



City of Cambridge

14.

IN CITY COUNCIL

May 9, 1994

COUNCILLOR WALSH
 VICE MAYOR RUSSELL
 COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
 COUNCILLOR TOOMEY

WHEREAS: On April 22, 1994, Dan Wuenschel, the Executive Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority sent the attached letter to Amy Gray of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council; and

WHEREAS: Said letter states in part "Our waiting lists for public housing remain a daily testament to this need with nearly 5,000 such households including 2,000 Cambridge households who have first preference among these applicants; and

WHEREAS: Housing for low income families with children have also been a priority amongst this City Council especially for Cambridge families; and

WHEREAS: Mr. Wuenschel's letter indicates that the shortage of housing for these types of families, especially from Cambridge, seems to continue to grow; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to ask the Executive Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority to give the City Council a historical review of what housing opportunities have been created for low income families with children during the last five years, the number of such families that have been on the waiting list during the last five years, what sections of the City are this type of housing located in, what plans are in process for finding a resolution to this problem and what suggestions can the Executive Director make so that the City Council can aid in finding a resolution to this problem; and be it further

ORDERED: That the Manager submit a copy of Mr. Wuenschel's response to the full City Council.

In City Council May 9, 1994.

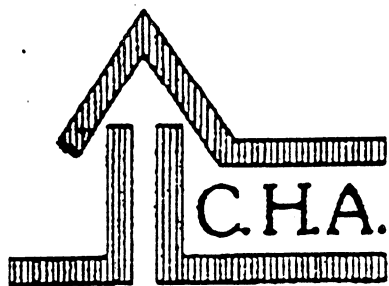
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury
 D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk



14
CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY

270 GREEN ST., CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

(617) 864-3020

22 April 1994

Ms. Ann Gray
11 Garfield Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Ms. Gray:

This will kindly respond to your letter dated April 7th, which we received on April 12, 1994.

Let me begin by re-stating the Cambridge Housing Authority's (CHA) previously stated position that we will not develop the Garfield and Mass Ave site without significant opportunity for input by area residents. We believe and understand that the appropriate vehicle for this neighborhood participation is through the recognized Agassiz Neighborhood Council (ANC) with whom we have been communicating on this subject for nearly a decade.

Indeed, from the discussions which began with the ANC in 1984, the CHA has always been clear that the most pressing need for affordable housing in Cambridge has been and continues to be for low income families with children. Our waiting lists for public housing remain a daily testament to this need with nearly 5,000 such households, including 2,000 Cambridge households who have 1st preference among these applicants. The need compared to other needy populations (the disabled and to a lesser extent, the elderly) is unmistakable. At no time in our discussions regarding the Garfield and Mass Ave site with the ANC did the CHA indicate a desire or an intention of developing anything other than housing for low income families and their children. Not only is this overwhelming need a compelling factor, but also the number of such low income families in the Agassiz neighborhood compared to other neighborhoods in Cambridge would clearly suggest that such a truly modest development will not adversely impact Agassiz when compared to other areas of the City which house many, many more low income families.

Now, permit me to address other concerns and suggestions listed in your letter. First, the issues of homeownership. While all of us would be happy to be offering such homes to individual households for purchase, the sad reality in our 1990's society is that too many of our citizens will simply never be in a position to realize the American dream of "owning their own homes" ---at least in the foreseeable future. The sad fact is that the most needy among us, simply do not

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possess the resources to buy their own homes. This is a problem that is beyond the ability of the Cambridge Housing Authority and, quite frankly, the citizens of Cambridge alone to solve. Until there is greater economic opportunity in our country ---many citizens will be in need of rental housing that is affordable. For this reason, and those cited above, the CHA feels compelled to develop for low income renters.

The notion of mixing low income rental units with market rental units on the site is a good one in the abstract. Indeed, the Harbor Point conversion which you reference was an appropriate response to that particular situation in which more than 1,500, isolated low income apartments were converted to a mixed income development which ultimately includes 400 low income apartments, and 883 market rate homes. Obviously the scale of the site under consideration makes such a venture not feasible.

