

City of Cambridge

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council 11/23, 1998

Consent Agenda Items

	YEA	NAY	ABSENT	PRESENT
Ms. Kathleen L. Born	✓			
Ms. Henrietta Davis	✓			
V. Mayor Anthony Galluccio	✓			
Mr. Kenneth E. Reeves	✓			
Ms. Sheila T. Russell	✓			
Mr. Michael A. Sullivan			✓	
Mr. Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.	✓			
Ms. Katherine Triantafillou	✓			
Mayor Francis H. Duehay	✓			

8 0 1



City of Cambridge

Agenda Item No. 2

IN CITY COUNCIL
November 23, 1998

MAYOR DUEHAY
COUNCILLOR BORN
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO
COUNCILLOR REEVES
COUNCILLOR RUSSELL
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

- WHEREAS:** There exists in Cambridge a severe shortage of decent housing affordable to low and moderate income residents; and
- WHEREAS:** The City Council desires to increase the supply of affordable home ownership, now and in the future, for low to moderate income Cambridge residents to reside in decent, affordable housing; and
- WHEREAS:** Pursuant to Section 15A of Chapter 40 of the General Laws, as amended and accepted by the City Council on November 26, 1990, the City Council may, by a majority vote, transfer municipal land to another board or officer of the City for the purpose of constructing affordable housing; and
- WHEREAS:** The City of Cambridge owns a certain parcel of land situated in Cambridge, Middlesex County, Massachusetts at 63 Cedar Street, bounded and described as follows:
- being lot numbered eleven (11) upon plan of the Trotting Park, belonging to Kidder and Rued, made by George W. Butterfield and recorded with Middlesex South District Deeds, Book of Plans six (6) plan thirty-seven (37) bounded and described as follows, to wit:
- Easterly on Cedar Street, fifty (50) feet.
- Northerly on lot numbered ten (10) on said plan, one hundred eighty-three and one half (183 ½) feet.
- Westerly on lot numbered nineteen (19) on said plan, fifty (50) feet.
- Southerly on lots numbered fifteen (15), fourteen (14), thirteen (13) and twelve (12) on said plan, one hundred and eighty-three and thirty-two one hundredths (183.32) feet.
- Containing according to said plan nine thousand and one hundred and seventy-five (9,175) square feet of land, more or less.

WHEREAS: The land at 63 Cedar Street was acquired by the City of Cambridge in 1995 through property tax foreclosure and the City Manager has determined that the best use of the land at 63 Cedar Street is for the construction of affordable housing; and

WHEREAS: The City Manager has recommended transfer of the property to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust Fund for development of affordable homeownership for Cambridge families; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager is authorized to transfer the land and property at 63 Cedar Street to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust, for consideration of One Dollar (\$1.00) and other valuable consideration for the construction of three housing units which shall be affordable to low and moderate income Cambridge households, and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager is hereby authorized to execute and deliver to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust, in the name of and on behalf of the City of Cambridge in such form as the City Manager shall approve (such approval to be conclusively evidenced by such execution and delivery) such documents, instruments, agreements, deeds, licenses, warranties, indemnifications, releases or certificates, or amendments thereto, required by the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust to redevelop the land at 63 Cedar Street to accommodate the intent of the foregoing resolutions; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager is hereby authorized to execute, accept, and deliver such supplemental or ancillary documents as are reasonable necessary to implement the intent of this Order and to execute, accept and deliver amendments thereto.

In City Council November 23, 1998.

Adopted by a yea and nay vote:-

Yeas 8; Nays 0; Absent 1.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk



City of Cambridge

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IN CITY COUNCIL
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DISPOSITION REPORT

for

63 CEDAR STREET

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 8, 1995 the City assumed ownership of the property located at 63 Cedar Street through tax foreclosure proceedings (see Final Judgment in Tax Lien Case attached). Subject to the condition noted below, the City Manager recommends that the City Council approve the transfer of this property to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust for the development of affordable homeownership for low to moderate income Cambridge residents.

