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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

City Hall Annex Inman & Broadway

To Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From *AK* Kathy A. Spiegelman, Assistant City Manager for Community Development **Date** January 20, 1983

Subject Response to Councillor Clinton's Order of January 17, 1983

The request for urban development guidelines comes while work is in progress on the Community Development Department's Cambridgeport Revitalization Plan, which should be available near the first of March. To provide a quick response to each of the issues raised in the order, information has been summarized from the ongoing work and from other planning studies as required.

1. Street Connections

To protect the Cambridgeport neighborhood from any excessive traffic, the Revitalization Plan suggests that the amount of development allowed be reduced from the levels currently permitted by the zoning ordinance. In fact, a reduced level of development has been the common feature of every rezoning proposal made over the last two years.

A traffic study conducted for MIT in 1980 recommended that Lafayette Square be redesigned to increase capacity and traffic flow. This is a major concern of the City's Department of Traffic and Parking. As development plans emerge, more detailed traffic studies will be needed from the developer with City input and review. At present, there is no formal requirement for such review. If a Planned Unit Development (PUD) type of zoning were enacted by the Council, an important criteria for review could be the extent to which traffic problems are solved both for Lafayette Square and the Simplex area and additionally, for the connection to Brookline Street near the former Ford Assembly Plant building.

2. Present Street System

Many improvements are obviously needed to make the present street system work with new development. Since no new major roads are feasible, the existing roads will have to serve traffic within the revitalization area. These streets need much physical improvement of surfaces, lighting, sidewalks, etc. as well as restudy of one-way flows, traffic signals, etc. The priority for improvement will depend upon the sequence in which sites develop.

Some street improvement is already underway in the Fort Washington area. Based on the presence of several new businesses in the area, the Community Development Department received a State grant for improvements of Waverly and Erie Streets and for an at-grade railroad crossing for pedestrians.

Most of the Fort Washington area activity has been in rehabilitated structures. Regarding likely new construction activity, the areas close to Massachusetts Avenue are expected to develop first. These sites have better access and visibility; development there will open up other areas for later construction. Thus, in the first years of development, work on Brookline, Sidney, Landsdowne, and Albany Streets will be needed. It may be possible to extend Pacific Street to Vassar, though more detailed study will be needed to determine if this is worthwhile.

The Ford Assembly Plant parking lot offers the possibility of a better connection between Waverly Street and the Brookline/Memorial Drive intersection. It is presently uncertain whether this site will redevelop early or late.

An additional connection which could be considered in the long run is the extension of Waverly Street up to Pacific via a little-used rail spur. Use of this spur for automobile traffic is complicated by ownership and operational problems.

3. Cooperation with Agencies Outside the City

The need for interaction with the State, the MDC, the railroad or other agencies in regard to traffic plans depends upon the specific improvement and the funding source. The Cambridgeport Revitalization Plan, which will be similar to the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan and the Alewife Revitalization Plan, will clarify an image for the area. This will serve two purposes. First, it will give the private sector an idea of what the City wants for the area. Secondly, it will allow the City to approach funding sources for roadway and parking improvements.

In the case of the Fort Washington District project, the City is working with the State DPW and Conrail. Although the means of transferring the funds to the City has yet to be finalized, the project should go ahead this year.

4. Parking

The present requirements regarding parking establish minimum and maximum numbers of space per type of use. The predominant category is Industrial B, which requires one parking space for 600-1000 square feet of office space. To deal effectively with parking, an overall plan for development is needed, from which a logical phasing of parking lots and garages may be derived. The Revitalization Plan will be a first step towards organizing parking. Again, a PUD zoning designation could insure public review and input into the parking

issue. And, once plans are firm for the area, the City could work with developers to create parking facilities if clear public benefits are involved.

5. Housing

Some housing development appears desirable, given the pressure on the Cambridge housing stock. However, this housing must be carefully conceived and sited to avoid over-taxing City services and to fit with the existing neighborhood. The Revitalization Plan would foresee a total of not more than 200 to 300 units, phased over ten to twenty years of development. About 100 units could fit along Brookline Street, between Franklin and Pacific. Another 50-75 units could be built between Massachusetts Avenue and Franklin Street, and about 75-100 near the Ford Assembly Plant building.

To the extent that is practical, housing should be available to a range of income groups. As suggested in Planning Board zoning recommendations and Community Development Department analyses, 10-15% subsidized units might work economically (depending upon the type of project and availability of public subsidies).

6. Lighting and Landscaping

The Revitalization Plan will have detailed suggestions for improved lighting and landscaping. An essential goal is to create, in conjunction with housing and business development, normal city streets where now exist poorly-surfaced streets without sidewalks, trees, or lights. Particularly needed is an urban plaza at Massachusetts Avenue to give a new image to the most visible edge of the development area. With so much vacant land throughout the area, the opportunity also exists to create new, neighborhood-oriented park spaces. For example, if new housing is built along Brookline Street, a park similar to Hastings Square might be appropriate. Whatever open space is created should be designed to be well used and maintained, with visual surveillance by neighboring users.

7. Updating Data and Planning Studies

The information from the 1980 U. S. Census is just now being made available to the City. The Community Development Department is currently analyzing the first parts of the data, and will make available pertinent Cambridgeport statistics.

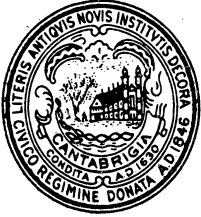
One aspect of the planning study which merits attention at this time is the Economic Development analysis. This 1980 study illustrated the possibility, however difficult, of developing Cambridgeport land for business use. The economy has worsened since that time; development of any kind is all the more difficult. Of particular concern is the impossibility of pre-determining the per cent of office use which a light industrial or research and development firm may need. This percentage varies for any given firm as well as for a variety of firms. A limitation as strict as the 25% proposed by the Quinton petition could discourage many desirable firms from locating in Cambridgeport. If the Council feels that pure office uses are not wanted some limitation, more like 50%, might be reasonable in part of the area.

8. Federal Programs

While Reagan has slashed many programs, some Federal assistance is available. Housing programs have suffered the most. However, Urban Development Action Grants are still being awarded, and some of those have been for housing. Although Cambridge already has a UDAG for East Cambridge, additional UDAG funding is being sought there. Other Massachusetts communities, such as Worcester or Quincy, have significantly more UDAG funding than Cambridge. It is very possible that a Cambridgeport development project could receive UDAG funds.

The Industrial Revenue Bond program has been extensively used in Cambridge, including \$5.2 million in Cambridgeport. This program will likely continue to be of use to Cambridgeport businesses.

State programs also bear watching. The City just received a \$650,000 CDAG for East Cambridge, and funds are still available.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

January 24, 1983

To the Honorable, the City Council:

With respect to Awaiting Report Item No. 23, enclosed please find the response to Councillor Clinton's Order relative to Urban Development Guidelines for the Cambridgeport Revitalization Plan. The response to item #9 in the order relative to school enrollment will be available by Monday evening.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

S-84

Re: response to Awaiting Report Item No. 23 re-
garding urban development guidelines for the re-
development of the Cambridgeport neighborhood.

In City Council,

January 24, 1983

1/24/83

COUNCILMAN FRANKLIN

REQUESTED SPECIAL MEETING

DATE OF AGENDA SET -

2/4/1983

HOLD FOR FUTURE ACTION