



City of Cambridge
Department of Human Service Programs
51 Inman Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, 498-9076

November 16, 1987

TO: Mayor Walter J. Sullivan
City Manager Robert W. Healy

FROM: Bill Herold for the Mayor's Committee on Homelessness

RE: Committee Recommendations

Over the past six months the Mayor's Committee on Homelessness has met to discuss the problems surrounding homelessness in the City of Cambridge. In the initial meetings of the Committee existing emergency resources and policies were reviewed and appropriate referral and response procedures were clarified, and in some cases, modified. The Committee then turned its attention to the root causes of homelessness. The attached recommendations were generated after extensive discussion amongst a diverse group including representatives of the clergy, church laity, the Cambridge Housing Authority, the Welfare Department, the area Mental Health office, shelter providers and the City.

Community and Youth Services
498-9037/9072
Council on Aging/Elderly Services
498-9039

Recreation
498-9028
Community Learning Center
547-1589

November 16, 1987

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mayor's Committee on Homelessness

Over the past ten years the single most important issue affecting the homeless is the tremendous decrease in low-income subsidized housing units. Nationally the department of Housing and Urban Development's budget has decreased 66% over the past seven years. This has resulted in virtually an end to new low and moderate income units from the previously existing HUD development pipeline. Exacerbating this problem is the phenomenon of expiring use restrictions which threatens the loss of hundreds of thousands of existing low and moderate income units nationally and several hundred in Cambridge alone. In Cambridge we are facing the very real possibility of losing 136 lodging house rooms at the YMCA. Also, the Cambridge Housing Authority has a waiting list with 1,400 names requesting family housing, all Cambridge residents. As a result, in Cambridge, the number of at risk and homeless persons has increased during the past several years.

The Department of Human Services' study An Outline of Supportive Housing Needs in Cambridge (May, 1987) indicates that the unmet housing needs in Cambridge are as follows: for every family with children housed, eight remained homeless; for every mentally ill person housed, seven went without housing; for every alcoholic/substance abuser sheltered, another stayed on the streets; for every adolescent housed, two went without, and for every battered woman taken in, three remained at risk.

To respond to the emergency housing crisis and its attendant problems the City, the Cambridge Housing Authority the churches and a variety of community based non-profit organizations are working to put into place a continuum of housing and social services. This continuum currently provides for a variety of shelters and supportive housing options together with appropriate social services for a portion of the homeless populations. Major gaps still exist in this continuum, they are:- a day program for the homeless, a twenty-four hour transitional shelter for single men, and a permanent site for each of the two ongoing shelters in Cambridge. Unmet needs

leave this continuum incomplete which results in cyclical homelessness. The movement of homeless persons towards independent living requires a complete and continuous spectrum of services.

While such identified emergency service and shelter gaps are being addressed, the provision of permanent housing for the homeless in Cambridge is frustrated by the lack of sufficient affordable housing in our community.

We feel that the City of Cambridge must effect local policies and procedures which can alleviate this housing crisis in our community and diminish the number of displaced Cambridge families and individuals. With this goal in mind we present the following recommendations.

1) The Committee feels very strongly that the definition of the term **affordable housing** when applied to Cambridge's housing policy, needs to be expanded and broadened. The term must not be restricted to refer only to cost. Affordable housing must also mean available housing to special needs populations, i.e.; homeless, mentally ill, alcoholic, and the runaway/pregnant teenager. The City's housing policies must realize that it is not only the high dollar cost of housing that creates homelessness but of equal importance is the lack of structured, specialized and designated units for special needs populations.

2) The committee strongly recommends that the City look for ways to incorporate and encourage the **creation of affordable housing units**. This would include the funding of private non-profit organizations and/or the Cambridge Housing Authority to develop specialized housing with new federal and state resources as well as local funds from linkage and real estate transfer taxes. These new sources of funds combined with incentives i.e.; zoning amendments, land write downs, pooling property assets and land banking would create affordable housing. The City cannot afford to pass up any opportunities of obtaining sites or buildings and of adding revenue to its general fund which in turn can be applied to affordable housing initiatives.

3) The committee feels strongly that the issue of homelessness must be incorporated in all of the City's social and housing policy considerations. This can be accomplished by **appointing a**

representative of this point of view to the various housing and social policy task forces presently at work within City government, including to any proposed Linkage Committee.

4) The Committee suggests the creation and maintenance of an **inventory of housing units** to guide the City in formulating its housing policy. This inventory would be all inclusive and contain data on all types of housing units: lodging houses, S.R.O.s, community residences, condo conversions, subsidized units, and the increase/decrease of rental units, etc. The inventory would be set up and maintained in the Department of Community Development in conjunction with Inspectional Services, Rent Control and License Commission.

5) The Committee realizes that some community residence **zoning restrictions** have been eliminated and that more options are now available. Nevertheless we feel that review of existing zoning restrictions on community residence siting should continue, including modification in the siting requirement from "facilities per 1,000 population" -to "beds per 1,000 population"

6) The committee feels that the City Council needs to initiate, cultivate and **expand the network** of institutions which can affect the problems of the homeless. This network would include, but not be limited to: local businesses, churches, development companies, educational institutions, philanthropic organizations, area corporations as well as individual citizens. This networking could be enhanced by designating a position in the Department of Human Services, whose role would be to raise funds from private and public sources as well as initiate non-governmental involvement in homeless issues.

The City of Cambridge has provided leadership in many areas of human life providing a livable and exciting habitation for many of its citizens. The homeless are invisible and forgotten in most cities and towns. Our community's public and private agencies have awakened to the needs of the homeless. We are painfully aware of the impact of national economic policy on low income persons in general, and on homeless persons and families in our midst. Private, civic and city agencies are combining their efforts to address the needs of our homeless. The above recommendations point the City Council in necessary directions for the future; advocating public policy for the creation of housing for Cambridge's most vulnerable citizens.



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Pastor Fred Reisz	University Lutheran Church
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Jill Herold	Assistant City Manager Department of Human Services
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Theresa Rowe	Emergency Service Center
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Jana M. Kiely	Adams House, Harvard University and St. Paul's Parish
Daniel J. Wuenschel	Cambridge Housing Authority
John Augeri	Dept. of Public Welfare

DIVISIONS:

Childcare
498-9076

Community & Youth
498-9037/9072

Low Income Fuel Assistance
498-9038

Recreation
498-9028

Community Learning Center
547-1589

Council on Aging/Elderly Services
498-9039

Planning & Development
498-9076

S-752

Comm. dated November 16, 1987 from Jill
Herold, Human Services Dept. for the Mayor's
Committee on Homelessness Re: Committee
recommendations.

December 21, 1987

Referred to the
Hearing Scheduled
12/21/87 at 7 P.M.