



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
MASSACHUSETTS  
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

March 18, 1977

COMMITTEE REPORT  
RENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the Research Team on Wednesday, March 16, 1977, members agreed that they were not yet ready to send out a report and a proposal on the testimony received at the first meeting.

They therefore scheduled another working meeting for Thursday, March 31, 1977, at 8 p.m. in the Walnut Room of City Hall. The hearing has been postponed until April 21, 1977, at 8 p.m. in the City Council Chamber. Of course both of these meetings are open to interested members of the public.

Enclosed are the minutes of the February 26, 1977, meeting of the Research Team and copies of written testimony submitted at that time.

For the Committee,

Barbara Ackermann  
Chairperson

REPORT ON THE GENERAL MEETING OF 26 FEBRUARY 1977  
RESEARCH TEAM OF THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON RENT CONTROL

PRESENT:

Rent Control Committee Ms. Barbara Ackermann, Chairperson  
Research Team Prof. Langley Keyes  
Prof. Edwin Kuh  
Mr. David Lichter  
Ms. Anne Thomas  
Ms. Jane Shister  
Staff to City Council Mr. Richard McKinnon  
Staff to Research Team Mr. Kirk McClure

REPORT:

The Research Team met in the City Council Chambers on February 26, 1977 at 10:15 am. The meeting was called to order by Councillor Ackermann who stated the purpose of the meeting as collecting the questions and issues that the Research Team should address in their study.

Presentations were made by:

- Mr. John Brode, Cambridge Rent Control Task Force, submitted a memo,
- Mr. Jim Peters, Cambridge Civic Association, submitted a statement
- Mr. Carl Barrons, Cambridge Property Owners Association, submitted a letter and questions,
- Mr. Charles Laverty, Cambridge Assessor, submitted questions,
- Ms. Francis Ness, Harlow Tenants Association, submitted questions,

Mr. Fred Cohn, Cambridge Rent Control Board, submitted three memos,

Ms. Emily Achtenberg, Housing Consultant, submitted a statement

Ms. Barbara DeMarneffe, Landlord, submitted questions,

Ms. Pat Matsumiya, Resident.

The meeting was opened to general comments after the presentations were made. The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:00 noon.

The Research Team met during lunch during which Prof. Keyes chaired. The Research Team discussed the time frame, the resources available and the data required for the research. Alternative approaches to the structure of the research were discussed. The Team resolved that the purpose of the research project is to advise the City Council on the impact that rent control has on development goals in general and housing goals in particular.

The afternoon session of the meeting began at 1:15 pm to discuss the housing and development goals of the city that rent control influences. Among the goals discussed were the revitalization of neighborhoods, home rehabilitation, income supports, housing quality, diversity of the population, care for the elderly and family supports. A distinction was drawn between the goals of the city and the mechanisms employed to serve those goals. Prof. Keyes closed the meeting by summarizing the goals of diversity of the population and revitalization of the neighborhoods as those to be examined for rent control's impact. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

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MEMO

TO: Rent Control Board

FROM: Fred Cohn - We have now been administering a rent control program for five years. It is time we take a close look at the subject matter of our efforts, and the probable effects of our policies. Housing is a valuable community resource; it is increasingly difficult and expensive to replace. We are now learning that resources are limited and must be conserved.

Therefore, rent control must be designed to preserve our housing rather than allow it to be used up and ultimately abandoned. What is the nature of the housing we are to care for?

Dwelling units are a series of interwoven systems; the structural frame holds up the building and provides support for all the other systems; the weathering skin keeps the weather out, lets in light and keeps in heat; the mechanical systems provide heat, power, water and drainage. The walls, floors and ceilings are grouped as interior finish. The frame, if protected by an intact skin, will last for centuries, but the other systems all have lives of more than a generation but less than a lifetime. These systems are always on the way to obsolescence and replacement, but the process is slow and easily overlooked.

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People who are not involved with building and have not owned a home seem to think that with proper maintenance a dwelling will continue to serve indefinitely. But if you examine the Cambridge housing stock you will find that a large part was built before indoor plumbing, central heating, or electrical service. Furthermore, the original roofs were probably wood shingles, now banned as a fire hazard, and there used to be very many more chimneys. If you look closely, you will find the relics of earlier plumbing (high tank toilets) and old heating systems (gravity warm air).

A time lapse picture with dates would be marvelous to instruct people in the way we change the skin and much of the insides of buildings, leaving the foundation and frame more or less undisturbed. The dwelling is more like an automobile than we realize; but it sits on a heavy pile of masonry over a hole (usually) and it's easier to remove and replace its systems than junk it.

If all this dynamic activity is taking place, why are so many people who do not own homes oblivious? The answer is simple: Most families try to put their nest in reasonable condition, or find a nest in reasonable shape before raising their family. Kitchens and baths are often modernized, adequate wiring is installed, and the place is painted. Therefore, children particularly of the middle class, generally grow up in a dwelling which was

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at a reasonable standard when they became aware of it; and the period of their presence in the nest is short compared to the life of these systems. They see their family trade-in cars, but the house seems to go on without much work.

But owners of older houses have discovered that there comes a day when the plumber announces that some section of piping can no longer be patched up and must be subjected to radical surgery. - or the electrician informs them that the electric panel in their house cannot take any additional load.

Therefore, such homeowners know that a dwelling needs periodic major investment as well as continuous maintenance. Many of these major investments may be postponed without serious consequences for a few years. Thus, wartime rent control does little damage; usually, the resources for major system replacement are not available anyway during a war. But

Cambridge has now had Rent Control for more than a war's length, and we are headed for trouble if the effect of Rent Control is to stifle the required new investment in replacement and to encourage instead patch up repairs.

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The situation is tricky because the physical results are not immediately perceptible. What is perceptible is the attitude of building owners. If we find that many of them have found that operation under rent control is so difficult and unprofitable that they are deciding not to invest in the updating of their buildings, then we have set in motion a mechanism to produce a vast slum. The decision not to invest implies a future policy of reduced maintainance, a loss of interest in the property.

If the balance sheets of these buildings show a net of diminishing worth, the banks and other sources of funds will look elsewhere for opportunities to invest, and our housing stock will not receive the attention it requires.

After a decade of neglect, we shall surely have abandonments.

Let me return to the description of the various systems which make up a dwelling.

Foundations sometimes have problems; some break up because the supporting ground is unstable; some brick foundation walls laid with lime mortar collapse, but these problems are special and nonrecurring. We will treat foundations as permanent systems, not requiring replacement.

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Most of the older dwellings we are considering have wood frames.

The frame includes the walls, the floors and the miscellaneous beams and girders which combine to hold the building up. The frame also includes the boards on the outside, but not the outside finish, such as clapboards or shingles; it also includes rough underfloors, but not the finish floors.

And it includes the lumber under the roof. These parts of a house are all protected from the weather and wear by the outside weathering skin and the inside surface finishes. They will last for centuries if the other systems are intact.

The outside weathering skin includes the roof surface, the siding, the windows and doors, and the system, if any, for disposing of water from the roof, the gutters and downspouts. The weathering system now includes insulation and vapor barriers.

Let us look at the changes in the last fifty years or so. Asphalt shingles have replaced wood shingles; wood will burn and is not permitted anymore, unless fireproofed. Many houses are now equipped with double-hung windows sliding up and down balanced by weights. Wood always swells and shrinks with changes in humidity, and therefore a wood sash moving in a wood

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frame must be loose in dry weather or it will jam when wet. Unfortunately, the humidity is high in warm weather, which means that windows swell in the summer and are tight, and shrink in the winter and become loose and drafty. Today this seems bad, but no one used to be concerned because fresh air was needed in the house in winter to provide combustion air for the fireplaces and stoves which kept people warm. A coal stove short of oxygen produces carbon monoxide, and any fire smokes up a room if there is not a plentiful supply of air. Drafty windows were well adapted to a house with fires in individual rooms.

