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M I D - C A M B R I D G E  
N E I G H B O R H O O D S T U D Y



A JOINT REPORT OF THE  
MID-CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY COMMITTEE AND  
THE CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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# M I D - C A M B R I D G E

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## N E I G H B O R H O O D S T U D Y

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### **Cambridge City Manager**

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### **Cambridge City Council**

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Councillor Kathleen Born, Vice Mayor

Councillor Henrietta Davis

Councillor Francis Duehay

Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio

Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves

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### **Cambridge Planning Board**

Paul Dietrich, Chair

Carolyn Mieth, Vice Chair

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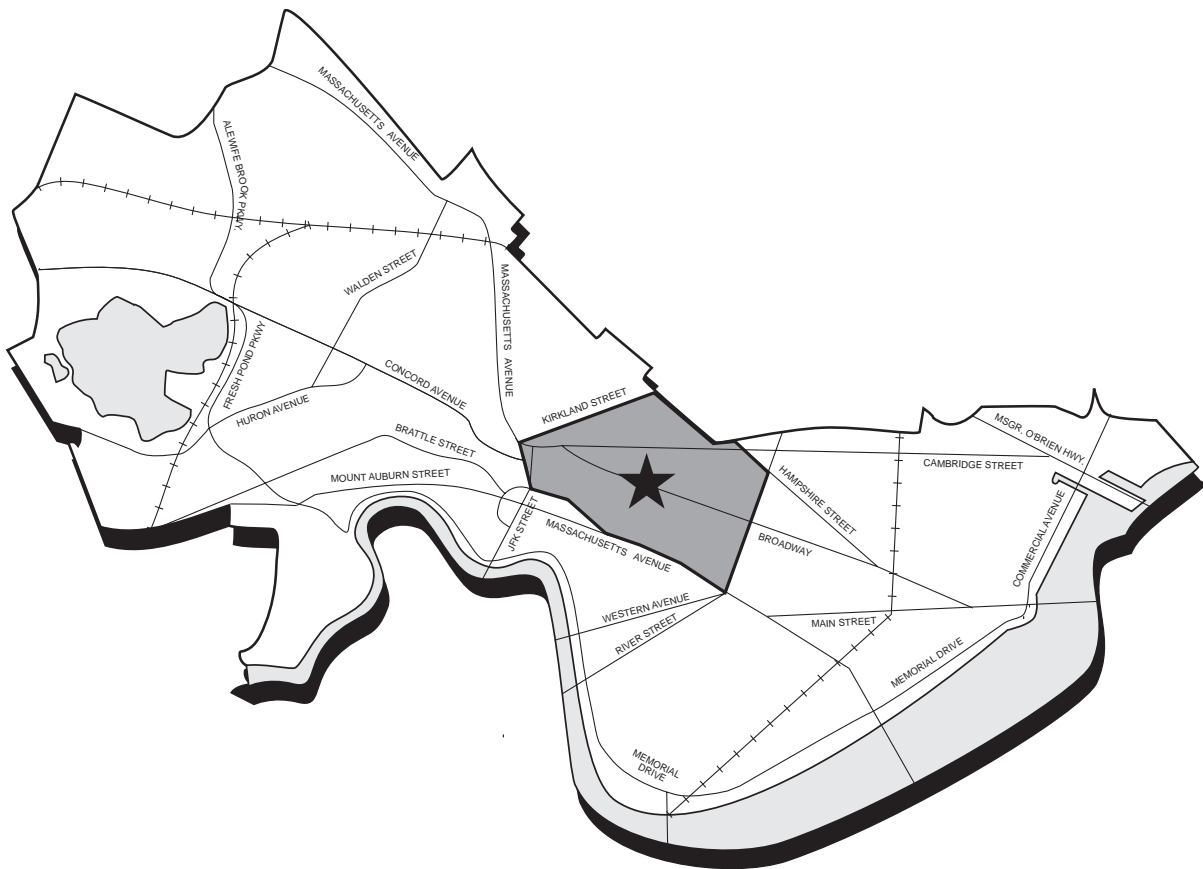
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# I N T R O D U C T I O N

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*City of Cambridge*  
*Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Location*



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# *Introduction*

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## **THE NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY PROCESS**

During the 1980s the City of Cambridge, along with the surrounding region, witnessed a wave of commercial growth and economic development. This growth expanded the City's tax base and created new jobs and opportunities for its residents. While many residents welcomed this prosperity, it also brought about an increasing awareness of issues which are of concern to neighborhood residents: increased building density, traffic congestion and parking problems, the rising cost of housing, inadequate open space, and the threat to neighborhood character and quality of life.

Since 1988, the Community Development Department (CDD) through its neighborhood planning program has conducted comprehensive studies in nine of the City's neighborhoods. The object of the neighborhood studies is to identify major planning problems and concerns through a joint CDD and community study committee and formulate recommendations for their solutions. The studies address issues such as traffic and parking, housing affordability and home ownership, neighborhood commercial areas and employment, park maintenance and rezoning of areas now inappropriately zoned. As part of each neighborhood study, CDD collects data on demographic changes since 1980, as well as changes in housing markets, land use, and development potential in each neighborhood.

For each study, the City Manager appoints a committee of neighborhood residents, small business owners, and civic leaders, along with

staff from the Community Development Department, to review the data, identify problems that exist in the neighborhood, and make recommendations as to how to resolve these problems. The recommendations are presented to the City Council, and, where appropriate, are incorporated into the work programs of City departments for implementation over the next several years.

## **THE MID-CAMBRIDGE STUDY**

In the Summer of 1993, CDD staff placed advertisements in the local papers seeking Mid-Cambridge residents to join the upcoming study committee. Out of 29 residents applying, City Manager Robert Healy named 12 applicants to the committee. The newly named members came from all of the different parts of the neighborhood with the aim of representing the demographic diversity of Mid-Cambridge. Some of the members were lifelong residents, while others had lived there less than ten years.

The Mid-Cambridge Study Committee met weekly for eight months from October 1993 until May 1994. The Committee reviewed, discussed, and debated issue of housing, parks, transportation, economic development, land use, zoning and urban design. They listened to a range of speakers from representatives of educational institutions to City staff responsible for traffic and zoning policies, and took walking tours to see each part of the neighborhood. Through the discussions, they identified problems around the neighborhood and worked together to come up with recommendations for each topic. After a presentation of the

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preliminary recommendations to the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association (MCNA), the Committee met over a period of two months in a joint group with five representatives from the MCNA to review the preliminary recommendations along with additional recommendations submitted by members of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association.

During the study period, two issues with significant ramifications for Mid-Cambridge were being played out, one statewide, the other citywide. The end of rent control, put forward in statewide referendum Proposition 9, was proposed in the middle of the study committee process and voted into effect near the end of their work. While the recommendations reflect the knowledge of the proposed change, the actual changes which have occurred and are continuing throughout Mid-Cambridge and the city are beginning to become evident just as this study is being published. The other issue, the consideration of the renovation of the main library was also under consideration by a separate committee during the end of the study committee's work, and continues unresolved today.

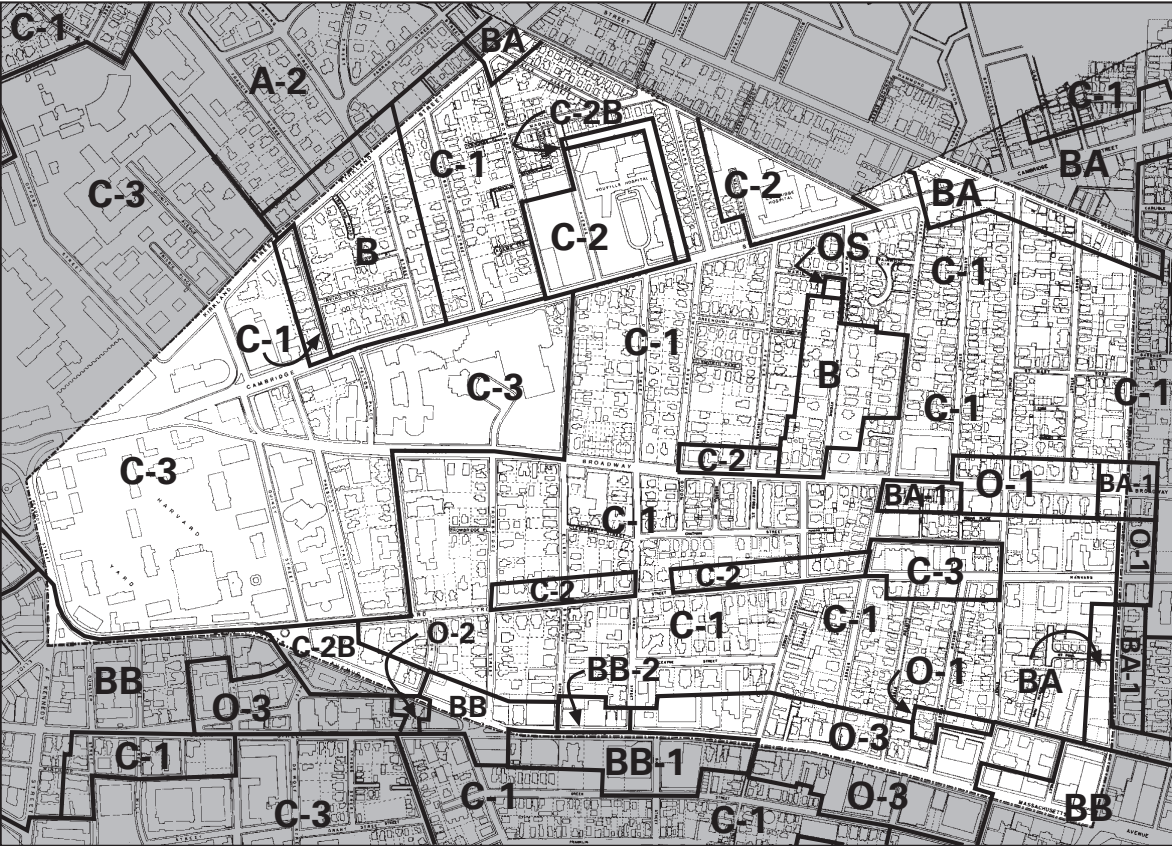
At the end of the process, the Committee produced recommendations ranging from creation of an informational handbook listing services and resources of the City's institutions to zoning changes to reduce excess infill housing. The Committee offers this study and its recommendations to the Mid-Cambridge community as a basis for long-term planning.

## **THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE GROWTH POLICY**

The Neighborhood Study process is seen as an extension of the City's Growth Policy document, "Towards a Sustainable Cambridge," which outlines the City's planning assumptions and policies in the areas of land use, housing, transportation, economic development, open space and urban design. The document was drafted by CDD staff in 1992-3 after a series of workshops with citizen, business and institutional representatives. It recognizes that the city's diversity of land uses, densities and population groups should be retained and strengthened. The document also calls for careful development of the city's evolving industrial districts, such as Alewife and lower Cambridgeport.

While the growth policy document is comprehensive, it does not prescribe land uses or designs for specific sites. Each of the city's 13 neighborhoods has distinct needs and resources which can be identified and addressed through neighborhood studies and the city's planning policies. The Growth Policy and neighborhood studies complement each other by informing the community of important issues, recommending a plan of action to address the concerns, and utilizing current policies to implement change.

*Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Boundary*







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# M E T H O D O L O G Y

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# *Methodology*

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The Mid-Cambridge Study Committee produced its recommendations through an extended process of issue identification, data collection and analysis, and further review and discussion. Community Development Department staff supported this process by gathering and presenting data from a number of sources, chief among them the U.S. Census, a random telephone survey of Mid-Cambridge residents, the Cambridge Assessing Department and the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance.

## **1. *The U.S. Census: 1980 and 1990***

The Census is a survey of every household taken every ten years by the U.S. Commerce Department Census Bureau as mandated by federal law. It collects demographic information on age distribution within the population, household composition, racial makeup, income, length of residency, ancestry and other categories. In theory, the Census is a survey of every household and provides us with the most complete profile of the City and its residents. Census data is available from the Community Development Department.

## **2. *1993 Random Telephone Survey of Mid-Cambridge Residents***

In 1993, the City contracted with the consulting firm, Atlantic Marketing Research Co., Inc., to conduct a random telephone survey of 373 households in Mid-Cambridge to determine the demographic character of the neighborhood as well as residents' perceptions and attitudes on

issues of community concern. The Mid-Cambridge survey is one of a series of telephone surveys conducted by the Department in several neighborhoods in conjunction with the neighborhood study process.

The survey instrument is composed of 66 questions designed by the Community Development Department with the assistance of the consultant. It is a combination of open-ended questions (those to which the respondent can give any response desired) and objective questions with a specified range of answers. The instrument asked four broad categories of questions: general demographics, housing, employment, and attitudinal.

The survey was done, in part, to elicit demographic information similar to what is provided through the Census but that was not yet available, was in need of updating, or was not part of the federal questionnaire. Typically, it takes the Census Bureau two to three years to process neighborhood level data and make it available to municipalities. The intention of the telephone survey was to provide Study Committee members with as current a profile of the neighborhood as possible to inform their discussions. In addition, because of the structure of the survey data, Community Development staff were able to use cross tabulations to pull out much more refined conclusions than provided by the Census data. For example, the Committee could analyze the neighborhood's population in terms of race, income, housing, and more.

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The Census and the telephone survey are not directly comparable, as the Census is a house-by-house survey and the telephone survey is a sample of households. While one cannot compare numbers directly, general patterns can be determined and general conclusions can be made.

Another very important reason for conducting the telephone survey was to gather attitudinal information from residents. The survey asked residents questions about their views on development and its positive or negative effects; the need for more housing, especially affordable housing, and whether that should be rentals or owner occupied housing; whether, how often and for what reasons residents use neighboring commercial squares or districts; attitudes about the condition and availability of parks and open space; and other questions on other areas of concern in the neighborhood. As with the demographic data, the Committee could also use cross tabulations of the attitudinal data to get a more refined picture of neighborhood views, such as the attitudes of the neighborhood's elderly residents towards the condition and availability of open space.

Census information and the telephone survey results are available from the Community Development Department.

### ***3. Cambridge Assessor's Data***

The Study Committee used data from the Assessor's Office to analyze the nature and quality of the neighborhood's housing stock, to understand the market for renting or buying housing in

Mid-Cambridge, and to examine the remaining build-out potential in the neighborhood. Housing data included the number of buildings in each property class (one, two, three-family, etc.), the number of dwelling units, and the number of housing sales in each property class and their sales prices. This data forms the basis for analyzing housing availability and affordability in the neighborhood. Property data, such as building and lot size, were gathered for all commercially zoned areas and higher density residential zoning districts. This information was used in calculating the amount of additional building allowed in the neighborhood under current zoning. All data are current through mid-1992.

### ***4. The Cambridge Zoning Ordinance***

The Zoning Ordinance, in conjunction with Assessing data, was used to determine the remaining build-out potential in Mid-Cambridge. The Zoning Ordinance is the part of the municipal code that governs how land and buildings in the City may be used. For each zoning district, the ordinance lays out three types of general regulations: 1) use: what activities or mix of activities may or may not take place; 2) dimensional requirements: what floor-area-ratio, density, height or set back restrictions apply to any one building in any given zoning district; and 3) parking requirements: how many spaces, if any, must be included with a building.

