



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER,
*Acting Assistant City Manager
for Community Development*

MARY FLYNN,
*Deputy Director for
Community Development*

To: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

From: Susan Schlesinger *MS*
Acting Assistant City Manager
for Community Development

Re: Council Order #18, dated 6/27/94
Neighborhood Studies Schedule

Date: July 27, 1994

The Community Development Department, through the Neighborhood Planning component, is currently completing neighborhood studies in Neighborhood Nine and Mid Cambridge and intends to undertake studies in Cambridgeport, Agassiz and Strawberry Hill in 1995, with the Cambridge Highlands and Neighborhood Ten to follow thereafter. Each study process takes approximately five to six months of meetings to complete. We expect that the Cambridge Highlands study, given the very small population of the neighborhood, will take a significantly shorter time to finish. To date, the component has completed studies in East Cambridge, North Cambridge, Riverside, Wellington-Harrington and Neighborhood Four. We anticipate publishing the reports for Riverside, Wellington-Harrington and Neighborhood Four early this fall; we will issue the Mid Cambridge and Neighborhood Nine reports in late fall.

These studies, with their study committees composed of neighborhood residents, are for the purposes of assessing the needs of each neighborhood in a variety of areas including land use, open space, transportation and housing, and establishing a set of priorities for action. They are also for the purpose of initiating a positive dialogue between the residents and the Community Development Department on issues of concern to the neighborhood. The department undertook studies in federal Block Grant eligible neighborhoods first, followed by others based on the issues facing the neighborhood. Cambridgeport is the last block grant eligible neighborhood to be done; Agassiz faces potential institutional encroachment and erosion of its commercial node at Porter Square.

In regards to the telephone surveys, the department has undertaken them in East Cambridge, North Cambridge, Riverside, Wellington-Harrington, Neighborhood Four, Mid Cambridge, Cambridgeport, Strawberry Hill, Agassiz and Neighborhood Nine. These surveys provide us with demographic and opinion data which are used during the neighborhood study process. An executive summary of the survey report for Agassiz is attached; copies of the complete report for this and other neighborhoods are available at Community Development. Neighborhood studies for North and East Cambridge are also available.

INTRODUCTION

The Atlantic Marketing Research Company, Inc., was hired in mid 1993 to conduct a general population survey in the Cambridge neighborhood of Agassiz.

The survey, conducted by telephone in November 1993, was undertaken to determine the demographic characteristics of the populations in this neighborhood as well as residents' perceptions on issues of community concern.

The following report analyzes the results of the Agassiz survey only.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agassiz is a homogenous, educated and affluent neighborhood.

- 85% of the population is White, and just over 15% of the population is foreign-born
- 50% of the population arrived within the last 5 years; and only 30% have been here for 11 years or more
- overall, residents are extremely well-educated: 87% have college or higher level degrees; only 4% say their highest grade of school was a high school diploma
- 68% are employed full-time, and three-fourths are employed either full-time or part-time
- 55% of all households are classified as mid- to high income

A majority (78%) of survey respondents who have lived in the neighborhood for five or more years feel it has changed very little in the last five years, and they have a slightly more positive outlook for the next five years.

- as stated, most residents perceive little change in the neighborhood; almost 17% think circumstances have improved and only 11% sense deterioration over the last five years
- future outlook is somewhat positive: nearly a quarter expect improvements over the next five years
- concern about availability of parking, traffic congestion and crime, in that order, outweigh concerns about open space and infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, etc.); however, crime, availability of open space and condition of parks, are important concerns
- around Mass Ave., major concerns are traffic congestion as well as availability of parking and public transportation
- commercial development is viewed positively
- two thirds of Agassiz residents, however, do not feel well-informed about development plans, and would like to be kept actively informed especially via printed media such as newsletters or articles

- Harvard's impact on the area is viewed positively
- Lesley College is perceived as having no impact or a positive impact on the neighborhood
- Harvard Square is visited frequently for most types of shopping except for groceries

Affordability with regards to housing is a major concern among Agassiz residents:

- almost three out of four Agassiz residents rent; over 70%, pay less than \$750 per month
- rent control benefits long term residents more than recent arrivals
- amount of rent, condition of housing, displacement due to high housing costs, and housing prices top the list of housing issues for area residents
- most residents (80%) are unaware of city programs to help finance home ownership
- more respondents (though only 33% of all homeowners) are aware of city programs to help finance home improvements
- only 1 respondent receives government rent subsidies
- only 10% of all respondents live in condominiums

Agassiz workers are a stable, well employed lot:

- over one-half of all employed residents are in professional or specialty occupations
- at the time of the survey, only 3% were unemployed; Hispanic workers are greatly over-represented in this group
- under-employment is not a major problem; only 9% of workers say their job is a poor match for their skills

METHODOLOGY

Design

The design for the research involved a cross-sectional survey of the adult population of Agassiz.

Sample

The sample frame for the Agassiz survey was a street listing based on tax records which identifies every residential building in the neighborhood and classifies it by the number of housing units. Based on the number of occupied dwelling units in the neighborhood, it was determined that 354 telephone interviews would be required to provide overall results that could be interpreted at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. A systematic random sample of every nth unit was selected for interviewing in order to complete 354 interviews.

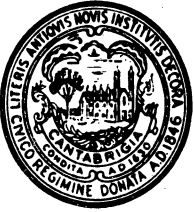
In order to minimize replacement of originally selected telephone numbers, as many as five call-backs were made to 'no answer' and 'busy' telephone dial attempts. Call-backs were made on different days, both weekends and weekdays, and at different times to assure that every household had an equal chance of being interviewed. Also, pre-arranged call-backs were made to households that requested calls at more convenient times. Several interviews were conducted in Spanish.

The results of a survey based on a sample of this size may be interpreted at a 95% confidence level with a $\pm 4.7\%$ margin of error.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was developed by the City of Cambridge Community Development Department. It had been used in earlier surveys, but changing conditions and the evolution of salient issues made modifications necessary. With input from Atlantic, question changes were made and the format was adjusted for interviewing.

A formal pretest of the questionnaire was conducted in October 1993. Minor revisions were made to the questionnaire based on the result of the pretest and the full administration of the survey was conducted in November, 1993.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300

FAX 349-4307

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI

Deputy City Manager

August 1, 1994

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 36, regarding a neighborhood studies schedule, received from Susan Schlesinger, Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachment

Consent Agenda # 15 S-361

Response to Awaiting Report Item Number
Thirty-Six regarding report on neighborhood
studies schedule.

for original order
see 1994 City Manager
Requests # 228.

In City Council,

August 1, 1994

Placed in file