Of course, this has all changed. The advent of central heating and the banning of unvented oil stoves eliminated the need for fresh air for combustion. But the idea was so strongly held that you will find that warm air heating systems installed in the 1920's regularly provided an intake duct to the outside for fresh air, not for the furnace to burn but to supply the occupants of the house.

Today, everyone paying a heating bill would like a tight, well insulated house, and there are some steps which can be taken to improve

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existing houses. Combination windows are expected to cut the loss through the windows in half. They are usually made of metal and in operation are not as subject to changes in humidity as wood windows. But in many old Cambridge buildings the wood windows have served their time and should be replaced with new prime windows, perhaps with insulating glass or storm panels. It is easy to talk about maintenance, but maintenance of old wood sash is very expensive; the glass used to be set in putty which hardened. The putty tended to deteriorate and form cracks; a failure of the paint film over the putty led to crumbling of the putty, the glass became loose in the frame, and the window had to be taken apart. This involves heating the remaining putty to remove it, the removal of the glass and the bed of putty behind it, scraping down to bare wood and then starting over with new glazing compound. It is a lot of work. I have done it, and the results are still not as good as using modern sash with the glass set in a groove filled with nonhardening butyl. Also, modern sash incorporates metal or plastic weatherstrips which eliminate the old swelling - shrinking problem.

All this detail is tedious, but it is given to show the kind of choice a building owner faces: He would like to rip out the old sash and put in

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otherwise unsatisfactory. Plumbing is two systems: The large pipes are the drains and vents; the small pipes are for hot and cold water. These systems converge at the fixtures; it may be interesting to start with the limits of this convergence. You would not like to think that the contents of the fixtures could re-enter the water pipes. You are all familiar with the old cast iron tub with the faucets and filler mounted on the tub just below the rim. For many years prior to 1932, there were warnings that such an arrangement was unsafe because dirty water from the tub could be siphoned back into the water lines if the water pressure in the supply pipes fell and the tub was full. It happened in Chicago in 1932. There was a series of deaths at a hotel from a disease transmitted in this way; and below the rim fillers without special protectors are now illegal. But the old ones are still with us. The backsiphonage is highly improbable; and we live with risks which are very costly to eliminate and not likely to affect us. But such tubs should not be reinstalled if a bath id done over.

The copper water tubing which we now install with soldered joints was introduced about 1940. So far, it seems to work well. But there are miles

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of old galvanized water pipe joined to old brass pipe and corroding rapidly in our houses. It all must be replaced sooner or later, and it is probably uneconomic to continue it in service; it needs replacement.

Drains and vents were for a long time made of cast iron joined by fitting the end spigot of one piece into the enlarged bell of the piece below, packing the joint with oakum and pouring lead on top. This system is durable if made of extra heavy grade cast iron. But a lot of standard, or thin wall, pipe was installed, and it tends to give out. Replacement is going to be necessary, and expensive. Threaded galvanized iron pipe with special recess fittings was used for drains starting in the twenties; it tends to rust through and plug with debris. Copper tubing in larger sizes for drains came into use after World War II and is reasonably durable, but expensive. Now we are permitted to use plastic pipe in smaller buildings. This material is highly resistant to corrosion and has a smooth interior, reducing the tendency to plug. It is also quite inexpensive. We hope it lasts.

When a bathroom in a dwelling begins to give trouble because the drains are slow and not fixed by the usual methods, or leaks develop and replacement

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parts are not readily found, the owner and his plumber can consider the alternatives: Patch it up and live with it or start over. After reading this description of the life expectancies of the drain system and water system, you begin to realize that it is not usually the fixtures that give major trouble, but what is in the walls. Fixtures are surprisingly cheap compared to the piping.

But if you start to work on a bathroom, you very quickly find that when you disconnect the fixtures to get at the piping below, things do fall apart. I don't want to get into a detailed exposition on toilets; you know that the old model with a copper tank high on the wall in a fine wood box was replaced by the three piece units, with tank hung on wall connected to base by a brass elbow. These are now being replaced by units with the tank bolted directly to the base, or one piece units. Cast iron bathtubs with no provision for showers are not attractive to tenants; people want showers; and showers use much less hot water, and save a lot of energy, and should be encouraged. Old washbasins will go on working for a long time if left undisturbed, but are expensive to work on. Parts are rare and expensive. Therefore, if the owner is hopeful about his property he will put in a new bath. If he does not, his building will not only be antique, it will also

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probably have rapidly increasing repair bills; and leaks from antique plumbing damage floors and ceilings, and can cause serious rot in the structure.

Some Cambridge houses have the remains of four or five heating systems: Each served its day and was replaced when it wore out or was producing poor results. We have talked about stoves and fireplaces in individual rooms: This method is still found in a modern form, using gas kitchen heater stoves and individual gas heaters in rooms. Central heating started with gravity hot air, fired by hand and without a blower. Next came steam; then gravity hot water, forced hot water, forced warm air, and electric heat. I am not going to describe each system in detail, but certain trends can be identified.

Basically the core of a heating system other than electric consists of a fire in an enclosed container, with smoke vented to the outdoors; during the last hundred years the fuel has ranged from wood to coal to oil and gas. And the method of putting the fuel in the fire has changed from hand stoking to automatic.

Then the heat in the furnace must be distributed to the rooms; This can

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done by having air passages around the fire box, and ducting heated air to  
rooms, by boiling water and distributing steam in pipes with condensed steam  
flowing back as water, by heating water and having it circulate by gravity or  
pump.

However, certain systems can be controlled to produce just the amount of heat desired in each room. We are all familiar with steam heated buildings where windows of some rooms are left open to moderate the heat, while other parts of the building are chilly. No one worried much about this when fuel was cheap but today it is clear that fuel is expensive and limited and it is contrary to public policy to waste it.

Therefore, just as we need to insulate and tighten the weathering shell of the building, so we must install heating equipment which delivers the heat where  
it is needed, and not out the windows. This can all be accomplished, but not with  
fifty year old machinery.

We all now expect to use electrical appliances which were not even thought of a few years ago, nor planned for when the wiring was installed. Furthermore, the insulation on wires fifty years old has often lost its resilience and has crumbled. Many fires are attributed to faulty electric wiring, and it is clear that much must be done to make the electric systems in homes both safe and sufficient.

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All these minutiae about parts of buildings add up to a single crucial message: The mechanical systems of buildings have limited useful lives even with the best possible maintenance, and the Rent Board should set rents which ensure that landlords will be able to make these replacements as they become necessary. It is not enough to say that we will make individual adjustments long after the investment has been made which will allow the owner to recapture the cost of the investment. The rent structure must provide enough money on a current basis to permit the continuous investment which is required. This can only be financed out of the net income; if you look at rents and expenses since 1970, you will find that over this period the net income in dollars has been almost level, while the cost of building replacements has about doubled.

The Board may well require that owners take care of their buildings, but it must at the same time set rents which make it possible for owners to do what they need to do to serve their tenants.

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Section 1 of Chapter 36 finds that our housing emergency was created by:

1. Housing demolition
2. Deterioration of a substantial proportion of the housing stock
3. Insufficient new housing construction
4. Increased costs of construction and finance
5. Inflation
6. Influx of young people
7. The desirability of Cambridge as a place to live.