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N E I G H O R H O O D  
O V E R V I E W



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## *Neighborhood Overview*

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The Mid-Cambridge neighborhood (see map) extends from Prospect Street on the east up to and including Harvard Yard on the west, and from Massachusetts Avenue on the south to Kirkland, Beacon and Hampshire Streets on the north. On the north border is the Agassiz neighborhood and the City of Somerville, with the Riverside neighborhood across Massachusetts Avenue on its southern border, and Wellington-Harrington and Area 4 on east. It is trisected by Cambridge Street and Broadway, both running roughly east-west from Harvard Square to Prospect Street. With the presence of Harvard Yard, Mid-Cambridge has key elements of Harvard University's classrooms and dorms, museums and libraries within its boundaries. Mid-Cambridge is also home to three medical institutions, The Cambridge Hospital, Youville Hospital and Harvard Community Health Plan, as well as the City of Cambridge's Rindge and Latin High School, Main Library and City Hall. Mid-Cambridge is home to one of the City's public elementary schools, The Longfellow School, which is also home to the two neighborhood organizations in Mid-Cambridge, The Longfellow Neighborhood Council, a school/neighborhood organization, and The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association, which has worked on issues of neighborhood significance for many years. Mid-Cambridge is also almost completely covered by an historic overlay district, The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District, which through a resident Commission, has oversight over a range of physical changes in the neighborhood.

### **History**

The first permanent residents of what is now Mid-Cambridge settled in the area around Harvard Square. (Native Americans visited the area seasonally to gather oysters and other food, but did not make a regular settlement here.) This area was dubbed "Newtowne" by its founders and later "Old Cambridge" as other parts of the renamed settlement grew. The eastern parts of today's Mid-Cambridge provided Old Cambridge with pasture and farmland. By the Revolutionary War era, this area was dominated by the estates of three prominent landowners, Dana, Inman and Foxcroft, and the Boardman farm. (Dana Hill and the Inman House figured prominently during the Revolution.)

As with many other parts of Cambridge, Mid-Cambridge growth was spurred by the opening of the West Boston Bridge in 1793 (now the site of the Longfellow Bridge.) As trade and commercial traffic increased, so did demand for improved infrastructure and commercial development. By the early nineteenth century, a series of turnpikes and carriage routes funnelled west suburban commuters through Mid-Cambridge to the bridge. This growth supported new taverns, boardinghouses and other businesses in the town.

As industrialization changed the face of the districts with river access (East Cambridge, old Cambridgeport), Mid-Cambridge remained more rural, lacking such access. Population pressures beginning in the mid 1800's encouraged the breakup of the large estates that comprised the neighborhood since its early days. The character

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of the area was shaped by deed restrictions written into the sale of these original estates, stipulating that uses be limited to residential, rather than commercial development. The neighborhood became denser over the course of the century; the housing stock in Dana Hill increased fivefold from 200 to 1000 houses between 1854 and 1903.

In the twentieth century, Mid-Cambridge became denser and more socially diverse as apartment and row housing were constructed as well as single family units. This trend accelerated in the 1960s, as smaller units, primarily along Harvard Street, were replaced with denser, modernist high rise and middle rise apartments. Commercial development has remained restricted to the periphery of the neighborhood, along Massachusetts Avenue and Cambridge Streets, with smaller pockets along Broadway.

#### ***MID-CAMBRIDGE TODAY:***

#### ***A Demographic Profile***

##### **Population**

Mid-Cambridge, with a 1990 population of about 13,000 people, is the city's most populous neighborhood. Its demographic character and trends mirror the city in many ways, yet it is distinctive in many respects.

The population has dropped slightly over the decade, from 13,415 in 1980. The population size grew in certain segments, however. Residents in group quarters, mainly Harvard dormitories but also convalescent homes and other elder facilities, increased their numbers by several hundred, to a total of 2,500. Mid-Cambridge houses about 18% of the city's group quarters population. When MIT's non-residential Neighborhood 2 is excluded, Mid-Cambridge ranks third in the city in its share of persons in group quarters.

##### **Household Characteristics**

Though Mid-Cambridge experienced a modest decline in households over the last decade (1980-90), it still tops the city in number of households overall, with just under 6,000. It ranks among the lowest in the city in persons per household (1.75, compared to a citywide average of 2.08).

Households can be further characterized as two types: those occupied by families (in Census terms, two or more persons related by marriage, birth or adoption), and "non family households," which include solo dwellers and unrelated adults living together as roommates. Mid-Cambridge ranks among the highest of city neighborhoods in its proportion of non family households: over two households in three, or 69%. Of this group, most are single people living alone; they comprise over one half of all neighborhood households (54%, compared to 42% of all Cambridge households.) There was a slight increase in family households over the decade, particularly among married couples with children.

##### **Race**

Mid-Cambridge is somewhat less diverse racially than the city as a whole; 16% of its population is of non-white background, compared to over one fourth of the citywide population. The minority population of the neighborhood has grown, however, while the numbers of white residents has decreased. The Asian population doubled in size over the decade, with nearly 1,200 Asian residents in 1990. The neighborhood's Black and Hispanic populations also grew.

##### **Place of Birth/Language Characteristics**

Language diversity has also increased somewhat in Mid-Cambridge. Eighteen percent of the population (aged five and above) speaks a language other than English at home, compared to 14% in 1980. The top five languages (besides English) heard in neighborhood homes and dormitories are French, Chinese, Spanish, Japanese and Hebrew.



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## **Age**

The population “pyramid” of Mid-Cambridge bulges considerably in the middle, again consistent with city trends and conditions. In 1990, over one in five residents (21%) were between the ages of 35 and 44, up from about one in ten (9%) in 1980. This group more than doubled in size over the decade. Infants and toddlers (aged 0-4) showed the next greatest increase in population. Every other age group declined or grew very modestly. The latter include children aged 5-14 (16% growth) and persons aged 45-64 (nearly 8% growth.)

## **Length of Residency**

Both the Census and neighborhood survey data suggest that residential patterns in the neighborhood have become more stable. In 1990, about one third of all residents had lived in the neighborhood for more than ten years. The figure jumps to 52% of all homeowners, compared to 23% of renters surveyed.

## **Tenure**

The proportion of homeowners has increased as well, from about 20% to 30% of all units in the neighborhood. This mirrors citywide trends very closely. There are significant demographic differences between renters and homeowners in Mid-Cambridge. Renters tend to be younger (over half are under 35), and earn lower incomes. Owners are more likely to be parents of children, including single parents. Within the latter group, almost 40% own their home.

## **Educational Attainment**

Mid-Cambridge is one of the most highly educated neighborhoods in the city. Two out of three adults aged 25 or older has a Bachelors degree or higher education, compared to 54% citywide. Education levels have increased over the decade, with greater numbers attaining higher education and a shrinking proportion with high school or lower levels of education.

## **Industry and Occupation**

Educational services remain the largest employer in Mid-Cambridge, with over 28% of the working population so employed. The next largest category, professional and related services (such as law, engineering or architecture), doubled in size as an employer of neighborhood residents, from 10% to over 20%. The Health services industry is another major employer, with one in ten employed residents working in this area.

Occupationally, Mid-Cambridge residents tend to work in professional positions, such as nurses, teachers or scientists. Thirty eight percent worked in professional occupations in 1990, compared to 31% of employees citywide. Residents working in managerial and executive positions increased by half over the decade, rising from 12% to 18% of all employed people. The clerical occupations declined significantly as an employer of residents.

## **Income**

Mid-Cambridge ranks third in median household income in the city, and fourth in median family income. The household median, \$37,075, was higher than the citywide median of \$33,140 in 1990. Family median income is considerably higher, at \$50,272 (compared to \$39,990 citywide), reflecting a high proportion of two earner, professionally employed households.



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A N A L Y S I S   A N D  
RECOMMENDATIONS

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# *Transportation*

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## **BACKGROUND**

Transportation has become a pivotal issue in urban planning, particularly in dense city neighborhoods such as Mid-Cambridge. Traffic volumes, parking availability and travel modes all affect the quality of life in the city, as well as its economic health and land use patterns. While regional, state and national policies may overshadow local choices at times, the City has a critical role to play in transportation planning.

The core problem is one of enhancing mobility while limiting the negative effects of vehicle use. People and goods must travel in the process of living and working. How can this travel occur without diminishing the essential qualities of Cambridge and its neighborhoods? The city has very little room for additional automobile traffic, with minor improvements possible for our intersections and traffic signals. Yet traffic continues to increase, both from regional commuters traveling through Cambridge and from greater activity within the city. The City's



Growth Policy document assumes that any improvements to the roadway network should be aimed at redirecting traffic away from and reducing traffic speed on neighborhood streets. City policy is also directed at reducing the number of single occupant vehicle trips, expanding non-automobile forms of transit, and encouraging new development near public transit nodes.

What is “driving” this problem, beyond economic growth in the region? Changing employment and commuting patterns are a major factor. In the past two decades, Cambridge has become a regional employment center. Whereas in 1970, over 70% of local jobs were filled by residents of Cambridge or abutting towns, by 1990 that figure had fallen to 57%. More Cambridge residents, in turn, commute greater distances to their jobs than before. The separation of places of work from residence, and the dispersion of work places, has made use of public transit or carpooling less convenient for people. Regional growth has also resulted in more vehicle trips that neither originate or terminate in Cambridge: 60% of traffic through Cambridge from Route 2 does not have destinations in Cambridge.

More people are driving cars alone, whether for work, errands or pleasure. According to the US Census, the proportion of Cambridge employees driving alone — who may live here or elsewhere — has increased, from 43% in 1980 to 52% in 1990, while the percentage using car or van pools or transit has declined. Meanwhile, Cambridge residents — who may work here or elsewhere — are more likely to use single occupancy vehicles: their legions grew from 32% to 39% of the

resident labor force during the decade. Mid-Cambridge residents were comparatively less car-dependent than their neighbors in other parts of Cambridge. Only one residential neighborhood (Riverside) had a lower proportion of single occupancy vehicle commuters in 1990, while just two neighborhoods had higher rates of walking to work. Mid-Cambridge travel modes, with comparison to citywide choices, are shown below.

**MODE SPLIT FOR MID-CAMBRIDGE LABOR FORCE  
Percent by Mode of Travel to Work**

	<b>SOV</b>	<b>Car/Pool</b>	<b>Transit</b>	<b>Walking</b>
<b>Mid-Cambridge</b>	32.0%	5.3%	25.2%	29.6%
<b>Cambridge</b>	37.5%	7.5%	23.5%	24.0%

*Source: US Census 1990*

Another contributor to traffic problems, as well as parking shortages, is the rise in vehicle ownership per household. Car registrations in Cambridge increased 40% between 1970 and 1986, even though the population fell substantially during this period. (This trend is not unique to Cambridge, however; car registrations increased 40% throughout the Boston area during this period.) Changing demographics is a factor: more Cambridge households are occupied by adult roommates living together, while participation in the labor force has risen, particularly for women, in recent decades. Within families, teenagers are more likely to own cars. Changing work and family patterns have resulted in greater car dependence, as people must juggle shopping and other errands, as well as transportation of children to activities, with work schedules and trips.

The City's strategies for traffic management focus on reducing single occupant vehicle trips and facilitating other forms of travel. These respond in part to requirements of the State Implementation Plan (SIP) of the federal Clean Air Act, which requires states with unhealthy air conditions to submit clean up plans. In 1992, Cambridge passed a Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance, centered on commuter mobility initiatives such as employer sponsored carpooling, and improvements in bicycling and pedestrian

routes. The City is also participating in the Transportation Improvement Program, which funds capital improvements to make roadways more inviting for bicyclists and pedestrians. The City also limits creation of new parking spaces via compliance with the Parking Freeze, part of an earlier SIP of the Clean Air Act. A very limited number of new spaces are allotted through a bank administered by the City. Ultimately, the problem of air quality and parking must be solved at the regional and state level, as current enforcement of the Parking Freeze makes Cambridge economically less competitive than suburban locations which can provide unrestricted parking.

**SURVEY RESULTS**

Nearly two out of three residents surveyed (64%) considered the availability of parking to be a major concern; more viewed this as a major concern in the neighborhood than any other issue, including crime. This view was consistent across all income groups, as well. A smaller percentage felt that traffic congestion was a major concern in Mid-Cambridge. Slightly under half, or 48%, listed it as a major concern, while the remainder viewed it as a minor issue or of no concern. Among the survey respondents, the largest group (43%) relied on a car or similar vehicle to get to work, while about one quarter (27%) used public transit. One respondent in five (19%) walked to work, and the remainder (9%) either biked to work or worked at home.

**DISCUSSIONS**

Committee members approached the issues of traffic and transportation by first examining their own travel patterns on a typical work day or weekend, and the mode of transportation used. A great variety of modes, including walking, public transit and bicycling, were mentioned, as well as frequent automobile use for trips such as groceries, errands or work related tasks. Both members and City staff must often reach multiple destinations during the day, suggesting the complexities of making transportation policy.

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Members discussed a range of issues with City staff concerned with transportation, including the Environmental Program director, the Director of Traffic and Parking, and CDD's Chief Transportation Planner. These included the City's long terms plans for the Parking Freeze. Members also asked about enforcement of traffic laws for bicyclists, as well as establishment of bicycle lanes. Also of concern was improvement in conditions for residents living along truck routes. Members wished to see more useful public transportation routes established throughout the City and surrounding areas. In particular, expansion of the Cambridge Hospital's capacity and services will require better cross town accessibility by public transit.

Visitor parking in the Harvard Square area — a concern for all of the residential neighborhoods abutting the Square — was debated at length. Committee members expressed considerable concern over potential abuse of visitor parking, as when vehicles are left with visitor permits for periods of longer than one week. Such practices were perceived in many instances, and were noted as a particular problem on Lee Street. More generally, it was observed that about one in three parked cars in the Harvard area use Visitor Permits. To address misuse as well as more general parking shortages caused by visitor/resident conflicts, members suggested imposing time limits, such as two to four hours, to increase resident parking access, as well as designated visitor parking zones. Limiting resident parking permits to particular neighborhoods, or restricting every other street to "neighborhood only" parking were also suggested. Some members agreed with these recommendations, while others were concerned that they might impose undue limits on social visits.

To alleviate parking problems, members suggested expansion of shuttle bus service as a flexible alternative to automobile use in the City. The possibility of opening Harvard's shuttle bus to the public was raised, although such an option may be limited by liability problems. Additional MBTA routes, such as an express bus from Boston's Back Bay to Harvard Square, were also suggested.

Members expressed a need for more flexible treatment from employees of the Traffic and Parking Department, including an improved appeals process for tickets, and would like to be kept informed about ongoing Public Works projects that presented parking problems, such as improvements to Quincy Square.

Pedestrian (and motorist) hazards were identified for a number of streets and intersections. These include Harvard Street, Inman Street, Cambridge Street near the Cambridge Hospital, and the intersections of Dana Street and Ellery Street, Harvard Street and Massachusetts Avenue. Proposals included reversing the direction of Ellery Street traffic, which now runs one-way towards Massachusetts Avenue, increased police officers and additional traffic lights.

Delivery trucks employing loading docks have aggravated traffic obstruction along Massachusetts Avenue, according to members. The section near Barsamian's presents special problems. An alternative to loading docks is the imposition of time limits for deliveries. Each of these solutions presents unique enforcement problems and trade-offs.