The recommended transfer is subject to the condition that the Trust be required to convey to the City's Treasurer/Collector sufficient funds to satisfy the outstanding taxes owed and the demolition lien associated with the property.

Upon approval of the transfer, the Trust will issue a Request for Proposals to select a developer. The developer will be asked to construct three single family homes which will then be sold to Cambridge families with incomes below 80% of the area median income at an affordable cost.

Given the escalating cost of housing throughout Cambridge, there is a clear need for affordable homeownership opportunities for families. The development of high quality, single family housing will benefit the community by:

- using City-owned land to create affordable homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income Cambridge families;
- constructing new housing to replace the deteriorated buildings formerly on the site;
- returning the property to the property tax base and providing compensation for delinquent taxes; and,
- fostering owner-occupancy within the neighborhood of North Cambridge.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE CITY PROPERTY

The property is a vacant 9,175 square foot lot with an address listed as 63-63R Cedar Street located in the block between Rindge Avenue and Dudley Street in North Cambridge. The parcel, deep with narrow street frontage and resembling the typical eighteenth century farm lot shape, is identical to many of the lots in the area. The flat, rectangular lot is currently covered with weed and brush and is surrounded by a four-foot chain link fence. The most recent assessment, done in January 1997 for Fiscal Year 1998, shows the value of the property at \$169,300.

III. HISTORY OF THE SITE

A review of records kept at the South Middlesex Registry indicates the site contained housing since shortly after the turn of the century. The property contained a total of four separate housing units, formerly subject to rent control. The most recent owner of the property fell behind on taxes beginning in 1991. The property was neglected and fell into disrepair, becoming a health and safety issue for the neighborhood. Eventually it was demolished by the City in July of 1993 with the cost of the demo (\$37,197) attached to the property. On May 8, 1995 the property was taken for back taxes by the City.

Taxes owed on the property (\$8,238.29) plus the demolition lien of \$37,197.00 total \$45,435.29. Penalties and fees associated with the back taxes will be forgiven upon transfer to the Affordable Housing Trust.

IV. EXISTING ZONING

The lot, consisting of 9,175 square feet, is located in the Residence B district. The first 5,000 square feet of lot area is calculated at one dwelling unit per 2,500 square feet of lot area, and at a floor area ratio of 0.5, allowing two dwelling units. The remaining 4,175 square feet of lot area is calculated at one dwelling unit per 4,000 square feet of lot area and at a floor area ratio of 0.35, allowing one additional dwelling unit.

The total development allowed on the site is three dwelling units with a total of 3,961 square feet of gross floor area. Each unit requires one parking space. Only multi-family or single family residential use is allowed as of right.

The proposed zoning changes in the Backyard Rezoning Petition would affect the as-of-right development potential of this site, by reducing the allowed number of units from three to two. CDD is preparing a possible revision to this Petition that would exempt affordable housing developments from the density changes. This revision will be discussed at the Planning Board and City Council Ordinance Committee meetings.

V. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVE USES

The site is located in a predominately residential neighborhood, predisposing it to residential use. Accordingly, there appear to be two potential alternative uses:

1. **Open Space:** The site is located within 1/10th of a mile of a half-acre play facility located at the corner of Cedar and Dudley Streets, the Reverend Williams Playground (Sleeper Tot Lot). Additionally, the site is within five blocks of two major City park facilities: Rindge Field, with adjoining Bergin Playground, McMath Park, and Fitzgerald School Tot Lot, is located just 2/10th of a mile northeast of the site and Russell Field is 4/10th of a mile southwest of the site.

Given the number of parks within the immediate neighborhood, additional open space is not considered a high priority.

2. **Family Housing:** The site recently consisted of two structures, including one two-family home and one single-family home that was later used as a two-family. A review of Registry of Deeds documents shows that the site contained housing as far back as 1915. The 1995 Comprehensive Planning for Trolley Square and Sheridan Square Report developed in part by the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee identifies the site as an opportunity to develop high quality, affordable housing for North Cambridge residents.