It further asserts these factors have "resulted in a substantial and increasing shortage of decent rental housing accommodations especially for families of low and moderate income and for elderly people on fixed income and abnormally high rents".

Section I concludes with some generalities about the consequences of not controlling rents.

My purpose here is to focus on the problem as perceived by the legislators; this may help the Rent Board with its deliberations about

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the general adjustment.

Of the seven enumerated items above all except Item 5 relate to market conditions in housing. Clearly, demolition and deterioration remove dwellings from the housing stock; increased costs prevent rapid addition to the stock; thus the supply of housing is seen as falling.

On the demand side, there is reference to the influx of young people and the general strong demand found in Cambridge.

When demand is strong and the supply inelastic, there are opportunities to raise the price. The phrase "abnormally high rents" refers to rents set to take advantage of the market imbalance: These the act seeks to prevent.

That is our charge today. No one has authorized us to create  
and administer a vast income transfer scheme, to tax one segment of  
our society for the benefit of another. What we are to do is prevent  
rent increases which are "abnormal". But we are equally required to grant to owners a fair net operating income, which we can infer means setting rents which allow for normal increases. All actors in our  
economic system try to preserve or improve their positions; the Rent  
Board formula allows owners to preserve their positions, but not

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improve them.

Insofar as we can, we should set rents at levels which are quite close to what a competent conservative manager would choose, giving proper attention to his costs, to costs of replacement of elements of the building, and to a moderate return. What we must prevent is the speculative activity of those who would make a quick profit by taking advantage of excess demand.

It would be very helpful if we had accurate information on how many families were unduly burdened by rent. The data from the 1970 census are that 51% of households pay less than 25% of income in rent, 15% pay between 25 and 35% and 30% pay over 35%. We know that 71% of the last group had incomes under \$5,000.00. But we do not know the family size or age of these households. Clearly, a single person can afford to devote a much higher proportion of income to rent. There appears to be no information available to help us to count the families who are pressed.

But we do know that a majority of families were paying less than a quarter of their income as rent in 1970.

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These families are entitled to protection against sudden opportunistic rent hikes; but they can afford to pay normal increases in rent based on the Rent Board formula. There would certainly be no basis for inferring from anything in Chapter 36 that we were to require an involuntary subsidy for their benefit from owners.

This all leads to a simple conclusion: Rent Control is a tool of limited usefulness. We should not assume authority not granted to us to convert it to an income transfer device, but should remind ourselves what we are here to do: Make such general adjustments of rent as are necessary to permit reasonable, but often unlettered, owners to pay their expenses, have money for replacements and an income somewhat protected from inflation.

It is for this reason that I have advocated recognition of the 1967 base. The Board's 30% adjustment over 1967 left owners worse off than they had been in 1967 by several percent. If we adopt 1973 as a base year, it simplifies our work, but we should either build into our adjustment the amount omitted from the Regulation 70 adjustment; or we should find some other method to avoid the progressive erosion caused by

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adoption of new base years for general adjustments. Otherwise, we are  
going to create a situation where rents by general adjustment fall so  
far below rents by individual adjustment that more and more owners  
will either come in for individual adjustments, or sell to someone  
else who is willing to take on this burden. The less we grant in  
general adjustments, the greater the probability of an individual  
adjustment, and the bigger the sudden hike in rent which the individual  
adjustment will grant.

Thus, my preference is to make an adjustment which recognizes  
all cost increases since 1967, but only adjusts half the net income.

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Also, the administrative burden is lightened  
& the small owner is disadvantaged by the  
prospects of administrative burden.

The 1977 General Adjustment raises a question which the Board has never analyzed or dealt with before: What is the proper relationship of the rents set by general adjustments to the rents set as a result of individual adjustments.

The Board adopted the present individual adjustment formula in 1972. We have applied this formula in hundreds of cases; and the Board has yet to receive a concrete proposal to change the formula.

However the disparity between the rents set by our formula for individual adjustments and by general adjustments has now increased alarmingly because we have not made general adjustments of proper amount.

The Rent Board charts show what has happened: In 1972 - 73 rents by general adjustment were about 90% (154/172) of the formula rent. In 1976, this ratio is 79% (172/218).

It is futile to argue whether owners have dealt with the erosion of their income by cutting down on essential ordinary operating expenses, principally maintenance, or whether they have simply accepted reduced net income. Whichever view you prefer, it leads inevitably to a gradual wrecking of our housing.

This follows because the only expense over which an owner has much control is maintenance. If he cuts down on maintenance, the deterioration of the dwellings simply accelerates, and owner and tenant both lose.

If for purposes of discussion, we assume that the owner continues to operate his building as before, his net income in dollars will be no more than it was in 1967. Meanwhile the cost of major replacements and renovations has more than doubled since 1967. This brings it about that he will not have the funds to make these vital new investments, without which the building will simply become obsolete.

It must be clear that if the value of the permitted net operating income is allowed to fall as sharply as it has, a prudent owner would have a great deal of trouble justifying to himself or a lender a further investment in the same property.

It is my proposal that the Rent Board by general adjustments adjust one half the median net by the change in C.P.I. income. This can also be expressed as adjusting the entire median net by one half the increase in C.P.I.

There is no magic in the fraction one half. But observe that the Rent Board is often asked to have the impact of inflation shared between owner and tenant, adjusting one half the net results in sharing on a 50 - 50 basis.

It also happens that the adjustment mandated by Regulation 70, setting rents at 30% over 1967, closely approximated a 50% adjustment of the net after adjusting expenses. When the Rent Board adopted Regulation 70 in the Fall of 1972, there was very little opposition and no legal challenge. The Rent Board then as now explained that rents set by the General Adjustment would be somewhat lower than an owner could obtain by an individual adjustment. But a vast majority of owners found that they could live with this difference rather than go to the trouble of an individual adjustment.

General adjustments must continue to satisfy the overwhelming majority of owners, or we will be inundated with petitions. The staff now estimates that in 1975 - 76 it cost \$3.84 per dwelling to make a general adjustment, and over \$80.00 per dwelling to make an individual adjustment. The potential burden on the City can be calculated rather

easily: There are about 20,000 controlled units.

It is also important to remember that almost all buildings have had capital improvements of one sort or another since the adoption of rent control and will continue to do so. Under our rules, an owner must petition for an individual adjustment to receive any return on a capital improvement. As the number and value of these capital improvements in any building accumulates through the years, the situation tends to push owners to petition where they might not have done so a few years ago, unless the general adjustments are reasonable.

Thus a practice of allowing the ratio of net by general adjustment to formula net to fall produces ever increasing pressure on owners to petition. For those small owners who find the individual adjustment procedures of the Rent Board very burdensome, this situation is a powerful disincentive to doing anything to improve their buildings.

This leads me to my last point: We are well on the way in Cambridge to producing a two class system for property owners. We have the well organized investment property managers who have all the middle

class skills in recordkeeping and bookkeeping, who come in regularly for individual adjustments and are doing reasonably well. This group includes also those who can obtain tax abatements from the Appellate Tax Board.

Since these owners tend to have buildings with many dwelling units and relatively high rents, the unit costs to them for processing a petition are not high in relation to the increased rents obtained.

The small owner who is not a full time property manager is at the other extreme. He is often not skilled in presentation of financial affairs, has records in disorder, and has a regular job which conflicts with days spent at rent board hearings. Because his holdings are small and his rents usually lower the return from a Rent Board petition is proportionately much lower.

Such owners are dependent on general adjustments; and the Board is aware that the City Council, the legislative body now responsible for our activity, has expressed concern that small owners be treated fairly.