Harvard University policies for student, staff and visitor parking were also examined. Harvard does not encourage undergraduates to bring their cars, but does provide limited (paid) parking for those students who do. Subsidized MBTA passes are provided to reduce student and staff car use near campus. Another concern of members was the allocation, under the zoning code, of pre-existing parking spaces to Harvard developments and the "Harvard Parking Pool." This allocation allows Harvard to flexibly allocate its parking out of its total parking supply to the locations and uses most in need of parking. This has been a source of occasional disagreement between some neighborhood residents, Harvard and the City.

In response to residents' complaints that large numbers of visitors to events and exhibits at Harvard are parking on neighborhood streets, Harvard conducted a parking study which found this to be a valid concern. To accommodate visitors to such Harvard facilities as the Sanders Theater and the Fogg Museum, Harvard has proposed a visitors parking program that would be arranged for by event sponsors and accommodated in several

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outdoor lots as well as the Broadway garage. Harvard requested that the museums and event sponsors advertise these parking options to guests. The parking program was to be imple-

mented on a pilot basis for one year, with usage and effectiveness periodically evaluated. This program is further elaborated below under “Institutions.



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# Transportation Recommendations

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## **A. Communication**

1. Consider Establishing a Traffic and Transportation Problems group to meet with the City Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department to review and prioritize parking, traffic and transportation problems in Mid-Cambridge.
2. Have upcoming projects and updates on ongoing projects by DPW listed in the newspaper.
3. Keep neighborhood informed on the progress of the Quincy Square improvements. *The Quincy Square improvements were completed in the Spring of 1997.*
4. Work with Neighborhood 4 to coordinate traffic and transportation issues on Prospect Street.
5. Request that MBTA post schedules of bus routes at bus stops.
6. Have snow emergency route maps available to the public.

## **B. Parking**

1. Visitor parking
  - a. Work with the Department of Traffic and Transportation to identify abuses of Visitor Parking Permits, with specific attention to streets within close proximity to the Central and Harvard Square MBTA Redline Stations. Restricting hours of use, imposing time limits on use, and designating visitor parking spaces should be considered. Consider larger

permits with a calendar on the permit for ease of enforcement.

2. Parking enforcement
    - a. Address parking congestion problems associated with construction projects.
  3. Snow Emergency Parking
    - a. When the opportunity exists, establish alternative parking for snow emergencies - using parking structures as temporary parking sites.
    - b. Consider providing snow emergency street maps.
    - c. Consider a system for plowing streets like street cleaning.
  4. Reducing Parking by Commuters
    - a. Consider parking sticker by zone which allows unlimited parking near place of residence, two hour limit elsewhere in Cambridge.
  5. Institutional Parking
    - a. Increase parking enforcement in neighborhood areas, especially in areas according to specific problem and time of day, e. g.:
      - 1.) Extension School in the evening;
      - 2.) Cambridge Hospital during the day.
    - b. Continue to work with the Cambridge Hospital to prepare for traffic and parking problems inherent to its expansion plans, consistent with its agreement with the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association.
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## 6. Resident Parking

- a. Consider identifying areas of parking which may be able to allow resident parking at meters evenings and Sundays.
- b. Consider the creation of special parking districts for residents in those areas under intense parking pressure.

## 7. Business Parking

- a. Address parking problems for small business - consider informational brochure e. g., "Where to park in Cambridge." (See also C.2.f.)

### **C. Pedestrian safety**

1. Address pedestrian street crossing facilities at the following locations:
  - a. Improve crosswalk striping at Massachusetts Avenue from Dana Street to Putnam Square.
  - b. Increase visibility of pedestrian crossing at Bishop Allen Drive and Prospect Street. Consider light at Bishop Allen Drive to allow pedestrian crossings.
  - c. Consider adding crosswalk across Broadway at Dana Street.
  - d. Increase visibility of crosswalk across Broadway at Ellery.
  - e. Consider adding a crosswalk across Cambridge Street at the Harvard Community Health Plan facility.
  - f. Improve crosswalk striping in Inman Square at all corners.
  - g. Improve narrow sidewalk on east side of Prospect Street.
  - h. Improve safety for high school students crossing Cambridge Street and Broadway.
2. When the opportunity exists, Improve lighting on Inman Street between Harvard Street and Massachusetts Avenue. Trim trees to allow more light to sidewalk and street level.
3. Examine ways to reduce speed of vehicles and traffic volume on Inman Street.
4. Improve the condition of sidewalks.

- a. Improve sidewalk maintenance so that repair schedule is consistent with the type of traffic, the volume of traffic, the existence of trees, and type of paving materials. (Consider charting sidewalk condition.)
- b. Improve condition of Dana Street sidewalks.
- c. Improve enforcement of the snow removal ordinances.

### **D. Bicycle Safety**

1. Increase bicycle safety through increased use of bicycle lanes and pathways with appropriate signage for autos, bicycles and pedestrians.
2. Provide information on bicycle safety.
3. Enforce traffic laws for bicyclists, and motorists sharing the road with bicyclists.

### **E. Motorist safety**

1. Provide more speed limit enforcement, post speeds more frequently.
2. Provide school zone sign on Fayette Street near Longfellow School.
3. Examine ways to reduce speed of vehicles on Kirkland Street between Quincy and Beacon Streets.
4. Improve the safety at the Bread and Circus Market parking lot on Prospect Street - consider right turn only out of parking lot from 5 to 7 pm.
5. Discourage increased traffic volume on Harvard Street and restrict tour bus use.
6. Investigate the occurrences of vehicles backing down Bishop Allen from Inman to Prospect Street.
7. Address vehicular safety at the following intersections:
  - a. Consider traffic light at Bishop Allen Drive and Prospect Street:
    - 1.) Balance with safety concern of slowing traffic in close proximity to Mass. Ave.

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- b. Improve left turn onto Massachusetts Avenue off Dana Street.
  - c. Improve enforcement of left turn only and right turn only lanes at Massachusetts Avenue from Inman Street across to Pleasant Street.
  - d. Improve merge/lane markings on Peabody Street between Massachusetts Avenue and Cambridge Street.
  - e. Improve merge/lane markings on Massachusetts Avenue between Cambridge and Garden Street.
  - f. Clarify turning lanes/markings on Quincy between Broadway and Cambridge Street.
  - g. Improve visibility of light at Dana and Harvard Streets. (e. g., prune trees on approaches, and/or add blinking light over street)
  - h. Improve snow plowing on small streets

#### ***F. Transportation***

1. Explore the use of shuttle services/ paratransit services and extend bus routes to improve accessibility to all parts of Cambridge (e. g., City Circle Shuttle)
2. Increase public transportation service to Inman Square.
3. Improve public transportation services for elderly or disabled persons. Transit routes

should serve shopping/cultural areas throughout the city.

4. Provide a shuttle service or express bus route serving Harvard Square and the Back Bay of Boston.
5. Explore the possibility of an employee shuttle system for City employees and large, private businesses. The system could be shared and funded by both interests.
6. Examine the truck management plan proposed by Harvard University as part of the expansion of Memorial Hall.

#### ***G. Traffic congestion***

1. Reduce traffic congestion on Inman Street at Massachusetts Avenue.

#### ***GROWTH POLICY CONTEXT***

Policies 17 and 18 call for improvements in MBTA service both within the City and from points outside of Cambridge. Policy 19 addresses the need for shuttles or paratransit services to supplement the current public transit system. Measures to alleviate road congestion (without increasing through capacity) are called for in Policy 22. Policy 23 calls for improvements in the City's infrastructure to promote bicycling.



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# Housing

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## BACKGROUND

Housing is central to both the social and physical character of our neighborhoods. The type of housing available and its condition profoundly affect the quality of neighborhood life, and the diversity of people who live there. In the last decade, areas such as Mid-Cambridge became more attractive to higher income, professional residents and consequently less affordable to others, as rents and home prices increased to match the new demand. Already dense neighborhoods such as Mid-Cambridge, however, offer



limited opportunities for producing substantial new housing for lower income residents. Finding ways to meet both demands — for preservation of neighborhood character and social diversity — remains a pressing concern for public policy.

Mid-Cambridge residents live closely together. With over 6,300 housing units and an average of 46 units per acre, it is one of the city's densest neighborhoods, and four times as dense as the citywide average. About one in four residential buildings are two-family homes, while 22% are single family and about one in six (16%) are triple deckers. The remainder are condominium buildings or multifamily structures. Condominiums comprise one in three of all housing units in Mid-Cambridge. When Rent Control was in effect, just under 4,000 units in the neighborhood, or 60% of the total, were covered; the majority of these were in multifamily or condominium buildings.

Mid-Cambridge remains a renter's neighborhood, with about 70% of units occupied by tenants. Homeownership has increased, however, with the proportion of owners increasing by nearly half between 1980 and 1990. These owners are demographically distinct. Over half of renters are under 35, compared to just one in seven owners. Over half of the neighborhood's couples with children (56%) are homeowners. One in three renter households earn low incomes (less than 80% of the regional median), while over half (53%) earn low or moderate incomes. Renter households earn \$34,526, on average, about one half of owner households (\$72,879) in Mid-Cambridge.

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To serve persons of lower income, Mid-Cambridge has a small stock of subsidized housing units, about 2%, compared to 12% citywide. The neighborhood's stock includes Cambridge Housing Authority units at Jackson Gardens and 15 Inman Street, and assisted private housing at 929 Massachusetts Avenue. In addition to these properties, several rental properties have been acquired by non-profit, community based organizations, including 18-20 Ware Street and 901 Massachusetts Avenue, while elsewhere in Mid-Cambridge, rooming house units have been rehabilitated. These homes, which committee members viewed in their neighborhood walking tour, suggest the diversity of affordable housing models available to Mid-Cambridge.

The City's housing programs seek to preserve affordable housing while creating new affordable homeownership and rental opportunities. Its ability to accomplish these goals is dependent on identifying financial resources, market and inventory conditions, site availability, the capacity of local housing providers and support for local programs and initiatives. The City receives funds from the federal HOME program and also dedicates the bulk of its Community Development Block Grant funds to housing assistance. Under the HOME program, the City has funded renovation of rental properties, such as the Cambridge YMCA project, as well as owner occupied single family and two and three decker buildings. CDD also works with tenants and owners of "expiring use" buildings, such as 929 Massachusetts Avenue, to maintain affordability in the face of owners' ability to prepay their mortgages and shift units from subsidized to market rental status. Other programs include the City's Multifamily Loan Program, administered by Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment Housing Services, a nonprofit organization that offers low interest loans and technical assistance to encourage rehabilitation of multifamily rental buildings such as 61 Fayette Street. The City also offers free counseling to first time homebuyers, and assistance to nonprofits in acquiring and renovating properties, such as 18-20 Ware Street and 901 Massachusetts Avenue.

Despite these important efforts, serious gaps in affordability remain, as well as mismatches between the needs of the population and the character and cost of existing stock. Rising home and condominium prices placed homebuying off limits to all but a minority of city residents; Mid-Cambridge was no exception to this trend. By 1989, single family sales prices were well over \$300,000, topping citywide average prices. In the following years, median prices dropped to around \$250,000, but were affordable only to those making \$89,000 or more annually. Condominiums were more accessible. With an average price of about \$141,000 circa 1993-4, households earning \$42,000 could afford them in Mid-Cambridge. High average rents in the non-controlled stock (at least \$950 monthly) placed two bedroom apartments out of the range of those earning under \$36,000 annually.<sup>1</sup> Now that rent control has ended, individuals with very low incomes can afford little more than subsidized rents; but the waiting list for assisted housing far outweighs the available stock. Much of the housing built in Cambridge in the 1980s, or the condominiums converted in neighborhoods such as Mid-Cambridge, are also a poor fit, in both price and design, with families with children. The latter families also face obstacles obtaining rental housing, as strict laws governing lead paint removal discourages some owners from renting to parents of young children.

### **Survey Results**

Respondents to the Atlantic telephone survey placed high home and rental costs at the top of their list of housing concerns. Physical condition of housing and displacement due to high costs were also major concerns. Nearly half (42%) felt that more rental opportunities were needed in Mid-Cambridge, compared to 31% giving higher priority to homeownership. While three out of four of all respondents supported increased low/moderate income housing in Mid-Cambridge, renters voiced greater support than did owners. Eight out of ten of these renters expect to be homeowners someday, but most do not believe

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that they can afford to buy a home in Mid-Cambridge. Only 17% were aware of City programs to help finance homebuying.

### **Discussions**

The Committee devoted four sessions, as well as a walking tour, to housing issues, more than any other single topic. Members discussed the effects of changing demographics, such as an aging population, on housing need, as well as the need to provide more housing opportunities for persons with disabilities. With City housing staff assistance, members considered the “nuts and bolts” of making home ownership financially feasible to more residents of Mid-Cambridge. They reviewed a range of City programs to create housing opportunities and improve existing stock, and advanced suggestions of their own in these areas. Members debated the pros and cons of the rent control system, with some stressing its potential role in

aiding deterioration, while others viewing it as a necessary to maintain rental affordability. There was broader agreement that better communication was needed among city officials, landlords and tenants — not only on rent control issues, but with regard to other housing repair and construction matters. The latter include problems with the permitting process, removal of asbestos or lead paint, and wider dissemination of information on the housing market system, with some stressing its potential role in aiding deterioration, while others viewing it as a necessary to maintain rental affordability.

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# *Housing Recommendations*

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## **A. Communication**

1. Improve public information on housing repair and construction, including the permitting process, asbestos and lead removal safety
2. Work with realtors to establish improved house sale fact/information to prospective/new owner.

## **B. Housing for a Stable and Diverse Neighborhood**

1. Support diversity in access to affordable housing according to the City's Fair Housing Goals:
  - a. Elderly persons.
  - b. Handicapped persons.
  - c. Families with children.
  - d. Non-White populations.
2. Establish a long-term plan for anticipated increase in the elderly population:
  - a. Examine transportation and services for elderly:
    - 1.) Support combination of shuttle systems. Improve transportation services for elderly (public or private).
    - 2.) Consider a subsidy program which would encourage taxi companies in the City to serve the elderly community more efficiently.
  - b. Expand safety features for physically challenged:
    - 1.) Explore changes to building code to encourage new housing construction that is easily adaptable for elderly needs (e. g., wider doors, etc.).

- 2.) Consider better routine sidewalk maintenance and enforcement of the snow removal ordinance.
- 3.) examine transportation and services for elderly and building to elderly standards when renovating or construction new housing, even if voluntary, as part of long term plan.

3. Explore property tax abatements for landlords renting to lower-income households to improve access to affordable housing for low-income households.
4. Consider affordable housing development in the form of artist lofts with private spaces or bedrooms with communal recreation/TV room, bathroom and showers, and kitchen.
5. Encourage owner occupancy:
  - a. Continue affordable housing repair programs such as the HIP Program.
6. Rental Housing:
  - a. Consider establishing a rental clearing house for low and moderate income people similar to Harvard's "waiting list" for rent-controlled units, (e. g., by matching units to those on the Cambridge Housing Authority waiting list).
  - b. Request that Harvard (and other major/ or all landlords) allocate a percentage or give priority to their rental units for low to moderate income households.

*Note: As this study is being published, Harvard has completed a sale to the City of Cambridge of one hundred previously rent controlled units, to*

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*be maintained as affordable by the City. Harvard will also extend rent protections for existing low and moderate income tenants for as long as those tenants choose to remain.*

- c. Encourage tenants to pool resources for housing opportunities:
  - 1.) Provide information and financial assistance for first-time-buying group.

