



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

CASE NO.: PB-19
PREMISES: 2050-2070 Massachusetts Avenue
ZONING DISTRICT: Business C/Residence B
PETITIONER: Cambridge Housing Authority
APPLICATION DATE: August 14, 1981
PUBLIC HEARING DATE: September 8, 1981
PETITION: Multi-Family Elderly Housing Special Permit for
51 Elderly Oriented Dwelling Units, Article 4.000,
Section 4.25
DATE OF PLANNING BOARD DECISION:

Application

The following documents were submitted by the applicant in support of the development plan.

1. Special Permit Application, Housing for the Elderly 2050-2070 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Housing Authority, Petitioner; HMFH/O'Marah Associates, Project Architects; submitted August 14, 1981.
2. Three copies of plans and elevations, numbers 1-6, entitled "Housing for the Elderly" dated August 13, 1981.

The Development Proposal

The multi-family elderly housing development at 2050-2070 Massachusetts Avenue is being proposed by the Cambridge Housing Authority under State legislation Chapter 667 which provides financial assistance to low-income elderly and handicapped persons. The 15,375 square foot site is currently owned by the City of Cambridge and must be deeded over to the Housing Authority prior to issuance of any building permits. The development will contain 51 elderly units with a common room area and retail space on the ground floor facing Massachusetts Avenue.

Public Hearing

A public hearing was held in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 40A, Section 11 of the MGL's on September 8, 1981 at 8:00 p.m. in the Conference Room, Cambridge Community Development Department, 57 Inman Street.

Fred Putnam of the Office of Program Planning and Development, Cambridge Housing Authority (applicant) introduced George Metzger of Hill, Miller, Friedlander, Holland, Inc., architect for the development.

Mr. Metzger explained that they were seeking approval for 51 units and that they had the support of the North Cambridge Concerned Citizens Group (Mr. Putnam submitted a letter on behalf of the NCCC).

Mr. Metzger further explained that the building massing was a major concern and that the development would include ground floor retail.

Metzger felt that the requested variances concerning number of units, building height and reduced parking were justified. He said the variances are needed to make the current proposal work given the financial constraints of the state program. He also said that an all commercial development of 55' in height could be built by right and would have far greater impacts particularly with respect to traffic and parking.

To provide more space for storage the applicant would like to reduce the number of parking spaces by two from the number shown on plans. Past Housing Authority experience suggests that there will still be sufficient numbers of spaces for the residents.

Planning Board Questions and Comments

Noting the request for reduced parking, the Board asked if the 3,000+ s.f. parcel to the southwest of the site could be used for additional parking. The applicants noted that the neighborhood was very much against using this site for parking and hoped that it would be developed for housing.

Paul Dietrich was concerned about service (deliveries) to the building and clearance for trucks as noted in the letter to the Board from Lauren Preston of the Department of Traffic and Parking.

Citizen Comment

Lucy Doherty of 38 Walden Street expressed concern over the number of units proposed. Edward Abott, an abutter at 13 Creighton Street, said that he would prefer a building with less height but was generally in favor of the proposal.

Margaret Mikalauskas of 14 Walden Street said that she didn't think this site was the perfect site for development for elderly housing.

John M. Milmore of 42 Walden Street did not think that this was the best development site and said there should be retail on Massachusetts Avenue not subsidized housing.

Ed Cyr, Head of the Cambridge Elders Association, favored the development and read a letter in support.

Chairman Arthur Parris requested a showing of raised hands to indicate support or opposition to the proposal. There was no opposition. Most in attendance supported the project but 5 or 6 citizens were opposed to the proposed density (51 units).

Documents - The following documents were submitted to the Board for their consideration.

1. Letter dated September 2, 1981, John B. Vidak for the North Cambridge Concerned Citizens in support of the proposed elderly housing development.
2. Letter dated September 9, 1981, Claire M. McDonough, Chairperson for the Cambridge Council on Aging in support of the elderly housing development as proposed.
3. Letter dated September 8, 1981, Edward F. DeLuca, President, Cambridge Committee of Elders, Inc., urging the Board to approve the proposed development.
4. Recommendation dated September 8, 1981, Lauren M. Preston, Traffic Engineer, City of Cambridge, stating that the design of the parking lot is good, but the access driveway should be at least sixteen (16) feet wide and indicated that the location of a loading area was not shown.
5. Letter submitted at the September 22 meeting, Frances T. McNamara, 53 Creighton Street; Mary T. Milmore; John M. Milmore, 42 Walden Street; and Lucy Doherty 38 Walden Street, in opposition to the density of the proposed development and requesting that not more than 34 units, no higher than four (4) stories be built.

Findings

1. In accordance with the requirements of subsection 10.43 of the zoning ordinance, criteria for the granting of a special permit, the Board finds that:
 - (a) The proposal includes a number of significant zoning violations, the two most significant being the increase in the allowed number of units from 24 to 51 and the proposed height which is approximately 23 feet above the permitted 35 foot limit. The Board, prior to granting a waiver of any violations, must make specific findings in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 10 of the Massachusetts General Laws. Based on the application and material presented to

the Board, these findings cannot be made. Therefore, justification for the granting of these variances cannot be established.