Therefore, I urge the Board to consider seriously adopting a policy of adjusting one half the median net in addition to operating expenses in a general adjustment.



# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MASSACHUSETTS 02139 · 6-7-876-6800

Barbara Ackermann  
City Councillor

February 25, 1977

To: Rent Control Study Committee

From: Barbara Ackermann

## Relevant City Policies

### Neighborhood Goals:

The City has endorsed the concept of neighborhood stabilization and revitalization. A diverse population is to be maintained with an emphasis on providing a suitable environment for families.

### Code Enforcement:

Bring up to code and maintain all residential buildings in standard condition.

### Rehab and Conservation:

Emphasize rehab of existing stock rather than on new construction.

### Home Ownership:

Preserve and expand opportunities for home ownership.

### Assessment:

Compliance with the State Tax Commission, who gives approval to the City Assessors for abatements and adjustments.

### Rent Control:

Regulate rents and control evictions.

Assure that rents for controlled units are at levels which yield to the landlords a fair net operating income.



# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

678 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 681-0400-C401-0402-0403-0404

## RENT CONTROL BOARD

J. Kenneth Griffin, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Peter D. Stanton, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

MEMO

FEBRUARY 26, 1977

TO: STUDY COMMITTEE OF THE RENT CONTROL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE  
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: J. KENNETH GRIFFIN

SUBJECT: SUGGESTIONS FOR THE RESEARCH PROGRAM TO EVALUATE RENT  
CONTROL AS PART OF A TOTAL HOUSING STRATEGY

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This memo reflects my personal view of a research program and should not be taken to represent the views of the Rent Board or of its individual members.

I recommend that this committee begin its design of a research program by making a decision as to how it should proceed. I suggest that if the committee is to be productive and successful it must be certain to begin with the "basics" and make certain the "basics" are followed. I suggest the following "basics" are required for a fair research program to evaluate rent control as part of a total housing strategy:

1. Design a plan
2. Keep the plan current
3. Base the plan on actual needs
4. Include information sources in the plan
5. Include in the plan specifications for;
  - i.) information development
  - ii.) information maintenance
  - iii.) information use
6. Specify resources necessary to follow the plan

### Designing a Plan-

I recommend a plan which is designed to answer general categories of questions at varying times which will endure for decades and not a plan designed to answer limited questions for a particular point in time. The design of the continuing plan, as opposed to a static plan, is a more difficult task but its rewards are well worth the effort.

The continuing plan must be based on information development maintenance and use with short and long range objectives.

The short range aspect responds to budget realities and the need for immediate responses to a limited number of questions. Implementation goals in the short range are expressed as completed combinations of development, maintenance, and use activities. When a goal has been attained it will mean: that a development effort has generated specific automated data elements; that the maintenance effort is operable and certifies a level of quality that meets predetermined requirements consistently, even over the long run; that a processing capability exists to apply the data responsively to at least one actual information need, with more potential needs to follow.

This phased approach makes small segments of the data base available for use in the shortest possible time and is preferred over the alternative that focuses until there is completion of the development of the data base, then on maintenance, and finally on data use.

The long range aspect provides the basis for a long term commitment which is essential in building a reliable information capability. Long term simply means that no time limits are set in

advance of annual budget approval. Thus, small or irregular funding levels are patiently invested to complete a segment of the total picture while the added costs from annual inflation and lost opportunities continue to accrue.

It may be necessary to use the plan to secure the commitment of the City Council, Manager, and Departments effected to enable the committee to implement the plan. It seems reasonable to assume that the Council, Manager, and the Departments will support a long range program only when there is a clear understanding of the investment required over time to satisfy the needs of the plan and the return that investment will give to the City.

If properly devised, the plan will serve the City in various ways for as long as information is required. The plan should provide an approach for identifying future information needs and arriving at solutions. It should provide a benchmark against which new needs and the resulting development, maintenance, and use solutions can be costed and timed. It should provide an incentive to maintain a constant vigil for funds and for opportunities to reduce costs.

A plan should provide a positive atmosphere in the face of uncertain funding where potential information needs are considered when they are first recognized, thus preserving valuable lead time. The plan can provide improved opportunities to share the information development yield from complementary activities ongoing elsewhere in the City.

#### Keep the Plan Current-

Prepare the plan in the form of a working document rather than a finished report. Then use the plan in the periodic review of goals against achievements--at least every six months for data development and maintenance, and more often for the more frequently modified data use activities-- reassess the City's information needs and reaffirm information application priorities; document progress; review data sources for quality and completeness; update the plan

accordingly.

Base the plan on actual needs-

Key the plan for information development and use to priority needs for research and planning activities or milestones. Prepare the plan as far in the future as it is possible to predict information needs, at least two and one half years ahead. A plan based on only a single budget year, prepared six months in advance, may not provide sufficient lead time to coordinate data related activities, to test a method or a program before incorporating it at full scale, or to obtain alternative resources should it be necessary to do so.

Information development can easily extend beyond a single budget year depending on the funding level and the scope of the desired information capability.

Maintenance is required during the entire life of the information system. The maintenance activity varies closely with development in the early implementation period when a high proportion of errors need correction and information use is relatively small.

Information use grows as the reliability of the data improves, the data base expands, and as applications produce timely and usable results at affordable costs. As implementations of the plan continues and data applications increase, maintenance is less used as a support for development and becomes more responsive to data use.

Include Information Sources-

The plan must identify and inventory relevant information sources available to the Study Committee from the City Departments and elsewhere, in manual and machine processable form. Identifying

a data element and its source is alone not sufficient to determine its acceptability. The process used to generate or collect and maintain each potential data element must be clearly understood before a decision is made and then well documented for data elements included in the accepted data base. The following considerations should be among those to be made by the Committee in arriving at a decision to include or exclude an element;

1. the data element should be continuously available
2. the definition or validity of the data element should not vary without ample advance warning
3. constraints placed on data use necessary to protect privacy should be weighed carefully
4. accuracy and completeness or reliability of each data element should be determined
5. the format for each data element should either satisfy requirements or be capable of necessary modification at an affordable cost.

Attached as exhibits to this memorandum are Summary Forms which contain outlines of the relevant information sources available to the Committee from City Departments. The forms have been prepared by the Rent Control Department as part of the Department's continuing effort to improve information available to the City. In addition to information available for the Committee from the City, other sources should be investigated and developed.

Include Specifications in the Plan-

I recommend that the plan should detail the information development process necessary to include each data element not yet available in an acceptable automated format (automated format is required for a lasting program). The term "development" is defined as the construction of data files available to the Committee required by the research program. It includes the tasks necessary to collect, code, edit, automate, reformat, and insert data in a predetermined computer processable file format. Data can be in

a raw state, never having been captured for use in an organized fashion, or it can be in machine processable form, but out of date or created to someone else's specifications (see attached summary forms under "automated"- left center of each form).

A procedure must be designed to perform these steps taking into consideration complementary data development efforts funded elsewhere in the City. Job responsibilities must be clearly defined for each step in the procedure. Some of these steps should be as follows:

1. design data collection forms
2. write routines to select computerized data
3. schedule and purchase necessary supplies and services
4. develop codes and instructions
5. transcribe data in a form suitable for conversion to a machine processable medium
6. develop procedures to detect and correct errors

The plan should include detailed maintenance procedures covering each element in the automated data base. The term "maintenance" is defined as the replacement of data values with correct or more recent values. The value of a maintenance system for the data cannot be overstated. It forms the basis for a fair research program. Some of the steps to detail maintenance procedures should be as follows:

1. review and adjust accuracy and completeness standards
2. detect errors and missing values
3. design forms to transcribe changes
4. establish arrangements for obtaining change information from acceptable sources for the life of the program
5. periodically collect changing data values
6. code and transcribe changes on transaction forms
7. convert, edit, and correct the update transactions

8. insert the updates into the data base
9. check the results and provide an audit trail
10. support a history file tracing the changing values for selected data elements.

