980

To the Honorable City Council:

The City Council has requested that the Community Development Department present an implementation plan for a neighborhood planning program. The following comments address the nature of the Department's current work program and the possibilities for expanding our planning activities in the city's residential neighborhoods.

The goals of the Department's Work program over the past four years have been the stabilization of the city's residential neighborhoods and the promotion of new development in appropriate non-residential areas of the city. During these years there were eleven successful downzoning petitions in residential neighborhoods and two successful comprehensive rezoning petitions for increased development in underutilized industrial areas. In Fiscal Year 1980-81 alone, the Department is administering more than \$13 million in state and federal grants for development activities in non-residential areas and for community improvements in residential neighborhoods. (see attachments)

The most important funding source for the Department's neighborhood improvement efforts is the Community Development Block Grant allocation, this year amounting to \$3,903,000. It is also CDBG funds that are used to cover staff costs in the Department. Expansion of neighborhood-based planning and development projects would have to be concentrated in those neighborhoods which are eligible under the CDBG program. The eligible neighborhoods now include numbers 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, and 13. However, the 1980 census statistics on income characteristics may alter the eligibility of one or several neighborhoods.

The most exemplary neighborhood planning effort in recent years has been the East Cambridge Stabilization Program. A committee of neighborhood residents holds regular meetings to decide on the expenditure of public funds allocated to the neighborhood. Procedural rules have been developed to maximize participation and responsibility on the part of committee members. A planner from the Community Development Department serves as staff to the Stabilization Committee.

The East Cambridge Stabilization Program was established in conjunction with the East Cambridge Riverfront UDAG project. The program was made possible by a commitment from the city for \$3.5 million over 14 years for neighborhood improvements. Funding in the early years comes from the Community Development Block Grant program and in later years will come from the anticipated tax revenues from the new development in the UDAG area. Some of the projects funded through the Stabilization Committee are street and sidewalk improvements, parks, street trees and a neighborhood newsletter which reports on stabilization activities.

The City's commitment to a similar public funding program for the North Cambridge neighborhood in conjunction with anticipated revenues from development in the Alewife industrial area, will likely lead to a stabilization effort based on the successful model in East Cambridge.

Current expenditures of Block Grant money in other neighborhoods could gradually be handled in the same way. However, existing Community Development Department staff could not assume the added work load of staffing neighborhood committees without relinquishing current responsibilities related to citywide issues or to the project development areas expected to generate the local funds already committed. An additional question is how to handle neighborhood planning in areas not eligible for Block Grant activities.

The Community Development Department is interested in pursuing alternative solutions to the problems of staff constraints and ineligible neighborhoods. It is possible that existing community service representatives or trained volunteers could be utilized in a neighborhood planning effort. The Department's current working relationship with neighborhood groups could be more formalized and interaction among these groups facilitated.

The as yet unmentioned issue of citizen participation becomes even more crucial when planning responsibility moves to the neighborhood level. It is essential to create an organization in the neighborhood which combines the broadest cross-section of opinions and attitudes possible.

These difficult issues as well as the identification of funding sources beyond Block Grant should be openly discussed and resolved prior to launching a major neighborhood planning effort. The Community Development Department would like to work with the City Council and interested citizens to set up a neighborhood planning program that will work effectively. Preparation in

the form of public discussions and research into similar efforts in other communities will be a good start. The Department's staff has already begun its own internal discussions and would welcome the Council's participation from the outset.

Very truly yours,



David R. Vickery
Assistant City Manager
for Community Development

DRV:lf
attachments

Residential Neighborhood Downzoning Petitions 1976 - 1980

<u>Date</u>	<u>Neighborhood Area</u>	<u>Ordinance #</u>
06/02/80	Rutland/Chauncy Streets Res. C-2 to Res. B	934
04/23/79	Ash Street Downzoning Res. C-2 to C-1	919
04/02/79	Fulkerson/Second Street Bus. A to Res. C-1 Ind. B, A-1 to Res. C-1	916
02/12/79	Mellen Street Res. C-3 to C-1	913
01/29/79	Bellis Circle Res. C-1 to B	911
07/10/78	Irving St./Sumner Road Res. C-1 to Res. B	899
06/12/78	Winter Street Bus. A to Res. C-1	894
06/12/78	North Cambridge Comprehensive	893
03/13/78	Neighborhood 9 Downzoning (Arlington, Lancaster, Linnaean Streets)	888
10/24/77	Cambridgeport Downzoning (Brookline St. Area)	883
05/09/77	Porter Square (Bus. C, Res. C-1)	880

None in 1976

Attachment #2:

Various Grants Administered by the Community Development Department FY 1980-81

<u>GRANT</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	\$3,903,000
Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG)	6,800,000
National Endowment for the Arts (Facade Improvement)	15,000
Economic Development Administration	93,750
State Energy Grant (Small Business Energy Program)	15,000
Land & Water Conservation Fund	400,000
Land & Water Conservation Fund	500,000
East Cambridge UDAG/Urban Self Help	799,000
U.P.A.R.R.	71,000
U.P.A.R.R.	119,000
U.P.A.R.R.	71,000
Urban Massachusetts Transit Authority (UMTA)	230,400
	\$13,017,150



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
JAMES L. SULLIVAN
City Manager

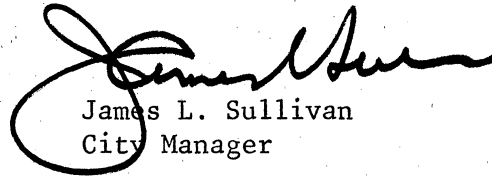
November 17, 1980

To the Honorable, the City Council:

With respect to Awaiting Report Item No. 7 relative to the progress of plans of the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Group in each neighborhood, enclosed please find copy of a report from David R.

Vickery, Assistant City Manager for Community Development.

Very truly yours,



James L. Sullivan
City Manager

JLS/mbf
Enc.

Agenda # 5C-523

Awaiting Report Item No. 7 relative to the progress of plans of the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Group in each neighborhood.

In City Council,

November 17, 1980

- 11/17/80 -

Referred to
Ordinance
Committee

on

Motion

L. D. Latham

Copy sent to Ordinance
Committee 11/18/80 (dl)