- (b) There are currently nine elderly housing developments in the city operated by the Cambridge Housing Authority. These developments contain a total of 1,111 elderly units. The need for additional low-income elderly housing units is significant and as noted by the Cambridge Committee of Elders there is a waiting list of 400 Cambridge elderly seeking such housing.
- (c) The type of development proposed (elderly housing) will not generate significant traffic nor will the pattern of access and egress cause congestion, hazard or a substantial change in the neighborhood. The Board has concern that the clearance of the passage through the development may impede fire or emergency access to the rear of the building.
- (d) Multi-family residential use is a permitted use in this district and is compatible with adjacent existing and allowed uses. The dimensional regulations for residential uses in the Business C district are more restrictive than the dimensional regulations for commercial or office uses. Therefore, an office or commercial development on this site at a similar scale would be permitted as-of-right.
- (e) The construction of housing on this site would eliminate the present unsightly vacant lot.
- (f) The proposed development conforms to the general intent and purpose of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance, the Massachusetts General Laws; Chapter 40A "The Zoning Act" and Chapter 40B Section 20-23, "Low-and Moderate-Income Housing" and the Community Development Department's Massachusetts Avenue Urban Design Plan. The proposed development does not conform to specific requirements of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance as noted in the following finding, number 3.

2. In accordance with subsection 10.464 of the ordinance, criteria for approval of multi-family dwellings, the Board finds that:

- (a) There are no key natural landscape features on the site. The proposed development will create a substantially improved site with landscaping and other amenities including a court yard/sitting area for residents of the building.
- (b) The proposed building plane along Massachusetts Avenue contains both horizontal and vertical variations which create an architecturally pleasant transition along Massachusetts Avenue while reducing the perceived bulk of the building. The overall height and massing is appropriate at this location and is compatible with adjacent structures.

- (c) The proposed location, arrangement and landscaping of open space will provide both a functional and visual benefit to the residents of the building.
- (d) The location and screening of the parking area will minimize the potential visual intrusion of on-site parking so that it will not detract from the use and enjoyment of either this or adjacent properties.
- (e) The project would be a positive contribution to the physical and social environment of the neighborhood.

3. The following violations of the zoning requirements customarily requiring a variance were contained within the development as documented in the application, dated August 14, 1981 and/or requested by the applicant at the public hearing on September 8, 1981:

	<u>Required</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
(a) Floor Area Ratio: Section 5.311 Section 5.272	.84	2.5
(b) Minimum lot area per dwelling unit: Section 5.51 Section 5.271 Total no. units	(BC) 600 s.f. (RB) 1250 s.f. 24	301 s.f. 51
(c) Height: Section 5.31(6) Section 5.43	35'	57.8'
(d) Setbacks: Section 5.31 Front: Side: Rear:	 10' 23' 50'	 1' 6' 35'
(e) Off-Street Parking: Section 6.48 Landscaping: Tree Barriers	 108 s.f. ---	 -0- -0-

4. The following are additional requests for special permits within the scope of the multi-family special permit review:

	<u>Required</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
(a) Reduction of off-street parking Section 6.361 (e) (4) Section 6.35	15 spaces	12 spaces

The Board finds that the reduction of required parking will not cause excessive congestion, endanger public safety, substantially reduce parking availability for other uses or otherwise adversely impact the neighborhood in light of the following:

- (1) The proximity to an MBTA bus stop and future transit station.
 - (2) The age of the proposed occupants are likely to result in a lower level of auto usage; and
 - (3) The impact of additional parking would have an adverse effect on the lot in that it would result in the reduction of green area and alter the design quality of the site.
5. The Board has found that the requested variances cannot be granted within the scope of their special permit authority, even though the proposed development offers a major public benefit to the City. Therefore, the Board suggests that the applicant (Cambridge Housing Authority) seek an appeal to the Board of Zoning Appeal in accordance with Chapter 40B, Section 20-23 of the Massachusetts General Laws', "Low and Moderate Income Housing." This legislation gives the Board of Zoning Appeal the authority to override any local regulation, including zoning, for the purpose of creating low- and moderate-income housing through the issuance of a comprehensive permit.

Planning Board Decision

After consideration and review of the plans and information submitted by the applicant, comments made at the public hearing, discussion by the Board and staff, the Planning Board by a _____ denies the special permit request for the construction of a multi-family elderly housing development because in granting such a permit the Board would be exceeding its authority to grant the required variances as defined in Section 10.31 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. The Board nevertheless concludes that the housing as proposed is well designed, suitable for the location proposed and a clear need of and public benefit for the City of Cambridge and the North Cambridge neighborhood. The Board therefore recommends that the Cambridge Housing Authority seek a Comprehensive Permit for the construction of this housing from the Board of Zoning Appeal as permitted under Chapter 40B of the Massachusetts General Laws.

Respectfully submitted,
For the Planning Board

Arthur C. Parris, Chairman

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on _____ by _____, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board.

Case No. PB-19

-7-

Twenty days have elapsed since the date of filing this
decision. NO appeal has been filed _____.
Appeal filed and dismissed or denied _____.

Date: _____

City Clerk, City of Cambridge