# City of Cambridge

The Committee on Housing and Community Development conducted a public hearing on Thursday, March 15, 1990 beginning at 7:51 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber, City Hall.

Councillor Ed Cyr, Chair of the above referenced Committee convened the hearing and introduced committee members Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr. and Councillor William H. Walsh to those assembled. In the Chair's opening remarks he stated that the purpose of this hearing was to review the process and apparatus for land use planning, development regulations and the impact assessment on the City of Cambridge.

Councillor Cyr further stated that it is the sense of the Committee to deal on two fronts: 1) development issues; and, 2) the construction of affordable housing units. The Chair cited the fact that procedural issues have a tendency to frustrate the average citizen as it relates to maintaining the character and diversity of a neighborhood.

At this time the Committee heard from Mr. Michael Rosenberg, Assistant City Manager for Community Development who presented an historical review for the decade 1980-1990 on the development character by component throughout the City of Cambridge, Mr. Rosenberg also provided the Committee with a ten year potential development schedule. It should be noted that the potential data reflects only those projects that the Community Development Department has been made aware of by development interests.

The following chart is a summary of Cambridge Development by District:

COMMERCIAL 1980 - 1990 & Ten Year Potential

| District | Square Feet Complete | Square Feet Under Const. | Square Feet Ten Year Potential |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alewife | 1,222,900 | 130,000 | 2,332,000 |
| Cambridgeport | 545,000 | 121,000 | 1,293,000 |
| East Cambridge | 3,077,200 | 840,000 | 971,000 |
| Kendall Square | 2,215,000 | 35,000 | 1,427,000 |
| Mass. Ave. East | 321,000 | 0 | 102,000 |
| Harvard Square | 424,000 | 0 | 346,500 |
| Mass. Ave. North | 394,000 | 0 | 25,000 |
| North Point | 20,660 | 0 | 19,100 |
| total square ft. | 8,219,760 | 1,126,000 | 6,515,600 |

HOUSING in Dwelling Units

Units Constructed
1980 - 1990 2,000

Future Development Potential
Units in planning stage

| | |
|---|---|
| North Point | 435 |
| University Park | 258 |
| Cambridge Center | 250 |
| YWCA (SRO) | 50 |
| Total units proposed | 993 |

| HOTEL | Rooms / Suites |
|---|---|
| Rooms Constructed 1980 - 1990 | 938 |
| Future Development Potential | |
| Rooms in planning stage | |
| University Park | 350 |
| One Kendall | 300 |
| Alewife | 200 |
| North Point | 200 |
| Harvard Square | 116 |
| YWCA | 96 |
| total rooms proposed | 1,262 |

Councillor Cyr questioned Mr. Robert W. Healy, City Manager on what constitutes the right mix between the various components to ensure a comprehensive development scheme or policy.

The City Manager provided the Committee with an historical review of the various development initiatives that have been undertaken by both public and private sector interests throughout the various areas of the City. The City Manager spoke in detail of the economic erosion the City witnessed in the late 1960's and early to mid 1970's with the shifting away from manufacturing and other like industrial applications. Mr. Healy further reviewed various downzoning proposals that were enacted by former City Councils affecting such areas as East Cambridge, the Alewife area, University Park and the Massachusetts Avenue Corridor.

Park and the Massachusetts Avenue Corridor.

Mr. Healy further pointed to the fact that the Galleria Mall currently under construction in the Lechmere area is a near mirror-image of the development blueprint that was unveiled in 1978. He underscored to the committee, the fact that development potential and initiatives are a product of market driven forces.

Mr. Rosenberg also commented on the issue of finding the right mix and outlined the planning and rezoning process that the Community Development Department and Planning Board employ to try to minimize potential negative impacts that large scale developments could bring to residential areas.

The City Manager stated that Traffic Mitigation Studies as well as other environmental studies have been incorporated into the early planning stages for large scale developments.

The chair, spoke of the need of a much greater collaborative link between the affected neighborhood, the city and the development interest(s).

The Committee then heard from Mr. Paul Dietrich, Chair of the Planning Board, who stated that the single most important issue that has continually faced the Board over the last five years is that of traffic management. He outlined various stipulations that have been imposed on developers ranging from employee "T" passes in the Harvard Square area to a full Traffic Mitigation Study at the fromer Simplex site.

Councillor Cyr commented on Mr. Dietrich's statements that given the fact that tougher federal standards will soon be promulgated in this area that this decade will require a level of creativity unmatched in history.

The Chair then steered the Committee's discussion towards the present City of Cambridge Zoning Ordinances and the possibility of a major re-write in order to allow for greater comprehension by the citizenry at large. The Chair further stated that he felt that the ordinances represented a patch-work quilt approach and suggested that a reduction in the number of districts might allow for a more unified and comprehensive policy statement on development.

Mr. Healy, Mr. Rosenberg and Mr. Dietrich all expressed skepticism that this reduction was achievable due to the complexities and physical layout of the City. Mr. Rosenberg stated that a working committee has been formed, whose responsibilities include the review and formulation of re-commendations to update the present zoning ordinances but did not forsee any major policy changes at this juncture.

Mr. Rosenberg, at the request of the Chair, outlined the various permit processes that are available along with the required time frames. (Attached is said Procedure Chart).

During the above referenced discussion the Chair stated the need for each board to issue more consistent decisions in compliance with stated City Council policy.

The hearing was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

For the Committee

Edward N. Cyr

Councillor Ed Cyr, Chair

# PROCEDURAL CHART

| PERMIT | NOTIFICATION | PUBLIC HEARING | DELIBERATION | DECISION | APPEAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPECIAL PERMIT | To parties in interest and others/posting/publication | Held by Planning Board or Board of Zoning Appeal | Discussion, with possible request for additional information; review conformance to criteria established in Ordinance. | If no action taken permit automatically granted. | Within 20 Days of filing with clerk |
| | Within 65 days of application | | Within 90 days of hearing | | 20 days |
| PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) SPECIAL PERMITS | As required for Special Permits but with an additional hearing before decision is made. Issued by Planning Board only. | | | | |
| VARIANCES | As for Special Permits | Held by Board of Zoning Appeal | As for special permits | As for special permits | As for special permits |
| | Within 65 days of application | | Within 100 days of application | | 20 days |
| ZONING AS-OF-RIGHT DEVELOPMENT | None required | None required | Review of conformance to zoning, building code, and required preliminary permits: e.g. special permit; Historical Commission, conservation district permits; parking exemption permit; etc. | | Within 30 days of decision |
| | 30 days | | | | 30 days |

2. S-410

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report from Councillor Ed Cyr, Chairman of the Housing and Community Development Committee, relative to the review of the process and apparatus for land use planning, development regulations and the impact assessment on the City of Cambridge.

InCity Council,

April 23, 1990

Report accepted and placed on file