### **B. Design**

- 1. Consider issues of excess infill (construction which causes significant neighborhood loss of open space) when new housing construction is planned. Support requirement for minimum open space through zoning.

### **C. Existing Housing Programs**

- 1. Support multi-family rehabilitation programs:
  - a. Small Property Owners Program.
  - b. Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment Housing Services loan programs.
  - c. De-leading programs.
- 2. Support affordable rental and non-profit ownership development.
- 3. Support affordable housing programs - In the Spring of 1995, City Manager Robert Healy and the City Council approved the new CITYHOME Program.

*Note: This program seeks to increase affordable housing opportunities, both rental and homeownership, for Cambridge residents. Funded by the City, the CITYHOME Program has received \$4.25 million in its first two years, and will receive \$4.5 million in its third year. The Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust allocates these funds to housing programs, including the Cambridge Condo Buyers initiative, the Affordable Housing Rehab Loan Program for rental property owners, and support for nonprofit acquisition of multifamily housing.*

The CITYHOME Program is a major commitment by the City to address the need for affordable housing.

- a. Limited equity housing
  - b. Conversion of existing buildings or construction of new buildings
  - c. Financial assistance for first-time-buyers
- 4. Increase City facilitated housing services
    - a. First-time-buyer classes
    - b. Access to affordable housing
    - c. Tenant ownership
    - d. Home ownership

### **GROWTH POLICY CONTEXT**

A central assumption of the Growth Policy document, maintenance of existing neighborhood character, is addressed by Policies #1 and #27. The latter specifies that new housing or reconstruction should fit the scale, density and character of neighborhoods, while emphasizing affordable housing designed for families with children. Housing Policy #28 proposes that affordable housing should serve a wide range of households, particularly families with lower incomes, racial minorities and persons with special needs. Policy #29 encourages rehabilitation of existing stock, with concentration of funds and staff efforts on provision of renovated units for low and moderate income persons. Policy #31 promotes affordable home ownership opportunities where financially feasible, while Policy #32 encourages non-profit and tenant ownership of existing housing stock.

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# *Institutions*

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## **BACKGROUND**

While the physical character of early Cambridge and Mid-Cambridge was shaped both by the early streets and bridges leading to Boston, and the provision of housing for those working in Boston, East Cambridge and Cambridgeport, nothing has been more central to shaping the general character of Mid-Cambridge and the larger city than its institutions, and none has been here longer, with greater effects, than Harvard University. Medical institutions, while more recent members of the neighborhood, also shape the economic, physical and social fabric of Mid-Cambridge and the city as a whole. While the institutions play a role that is regional, or even national in scope (in the case of MIT and Harvard), their decisions — about building, parking, housing students and staff and other matters — always have large and immediate local effects. Residents and small businesses in Mid-Cambridge have at times been uneasy neighbors with these institutions, but unlike other large employers, they are much less likely to locate elsewhere or disappear.

The city's institutions have profound economic impacts. Large institutions representing



education, medicine and non-commercial research comprise about one in three of the 25 largest employers in the city, and roughly a quarter of the city's 100,000 jobs. Harvard has long been the largest employer in Cambridge, with nearly 8,000 jobs in Cambridge and the largest employer of the city's residents. Harvard and MIT have in turn spawned entire industries, from electronics and computing to biomedical innovations, and countless "spin-off" firms started by university faculty, staff and alumni. At the same time, the universities — and medical institutions such as the Cambridge Hospital, which is closely affiliated with Harvard as a teaching hospital — remain non-commercial enterprises. This complicates their relationship to the city. While removing considerable commercial property from the tax rolls, the universities also construct new tax-paying developments, as well as making "payments in lieu of taxes." The institutions operate outside of the pressures of the commercial market, adding stability to the city's employment base and physical fabric, yet their role as real estate managers in support of the institutions' endowment is at times in conflict with city (and resident) planning goals. Like their counterparts in the for-profit world, educational and medical institutions face new pressures to adapt to rapid changes in technology, economics and population. Accommodating these needs while respecting the need to maintain the city's social and physical diversity is a constant challenge. The role of the universities in Cambridge was the topic of the 1991 document, Report of the Mayor's Committee on University-Community Relations.

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**Tax Exempt Land in Mid-Cambridge**

Total Land on Tax Rolls	10,277,816 s. f.
All Tax Exempt Property	3,326,792 s. f.
Harvard University (tax exempt only)	1,657,443 s. f.
City of Cambridge	756,706 s. f.
Misc. Non-Profit Organizations	389,196 s. f.
Youville Hospital	340,887 s. f.
Cambridge Hospital	182,560 s. f.

Source: Cambridge Assessor's Office, 1997

**Mid-Cambridge Institutional Land Uses**

Harvard - Educational Uses	1,657,443 s. f.
Harvard - Multi-Unit Housing	138,359 s. f.
Harvard - Hotel	30,902 s. f.
Youville Hospital - Medical	340,887 s. f.
Cambridge Hospital - Medical	182,560 s. f.

Source: Cambridge Assessor's Office, 1997

The City's tax rolls include approximately 10 million square feet of land found in the Mid-Cambridge neighborhood. Almost one third of that property, or 3.3 million square feet, is exempt from real estate taxes due to ownership by a non-profit institution. Almost exactly half of the tax exempt property is owned by Harvard University. Another 16% is controlled by the two other major institutions in Mid-Cambridge, Youville Hospital and Cambridge Hospital. Other significant institutional uses include taxable multi-unit housing and an hotel, both owned by Harvard University.

**Mid-Cambridge Institutional Employment\***

Harvard University (1996)	7,746
Cambridge Hospital (1997)	1,065
Youville Hospital (1997)	585

Source: Harvard University, Cambridge Hospital and Youville Hospital, 1997

\* Employment is stated in Full Time Equivalent Positions

The three major institutions found in Mid-

Cambridge employ the equivalent of almost 9,400 full time employees. (N. B.: The figure given for Harvard employment reflects the number of employees citywide.) When part time positions are taken into account, the total number of persons employed at these institutions almost certainly exceeds 10,000 persons. The traffic and parking issues associated with these employees raised concerns with Study Committee members.

**FY 97 Tax Assessments and FY 96 PILOTs\* Paid by Non-Profits with Mid-Cambridge Property**

Total Mid-Cambridge Tax Assessments	\$13,013,226
Harvard PILOT	\$1,289,100
Harvard Tax Payments	\$605,508
Cambridge Housing Authority PILOT	\$233,362
Lincoln Institute of Land Policy PILOT	\$5,439
C.A.S.C.A.P. PILOT	\$3,111
United Residents of Cambridge PILOT	\$1,222

Source: Cambridge Assessor's Office, 1997

\* PILOT stands for Payment in Lieu of Taxes.

Total tax assessments for Mid-Cambridge property represent about 9.5% of the property taxes assessed and collected by the City of Cambridge. The table shown above lists the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) made by non-profit institutions who own land in Mid-Cambridge. The PILOT amounts represent the entire amount paid by the non-profit, not the payment made for property located only in Mid-Cambridge.

**Mid-Cambridge Student Population**

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***(College and Graduate Students Only)***

Citywide Student Population	24,364
Citywide Students Residing on Campus	11,931
Mid-Cambridge Student Population	3,595
Mid-Cambridge Student Population Residing on Campus	1,374

*Source: U. S. Census, 1990*

Cambridge is noted for many things, but, when they hear the name of the city, more people probably think of universities and students, than any one other distinguishing feature. Not too surprisingly, college and graduate students comprise a significant proportion of the City's population. The 1990 U. S. Census found that post-secondary students comprise almost one-fourth of the City's population. Dormitory residents comprise over 10% of the total population. Virtually identical proportions of Mid-Cambridge residents attending college or graduate school reside in dormitories and in private housing.

**SURVEY RESULTS**

Survey respondents were asked about the impact of Harvard University on the neighborhood. Seven out of ten viewed Harvard's impact as positive, while 17% felt its impact was negative and the balance saw no impact. Renters and owners shared a generally favorable impression of Harvard's impacts, though renters were slightly more likely to see a negative impact (one in five, or 19%, vs. 13% of owners responding.) Residents aged 45 or older, while still positive in the majority, were less inclined than younger residents to view the institution's impact as positive. A large majority in every income group perceived Harvard positively, with a greater share of low and moderate income respondents responding in this fashion than those earning middle and upper incomes.

Among the specific positive impacts of Harvard University, the most cited qualities were cultural and scientific activities, and the addition of ethnic diversity to the neighborhood. Others focused on economic and business help, or improvements to education and physical improve-

ments. Overcrowding or over-development were seen as the greatest negative impacts from Harvard, with "increased housing costs" a close second. Others felt that Harvard was not adding to the community, or that it was encroaching into the neighborhood. Insufficient parking was also cited as a negative impact.

**DISCUSSION**

At the beginning of the study process, members discussed alternate ways of involving Harvard University in the committee's work. While some felt that a Harvard representative should attend only when relevant for discussion topics, the group voted to invite a representative of the University as a non-voting committee member for the duration of the study. Happy Green, of Harvard University's Department of Community Affairs, was subsequently appointed to the committee.

Happy Green presented Harvard's proposal for a visitor parking program to accommodate uses of such University facilities as the Sanders Theater, Paine Hall and the Sackler Museum. The plan was developed after surveys conducted by Harvard showed that Sanders Theater generates significant car traffic, while the other facilities attract fewer cars, with the majority of Cambridge and Boston visitors arriving by modes other than automobiles. Most visitor parking, the survey found, takes place on-street rather than in garages or Harvard parking facilities. The plan proposed setting aside ten spaces each weekday for patrons of the Fogg and Sackler Museum, while accommodating weekenders at an outdoor lot on Prescott Street. Parking for events in Sanders Theater, Paine Hall, the Carpenter Center, Busch Hall and the Faculty Club will be arranged for by event sponsors and accommodated in several outdoor lots, as well as the Broadway garage. The Mid-Cambridge Study Committee requested that the museums and event sponsors advertise these parking options to guests. The parking program was to be implemented on a pilot basis for one year, with usage and effectiveness periodically evaluated.

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Much of the Committee's discussions focused on improvement in communications between the institutions and the community, and the need for neighbors to get better information about the institutions' long range plans. Residents called on the city to continue working with the institutions to conduct longer term planning and to make this process accessible to residents.

Of special concern was the need to make residents aware of services, facilities and resources available to the general public, including those of Harvard University; the School Department and other City agencies, such as the Cambridge Library; and the Cambridge Hospital. Among the suggestions raised were an informational handbook on services available, institution mailings to all Mid-Cambridge households, as well as using local media, such as newspaper columns and neighborhood newsletters, to keep residents abreast of events accessible to the public. Dissemination through newer media, such as cable TV and the Internet, was also urged.

Large institutional construction projects — such as recent expansions by the Cambridge Hospital in Mid-Cambridge — were also a concern of members. Although the most recent expansion proposal (just now getting underway as this report goes to publication) has been the subject of numerous hearings and reviews by the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District and extensive discussions and reviews by the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association and a Community Advisory Committee, the Committee felt that the City should improve its notification of residents affected by land uses covered by the Institutional Overlay District zoning guidelines.

Planning issues specific to Harvard University occupied considerable discussion. Committee members called for creation of a planning process and timeline for priority projects identified by Harvard in its Capital Campaign. Housing of university students, a perennial concern in the neighborhoods, was also debated. There was apprehension that additional housing of Harvard students and affiliates, as at formerly rent controlled Harvard owned properties, would change

the character of Mid-Cambridge. Members called for analysis of the impact of Harvard's housing additional students, or creation of net new units, on Mid-Cambridge housing prices. With regards to transportation issues, the prospects for resident use of Harvard shuttle services was raised, as was public review of Harvard's visitor parking program. Where construction agreements have been established, members called for better enforcement mechanisms. The Town-Gown joint committee was suggested as an entity that could explore new means of enforcement.

The Cambridge Rindge and Latin School was recognized as an important institutional neighbor for Mid-Cambridge. Members saw new possibilities for better understanding between youth and adults without children or teenagers, as well as a place for volunteer service and a source of entertainment, such as plays and sporting events. Better publicity could help connect residents with school events and with the community's youth more generally. The use of Longfellow School was also recognized as an under-utilized community resource, given its centralized location in Mid-Cambridge. Members called for expanded use of the elementary school for community meetings and other programming.

The expansion of Cambridge Hospital was a special topic of concern. Members looked to the ongoing process between the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association and the Hospital as the best guide for resolving expansion issues. They also requested that the City plan for possible impacts on Inman Square's character from expanded hospital services and movement of additional small medical offices into the area. As regards Youville Lifecare (formerly called Youville Hospital), it was felt that a City informational handbook could best inform residents of services provided by this institution.

City government did not escape scrutiny from committee members. Users of City Hall — both workers and "customers" — create parking impacts for neighborhood residents in the area. Members asked for stepped-up efforts to reduce parking needs of city workers, such as a parking lot, shuttle system or more general vehicle trip reduction programs.

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# *Institutions Recommendations*

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## **A. General Approach**

1. Conduct longer term planning relative to institutional issues. Continue work with institutions on long range planning, and increase communication with neighborhoods on Institution's long range plans.
2. Consider the publication/distribution of an informational handbook for residents of Cambridge outlining services and resources of the City's institutions. Combine Cambridge School Department, other City Departments, Harvard University, and Hospital informational materials into one publication.
3. Increase public education of events/services:
  - a. Cable television.
  - b. Open houses.
  - c. More news in newspapers.
  - d. Citywide Internet.
4. Consider requiring informational public meetings for large construction projects. If residents must rely on neighborhood civic organizations to disseminate information of on-goings in the neighborhood, then the City needs to support these groups financially and equally.
5. Improve communication to residents of publicly accessible Harvard/MIT other institutions facilities/resources (i. e., library):
  - a. Examine ways to provide mailings to every household (possible piggy-back mailings with City agencies).
  - b. Column in local newspapers on institutional events open to the public:
    - 1.) The Boston Globe, City Section; The Boston Herald; The Cambridge Tab; The Cambridge Chronicle.
  - c. Include information in neighborhood newsletters.
6. Consider improving City and institution notification procedures for actions falling under Institutional Overlay District guidelines.
7. Have institutions provide an annual report to the neighborhood; annual report to the Planning Board.
8. Examine locations available for an agreed upon place of posting for all information relevant to neighborhood (e. g., Broadway Market, Tot Lots, Library).

## **B. Harvard University**

1. Resolve potential conflicts with face to face discussions in a joint planning process, as outlined in the Town-Gown Report.
2. Work with Harvard to establish a planning process/timeline for addressing each of Harvard's priority projects identified in their Capital Campaign.
3. Consider examining the effects of Harvard housing more of its students (new net units) on neighborhood housing prices.
4. Consider establishing public review for Harvard's visitor parking program.

5. Improve mechanisms for enforcement of construction agreements with neighborhoods - request the Joint Neighborhood-Harvard Committee to examine ways for enforcement of these agreements.
6. Improve monitoring of compliance with City regulations/laws.
7. Explore ways in which residents can use Harvard shuttle services.
8. Maintain a viable transition between institutional uses and surrounding uses.
9. Avoid excessive concentrations of impermanent institutional populations in dense urban settings, taking into account scale, concentration and mix weighed against the need for University to house affiliates.

