

Councillor Reeves asked whether the staff had information about places with vibrant and well-functioning neighborhoods. Mr. Dash said there have been studies on “neighboring” and what promotes “neighboring.” Social networks are the key ingredients for good neighborhoods. Social networks organize around schools, churches and other civic organizations.

Councillor Reeves noted that schools in Cambridge are not neighborhood schools and speculated that perhaps they should be.

Mr. Dash informed the committee that the physical environment is also a factor. Changes such as calming traffic and supporting the pedestrian environment have made significant improvements in the quality of neighborhood life in many cities. Ms. Glazer added that parks and open space can provide opportunities for social networks among neighbors.

Mr. Dash said that planners must also think about the physical barriers. For example, busy streets are often dividers of neighborhoods. Broadway in mid-Cambridge acts as a neighborhood divider; Massachusetts Avenue has a similar effect on many parts of Cambridge.

Councillor Simmons said that at the National League of Cities (NLC) Conference, she and Councillor Davis learned of an interesting program in San Jose, California. The program focused on the fragile neighborhoods, and gave the neighborhood some control over funds to make the improvements that they wanted.

Councillor Reeves recalled the example of Minneapolis, where each neighborhood has funds to spend on what they want. It did move democracy closer to the people.

Councillor Reeves raised the example of Neighborhood Four. The neighborhood contains two schools, many churches, a youth center, mom and pop stores that are well patronized, several day care centers. He asked if Area Four is a good neighborhood.

Councillor Simmons said that it is a great neighborhood; it just has some elements that are not desirable, such as the recent shootings and violence. The neighborhood still has a fairly decent mix of long term residents and newcomers. There are little subgroupings within the neighborhood.

Councillor Reeves asked about the Neighborhood Four study. Mr. Dash replied that CDD staff is finishing up the update. They have had three neighborhood meetings. There will be a fourth in July, which will focus on the overall picture.

Councillor Reeves requested copies of all of the neighborhood studies. Mr. Dash suggested also looking at some other reports such as the Gibbs Report, the Committee to Enhance Central Square Now Report.

Councillor Simmons said that many times the City does a lot for neighborhoods that neighborhood residents do not see. She would be interested to know more about how the City decides what it can do. She added that very little of the neighborhood studies make their way into the work of the City Council.

Councillor Reeves said that he is interested in building a city with dynamic, good neighborhoods, with more emphasis on the human interaction part. He is worried that Cambridge is becoming increasingly rich and increasingly disconnected.

Councillor Reeves said that he expects to have more frequent meetings in the summer. He mentioned the Citiscape program, a three-year study by students at RSTA – starting with infrastructure and building and including residents and sociology.

Councillor Reeves said that he would like more information about various movements, discussions and studies of what makes a good neighborhood, what are the “good cities” according to the experts and what are the criteria used to evaluate them.

Councillor Reeves invited public comment; although, he said that in his experience this is not a defined part of committee meetings.

John Moot, 44 Coolidge Hill Road, stated that he worked in the anti-poverty movement. The neighborhood organizers were one of the most valuable parts of that program. He suggested that the committee focus on the more urban, “true” neighborhoods in Cambridge, rather than places like his neighborhood, Neighborhood Ten. His neighborhood does have activities, for example they set up tables on the street for a street-long dinner, but other neighborhoods have more of the elements that make Cambridge the special place it is.

He said that his other question is what has happened to neighborhoods since the end of rent control, and how CDD can adapt its studies to take these changes into account?

Steve Kaiser, Hamilton Street, said his concern is whether the neighborhood studies are as good as we want them to be. The word “planning” has been removed from the name of the CDD.

Mr. Moot added that the thirteen neighborhoods were defined in 1950 by Mark Flood. Perhaps they should be changed to reflect changes in the city and the population.

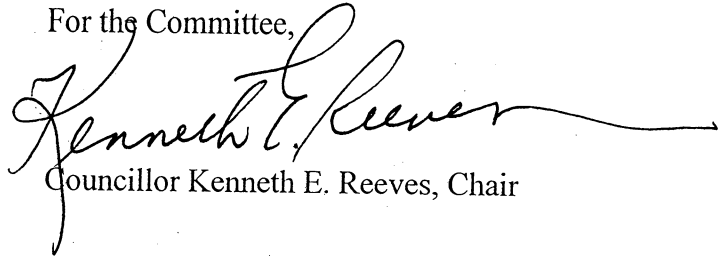
Stash Horowitz, Vice President, Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods, Co-Chair of Cambridge Neighborhood Initiative (CNI), said that even though each neighborhood has its own character, all have some common problems. The problems come from our richness. There is a great gap between the haves and the have-nots. There has been over-development of the commercial sector and too much expansion of the universities. The Neighborhood Planning Studies contain inaccuracies; the studies done with the zoning moratorium were very good studies. Cambridge needs to build

more housing, not more commercial development. He said that if we know what the problems are, and we do, then we need actions more than studies. He stated that Portland, Oregon is an example of a livable city, with good public transportation and amenities.

Councillor Reeves thanked those present for their comments and participation.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:23 P.M.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kenneth E. Reeves", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair

City of Cambridge

NEIGHBORHOOD AND LONG TERM PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair
Councillor Marjorie C. Decker
Councillor E. Denise Simmons*

In City Council July 29, 2002

The Neighborhood and Long Term Planning Committee held a public hearing on June 18, 2002, beginning at 3:15 P.M. in the Ackermann Room for the purpose of discussing neighborhood planning issues, neighborhood study updates and urban planning that emphasizes green spaces and forest-like areas near dense development.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair of the Committee, Councillor E. Denise Simmons and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Beth Rubenstein, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, Susan Glazer, Deputy Director of the Community Development Department (CDD) and Stuart Dash, Director of Neighborhood and Community Planning.

Councillor Reeves convened the hearing and explained the purpose. He began with a discussion of the work of the committee and issues of overlapping jurisdiction with the University Relations Committee. He suggested that the committee might want to spend some time considering what is a neighborhood in the 21st Century, with some consideration of the "new urbanism."

Ms. Rubenstein said that the new urbanism movement reflects a renewed appreciation of urban quality of life. The movement is really aimed at making improvements in places that are more suburban. There has been a great deal of interest in a "fun" place to live, ability to walk to destinations, a focus on streets rather than backyards, little stores to walk to, short blocks. Cambridge has a lot of what the new urbanism seeks to replicate, not to the same degree in all neighborhoods. The concept will be very important in the development of North Point.

Mr. Dash said that in the neighborhood studies the neighborhood participants are interested in the "best of Cambridge" which is very consistent with the new urbanism goals.

Councillor Reeves said that the City spends a lot of money on the neighborhood studies. He would like to know what information those studies are yielding with regard to shaping the future of the City. He said that he finds the sociological aspects of neighborhoods to be most important. He continues to be amazed at the extent to which people in Cambridge do not know each other. Mid-Cambridge is sort of a textbook example of the new Cambridge residents who are not connected to Cambridge.

S-238

Committee Report #2

Committee Report from Councillor
Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair of the
Neighborhood and Long Term
Planning Committee, for a meeting
held on June 18, 2002 for the
purpose of discussing
neighborhood planning issues,
neighborhood study updates and
urban planning that emphasizes
green spaces and forest-like areas
near dense development.

In City Council July 29, 2002

**REPORT ACCEPTED.
PLACED ON FILE.**