Housing persons with disabilities is a genuine concern for the CHA. Undoubtedly, there is considerable need (albeit not so great as for families with children) for this segment of our community ---particularly those who are currently homeless, recovering substance abusers, and the chronically mentally ill ---as well as those who suffer from mobility impairments. In this regard the CHA will examine (within cost constraints) our ability to make one of the proposed units available to a family with a member who possesses a disability.

As far as elderly/disabled housing is concerned, the CHA agrees that the long term future seems to indicate such need, but currently our wait lists are such that an applicant who is a Cambridge resident can be served by our existing inventory after a wait of approximately 4-6 months, in contrast to needy families who must currently wait at least 2-4 years to gain an apartment.

In addition, available federal funds for this undertaking have been specifically earmarked for the development of a rental property for low income families. The opportunity to provide additional units of affordable housing, so desperately needed in the City, could be lost if any attempt were made to convert this grant to serve any other segment of our population.

Your other concerns regarding parking, traffic flow, and the historic nature of the district can probably best be answered in this manner. We have either developed or acquired family public housing of the scope proposed at Garfield Street at the following locations: 15 Inman Street (2 doors from City Hall), 12-18 Hingham Street, and condominiums at 2 Chestnut Street, 20 Chestnut Street and 41 Concord Avenue.

Each of these sites has conformed to the City's zoning and parking requirements and each has proved to be an improvement to its surrounding community in terms of both "people and real estate values". In the case of 15 Inman Street, the CHA and its architect have garnered awards from both the local and state Historical Commissions. In fact, the CHA would be happy to conduct a tour of these and other developments for a committee of the ANC in which you might participate.

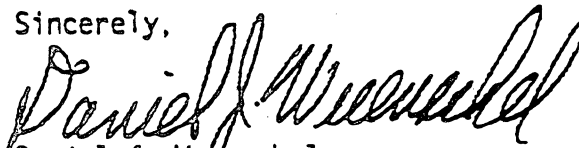
In closing, let me state that the CHA is committed to working with neighborhood citizens in our development activities. You will find that historically, that commitment is honored. We will be happy to do so in your case within the parameters established by the recognized Agassiz Neighborhood Council.

Finally, a note about children ---particularly children from poorer families. The CHA believes that we as a society have no greater resource. For this reason we have, since 1984 funded and sponsored a youth enrichment The Workforce program that has:

- 1) Provided services in education and employment to over 600 public housing youth, and
- 2) Sent nearly a score of young people to colleges of their choice in the last two years through scholarship programs which we have directly funded and/or leveraged funding from other sources.

We believe that our future as a society is inextricably bound to our young people. What better contribution could we, as a society, make to the future than to provide a truly decent home to some 15 youngsters who might attend the new Agassiz School and move on to become productive citizens of Cambridge? I encourage you all to join us in the effort.

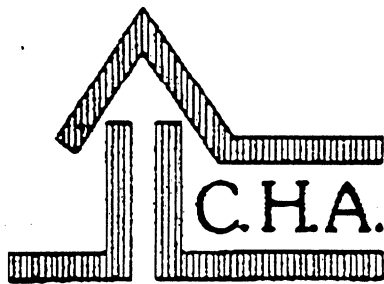
Sincerely,



Daniel J. Wunschel
Executive Director

DJW/ss

cc: Len Charney, CHA
Terry Delaney, ANC
Robert Healy, City Manager
~~City Council~~
Susan Schlesinger, City Housing Director



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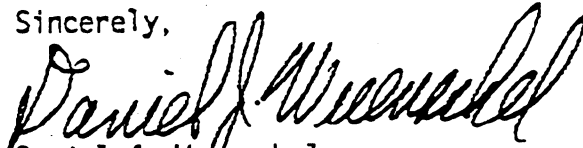
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Executive Director

DJW/ss

cc: Len Charney, CHA
Terry Delaney, ANC
Robert Healy, City Manager
~~City Council~~
Susan Schlesinger, City Housing Director

May 4, 1994

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Russell, Sullivan

Consent Order #14

CM-189

Councillor Walsh re: Executive
Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority
is requested to give the City Council
a historical review of housing opportunities
for low income families.

In City Council May 9, 1994

Order adopted.