### **C. Library**

1. Keep the library in Mid-Cambridge. *Note - A committee to explore the siting of a new/renovated library was beginning its work during the end of the Study Committee's work, and made recommendations for an expanded library at the same site. After concerns were raised about additional traffic and the use of some of the land in front of the library for the proposed library, a new committee was formed this past year to explore the library siting. They have not made their recommendations at this time.*
2. Improve the maintenance of library grounds (e. g., picking up litter, snow removal.)
3. Explore ways to reduce derelicts hanging out.

### **D. Cambridge Rindge-Latin High School and Longfellow Elementary School**

1. Publicize high school events to residents (e. g., plays, sporting events, etc.) as an opportunity to bridge gap and improve understanding between adults without children and teens.
2. Advertise volunteer opportunities for wide range of interests. Request that School Department publish a wish list of the type of things volunteers could provide such a speakers for career days.

3. Utilize Longfellow School as a good centralized location to base community meetings and programming. Consider additions to or improvements in space to address need for large meeting/auditorium facilities.

### **E. Hospitals/Medical**

1. The Committee recommended that the ongoing process between the Cambridge Hospital and the MCNA should be the primary guide for working with the issues concerning the Cambridge Hospital expansion.
2. Cambridge Handbook would improve residents' knowledge of institutions such as Youville and the services that they provide.
3. Plan for possible effects on the character/nature of Inman Square as The Cambridge Hospital expand its services and more small doctor's offices move into the area.
4. Ensure that the agreement is enforced with the hospital and MCNA, especially parking. Explore zoned parking, (e. g., parking with time limits outside of home zone).
5. Explore zoning which would prohibit the establishment of group medical practices in residential zones.

### **F. City of Cambridge**

1. Address parking by users of City Hall. (It becomes problematic on near-by residential streets.)
  - a. Establish a parking lot/shuttle system/ trip reduction efforts to reduce parking needs of City employees
2. Establish places for community use.
3. Study the feasibility of making 51 and/or 57 Inman Street into residential use, especially as uses change in City buildings.

### **G. Other Institutions**

1. Cambridge College:
  - a. Examine parking increase in new development.



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***GROWTH POLICY CONTEXT***

Residents' overarching concern about longer term planning and dialogue with the institutions is addressed in Growth Policy #49. This policy calls for ongoing dialogue between the major institutions and the City to share concerns, identify problems and opportunities and to seek solutions and areas of mutual cooperation. It recommends that each of the institutions create a plan detailing current status, future needs and goals and the means for attaining them. Policy #55, which specifically addresses institutional investment in commercial properties, also calls for formal dialogue with the City and residents to establish broader community objectives for their development.

Policy #52 addresses neighborhood impacts of university housing for students and affiliates. It stresses the need for such housing to match the scale, density and character of the surrounding neighborhood, and the opportunity for such housing to integrate the university and resident communities.

Governance of smaller institutions, such as Cambridge College, is the subject of Policy #56. Such institutions should be regulated on an individual basis, appropriate to their context, using the zoning ordinance's institutional regulations as well as urban design and other City policies.



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# *Economic Development and Employment*

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## **BACKGROUND**

Cambridge's economic base has changed radically in this century. While it continues to be a premier provider of educational services, the city no longer ranks among the state's largest centers of blue collar employment. Its mill based economy is now largely "mind" based, focusing on delivery of research, education and new product development. The birthplace of the Davenport sofa, the Porterhouse steak and Fig Newton cookies has moved on to new inventions, particularly in cutting edge fields such as computer software, biomedicine and high performance materials. These new industries, spurred in large part by the presence of Harvard and MIT, have changed the city's structure of employment and opportunity, as well as its population base and its built environment. Job opportunities are plentiful for those with advanced educations and highly technical skills, but more restricted for those with fewer credentials. The rapid growth of the research-based economy in the last decade also added considerable new construction and renovation, strengthening the tax base while increasing traffic pressures and other side effects of growth.



US Census and survey results reveal that a majority of Mid-Cambridge residents have done very well by the new economy. It favors technical and professional training, and persons with such skills are in abundance here. Smaller numbers face some obstacles in advancing economically.

## **SURVEY AND CENSUS RESULTS**

### ***Educational Attainment***

As noted above, Mid-Cambridge is one of the most highly educated neighborhoods in the city, giving its residents an edge in employment prospects. Two out of three adults aged 25 or older has a Bachelors degree or higher education, compared to 54% citywide. Education levels have increased over the decade, with greater numbers attaining higher education and fewer completing only high school or less. Survey results found, however, a considerable difference in educational levels between long time residents of Mid-Cambridge and those who have moved here in the last two decades:

### ***Education by Length of Residence***

	<b>1-10 Yrs</b>	<b>11-20 Yrs</b>	<b>21+ Yrs</b>
High School or Less	9.5%	5.0%	39.0%
Some College/ Associates Degree	9.9%	7.0%	16.0%
Bachelors or Higher Degree	80.7%	89.0%	46.0%

*Source: Atlantic Marketing Research Corp. 1993*

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### ***Industry and Occupation***

Educational services remain the largest employer in Mid-Cambridge, with over 28% of the working population so employed. The next largest category, professional and related services (e. g., law, engineering and architecture), employs more than one in five working residents. The health services industry is another major employer, with one in ten employed residents working in this area. Smaller proportions of residents are employed in manufacturing, finance, government and other sectors.

Occupationally, Mid-Cambridge residents tend to work in professional positions, such as nurses, teachers or scientists. Thirty eight percent worked in professional occupations in 1990, compared to 31% of employees citywide. Residents working in managerial and executive positions increased by half over the decade, rising from 12% to 18% of all employed people. The clerical occupations declined significantly as an employer of residents. Mid-Cambridge residents are about half as likely as all residents citywide to work in blue collar occupations, either in skilled trades or in machine operation and assembly work. About one in twenty employed persons are in these fields, compared to one in ten across the city.

### ***Income***

Mid-Cambridge ranks third in median household income in the city, and fourth in median family income. The household median, \$37,075, was higher than the citywide median of \$33,140 in 1990. Family median income is considerably higher, at \$50,272 (compared to \$39,990 citywide) reflecting a high proportion of two earner, professionally employed households. Slightly less than four percent of the neighborhood's families live below the poverty line, about one half the poverty rate citywide, and one sixth of the poverty rate in nearby Neighborhood Four. The telephone survey found that nearly half of those residents with low incomes were singles living alone; while perhaps half of this group is composed of students, the balance are seniors and

others seeking to make ends meet. Almost two fifths (38%) of single parent households in the neighborhood earn low incomes.

### ***Purchases and Errands in Commercial Areas***

Harvard Square was frequented for errands far more than Central Square or Inman Square among residents surveyed. Over two thirds of the respondents perform errands in Harvard Square at least once a week, while just one quarter go to Inman Square that often. Nearly half (47%) visit Central Square once or more per week. Each of the commercial areas specialized in different goods and services used by residents. Central Square was used mainly for grocery or food shopping, Inman Square was primarily a dining destination, while Harvard drew visitors for other types of shopping, such as banking, purchase of CDs, books and other goods.

### ***Employment and Skills Match***

Most workers felt that their current job matches their skills very well (64%); a scant 9% feel under-employed, or that their skills are poorly matched to their work. This small sub-group consider the lack of suitable jobs as the prime cause of their under-employment. Seven out of ten listed this factor, while one quarter spoke of the need for job training; an equal proportion noted the need for child care or the lack of transportation. Just one in seven respondents listed language problems as a reason for mismatch.<sup>2</sup>

One in four respondents did not feel that job opportunities available in Cambridge matched their skills well or even adequately; a much higher proportion of Hispanic respondents (38%) viewed the local labor market this way. Longer term residents are somewhat more likely to perceive a poor match than those who moved here in the last five years.

Among the small sample of residents who were unemployed at the time of the survey (3%), the majority again cited job availability as their primary obstacle. Much smaller numbers cited educational barriers, child care responsibilities, language problems and transportation as reasons

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for unemployment. Eight out of ten of those out of work felt that career counseling was the most effective tool to meet their needs, followed by vocational training and on the job instruction.

## **DISCUSSION**

Participants spoke of both the job and income opportunities offered by business and training programs, and the need for careful management of the impacts of new development. Institutions such as Harvard University and the Cambridge Hospital were seen as pivotal in providing training, both on the job and within the high school's curriculum. Outreach to assist those with physical and mental disabilities in gaining employment was also stressed.

While recognizing the need for continued job creation to provide opportunities, members wished to limit the traffic and parking burdens associated with such development. Of particular importance were policies to effectively limit truck traffic, both in quantity and in access to interior neighborhood streets. There was a strong desire that new developments provide sufficient parking to offset neighborhood parking impacts.

Creating small business opportunities was also favored by participants. There was wide agreement that home-based enterprises and other small, start-up ventures were vital to improve residents' economic fortunes, and deserved support. Suggestions for the latter ranged from simplification of zoning procedures to creation of a home-based business center, as well as surveys to discern the number, type and needs of home-based firms. Residents wished to ensure that any new business promotion also address additional parking demands for customers, particularly in residential areas. They also called for greater assistance to neighborhood-serving small retail establishments, including "early warning" to monitor loss of important businesses, such as Savenour's. Another suggestion was to support additional business in public areas, such as pushcarts or tables outside on Massachusetts Avenue. The discussions also touched on the needs of specific commercial areas, including problems with liquor stores in Central Square, and improvement of bus transportation to Inman Square.



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# *Economic Development and Employment Recommendations*

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## **A. Growth Management**

1. Economic and employment development should be as much as possible accomplished without creating new traffic and parking problems:
  - a. Improve truck policy to restrict truck traffic on interior neighborhood streets:
  - b. Improve truck policy so that economic development does not necessarily mean more truck traffic:
  - c. Consider requiring for development to provide own parking/other mitigation to offset parking pressure on neighborhood streets:
2. Consider establishing minimum standards of operation for developments in neighborhood areas which addresses:
  - a. Garbage pickup:
  - b. Short term parking:
  - c. Hours of operation:
  - d. Size of store.

## **B. Institutions**

1. All Institutions:
  - a. Institute small job training programs for jobs they know they can offer:
  - b. Create in-High School training programs for those jobs:
  - c. Conduct training for jobs as part of a public service program:

- d. Create a liaison from institutions to job service:
- e. Maintain an outreach program for those with handicaps or mental illness (e. g., supermarket jobs).

## **C. Small Business Support**

1. Examine ways to increase support for home-based businesses/small entrepreneurs:
  - a. Consider a program on splitting resources (e. g., sharing employees, equipment).
  - b. Examine the benefits of shared resources over neighborhood lines.
  - c. Consider conducting a survey to home based businesses to find out about needs, number and type.
  - d. Streamline zoning to help home based businesses:
  - e. Consider establishing a home-based business center.
2. Consider increasing support for neighborhood scale/small business:
  - a. Monitor small business coming and going.
  - b. Establish a quick response on business leaving/disaster (e. g., Savenours).
  - c. Encourage appropriate small business activity in small areas (e. g., tables and chairs in commercial areas, outside at 1000 Mass. Ave. and Bay Square).
  - d. Consider allowing pushcarts as part of the retail mix:

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- e. Make a distinction in the liquor license cap between restaurants and bars, (i. e., allow more restaurant beer and wine licenses without allowing more bars).
  - f. Address parking issues for small businesses (e. g., booklet “Where can you park in Cambridge?”).

#### **D. Specific Areas**

1. Inman Square
  - a. Work with landlords to create more neighborhood service businesses:
  - b. Improve bus service to the square (e. g., make the #69 bus more frequent all day).
  - c. Continue work on implementing the recommendations of the Inman Square Task Force for improvements to Inman Square.
2. Central Square:
  - a. Continue increased Mid-Cambridge involvement with Central Square issues.
  - b. Mitigate perception of crime problem with increased employment, recreation and parks.

- c. Revisit City policy differences with other areas (e. g., street performers allowed in Harvard Square, no street performers allowed in Central Square).
- d. Continue work with neighborhood on specific issues (e. g., liquor store - later opening, less nips and cheap wine).
- e. Continue working with the Central Square Advisory Committee on recommendations for Central Square.

#### **GROWTH POLICY CONTEXT**

Growth Policy #20 calls for use of City authority, where possible, to route truck traffic around, rather than through, residential neighborhoods, while Policy #39 seeks to minimize the impact of development on abutting residential areas. Training of residents to extend the benefits of the City’s employment base is urged in Policies 40 and 41. Growth Policy #44 recommends cultivation of a regulatory and policy environment that assists in retaining existing industries while supporting creation of new businesses. Strengthening of the city’s commercial squares and retail areas, while building on their unique assets and identities, is addressed by Policies 47 and 48.



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# Open Space

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## BACKGROUND

Open space is an especially important resource for Cambridge residents, offering a variety of recreational and visual experiences as well as a respite from urban congestion and a means to create community. It is particularly vital in dense neighborhoods such as Mid-Cambridge, where park lands are at a premium. Scarcity and costliness of land limit the City's ability to acquire and create new sites. Despite these limits, the City has added over 70 acres of new open space in the past ten years, for a total of 377 acres of open space on 68 sites across Cambridge. Acquisition of new sites is difficult, due to limited land resources and high costs. The most prominent example, Danehy Park, was reclaimed from the former City dump. A smaller example, but an important one for Mid-Cambridge, is the Mid-Cambridge City Park, created by an agreement with the City and the neighborhood as part of the siting and renovations for the Rindge and Latin High School. Other significant parks have been created through zoning modifications to encourage open space in new developments.



Mid-Cambridge enjoys a range of open spaces and facilities, from the wide expanse of Library Park and the active use of Hancock Playground to the “vest pocket” sitting area of Velluci Plaza in Inman Square. Total public open space comprises 4.5 acres. Parents with children in strollers are a neighborhood fixture in sites such as the Maple Avenue Tot Lot. Resident involvement with park activities and maintenance helps to maintain the quality of the neighborhood's open spaces while instilling pride and personal investment.

Management of open space resources is shared by City departments working in concert in the Open Space Committee. The City's Open Space Committee is composed of representatives from The City Manager's Office, Community Development, Public Works, Electrical, Transportation and Parking, Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Parks and Recreation and the Water Department. In addition to the unique responsibilities of the member agencies, the members make joint recommendations to the City's capital budget committee on open space renovations and upgrading the system. Neighborhood studies such as this one are utilized when members develop their recommendations. The Committee also develops long range goals and plans, preparing an Open Space Plan every five years.

The City also looks to neighborhood organizations when developing recommendations on parks and open space, such as Mid-Cambridge's Longfellow Neighborhood Council and the Mid-Cambridge City Park Committee. Both the Mid-Cambridge City Park Committee and The Longfellow Neighborhood Council organize park

activities and encourage resident involvement in park maintenance and improvement. These efforts help to instill neighborhood pride and a personal quality to Mid-Cambridge's parks. They include day-to-day 'house-keeping' by residents of such parks as those at Hancock Street and Maple Avenue, forums for discussion of problems at parks and providing a liaison between the community and the City departments responsible for open space. Specific programming, organized through the Community Schools and employing teenaged recreational workers, include summer entertainment in the parks by magicians or musicians, and hands-on activities such as bubble-making or clay molding. The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association's annual Ice Cream Social is also a program which offers residents a place to meet one another and build community spirit.