The plan must describe specific applications of the data base and relate them to the research activities of the Committee and to the planning activities of the Council. The specific applications are the "data use" which is defined as the generated applications of the data base, or the specific results achieved in response to questions on a day to day basis (in the long term).

The purpose of this meeting of the research team is to "develop a set of questions as part of the design of a research program." (see the proposal for the procedure for a research program as amended December 16, 1976- attached) I have been asked for my thoughts as to what questions might be asked. Given the present status of the available data to the City I do not believe any questions can be asked which will evaluate Rent Control as part of a total housing strategy other than questions which are designed to obtain information to be used to form a data base. When a data base is developed the questions which can be asked might be as follows:

1. What is the house number of each individual housing unit in the City?
2. What is the unit identification number of each housing unit in the City?
3. What is the street name for each housing unit in the City?
4. How many housing units are in a property at a unique location in the City?
5. What is the zip code for mailing to each individual housing unit in the City?
6. Is the housing unit is a building containing residential units only, or are there commercial or industrial units also?

7. Is the housing unit under rent control, or is it in public housing, subsidized housing, or is it exempt from rent control? Why?
8. What services are provided to the housing unit?
9. Who owns the housing unit?

I can go on and on to describe the important data elements which are necessary to have to form a data base from which a research program can begin to ask questions to develop a strategy. I suggest that it is simple too early in the process of designing the program to be able ask the detail of information or data use. What must be done first is to describe applications not specific questions.

From a data retrieval request (question) originating with a planner (study committee person or member of the council) or from a staff professional (research assistant or City Department employee), computer systems, programming, and operations specifications are developed to deliver a particular product (the answer to the question, if there is an answer). Some of the specific information necessary to develop a useful information product is as follows:

1. What output mode is required
  - i.) interactive
  - ii.) immediate access
  - iii.) batch
  - iv.) remote
2. What type of output is required
  - i.) cathode-ray tube
  - ii.) printed report-
    - a) listing and sort sequence
    - b) tabulation
    - c) graph
    - d) map
  - iii.) punched cards
  - iv.) punched paper tape
  - v.) magnetic tape, disc, or drum
  - vi.) microfilm or microfiche
3. What will be the production frequency
  - i.) one-time
  - ii.) as requested
  - iii.) periodically

4. What will be the input mode
  - i.) interactive
  - ii.) remote
5. What will be the content of the input
  - i.) data elements
  - ii.) constant values
6. What types of computations and tests will be performed with the data
7. What will be the output format and size.

Specify Resources Necessary to Follow the Plan-

Data is one of the key resources for an effective research effort. The other key resources are people, software, and hardware, and the plan which documents the methods and procedures that bind the resources together in an organized, but not necessarily centralized system. Decisions affecting these resources will be more heavily influenced by outside considerations - how the City plans to supply data processing services - than those decisions concerning the data design of the plan.

People perform the following information related functions;

- 1.) Administration
- 2.) Systems analysis
- 3.) Programming
- 4.) Computer operations
- 5.) Data conversion
- 6.) Clerical

Software provides the means of communication between people and hardware. User oriented packages perform certain specialized jobs and sometimes allow people with little or no programming background to create, maintain, control, and use their own data base. High level programming languages provide the means to develop sets of instructions efficiently directing the computer

to produce specific outputs. Operating systems provide the means to control all of the various jobs submitted for processing at the computer site.

Hardware consists of the component devices connected by cables or communication lines that under software command quickly perform the required operations on an automated data base. The hardware is the computer.

The City has many automated data files as is demonstrated by a review of the attached summary forms for various departments. The City does not have an effective or efficient software and hardware assortment to use the data files in existence or to create additional needed files. The City does not have the people trained for systems analysis, programming, computer operations, or data conversion. Therefore, the Committee and the Research Team have two alternatives; have the City obtain the necessary resources or; have someone other than the City provide the Resources. I recommend that the City must obtain the resources and further recommend the following package:

People- Existing personnel (Management and staff)

Software- PDP RSX - 11 interactive operating system which is required for the operation of ADMINIS (Applications language package). This software includes ADMIS which allows existing personnel to communicate with the particular hardware on which FDP RSX - 11 ADMINIS operates.

Hardware- Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC)

1 PDP 11/70 96K words main frame (or with modifications of the equipment to follow, a PDP 11/34) Either a PDP 11/34 or a PDP 11/70 is required in order to be able to use the above software

1 TU/16 dual density tape drive

- 1 1250 LPM high speed printer
- 1 DH 11 communications port - capacity, 16 CRTs
- 16 VT 52 Crt terminals
- 2 RP 06 disk storage drives (352 Megabytes)
- 1 key to tape or key to disk off-line data conversion medium.

The people, software and hardware recommended would allow all departments with information useful to a data base for housing studies to be connected to the computer and maintain the data base. In addition, it would provide the Committee and Study Team a direct line to the data base and allow for instant, or nearly instant research and data use.

#### Conclusion-

If the City had a plan for the use of a housing related data base and if the plan was possible to implement because it was based on a detailed data base operating on and with the recommended hardware and software the City of Cambridge would never cease to benefit from the products produced.

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Building

DATE: December 1, 1976

PERSON(S): Mr. Charles Sprague

ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:

Provides permits for construction, alteration, demolition, occupancy.

INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:

AUTOMATED

None

MANUAL

Actual permits and 3" x 5" summary card file in property location sequence containing type of permit - permit number - # of DUS - Owner - Date - Contractor's name - Other miscellaneous information.

OTHER POTENTIAL USES:

Rent Control, License, Planning & Community Development, Assessor

PROCESSING NEEDS: None discussed.

Automation of permit operation would facilitate a more vigorous enforcement of city and state codes and regulations through shared address-based file.

INFORMATION NEEDS:

Unreported construction starts, occupancies, alterations or demolitions; activity that starts prior to permit filing.

SOURCE:

Assessor - Water - Rent Control - Planning & Community Development - Health - Fire

INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL

GENERAL ATTITUDE: Good. But needs must be more closely assessed.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:

DATA BASE(S):

METHOD:

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Cambridge Housing Authority

Several: October, 1976

DATE: and December, 1976 PERSON(S): Dan Wuenschel

ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:

Maintenance of public housing - federal and state programs

INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:

AUTOMATED

MANUAL

Rent collection and maintenance data  
for public housing projects

Leased Housing Program

OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:

Rent Control, Planning & Community Development.  
RC has ownership, location and market rent data for all leased housing units.

PROCESSING NEEDS:

Listings and tabulations of rents for all apartments, and rent averages for  
buildings with any leased housing units.

INFORMATION NEEDS:

SOURCE:

Rent by apartment for all buildings  
containing any leased housing units.

Rent Control

INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL

GENERAL ATTITUDE: Excellent

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES: CHA funds to automate leased housing data

DATA BASE(S): Rent Board Master - expanded

METHOD: Not discussed.