The need for affordable housing throughout Cambridge, and specifically in North Cambridge continues to be apparent through a review of recent residential sales data. A review of 1998 sales records through September shows the median cost of a single family or condominium unit in North Cambridge is \$233,000. In order to afford this, a family would need to have a yearly income of approximately \$71,000, along with a minimum downpayment of close to \$12,000, putting homeownership far out of the reach of many neighborhood residents.

VI. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED USE OF THE SITE

A. The Planning Process

The City of Cambridge became the owner of the property in May 1995. On September 30, 1997 Community Development Department (CDD) staff conducted outreach to the neighborhood around the site, distributing approximately 100 letters requesting input into the planning process associated with developing the site. To ensure that the request for input was received, the thirty closest abutters were also mailed the letter. The letter produced five phone calls from abutters requesting information about the City's plans and requesting that they be kept informed of any meetings about the site.

On October 22, 1997 a flyer was distributed in the neighborhood and then directly mailed to the thirty closest abutters announcing a neighborhood meeting to be held on October 30, 1997 at the Gately Center.

The October 30, 1997 meeting held at the Gately Center was attended by ten neighborhood residents. Attendees raised general concerns about the amount of development within the North Cambridge area. In addition, neighbors expressed concerns about the impacts of development of the site on traffic and parking in the area. Finally, neighbors were concerned that a recent bulk sale of nine properties previously owned by the UTT Realty Trust (also known as Wise Potato Chips) would create additional development in the area surrounding the site. Six of the people present requested that development of the site be delayed until the issues associated with the parking, traffic, and the potential development of the UTT properties were resolved.

CDD staff also requested feedback on the use of the site from the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee at their November 12, 1997 meeting. Some of the same concerns about traffic and parking were voiced as were the general concerns about development in the North Cambridge area and the transfer of the UTT properties. Attendees commented that any development proposed should meet existing zoning requirements.

CDD conducted research to determine the impacts on the neighborhood resulting from the sale of the UTT properties. Eight of the nine properties had been resold to homeowners with no change of use proposed to the sites. Conversations with the current owner indicated that the remaining property at 141 Rindge Avenue, which housed the Wise Potato Chips office space and three residential units, was not for sale. There is a pending variance request to convert the two office spaces into residential use, creating five residential units where there were previously three.

Traffic concerns raised by the residents were brought to the attention of the CDD Environmental and Transportation Planning Division staff. Prior traffic analysis of the area had resulted in the installation of a "raised intersection" at the nearby corner of Cedar and Dudley Street. A public meeting will be scheduled in the near future to discuss the effect of the raised intersection as well as any additional steps that may be taken to improve safety along Cedar Street. In January of 1999, the City will work with the community on the redesign of Sheridan Square and the section of Cedar Street from Sheridan Square to Dudley. Consultation with the Environmental and Transportation Planning Division indicates that the redevelopment of the site at 63 Cedar Street will have no impact on the future plans for the roadway redesign.

Parking on the site will comply with the zoning requirements, resulting in at least one parking space for each of the three units proposed. As site plans are developed with neighborhood input, opportunities to include additional parking on site will be explored, weighing the options in comparison to maximizing the site's open space.

CDD held a second meeting with the neighbors on December 17, 1997 to update them on their concerns. Follow up letters were sent to those abutters who did not attend the meeting, providing them with a summary of information addressed at the meeting and requesting their input into the planning process.

A third meeting, held on January 31, 1998, resulted in the establishment of the guidelines outlined in the development plan described below. These guidelines were well received by the attendees. CDD continues to provide updates about the progress of the property transfer to members of the neighborhood.

B. The Development Plan

The first step in the development plan would be the transfer of this site to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust for the development of affordable homeownership opportunities for Cambridge families. The transfer would be subject to the condition that the Trust be required to convey sufficient funds to the City's Treasurer/Collector to satisfy the unpaid taxes and the cost of the demolition for this property.