The following is a list of City-owned parks in Mid-Cambridge. It does not include "private" open spaces and landscaped areas, such as Harvard Yard, which add to the open space quality of the neighborhood.

***Parks and Recreational Areas***

Maple Avenue Tot Lot	0.1 acre
Library Park	3.3 acres
Paine Playground	0.4 acre
Longfellow School	0.2 acre
Wilder/Lee Street	0.1 acre
Cooper Park/Hancock Street	0.1 acre
Velluci Plaza	0.1 acre

Despite these valuable resources, open space is scarce for Mid-Cambridge residents, as it is in Cambridge neighborhoods. There are only 0.43 acres per 1000 persons, and somewhat less if persons in group quarters, such as Harvard dormitory students, are counted. Mid Cambridge ranks among the Cambridge neighborhood most in need of open space.

**SURVEY RESULTS**

Both the availability and condition of parks in Mid-Cambridge were seen as either a major or minor concern by over 80% of survey respondents.

***Views of Park Availability and Condition***

	<b><i>Availability</i></b>	<b><i>Condition</i></b>
Major Concern	39%	41%
Minor Concern	43%	41%
Not a Concern	19%	18%

*Source: Atlantic Marketing Research Corp. 1993*

These opinions were held uniformly across different groups in the neighborhood. Nearly half of all homeowners (48%) considered open space availability a major concern, compared to 45% of renters. More than eight in ten respondents in both groups considered it to be either a major or minor concern. These attitudes were also generally consistent across income groups. Interestingly, respondents without children in school rated park availability as a major concern as often as those with children in school (45% vs. 46%). A greater share of those with children in school (55%) viewed the condition of open space to be a major concern, compared to 39% of those without school age children. Parents of school children are also considerably more likely to view the availability of recreational facilities as a major concern (56%, compared to 36% of respondents without school age children). The other notable variation in opinion occurred with age. Older residents (65+) were considerably less likely to view the availability of open space and recreational facilities, or park condition, as a major concern. Where about one half of respondents aged 15-34 or 35-44 considered open space availability a major concern, just one in three of those aged 65 or older did so.

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## **DISCUSSION**

Committee members discussed concerns with specific neighborhood parks as well as more general issues of programming, design and maintenance. There was agreement that City agencies offering park programs, such as the School Department and the Department of Human Services, could offer greater publicity about their activities. Better communication is also needed between the City and neighborhood residents concerning park use and design issues, as well as specific conflicts over use. An example of the latter includes complaints about basketball playing at Paine Park. There was real interest in cultural uses of the parks, such as installation of artworks, or performances for adults during afternoons or evenings. Members would also like to see creation, where possible, of “pocket parks”

with sidewalk benches and sitting areas. They recommend an expanded role for senior citizens in park maintenance, on an “adopt a park” model. Specific park concerns included replacement of dangerous equipment at the Maple Avenue tot lot, and improvement of the tot lot in Library Park, modeled on the children’s area at Cambridge Commons. In the field area in Library Park, members wished to see maintenance of the openness and passive sitting area there, while making some improvements to take advantage of the large central space. The latter could include installation of tables, chairs or a gazebo or small band shell. The Joint Committee noted that all changes for Library Park should be made in consultation with the Mid-Cambridge City Park Committee.



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# Open Space Recommendations

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## **A. Communication/Information**

1. Increase publicity by the School Department and the Department of Human Services on programs:
  - a. Publicize CRLS and War Memorial Pool activities to increase use by neighborhood residents.
2. Improve communication between the neighborhood and the City regarding problems with park use and/or design (e. g., basketball court at Paine Park causing problems for neighbors).
3. Consider an inventory of total open space in Mid-Cambridge including private open space, to enable both better park and open space planning and possible acquisition of new open space.

## **B. Parks Needing Renovation**

1. Renovate and improve Library Park Tot Lot:
  - a. For the tot lot, address:
    - 1.) Safety concerns.
  - b. Install play equipment that maintains kids' interest.
  - c. Use Cambridge Common park as a model.
  - d. Possibly enlarge.
2. Renovate Cooper Playground (Hancock Street).
3. Replace dangerous equipment in Maple Avenue tot lot (i. e., metal horses on springs).

## **C. Park Design**

1. Use Science Center's stone fountain as a model for open space ideas that are attractive to all people and ages.
2. Install water facilities for play and cooling where possible/feasible:
  - a. Lee Street Park.
  - b. Paine Playground.
3. Support community gardens. (Although there are not any in the neighborhood, empty lots should be identified as possible site for such gardens.) Improve use of existing City land in parks, vacant lots, etc., to integrate into city park.
4. Install artwork in parks where possible. (Support the City's 1% for art program.)

## **D. Park Programming/Activities**

1. Support performances or activities in parks for adults during afternoons and evenings
2. Provide for more multiple use spaces (e. g., parking garage as concert space or tennis court).

## **E. Park Creation**

1. When possible create "pocket-parks":
  - a. Seek land for acquisition.
  - b. Sidewalk benches/sitting areas.
2. Encourage private developers to create open spaces that are accessible by the public.
3. Examine the feasibility of providing a park for Longfellow School.

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**F. Park Maintenance**

1. Increase park maintenance and coordination of functions.

**G. Specific Parks**

1. Mid-Cambridge City Park, work with the existing Mid-Cambridge City Park Committee to consider the following:
  - a. Preserve the “openness” of field to accommodate lounging, relaxing, sunning.
  - b. Encourage use by all ages, maintain a passive sitting area atmosphere.
  - c. Take advantage of big, central space:
    - 1.) Consider the installation of seating to better serve the elderly population and encourage extended use of the park in inclement weather.
    - 2.) Consider performances or activities for adults during afternoons and evenings, consistent with park regulations.
    - 3.) Explore the possibility for a facility for outside performances that would not encroach onto the field, possibly a gazebo or bandshell.
    - 4.) Consider supplementing existing plantings and professional horticultural maintenance for all plantings.

2. Consider the Charles River as a source of recreation or relaxation for Mid-Cambridge residents:
  - a. Increase public recreation and access to the river itself.
  - b. Expand MDC and City programming and publicity for recreation along the Cambridge side of the Charles River, including boating and canoeing.
  - c. Develop programs that invite the public to use the river, and/or increase public awareness of existing programs.
3. Add softer play surfaces in some area of Cooper Park
4. Follow recommendations of Inman Square Task Force on improvements for Velluci Plaza.

**GROWTH POLICY CONTEXT**

Growth Policy #63 calls for open space and recreational facilities that serve a wide range of people, through expansion of the inventory and creative use of existing facilities, including innovative programming. Expanded use of Metropolitan District Commission holdings, such as the Charles River parklands, is supported by Policy #65. Creation of new open space facilities, whether through federal or state programs or private development, is called for in Policies #66 and #67. Policy #70 advocates repair, maintenance and timely upgrading of existing facilities as the City’s highest fiscal priority for parks.

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# *Land Use, Urban Design, and Zoning*

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## **BACKGROUND**

The City employs a variety of techniques to regulate changes in the built environment. They include the zoning code, the building code, historic conservation districts and regulations governing flood plains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas. Common to all of them is the “police power” granted to municipalities by the state, which empowers government to regulate private behavior and actions without providing compensation. While the City’s zoning ordinance is the clearest statement of land use policy, it cannot encompass all of the problems that arise from late twentieth century development in a nineteenth century (or earlier) environment. The quality of the built environment — and the quality of urban life more generally — also depend on factors such as landscaping, scale, materials and building design, as well as the integration of open space and pedestrian connections with buildings. Only small portions of the City, such as Harvard Square, are regulated by specific design and development standards.



For zoning purposes, the city is divided into 39 discrete zones to control land development through such elements as distance of setbacks, height, density, use, open space, parking quantity and signage. The following zones are in use in Mid-Cambridge: Residence B, Residence C-1, Residence C-2B, Residence C-3, Office-1, Office-3, Business A-1, Business A, Business BB-2 and Business B. While the City and citizen groups have attempted to match what is allowed under zoning with what exists on the ground, the actual built environment in these zones is a product of historic evolution in regulatory standards, design styles, demographics and the cycles of the real estate market. It should not be assumed in every case that the applicable zoning district allows what is seen “on the street” as viewed by a resident there. Also, the same regulations may produce vastly different results in diverse settings, given differences in context and scale. Perceptions of open space and setbacks are apt to differ considerably between plans and three dimensional reality.

The diversity of zoning districts in Mid-Cambridge suggests the range of conditions and problems in regulating the physical environment. The Residence C-1 zone covers most of the residential area of Mid-Cambridge. This zone allows both the one, two and three family housing pattern found in most of the neighborhood, as well as townhouses. Other, smaller residential sections of the neighborhood range from the Residence B district, which allows one and two family homes, as well as townhouses with generous separation between dwellings, to the Residence C-3 zone,

found along portions of Harvard Street and elsewhere, where multi-family buildings are allowed without height limits. The setback requirements in the C-2 and C-3 districts also encourage “slab” apartments set back from the street on an open lot, often filled with parked cars or parking structures. This more densely urban style of building has tended to be poorly integrated into existing neighborhoods, as witness the high rises that sprouted along Harvard Street in the 1960s and 70s. The City responded to this trend by developing a townhouse ordinance to encourage buildings more closely tailored to the neighborhood context. It was anticipated that townhouse development would occur on single, infill lots with narrow street frontage. The resulting developments have themselves been the subject of neighborhood concerns over density and diminishing open space, as well as the demolition of older properties. The creation of conservation districts, such as the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District (MCNCD), was driven in large part by efforts to control or minimize infill developments. In the MDNCD, a commission of Cambridge residents reviews exterior changes to the built environment of Mid-Cambridge for consistency with the historic pattern, density and style of the neighborhood.

***Residential Districts (included in Mid-Cambridge)***

		Maximum FAR	Maximum Height	Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit	Maximum Dwelling Units Per Acre
<b>B</b>	Residence Two Family	0.5	35'	2500 sq. ft.	17
<b>C1</b>	Residence Multifamily, apts., dorms	.75	35'	1200 sq. ft.	36
<b>C2</b>	Residence Multifamily	1.75	85'	600 sq. ft.	72
<b>C2B</b>	Residence Multifamily	1.75	45'	600 sq. ft.	72
<b>C3</b>	Residence Multifamily	3.0	none	300 sq. ft.	145

***The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission***

While there are many neighborhoods with neighborhood organizations in Cambridge, there are only two or three neighborhoods which have been designated as neighborhood conservation districts - and no neighborhood conservation district is as large as Mid-Cambridge's. (The district includes almost all of Mid-Cambridge, with only the Massachusetts Avenue corridor and the Harvard Yard portion excluded.) The City Council Order of June 8, 1992 extending and expanding the authority of the MCNCD attests to both the neighborhood and citywide respect for the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission.

As established in 1985, the MCNCD was given binding review within the designated district on residential structure visible from a public way undergoing any demolition or expansion greater than thirty-three percent of the existing floor area or new construction of more than seven hundred and fifty square feet. Binding review also extended to any activity visible from a public way involving a structure which was publicly owned or contained a nonconforming use. The original ordinance also gave the MCNCD authority for non-binding review of alterations visible from the street on any structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places and conforming commercial structures.

The City Council order of June 8, 1992 amends the original MCNCD order and establishes non-binding review on structures visible from a public way which are either: new construction of more than one hundred and fifty and less than seven hundred and fifty square feet of floor area; exterior alterations requiring a variance or a special permit; alterations that involve removal or enclosure of any historic decorative roofing material; increasing, reducing or changing window or door size or location; or changing the pitch or configuration of a roof. Significantly, binding review is extended to commercial properties as well, with the same thresholds for binding and non-binding review as residential property. Additionally, binding review is established for all alterations to the one hundred and three Mid-Cambridge properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**Office Districts (included in Mid-Cambridge)**

		FAR	Maximum Height	Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit	Maximum Dwelling Units Per Acre
<b>O1</b>	Offices and multifamily housing	.75	35'	1200 sq. ft.	36
<b>O3</b>	Offices and multifamily housing	3.0	120'	300 sq. ft.	145

**Business Districts (included in Mid-Cambridge)**

		FAR	Maximum Height	Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit	Maximum Dwelling Units Per Acre
<b>BA-1</b>	Business, Neighborhood Retail, Office	1.0	35'		
	Multifamily Residence @ Res. C-1	.75	35'	1200 sq. ft.	36
<b>BA</b>	Business, Neighborhood Retail, Office	1.0	35'		
	Multifamily Residence @ Res. C-2	1.75	45'	600 sq. ft.	72
<b>BB-2</b>	Business, General Retail, Office	3.0	90'		
	Multifamily Residence	3.0	90'	300 sq. ft.	145
<b>BB</b>	Business, General Retail, Office	4.0	120'		
	Multifamily Residence @ Res. C-3	3.0	120'	300 sq. ft.	145

Commercial zones are equally diverse in Mid-Cambridge. Inman Square is typical of Business A and Business A-1 zones, neighborhood shopping districts with small scaled commercial buildings limited to 35 feet in height, and housing permitted. The BA district, however, allows up to 85 foot

residential structures. Inman Square reflects the efforts to down-zone districts, beginning in the late 1970s, that had formerly allowed very tall and dense structures, as permitted in the (Business B) Central Square area. Overlay districts in Harvard and Central Square were also crafted to cap height limits during this period. In addition, the Business B-2 and B-1 districts, along Massachusetts Avenue between Harvard and Central Squares, were instituted to smooth the abrupt transition between commercial and residential zones. These latter zones limited heights and provided height and use transitions between the Residence C-1 zone and the Business B districts along Massachusetts Avenue.

Institutions such as Harvard University, the Cambridge Hospital and other non-profit organizations, such as the YWCA, represent a special type of land use in Mid-Cambridge. State law generally disallows cities and towns from prohibition of institutional uses through zoning. Cambridge, however, has special authority granted by the state to control the physical location of such uses, through the adoption of institutional use regulations in the Zoning Ordinance. That special authority is granted only in the city's low density residential districts (those requiring at least 1200 square feet of lot area for each dwelling unit). The regulations identify thirty-five types of institutional uses, ranging from religious activities and municipal functions, to university facilities and allow those uses, prohibit them, or permit them by special permit depending on where the use is proposed, whether it replaces an existing residential use, and how disruptive the institutional use might be in a residential neighborhood setting. A second element of the institutional regulations is the creation on the zoning map of eight institutional overlay districts, which identify existing concentrations of institutional land use, as for instance at the university campuses and hospital grounds. Within these overlay districts the regulations are somewhat more liberal in allowing the establishment of new institutional uses than would be the

case outside them. An overlay district has been in place in Harvard Square since 1978; it provides for community input on proposed development via a special permit procedure. In the following decade a similar district was adopted in Central Square. These districts have enabled greater design review of projects while reducing the density and height of selected developments.

A common concern in Mid-Cambridge and other dense residential areas is the potential for additional development to change the scale and quality of the built environment. While it is an inexact tool, given the vagaries of particular sites and the market as a whole, build-out analysis can provide a glimpse of potential problem areas. The following table shows the existing built area of several districts as a percentage of maximum buildable area for both residential and commercial development.