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Election Board

DATE: December, 1976 PERSON(S): Ed Semp (Telephone)

ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:

Voter registration  
City Census

INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:

AUTOMATED

MANUAL

City voter registration and census file

OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:

Rent Control, Police, Fire, Planning and Community Development

PROCESSING NEEDS:

Now being switched from outside service bureau to  
School Board computer

INFORMATION NEEDS:

SOURCE:

None discussed

INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL

GENERAL ATTITUDE: No actual statement, but feeling is they want to control  
their own data and prefer not to share.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:

DATA BASE(S):

METHOD:

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Fire

October 7, 1976

DATE: December 16, 1976 PERSON(S): Deputy Jelinas

ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:

Fire prevention through inspection  
 Fire fighting

INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:

AUTOMATED	MANUAL
UFIRS - Discontinued (Federally financed reporting system) (Maintained for over one year) (Dropped January, 1976)	Fire inspection reports Fire incidents reports Fire rescue reports

OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:

Rent Control - Planning & Development - Building Department - Water

PROCESSING NEEDS:

Dispatch information. See Police

INFORMATION NEEDS:

SOURCE:

Inspection data )	Manual files
Previous fire incidents data)	Dime file
Geo-based data	Land use inventory
Building descriptions - use, occupancy data	

INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL

GENERAL ATTITUDE: Good

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES: LEAA - See police

DATA BASE(S): = Command and control sub system

METHOD: Refer to Charlotte, N. C. and Huntington Beach, Ca.

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Health and Hospitals

November 23, 1976

DATE: December 17, 1976

PERSON(S): Dick Conway

Alice Slater

**ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:**

Inspection enforcing city health code.

**INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:**

**AUTOMATED**

None

**MANUAL**

- A. "open" and "Closed" files 8½ x 11 for general housing inspection results
- B. Lead paint inspections
- C. Lodging house inspections
- D. Low income and elderly inspections
- E. Commercial inspections

**OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:**

A, B, C, D - Rent Control, Planning & Community Development

**PROCESSING NEEDS:**

Automation of the inspection and follow-up process

**INFORMATION NEEDS:**

Building owners' and managers' names )  
 Building owners' and managers' addresses )  
 Property location skeleton file for City)

**SOURCE:**

Rent Control

**INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL**

**GENERAL ATTITUDE:** Good

**POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:** City expense budget

**DATA BASE(S):** = Rent Board Master - Extract

**METHOD:** No discussions yet.

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: License

DATE: September 28, 1976 PERSON(S): Phyllis McLaughlin, Secretary

ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:

Issue licenses for lodging houses and other regulated business activities.

INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:

AUTOMATED

None

MANUAL

A list of lodging house locations in street address sequence contains: Owner name, address, Manager's name, phone no. for both, number of rooms.

OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:

Rent Control - Planning & Community Development.

PROCESSING NEEDS: None discussed - But licensing and mailing functions could be automated to speed cash movement - Increase accuracy and compliance.

INFORMATION NEEDS:

Owners of registered rooming houses  
Locations of registered rooming houses  
Number of units, shared bathrooms

SOURCE:

Rent Control

INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL

GENERAL ATTITUDE: Good

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES: City Expense Budget

DATA BASE(S): = Rent Board Master

METHOD: Not discussed.

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Police

DATE: October 8, 1976 PERSON(S): Dana Skiff

**ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:**

Dispatching investigation teams  
 Accident reports  
 Crime reports

**INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:**

<b>AUTOMATED</b>	<b>MANUAL</b>
None	Calls are logged for dispatch Reports are completed by hand and filed.

**OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:**

Traffic - Fire - Emergency medical

**PROCESSING NEEDS:** Automated dispatch system that provides available data pertinent to the scene and to the situation before investigating team arrives. See Huntington Beach, Ca.

**INFORMATION NEEDS:**

**SOURCE:**

Warrants	Criminal activity	) To be created from land use inventory, police files and dime file
Medical history	Narcotics registration	
Gun registrations	Street address/ Geo data)	

**INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL**

**GENERAL ATTITUDE:** Unknown

**POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:** LEAA

**DATA BASE(S):** Command and control sub systems:  
 Geo-based file

**METHOD:** See Charlotte, N. C. and Huntington Beach, Ca.



SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Redevelopment Authority

DATE: October 13, 1976 PERSON(S): Mr. Widden

<b>ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:</b>  Property acquisition by CRA	
<b>INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:</b> <b>AUTOMATED</b>  None	<b>MANUAL</b>  Lists of properties acquired: Address, description, owner, status
<b>OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:</b> Planning & Community Development Rent Control - They will supply RC with periodic information concerning new acquisitions with residential units.	
<b>PROCESSING NEEDS:</b>  None at present.	
<b>INFORMATION NEEDS:</b> Land use inventory data ..... Tax Assessor data ..... Real estate transfers .....	<b>SOURCE:</b> Planning & Community Development Assessor The Directory
<b>INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL</b>  <b>GENERAL ATTITUDE:</b> Good.  <b>POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:</b> None needed.  <b>DATA BASE(S):</b> =  <b>METHOD:</b>	

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Tax Assessor

Several:

DATE: December 16, 1976 PERSON(S): Bob Mossgraber and three Assessors

Roger Hardy

<b>ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:</b>	
Data - Collection for 100% valuation	
General assessment activities	
Tax billing	
<b>INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:</b>	
<b>AUTOMATED</b>	<b>MANUAL</b>
Real property tax files: taxable exempt	Data cards from field evaluation effort with CETA staff.
Tax arrears	
Tax collection data	
<b>OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:</b> Rent Control - Planning & Community Development - Building - Water - License Rent Control now has both taxable and exempt files.	
<b>PROCESSING NEEDS:</b> Data cards should be converted to automated form immediately after field work and in-office coding and editing to provide validation before field crews are disbanded, and for other uses.	
<b>INFORMATION NEEDS:</b>	<b>SOURCE:</b>
Listing of tax file in street address sequence.	Rent Board
<b>INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL</b>	
GENERAL ATTITUDE: Good.	
POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:	
DATA BASE(S):	
METHOD:	

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Traffic and Parking

DATE: October 7, 1976  
December 22, 1976

PERSON(S): Mr. Teso

Garry Morecroft

<b>ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:</b>	
Resident and Visitor Parking Permit Program	
Parking Regulation Enforcement and Revenue Collection	
Traffic Sign Maintenance	
Traffic Accident Analysis	
Street Openings and Closings - Traffic Flow Control	
<b>INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:</b>	
<b>AUTOMATED</b>	<b>MANUAL</b>
1. Resident parking sticker file	A. Card file - Street openings, closings
2. Automobile excise tax file	B. Traffic sign locations
3. Parking violation file	C. Parking meter locations
	D. On-street)-Parking capacity in map Off-street) and narrative form
4. Traffic signal control - Proposed with a dedicated computer	E. Accident reports
	F. Street names
<b>OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:</b>	
1. Rent Control	A. City clerk, Council, Planning & Community Development
2. Rent Control	B. & D. Planning & Comm. Dev.-Public Works
3. Police	E. Police
<b>PROCESSING NEEDS:</b>	
A central repository for street oriented information	
In-house processing of parking permit activity - relating excise tax info. to parking offense scofflaws and auto ownership	
Automation of traffic sign data	
<b>INFORMATION NEEDS:</b>	<b>SOURCE:</b>
None expressed	
<b>INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL</b>	
<b>GENERAL ATTITUDE:</b> Excellent	
<b>POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:</b> City expense budget, HUD 701	
<b>DATA BASE(S):</b> Street segment file	
<b>METHOD:</b> Use dime file as basis for developing the blockface and street segment detail records.	