If approved, subject to this condition, the Trust, through the Community Development Department, will continue to work with the neighborhood residents to establish development guidelines for the construction of three homes at 63 Cedar Street which will be sold as affordable housing to three income-eligible Cambridge families.

Using the guidelines established, the Trust will issue a Request For Proposals (RFP) to select a developer. The RFP will include the development guidelines and will specify the objective selection criteria which will be used to evaluate the proposals. The Trust will then convene a Project Review Committee to review developer proposals and provide a final recommendation.

The Trust will make a final selection, and will work with the designated developer to complete the financial packaging and design process. The Trust will convey the site to the developer at the initial project closing.

Preliminary Timeline:

Action to Be Taken	Time Frame
Issue RFP	Two months from Transfer of land to Trust
Trust Designates Developer	Two months from date of RFP
Initial Closing/Construction Start	Six months from designating developer
Initial Occupancy	Nine months from construction start

C. Nature and Affordability of the Proposed Development

The proposed use of the site is three homeownership units to be made available to low to moderate income Cambridge families.

Site and Design Standards

The new units constructed at the site will be designed to be architecturally consistent with the neighborhood, which is a mix of predominately single, two and three family homes. The design will attempt to incorporate traditional single-family home features and be laid out with larger households in mind, having at least three bedrooms and one and a half bathrooms. Each unit will have at least one parking space. The units will be situated on the site to maximize the size of the individual yards while still maintaining compliance with zoning regulations.

Income of Households Benefiting

The City's goal is to create affordable homeownership opportunities for families with children. This goal will be achieved by making the units available at levels which are affordable to households with incomes at or below 80% of the median income (currently \$45,300 for a family of four). Properties will be priced so that potential buyers will need to spend no more than 30% of their gross monthly income on housing expenses. In order to create this level of affordability, CDD staff will explore the use of a variety of public and private resources, including Trust funds and federal HOME funds, to make the units available to the widest possible group of income-eligible households.

The Trust Fund will ensure long-term affordability by requiring all properties to be transferred with long term deed restrictions to maintain the units as affordable. Such limited-equity deed restrictions will ensure the most advantageous use of scarce public funds to create a long-range impact.

Resident Selection

To the maximum extent allowable under federal and state law, this housing will be for Cambridge residents who meet the eligibility criteria. The developer will be required to target marketing activity in North Cambridge and throughout the entire City.

Role of the Community

Neighborhood meetings will continue to be held to provide status reports to residents, to review proposals received from developers, and provide neighborhood input throughout the construction period.

VII. CONCLUSION

The City has an outstanding opportunity to turn a vacant piece of property into a community-enhancing development, while meeting one of its top priorities: to increase the supply of affordable housing for families.

The development of the site at 63 Cedar Street will provide the following public benefits:

- help meet the demand for affordable housing caused by the end of rent control and escalating housing costs;
- provide compensation to the City for unpaid real estate taxes;
- create three new sources of real estate tax revenue;
- create three new affordable homeownership opportunities for Cambridge families;
- ensure the construction of high-quality housing that is architecturally consistent with the neighborhood.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 349-4300
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2.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

November 23, 1998

To the Honorable, the City Council,

I am submitting for your consideration the attached Report on the Disposition of 63 Cedar Street. The proposal is to construct three homeownership units for low and moderate income residents on the site. The use of this City-owned site for affordable homeownership was one of the recommendations of the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee and the Cambridge Community Development Department's 1995 Comprehensive Planning for Trolley Square and Sheridan Square Report.

Although land dispositions to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust are exempt from the Disposition of City Property Ordinance, the report is patterned on the requirements of the Ordinance. As the report describes, neighborhood residents have participated and will continue to participate in all discussions relating to the re-use of the site.

I recommend that the City Council approve the transfer of this site to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust for the development of affordable homeownership opportunities for Cambridge families.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

CM 660

Consent Agenda #2

Relative to the Disposition of
63 Cedar Street to the Cambridge
Affordable Housing Trust.

In City Council Novmeber 23, 1998

ORDER ADOPTED

B-0-1