***Mid-Cambridge Commercial and Residential Build-Out***

	<b><i>Commercial</i></b>	<b><i>Residential</i></b>
Business A (Inman Square)	57%	28%
C-2 (Harvard St.)	N/A	62%
C-3 (Harvard St.)	N/A	83%
C-3 (Harvard Yard)	34%	14%

*Sources: City of Cambridge Assessor’s Office; Harvard Planning Office*

**SURVEY RESULTS**

Residents polled by Atlantic Marketing were generally positive about the effects of commercial development in Cambridge. A majority (57%) viewed it as positive. Younger residents and those with college degrees or higher education were more likely to say that new developments will have a positive impact on the city. Among those aged 45 or older, nearly one third of all respondents believed that development’s effects were negative; less than one half of those aged 45-64 (48%) gave development positive marks.

Those who placed new developments in a positive light stressed economic outcomes. The



most frequent benefit mentioned was “more jobs,” (31%), followed by increased money for the neighborhoods, better shopping and higher quality goods, and an improved tax base. Crowding and overdevelopment was the primary concern of those critical of development; these were mentioned by over one third of those responding negatively about development’s impacts. Other complaints included detracting from the area’s appearance, increased traffic, and higher housing costs.

There was much stronger agreement on the need for more information about development plans. Three out of four residents do not feel adequately informed. This attitude prevails across most population groups, though it is stronger among renters, recent migrants to the neighborhood and persons of color. For example, eight out of ten renters felt that they did not know enough about Mid-Cambridge development plans, compared to nearly six in ten homeowners. The most popular source of information on development was neighborhood newsletters (cited by 83%), followed by mailed flyers and newspaper announcements. Meetings at City Hall or in the community were preferred by less than half of those responding.

**DISCUSSION**

The human scale of Mid-Cambridge is one of the features that defines the neighborhood’s quality of life for its residents. Controlling density was thus a special concern of committee members,

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particularly excessive infill development. Members felt that townhouse development in many cases had deprived the neighborhood of valued open space and, on some sites, posed fire hazards due to the close proximity of woodframe structures and the potential for a firestorm. There was agreement that the first step should be to clarify the potential for infill under current zoning, and analyze the best means to reduce it. Suggestions included higher open space requirements as well as downzoning the Residence C-1 district to Residence C status. Tighter review standards for the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District were also advised as a means to limit excessive infill.

The potential for unlimited heights, as in the Residence C-2 and C-3 districts along Harvard Street, was also a source of concern. There was strong support for reducing the height limits in these zones. Members also felt that better transitions between buildings of differing height, scale and density needed to be established.

Institutional expansion was also discussed. The replacement of housing by non-residential uses, as with the former Lincoln Institute for Land Policy building on Trowbridge Street, was viewed as a disturbing trend, as were other cases of conversion from residential to non-residential use. Similarly, the prospect of the spread of affiliate housing by Harvard University into the residential area beyond Ware Street was also questioned. The mixed effects of Cambridge Hospital expansion was discussed as well. Some wished to see an agreement with the Hospital

limiting future expansion. Participants also wished to limit the incursion of small medical offices into the Inman Square area.

Members made a strong case for cooperative and coordinated planning across both neighborhood and City lines. A good example is pedestrian safety, design and other issues along Prospect Street, on the eastern border separating Mid-Cambridge from Area Four. Line Street, which borders the City of Somerville, also raises regional planning and zoning issues. Members recommended new initiatives to encourage planning that straddled these lines, with a “bilateral commission” to consider cross border issues and a non-binding review of Cambridge/Somerville zoning concerns, where the zoning at the edge of one city may be incompatible with the district directly abutting but in a different zoning district in the other city.

The Committee discussed streetscape issues, including potential changes that would make the street more accessible and user-friendly for pedestrians and bicyclists. Making the environment workable for persons with disabilities was highlighted. Participants supported efforts by the Cambridge Environmental Program’s Street Enhancement Initiative. The latter includes installation of neck-downs at busy intersections of such arterial streets as Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Street and Broadway. Streetscaping along major pedestrian roadways, including streets that connect walkers to the Charles River, also received considerable support.



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# *Land Use, Urban Design, and Zoning Recommendations*

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1. Examine potential of infill under current zoning:
  - a. Conduct analysis including figure ground map.
2. Conduct analysis towards the means of reducing excessive infill, and in that work consider the following possible techniques:
  - a. Consider increasing Zoning's open space requirement.
  - b. Consider changing C-1 residential district to C residential districts.
  - c. Examine the Conservation District's guidelines.
3. Lower height limits to 45' in the C-2 and C-3 residential districts on Harvard Street.
4. Consider requiring real estate agencies/ mortgage lenders to provide prospective property owners with basic zoning information.
5. Support the City's efforts to create better pedestrian areas and to improve bicycle access to public streets through the Street Enhancement Initiative:
  - a. Install neck-downs at busy intersections
    - 1.) Massachusetts Avenue.
    - 2.) Broadway.
    - 3.) Cambridge Street.
6. Support streetscaping on major pedestrian spines:
  - a. Harvard Street.
  - b. Streets that serve as pedestrian pathways to the Charles River.
    - c. Massachusetts Avenue.
7. Include edge districts in planning analysis:
  - a. Somerville - Cambridge line:
    - 1.) Support for regional planning initiative to encourage planning across town lines:
    - 2.) Consider establishing a bilateral commission to discuss cross-border issues.
    - 3.) Consider establishing a non-binding review for zoning issues such as the Beacon - Hampshire edge:
  - b. Prospect Street:
    - 1.) Work with Area 4 on improvement
8. Establish better transition rules between commercial and residential zones covering height limits, landscaping, screening, lighting and parking, especially along:
  - a. Massachusetts Avenue.
  - b. Prospect Street.
  - c. Hampshire Street.

## **GROWTH POLICY CONTEXT**

Policies #1- #3 emphasize the need to retain and strengthen the city's historic pattern of development, scale and density within its neighborhoods and districts; they are in particular relevant to recommendations for assessing current infill capacity in Mid-Cambridge and taking steps to

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reduce excessive infill. Transitions between differing uses, scales and densities, using such tools as buffering, landscaping and screening, are advanced in Policies #4 and #62. Growth Policy #59 stipulates that zoning regulations should be consistent with the City's basic objectives for governing height, setback, use, density and other standards.

Limitation of the major educational and health care institutions to the areas they have historically occupied, or appropriate abutting areas, is recommended in Policy #5, while Policy #6 calls for reasonable density within the core campuses to forestall unnecessary expansion into both commercial districts and low density residential neighborhoods. Growth Policy #56 stipulates that the City's smaller institutions should be regulated on an individual basis, as provided for in the zoning ordinance's institutional regulations.

Creation of safe and pleasant environments for bicyclists and pedestrians is addressed by Policies #15 and #23. Policy #21 discourages vehicle travel through residential areas, both by providing roadway improvements around the neighborhoods' perimeters, and by changes to roadways that impede travel on local streets.

<sup>1</sup> *Note that these are average rents for people in existing units, while rents for units that are newly turned over fetch between \$1000-1200 per month, or more in some cases.*

<sup>2</sup> *Note that more than one response was permitted.*

<sup>3</sup> *Note that in the Residence C-2 and C-3 zones, commercial use is not allowed as-of-right.*

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C O N C L U S I O N

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## *Conclusion*

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The Mid-Cambridge neighborhood, with its combination of densely populated streets bordered by the institutional presences of Harvard University, the medical/hospital row on Cambridge Street, and the City of Cambridge, presents some of the most challenging problems in each of the physical planning areas covered in the neighborhood study process. With a mostly built-out residential and retail core, the redevelopment of existing buildings makes up the greatest share of development opportunities, and very often, development conflicts. Additionally, the construction of buildings on land long-considered permanently open, such as large

residential backyards, contributes to the sense of development pressure. As with most Cambridge neighborhoods, the problems of parking and traffic are also longstanding concerns. Some of the recommendations crossed topic boundaries, such as the recommendations to increase the information that is available to the neighborhood. The comments of the Neighborhood Study Committee, augmented by the work of the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association, represent a significant contribution to the City and the neighborhood in the form of valuable recommendations in all planning areas.



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A P P E N D I X I

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# Housing

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## HomeOwners Rehab Inc. (HRI)

**Home Improvement Program (HIP).** A stabilization program for low and moderate income homeowners. The program works through extending financial and technical assistance to homeowners in the form of below market rate schedule payment loans, deferred loans, and in some cases, zero interest loans. HIP clients are primarily elderly couples as well as widows or widowers. They are people who either live alone, are unable to cope with the required repair, or cannot get financing for the repairs. A typical HIP loan is approximately \$15,000. If the borrowers are not able to make any payments on the loan at all, the loan becomes “deferred”, which means that payment is made from proceeds of the sale of the house, usually upon the death of the owner. HRI has two staff members working full time on the program. HIP is funded by the City out of Block Grant funds, as well as by the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (MHFA).

**Work Equity Program.** In the 1970's, HRI would buy a single, two or three family house, do up to 80 or 90% of the required repairs, then select a buyer. The buyer would complete the remaining 10 to 20% of the repairs under the supervision of HRI, and that would represent the down payment. The program enabled someone of moderate income to buy a house without a down payment, and, through doing the repairs, become skilled in maintenance requirements. Fifty to sixty properties in Area Four went through this program between the 1970's and 80's. In 1980, the market changed. Shells of two family houses that HRI

used to buy for \$20,000 cost \$100,000. The acquisition price became more than the houses could be sold for at the end of the process. Consequently, it is currently very rare for HRI to put single or two-family houses through the Work Equity Program.

Recently, HRI directed the Work Equity Program towards multi-family housing. That stock is predominantly rent controlled, and, therefore, there is little speculation on it. A rent controlled apartment building can be bought for the same price as a two or a three family house in Cambridge. The first such building HRI purchased was the Fogerty Building at the corner of Harvard and Pine Streets. In this case, the developer who owned the building wanted to convert it into market rate condominiums. However, the bank did not believe that condominiums in Area Four would sell. The developer then sold the building to HRI at a reasonable price, and it was converted into a limited equity cooperative. Another project is the Cherry Street Townhouses. There are 8 town houses with lots of open space and landscaping, built in 1983. HRI used modular construction to keep the cost down. The project is very successful and stable, only one unit turned over since it was built.

HRI also rebuilt 125 Portland Street, which was purchased by U.S. Trust in the course of developing the parcel next door. The building was almost entirely burned down, and U.S. Trust did not do anything about it for a year, by which time the roof had collapsed, and all the inside framing of the building was ruined. U.S. Trust intended to demolish the building. However,

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pressure from the neighborhood enabled HRI to acquire the building almost free and reconstruct it. The units at 125 Portland are HOP condominiums. HOP was a state program (no longer in existence), that provided low rate mortgages to low income households. HRI's most recent new construction are the six town houses on Columbia Street. Built on a vacant, City-owned lot, HRI and the City went through a neighborhood process to determine the best use of the lot. There was overwhelming support for ownership housing, particularly because of the crime situation in the area. The project was completed in 1991.

HRI's home ownership efforts are focused on cooperative and condominiums in multi-family housing. HRI tries to build long term affordability in its projects. When a unit is sold, the seller gets some equity, but nothing close to market rate. This way the subsidy that went into the project become permanent and the units remain affordable.

**Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment Housing Service.** This program is a partnership of owners, tenants, lenders, and City officials. Their job is to promote investment and improvements in large, multi-family, rent controlled buildings while keeping the rents affordable. They administer a common loan pool through which loans for improvements are passed at different interest rates, depending on the rent. If one tenant can afford less than the other, his or her interest rate will be lower. Landlords are required, through deed restrictions, to rent to low income families.

**Cambridge Community Housing, Inc.** A non-profit organization formed by HRI to purchase rent controlled property. The first property purchase by HRI was a 56-unit apartment building near Harvard Square. None of the units had been occupied by a minority household, a family with children, elderly people or Section 8 certificate holders. Through time and attrition, HRI was able to make those units available to minorities and people with special needs.

Three other buildings were purchased through the program. One is at the intersection of Cardinal Medeiros and Marcella Street, which had been owned by HUD. In addition to the building being in very bad condition, the apartments were small and

badly designed. The original 6 two-bedroom and 3 three-bedroom design was changed to 4 five-bedrooms and 3 two-bedroom apartments. Priority was given to families who were previously homeless.

The second purchase was an apartment building at 901 Massachusetts Avenue, and the third was an apartment building on Richdale Avenue which was in dilapidated condition.

### **Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA)**

**Newtowne Court** was built in 1936 under the Public Works Administration. It predates the low income housing act, which was passed by Congress in 1937. The development was conceived primarily as a slum clearing project, and even though the CHA managed it for a long time, it did not own the development until the late 50's. Newtowne Court has 8 buildings on site, totalling 294 units. The development is difficult to modernize because the buildings face inward. The only activity that takes place on the street is parking. Some kitchen renovations took place in Newtowne Court during the 70's, but nothing else. In the early 80's, CHA began planning for the modernization of the development. This has now evolved into a \$50 million redevelopment effort that began this summer.

**Washington Elms** was built in 1941, under the low income public housing act. In its early years, the development was used primarily to house "War Families", where a member of the family was in the armed services during WW II. Washington Elms was designed very differently from Newtowne Court. It has pass-through common stairways, and the units were significantly smaller than Newtowne Court. By the late 1970's over 50% of the units in the development were vacant. In 1981, the CHA began a gut rehab of the development. The project took four years. When work was completed in 1985, the development's design was completely changed. All apartments had a private entrance. The site was opened up to neighborhood streets through the introduction of entry ways all along the parameter. Private, enclosed courtyards replaced common open spaces. The number of units was cut from 324 to 175. The renovation of Washington Elms has won many awards.

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# *City of Cambridge*

## *Affordable Housing Activities*

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The City of Cambridge has an ongoing commitment to the preservation of existing affordable housing and the creation of new affordable home ownership and rental opportunities. The City's ability to accomplish this depends on a number of factors: primarily identification of resources to develop additional affordable units and rehabilitate existing units. Other factors include market and inventory conditions, the availability of sites, the capacity of local housing providers and support for local programs and initiatives.

Scarcity of vacant land in Cambridge necessitates that affordable housing opportunities come from existing stock. Affordable housing initiatives may take the form of stabilizing existing housing occupied by low and moderate income households or converting buildings to nonprofit or public ownership and providing access to affordable units to low and moderate income households upon turnover. They may also involve rehabilitating buildings in distressed conditions with vacancies and substantial capital needs for occupancy after rehab by low and moderate income households.

An important public benefit of many of Cambridge's housing initiatives is securing long-term affordability, either through limited equity restrictions, public or nonprofit ownership or via long-term contracts and deed restrictions with private owners. Large public investments are typically required to secure affordable units, therefore, making these units affordable in the long-term is the most efficient way to use scarce housing resources.

Approximately one million dollars, a sizable percentage of the City's CDBG funds, is spent on housing. The housing funds are administered through the City's Community Development Department (CDD). Along with supplying administrative support and program funds to the local nonprofit housing development agencies, CDD provide multi-family rehabilitation funds, first-time home buyer assistance, development funds and technical assistance for substantial rehabilitation and new construction for the benefit of low and moderate income households.

### **ONGOING HOUSING PROGRAMS**

#### **Development**

**Affordable Housing Trust:** CDD staff provide technical assistance to the Affordable Housing Trust, a trust fund established by a local zoning ordinance to develop and sustain affordable housing with funds received under incentive zoning provisions. The City Manager is the managing trustee, and the other board members include representatives from different sectors of the community concerned with housing policy, including city agencies, nonprofit housing organizations and community representatives. The Trust has played an important role in leveraging other financing for affordable housing projects. Since its inception, Trust funds have supported the development of 293 units of housing. In addition, the Trust also acts as the local housing partnership entity and is charged with the review and approval of all applications for funding from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership.