SUMMARY FORM

GEOGRAPHIC OR ADDRESSED BASED INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT: Water

DATE: October 8, 1976 PERSON(S): Mr. Kelleher

<b>ACTIVITIES GENERATING INFORMATION:</b>	
Maintain water system - Supply water to City - Bill residents and businesses for water useage.	
<b>INFORMATION CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION:</b>	
<b>AUTOMATED</b>	<b>MANUAL</b>
1. Water billing file: Property location Name and address of person billed Account number Other consumption and cost related information	2 files - Property locations Billing accounts
<b>OTHER POTENTIAL USERS:</b>	
1. Rent Control, Treasurer RC now has copy of the water billing file.	
<b>PROCESSING NEEDS:</b>	
Now handled by outside service bureau.	
<b>INFORMATION NEEDS:</b>	<b>SOURCE:</b>
None expressed.	
<b>INFORMATION SHARING POTENTIAL</b>	
GENERAL ATTITUDE: Fair	
POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES:	
DATA BASE(S):	
METHOD:	

Focus: evaluation of benefits and costs of rent control, in relation to other aspects of the city's housing policy. Rather than focus on issues of whether or not rent control is needed, should accept some form of rent control as necessary and determine the kinds of policies needed to make it work better. Including policies of other housing-related departments, e.g. Housing Inspection, Buildings, Assessing, CD, CHA. changes ^

Data Sources: should include both "hard data"--e.g. analysis of rent control records for selected sample groups, in conjunction with other relevant sources (e.g. building permit data, BLS indices). And "soft data"--~~informal~~ interviews with various groups affected by rent control policy, e.g. tenants, owners, realtors, bankers, RCA. Use sources in complementary fashion; develop illustrative case studies.

General Framework of Analysis: should look at issues both for city <sup>as a whole</sup> ~~selected~~ and for different/sub-markets, e.g. 1) neighborhood 2) building type and size 3) owner type and size.

Issues:

I. Rents: how and why have rents changed under rent control?

A. what has been the impact of various types of adjustments (individual and general) on rents and on the number of bldgs affected?

B. how have different types of adjustments impacted different sub-markets and why? ~~Why have these outcomes~~

C. How have rents changed in relation to operating costs?

D. How have rents changed in relation to tenants' ability to pay?

E. How have rents changed in Cambridge in comparison to other cities or the metropolitan area generally?

F. How have particular rent control policies affected these outcomes--e.g. administrative procedures for individual adjustments, processing time, allowable operating cost policies.

G. How can other city programs be coordinated with rent control policy to achieve more reasonable rent levels (e.g. CHA-Section 8).

II. Evictions: how has rent control affected tenants' security of tenure and owners' ability to terminate tenancy for just cause?

A. How has the eviction certificate process affected owners' ability to initiate eviction proceedings, in terms of the outcome of various kinds of cases, length of processing time, and the impact of ~~various~~ specific rent control policies?

B. How has rent control affected the extent to which summary process proceedings are employed, in terms of actual summary process trends and court actions?

C. How can court procedures be ~~more~~ coordinated with rent control policy to achieve ~~a~~ more equitable outcomes?

III. Housing Quality: how has rent control affected the level of maintenance and services in controlled buildings?

A. ~~Tax~~ How have housing conditions changed under rent control, and what is the relative impact of rent control on these trends as compared with other factors (e.g. property tax rates, availability and cost of mortgage financing).

B. How have specific rent control policies affected the level and nature of capital improvements?

C. How have specific rent control policies ~~affected~~ encouraged or discouraged owners to repair major code violations?

D. How can rent control policy be coordinated with other city departments and existing or potential programs, e.g. Housing Inspection, home improvement/ municipal loan programs, to improve housing quality?

IV. Profitability, Sales, & Ownership Patterns

A. How has the profitability of buildings changed under rent control, according to various measures, and to what extent are these trends attributable to rent control as opposed to other factors (e.g. interest rates).

B. How have sales prices/<sup>and volumes</sup> changed under rent control, and what is the relative significance of rent control in comparison with other factors?

C. How have ownership patterns changed (e.g. owner-occupancy vs. absentee ownership, small vs. large owners, condominiums) and what is the relative impact of rent control on these trends?

V. New Construction

A. What are recent trends in subsidized and unsubsidized housing construction in Cambridge, and to what extent can they be attributed to rent control in relation to other factors (e.g. cost and availability of mortgage financing, land, and subsidies).

VI. Property Tax: what is the relationship of rent control to the city's property tax structure?

A. ~~What~~ What is the impact of property tax abatements granted under rent control, and the relative importance of rent control policies compared to other factors (e.g. prior over-assessments, failure of owners to petition for rent adjustments)?

B. How has the total valuation of rent controlled properties changed in relation to other sectors, and what is the relative significance of rent control in this process?

C. How has the <sup>distribution of the city's</sup> tax burden changed, and to what extent can these trends be attributed to rent control or other factors?

D. What conflicts ~~exist~~ exist between local/assessing <sup>rent control and ~~and~~ State</sup> ~~and~~ ~~tax~~ policies, and what are appropriate abatement practices for a rent controlled community?

February 26, 1977

Question submitted to the Rent Control Study Group

The Harlow Tenants group requests a survey of the number of rental units converted to condominiums during a specific time period, to examine the following aspects of such conversions:

- 1) What has been the rate of removal of rental units from the rental housing market?
- 2) What is the intended rate of removal of rental units by landlords planning condominium conversions?
- 3) What income levels and type of tenants have been displaced by the conversions?
- 4) What income levels and type of family unit (single, small family, elderly, etc) have been purchasers of these condominiums?

TO: Rent Control Committee, Cambridge City Council  
From: Cambridge Rent Control Task Force  
Date: 25 Feb. 1977  
Re: Suggested scope to rent control study

1. We feel that a preamble to the study would help focus the effort.

PREAMBLE: This study intends to evaluate the effectiveness of current and alternate housing policies in terms of their successes in the following areas:

1) to provide decent rental housing accommodations, especially for families of low and middle incomes. Special attention should be focused on the stabilization of the trend toward high income housing.

2) to perform the function of mediator between landlord and tenants.

2. Specific issues that we feel ought to be covered include:

- 1) income survey (or gather material from surveys done previously).
- 2) length of stay survey (transiency).
- 3) long-term deterioration survey.
- 4) study of causes of long-term deterioration: taxes, financing, churning, speculation, holding for demolition, age of owner and/or tenants, type of tenant, size of landlord's holdings, maintenance prior to rent control, length of life of housing type, age of building, assessment policies. (Study should use appropriate statistical techniques).
- 5) impact of educational institutions on housing stock.
- 6) survey of vacancy by type and location of unit as well as by rent level.
- 7) survey of type of occupant who vacated presently vacant units.
- 8) correlate results of other surveys by type of owner--absentee, resident in Cambridge, owner-occupant.
- 9) determine number of family size units, their cost, availability, condition, etc.
- 10) survey application of formulae to determine rent levels and adjustments.
- 11) survey landlord cash flows.
- 12) survey condominium conversion both realized and planned.

3. Special attention should be paid to making the results available in a form that retains comparability with prior studies.

4. The data collected should be sufficiently compatible as to build a single relational data base. IE. division of the data into categories different from those first chosen should be trivial.

Cambridge Civic Association

STATEMENT TO HCUSING RESEARCH TEAM

FEBRUARY 26, 1977

The Cambridge Civic Association has supported rent control because it has appeared to be the most effective technique to ensure that low and moderate income residents can continue to find decent, affordable housing in Cambridge, We have supported rent control as a means of encouraging long-term residency; as a protection for the elderly; and as a means of enabling low and middle income families to stay in Cambridge. We agree, however, that it is appropriate to conduct a study to determine whether rent control is helping Cambridge to meet these objectives; whether specific changes may be needed to make rent control work more effectively and more fairly; and whether Cambridge must adopt other strategies to achieve these goals.

We have worked with the coalition of organizations known as the Rent Control Task Force to draw up the list of questions that will be presented to you by its Chairperson, but we would like to emphasize a few points:

(1) We believe that the research plan should include a preamble listing specific housing policy objectives -- as contained in the rent control enabling act and other documents -- against which rent control and alternative programs will be evaluated.

(2) We propose that the study should evaluate alternative rent reduction techniques, such as subsidies and new tax structures, but the analysis must include a realistic assessment of the political and economic factors that may affect their value as central elements of a housing strategy.

(3) The study must not only look at the overall impact of rent control but should also examine the details of rent control legislation, regulations, and administration to determine whether specific changes would make the program more effective and less costly.

## Questions For Rent Control Committee

Feb. 26 '77

1. What is the real number of habitable apartments in Cambridge?
2. What is the vacancy rate?
3. Is there a housing shortage?
4. How many buildings under rent control have had their assessments lowered since rent control went into effect?
5. Why has it taken a year and a half for each of my individual adjustments?
6. Why doesn't the Board use mathematical formulas to determine rent levels instead of allowing for endless delays?
7. Why doesn't the Board allow more yearly across the board increases or decreases based on national statistics?  
Local and/or
8. Why isn't the Board responsive to all

citizen needs with speed and dispatch instead of keeping tenants and landlords suspended for months and years in financial uncertainty?

9. Why wasn't the Board after five years plugged its material into a data bank to speed up all its processes?

10. When is the City going to start a study to see the real effects of rent control on the city over the past 7 years?

For instance, how many people own rent controlled property now in comparison to the number in 1970?

How many units are there now compared to 1970?

How much has the city lost in property taxes from controlled property, since 1970.

How much has the R.C. office cost since 1970

How many people have failed or are in or near

bankruptcy because of rent control?

11. Why aren't adjustments retroactive to the date the process starts. The way it works now, tenants are encouraged to stall the process to delay the final judgement. The landlord is penalized by the city's inefficiency or the rent control office staff's bias against an individual landlord for real or imaginary reasons. Due process is truly denied. It is an unfair, lopsided procedure.
12. Why not abolish the whole department?

# CAMBRIDGE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION INC.

614 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

Telephone: 354-2626

## Officers

President: CARL F. BARRON  
Vice President: ROBERT A. JONES  
Treasurer: PAUL WATKINS  
Secretary: BARBARA R. DEMARNEFFE

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Thomas H. Niles  
Samuel Pillsbury  
Paul Watkins

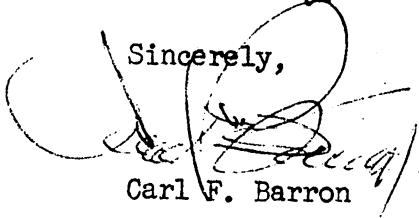
February 25, 1977

Hon. Barbara Ackermann, Chairman  
Rent Control Committee  
Cambridge City Council  
City Hall  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mrs. Ackermann:

Enclosed, you will please find a list of various points to which we would like to have answers or information supplied. We believe that answers to these questions would be of tremendous benefit to the entire City.

Sincerely,



Carl F. Barron

CFB/rdr  
Enclosure

February 25, 1977

QUESTIONS FOR THE RENT CONTROL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

AS PROPOUNDED BY THE CAMBRIDGE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

1. What has been the effect of rent control on the market value of controlled properties since 1970?
2. What has been the effect on the tax base of Cambridge?
3. How much of a shift of the tax burden has taken place from tenants to home-owners and business?
4. How much does rent control cost the taxpayer of Cambridge when you include the following:
  - a. The cost of administration
  - b. The cost of abatements granted
  - c. The loss of taxes due to controlled rents vs. free rents?
5. How many units have actually received the various city-wide rent adjustments authorized by the Rent Board in 1973 and in 1975?
6. How many units have received an individual adjustment (on a per building basis) for the years 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976?
7. The cost to the City for adjusting units on an individual basis vs. the cost on a city-wide basis?
8. What is the average time that it takes for a landlord to process a rent adjustment from the day he files his petition to the date he receives written notice that he may increase his rents?
9. What is the median cost and range in costs for a landlord to obtain an individual rent adjustment, taking into account lawyers' fees, accountants' fees and the time he spends at rent control hearings and board meetings?
10. Who is most successful in obtaining an individual rent adjustment - the small owner or the large owner?
11. How many units in the City have never received an individual rent adjustment?
12. How many rent-controlled properties have been foreclosed by banks and other financial institutions?
13. Who benefits most from rent control - the long-term tenant or the short-term tenant

14. Given the highly inflationary period from November 1972 to the present, and noting the three adjustments on a city-wide basis granted to owners during this period, have owners received fair net income as defined by the Board's formula?
  - a. If not, why not?
  - b. Have owners received adequate funds for maintaining their property during this period?
  - c. Have they received adequate funds for making capital improvements during this period?
15. How has rent control affected a landlord's ability to obtain bank financing?
16. Has rent control helped poor people and people on fixed incomes any more than those in the middle income and higher brackets?

HIGHLY EMOTIONAL ISSUE  
THAT BEARS FULL AND  
FAIR ANALYSIS?

~~MY STATEMENT IS~~

~~WHAT~~

MY ARTICLE EXPLAINS  
MY ~~STATEMENTS~~ <sup>OPINIONS</sup> AND THE THOUGHTS  
OF THE OFFICE THAT I  
REPRESENT?

- 1.) REDEFINE PROBLEM AND  
EMERGENCY
- 2.) IS RENT CONTROL  
THE SOLUTION
- 3.) HAS IT AFFECTED  
PROPERTY VALUE?
- 4.) IS THERE DISCREPANCIES  
IN RENTS OF SIMILAR

PROPERTIES AND ARTS?

- 5.) IS THERE A RESERVE  
FOR REPLACEMENT, <sup>REPAIR</sup> BUILT  
IN FORMULA TO ALLOW  
FOR PROPER REPAIR,  
MAINT & NECESSARY  
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS?
- 6.) HOW MANY OWNERS  
ARE UNABLE TO  
SECURE RENT CONTROL  
RENTS?
- 7.) WHAT IS CURRENT  
VACANCY RATE?
- 8.) IS THE COST  
OF ADH (DIRECT

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MASSACHUSETTS 02139

FROM THE OFFICE OF  
ASSESSORS

19

AND INDIRECT) GOING  
TO ELDERLY AND  
INDIGENT

9.) IS RENT CONTROL  
IN ITS PRESENT  
FORM SUBSIDIZING  
SOME NEW TO DO  
TENANTS

10.) WERE ADJUSTMENTS  
ADEQUATE AND  
TIMELY TO ABSORB  
INCREASED OPERATING  
COSTS?

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MASSACHUSETTS 02139

FROM THE OFFICE OF  
ASSESSORS

19

11.) ARE THE COSTS  
AND EFFECTS OF  
RENT CONTROL BEING  
BORNE BY THE  
OWNERS OF SINGLE FAMILY,  
OWNER OCCUPIED 2 & 3  
FAMILY PROPERTIES AND  
THE COMMERCIAL AND  
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR?

12. ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES

13.)

# City of Cambridge

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*In City Council*.....

*The*

*Committee*

*to which*

*Reports,*

S-172

**REPORT**

Committee on Rent Control together with a copy of the minutes of the Feb. 26, 1977 meeting and a notification that the next meeting will be held on April 21, 1977 in the City Council Chamber.

In City Council,

March 28, 1977

3/30/77

- Placed on File -