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**HOME Program:** CDD administers the HUD-funded HOME Program. HOME funds are used to rehabilitate rental properties such as the Cambridge YMCA, as well as those that owned and managed by Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs). HOME funds can also be used for acquisition and new construction of affordable rental and home ownership units, such as those at the Hampshire-Columbia Street site. The City has contracted with Just A Start and Homeowners Rehab to operate a HOME-funded home improvement type program. This will benefit single family owner-occupied properties and two or three family buildings where HOME funds can be used in conjunction with CDBG funds. The HOME program has also been successful in reducing the acquisition cost of Cambridge properties to ensure their affordability to low income first-time home buyers.

**Expiring Use Activities:** The City of Cambridge has over 1,600 units in eight federally-subsidized developments facing the risk of expiring use restrictions or rent subsidies during the 1990s. CDD actively works with tenants, owners and other concerned parties to address the long-term needs of these affordable housing developments. The CDD provides technical assistance to help tenant groups to organize, to preserve affordability and maintain housing quality, and, in certain cases, to work with a local nonprofit organization to acquire their buildings.

## **Rehabilitation**

**Harvard Emergency Loan Program:** The Harvard Emergency Loan Program, administered by the CDD, provides low interest rate loans to help owners of rent controlled properties to rehabilitate their buildings.

**Home Improvement Program:** Cambridge's Home Improvement Program (HIP) gives technical assistance and reduced rate loans to low income, often elderly owners of one to four family buildings. By making relatively small investments in critical rehab needs, the program allows low and moderate income owners to remain in their homes. Funded primarily through CDBG and

revolving loans, the program is operated by two agencies, Just A Start and Homeowner's Rehab Inc., under contract with the CDD. Between 100 and 150 units are rehabilitated annually through this program.

**Rehab Assistance Program:** The Rehab Assistance Program (RAP) is funded with CDBG funds and private sources. The program provides training and education for youth rehab and deleading crews which provide labor for HIP cases and affordable housing projects at cost.

**Multifamily Loan Programs:** Cambridge's continuing multifamily loan programs are managed by the Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment Housing Services (CNAHS), a private nonprofit corporation. CNAHS operates a rehab program for investor-owner rental buildings, providing low-interest loans and technical assistance to encourage reinvestment in the multifamily stock. Operating support for this program is provided by CDBG funds, leveraging loan funds from state and private sources. Two loan programs funded by HUD and administered by the City - The Rental Rehabilitation Program and the 312 Loan Program - were phased out in 1991. CNAHS also administers the City-funded Small Property Owners Rehab and Loan Program. This program supports moderate levels of rehabilitation for owners of rent controlled properties with 12 or fewer units by giving owners technical assistance and loans. Loans are made from a reduced interest rate loan pool that has been capitalized by a consortium of local banks. This is a phased rehab program which attempts to stop the deterioration of rent controlled properties.

## **Lead-Safe Cambridge**

In 1994, Cambridge received a federal grant under the HUD Lead-based Paint Hazard Reduction Grant Program to abate 300 privately owned residential units over a two year period. The grant will be administered through the Lead Safe Cambridge program.



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## Home Ownership

### **Limited Equity Cooperatives and Condominiums:**

The Resident Cooperative Ownership Program, in partnership with nonprofit housing agencies, provides technical, legal and financial assistance to tenant groups seeking to buy and renovate their buildings and convert them to limited equity cooperatives and condominiums. In addition to providing development assistance, the program advocates for funding for new projects and provides management support to established coops. The City will expand this program if suitable sites and funding are available. A Share Loan Program was recently established to help low and moderate income residents buy into existing cooperatives.

**Home buyer Counseling:** Beginning in August 1993, the City began offering home buyer counseling courses to Cambridge residents. Potential buyers attend four two-hour sessions covering issues such as credit, finding a home, qualifying for a mortgage and the purchase process. Over 40 households successfully completed the first course, and 45 are currently participating in a course offered this month. Participation gives buyers access to low cost mortgages through the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency and local banks. Additional classes are scheduled for the Spring.

## Technical Assistance and Services

### **Assistance to Nonprofit Development**

**Organizations:** The local nonprofit housing development agencies play a key role in the Cambridge housing delivery system. Cambridge is fortunate to have several stable and experienced agencies which have been integrally involved in the delivery of affordable housing for many years. Three agencies, Just A Start, Corp., Homeowner's Rehab., Inc., and Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment Housing Services, Inc., have extensive experience in all levels of rehabilitation and also in management of multifamily stock. CNAHS, which has a partnership-model board composed of lenders, city housing officials, property owners and tenants, also has special expertise in dealing

with the rent controlled stock. Cambridge and Somerville Cooperative Apartment Project (CASCAP) concentrates on the delivery of housing to the mentally disabled population. CASCAP has strengths in both rehabilitation and development and in the management of group homes/single room occupancy dwellings with a social service component. The CDD provides technical and operating support for these agencies and also provides loans and grants from CDBG funds to nonprofit organizations to support acquisition and development of affordable units.

Nonprofit agencies developed 375 units of affordable housing in Cambridge in FY93, including affordable rental units and SRO units for people with AIDS and other special needs. We project that nonprofit will develop 360 additional units in FY94.

**Housing Access Services:** The CDD in cooperation with nonprofit agencies, provides housing access services for low and moderate income households. These services include maintaining a list of households interested in affordable housing opportunities. The Department recently computerized this system, and will expand it during the coming year. CDD is also responsible for administering the resale of limited equity units, where deed restrictions limit the price and target the availability of these units to low income buyers. For these units, as well as for other affordable units, the Department also provides marketing assistance to both nonprofit and for profit developers and owners to help them locate low or moderate income purchasers or renters.

**Housing Intercept Program:** The Cambridge Housing Intercept Program (formerly the Cambridge Housing Services Program), is a program that provides counselling and information services for owners and tenants, and mediation services to try to resolve disputes over tenancies. This program has proved to be very effective in keeping tenants in their housing, thereby preventing homelessness in over 200 cases annually. This program is jointly funded by the CDD and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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## **OTHER INITIATIVES**

***Inclusionary Zoning:*** In certain parts of the City, like North Point and the south of Pacific area of Cambridgeport, the City Council has enacted zoning that requires that a percentage of the units developed in any residential project be affordable. Over time, this zoning initiative will result in mixed-income housing being created.

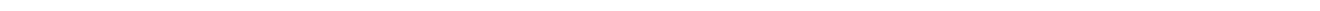
***Fair Housing:*** Since 1981, HUD has periodically funded the Cambridge Community Housing

Resource Board (CHRB), which was established to promote equal housing opportunities for all regardless of race or ethnic background. The Cambridge CHRB's programs have been administered by CDD staff and have included real estate scholarships for minorities and a Fair Housing curriculum at the high school. When HUD funding ended, a citywide Fair Housing Commission was established to promote fair housing.

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A P P E N D I X I I

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# *Growth Policy*

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## **Transportation Policies**

### ***Policy #17***

Encourage regional employment patterns that take advantage of areas well served by transit to and from Cambridge.

### ***Policy #18***

Improve MBTA public transportation service within the city including updating routes, schedules, sign, and bus stop placement.

### ***Policy #19***

Investigate the feasibility of developing and implementing, within the financial resources of the city, a paratransit system, utilizing taxi cabs where appropriate, in order to supplement the current MBTA system in Cambridge.

### ***Policy #22***

Undertake reasonable measures to improve the functioning of the city's street network, without increasing through-capacity, to reduce congestion and noise and facilitate bus and other non-automobile circulation. However, minor arterials with a residential character should be protected whenever possible.

### ***Policy #23***

Encourage all reasonable forms of nonautomobile travel including, for example, making improvements to the city's infrastructure that would promote bicycling and walking.

## **Housing Policies**

### ***Policy #1***

Existing residential neighborhoods, or any portions of a neighborhood having an identifiable and consistent built character, should be maintained at their prevailing pattern of development and building density and scale.

### ***Policy #27***

Where possible, construct new affordable housing that fits neighborhood character. In existing residential neighborhoods housing should be built at a scale, density, and character consistent with existing development patterns. Permit reconstruction of affordable housing (defined as more than 50% of units rented or owned by households at 80% or less than median income) that serves a wide range of incomes and groups at previous non-conforming density where reconstruction is less expensive than rehabilitation. Emphasize construction of affordable housing designed for families with children.

### ***Policy #28***

Affordable housing in rehabilitated or newly constructed buildings should serve a wide range of households, particularly low- and moderate-income families, racial minorities, and single persons with special needs.

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**Policy #29**

Encourage rehabilitation of the existing housing stock. Concentrate City funds and staff efforts on rehabilitation that will provide units for low- and moderate-income residents.

**Policy #31**

Promote affordable home ownership opportunities where financially feasible.

**Policy #32**

Encourage non-profit and tenant ownership of the existing housing stock.

**Institution Policies**

**Policy #49**

The City and its major institutions should engage in a formally established on-going dialogue to share concerns; identify problems, conflicts, and opportunities; and to fashion solutions and areas of cooperation to their mutual satisfaction. As part of this dialogue, each institution should create a plan describing its existing status as well as outlining its future needs and goals, and the means achieving those goals.

**Policy #52**

The City's major educational institutions should be encouraged to provide housing for their respective facilities, students and staff through additions to the city's inventory of housing units. Effective use of existing land holdings should be a tool in meeting this objective, where it does not result in excessive density in the core campus. In addition, where new housing is to be located within or abutting an existing neighborhood, it should match the scale, density, and character of the neighborhood. The institutions should be encouraged to maintain this housing for client populations over an extended period of time. They should consider housing other city residents within these housing developments as a means of integrating the institutional community with city residents.

**Policy #55**

Where major institutions invest in commercial properties, their willingness to manage those properties partly in response to broader community objectives of diversity and community need, as articulated through the continuing formal dialogue with the City and its residents, should be encouraged, consistent with the institutions' fiduciary responsibilities.

**Policy #56**

Recognizing the localized nature of their physical presence, the city's smaller institutions should be regulated on an individual basis as provided in the zoning ordinance's institutional regulations and as they are impacted by zoning, urban design, and other City policies.

**Economic Development and Employment Policies**

**Policy #20**

Encourage the state transportation and environmental agencies to develop a regional goods movement plan. In the meantime, use the City's limited authority as much as possible to route truck traffic around rather than through residential neighborhoods.

**Policy #39**

Development patterns in all nonresidential areas must be planned to minimize negative impact on abutting residential neighborhoods.

**Policy #40**

The City should actively assist its residents in developing the skills necessary for them to take full advantage of the City's changing economic makeup and to provide the personnel resources that would make Cambridge a desirable place to locate and expand.

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**Policy #41**

The benefits of a strong employment base should be extended to portions of the resident population that have not benefitted in the past; the City should support appropriate training programs that advance this objective.

**Policy #44**

The City should actively cultivate a regulatory and policy environment that assists in the retention of existing industries, supports the creation of new businesses and the innovative thinking that proceeds it, retains an inventory of low-cost space necessary for fledgling enterprises, and fosters an innovative environment where entrepreneurship thrives.

**Policy #47**

Existing retail districts should be strengthened; new retail activity should be directed toward the city's existing retail squares and corridors.

**Policy #48**

Retail districts should be recognized for their unique assets, opportunities, and functions, and those aspects should be encouraged, in part to assure that they can compete with regional shopping centers and maintain their economic viability.

**Open Space Policies**

**Policy #63**

Open space and recreational facilities serving a wide range of functions and clientele, including the elderly and special needs populations, should be encouraged, either through expansion of the existing inventory, through multiple uses of existing facilities, or through creative programming of those facilities.

**Policy #65**

Expansion of Cambridge residents' opportunities to use regional recreational facilities (those owned by Metropolitan District Commission and the

Commonwealth) located in the city should be encouraged, particularly where the residential community is underserved by local recreational facilities, and when the legitimate regional use of that facility would not be unduly restricted. In addition, there should be increased coordination of recreation programming and planning between the local and regional levels.

**Policy #66**

New open space facilities, including larger ones for organized activities, should be considered for those private developments where the size of the development, the amount of land area and/or the ownership patterns provide the flexibility to accommodate such a facility without loss of economic value for other uses.

**Policy #67**

Acquisition of publicly owned or administered open space should be made in those dense residential areas clearly deficient in all forms of open space, but only where significant fiscal resources are provided through federal or state acquisition programs or substantial portion of the cost is borne privately. Facilities of modest size and flexible in use characteristics, located close to the homes of the persons for whom they are intended should be encouraged.

**Policy #70**

Repair, maintenance and timely upgrading of existing facilities should be the City's highest fiscal priority with regard to open space and recreational facilities. The City should explore, and adopt as appropriate, mechanisms whereby the private sector can reasonably provide, assist in and/or contribute to the maintenance of publicly usable open space and recreational facilities.

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## **Land Use, Urban Design and Zoning Policies**

### ***Policy #1***

Existing residential neighborhoods, or any portions of a neighborhood having an identifiable and consistent built character, should be maintained at their prevailing pattern of development and building density and scale.

### ***Policy #2***

Except in evolving industrial areas, the city's existing land use structure and the area of residential and commercial neighborhoods should remain essentially as they have developed historically.

### ***Policy #3***

The wide diversity of development patterns, uses, scales and densities present within the city's many residential and commercial districts should be retained and strengthened. That diversity should be between and among the various districts, not necessarily within each individual one.

### ***Policy #4***

Adequate transitions and buffers between differing scales of development and differing uses should be provided; general provisions for screening, landscaping and setbacks should be imposed while in especially complex circumstances special provisions should be developed.

### ***Policy #5***

The major institutions, principally Lesley College, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the hospitals, should be limited to those areas that historically have been occupied by such uses and to abutting areas that are reasonably suited to institutional expansion, as indicated by any institutional overlay district formally adopted by the City.

### ***Policy #6***

For such institutions reasonable densities should be permitted in their core campuses to forestall unnecessary expansion into both commercial districts and low-density residential neighborhoods.

### ***Policy #15***

Enact land use regulations that encourage transit and other forms of nonautomobile mobility by mixing land uses, creating a pleasant and safe pedestrian and bicycle environment, and restricting high density development to areas near transit stations.

### ***Policy #21***

Discourage vehicle travel through residential areas both by providing roadway improvements around the neighborhood's perimeter and by operational changes to roadways, which will impede travel on local streets.

### ***Policy #23***

Encourage all reasonable forms of nonautomobile travel including, for example, making improvements to the city's infrastructure which would promote bicycling and walking.

### ***Policy #56***

Recognizing the localized nature of their physical presence, the city's smaller institutions should be regulated on an individual basis as provided in the zoning ordinance's institutional regulations and as they are impacted by zoning, urban design and other City policies.

### ***Policy #59***

The regulations for all zoning districts in Cambridge should reflect the city's fundamental urban design and environmental objective; height, setback, use, site development, and density standards imposed should be consistent with or advance those urban design objectives.



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***Policy #62***

As transitions between differing uses are extremely important in a densely developed city, urban design standards should be developed to ensure that these transitions are made properly, respecting the maximum extent possible the needs of each contrasting use.

