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TRANSCRIPT AND GENERAL QUOTES FROM CHARLES SULLIVAN’S TALK TO THE CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, THURS. APRIL 29th.

INTRODUCTION:

Cathie Zusy, former President of the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association, quoting Mr. Sullivan’s introduction to “Building Old Cambridge” (2016):

“*In 2010 the Census Bureau determined that 30% of owner-occupants and over 70% of renters had arrived within the previous five years, while only 17% of owner-occupants and 2% of renters had lived here for more than twenty years. As a result, Cambridge in the 21st Century is a community in danger of losing its collective memory”.*

Charles Sullivan (C.S.) Thank you Cathie. It is time to have a discussion on zoning. There are few topics that are hotter at the moment with the proposals to reform the zoning codes of Cambridge. I thought it would be useful to go back and talk about the context around how Cambridge developed and influenced the growth of individual neighborhoods, land uses, development and the efforts the communities took to regulate its expansion after the civil war. I will bring this up to fairly recent times but not up to the present. I do not want to give in to the desirability of the present politics and recent zoning. That’s what I hope. What I can tell you about the city’s collective experience with a series of Ordinances has meant for development of Cambridge and what has occupied us so consistently for so many decades.

**BEGINNING HISTORY: (Paraphrased in places)**

Basic geography lesson- Cambridge was founded in 1630 intended to be the capital of the Massachusetts Bay Colony- It was settled in an isolated location thought to be more secure from invasion by sea but after 4 years the General Court decided to move back to Boston as being more central. No agricultural sources but at the junction of highways. Harvard College was established in 1636 as “a consolation prize” at moving the village back to Boston. There was really no reason for Cambridge to be in this location on the banks of the Charles about 3 miles up.

**Old Cambridge (Harvard Sq area**) laid out in 1630, the first grid plan in New England and was the only village, only about 80 wood frame houses in the 17th C. Land between Harvard, East Cambridge and Boston was pastoral land made up of 3 farms. Other than recommending not to make chimneys out of wood there were no local ordinances governing structures or uses until after the Civil War.

18th Century landscape changed with arrival of West Indian planters, Colonial Loyalists, establishing large estates East of Harvard Square, out to East Cambridge and were gradually subdivided influencing the urban form of Cambridge well into the 19th C.

There were forts in East Cambridge, (Bunker Hill) Ft. Washington (along Putnam Ave), Port during the siege of Boston during the Revolution. Boston was 7 miles by road from Cambridge but would have to walk through Brookline and Roxbury to get there. Francis Dana worked with a group of investors to build the west bridge on the site of today’s Longfellow Bridge and the affect of this was to create a land rush similar to westward expansion nationally. The frontier in 1794 was the eastern shore of Cambridge. The bridge company opened roads and turnpikes and all of the streets current today were laid out as now and the building of Craigie Bridge.

There were eventually three villages:

**1) Old Cambridge** (educational center), **2) Cambridgeport (trading community, maritime connection), 3) East Cambridge (became legislative center**- courthouse/ jail, and first industries in glassworks, etc).

These communities developed differently in a geographic sense based on use. East Cambridge attracted glassworkers from Scotland and Germany, both EC and Cambridgeport attracted ambitious young people from inland towns of New England, and from the Maritimes. The communities were fairly homogeneous and Old Cambridge with its community which grew up around the University which included a small African American community as well. (Lafayette Square in Cambridge) The three villages developed some extreme rivalries- “they did not play well together”, Harvard Square tried to secede from Cambridge itself right up to 1855.

Cambridge became a city in 1846 with three wards: Ward 1- Old Cambridge, Ward 2 Cambridgeport, Ward 3- East Cambridge (1884). Villages are still separated by tracts of land and farms and 60 or so years after the first bridge was built. Industry is still on the periphery. East Cambridge industries- Glass, furniture, Cambridgeport- soap, Clay pits for bricks in North Cambridge. Stockyards in Porter sq. Mostly located off where they wouldn’t bother anyone. Along Harvard St, Broadway and Cambridge Sts there were strings of houses, but still big tracts of land between villages. Marshes around Cambridgeport were filled in, West Cambridge was still rural.

Some minority communities: **Lewisville** (Near the Radcliffe Quad- Walker St, Concord Ave/ Mass Ave), significant amount of African Americans in Harvard Square associated with the college, east of Harvard sq on **“Harvard Hill”** and close to the **river shoreline** towards Kendall Sq- “*but these numbers are quite small”.*

Cambridge driven by real estate developers and investors and they had a vision that Cambridge could be a residential suburb of Boston if only there were easier ways to get back and forth. They chartered the Harvard charter railroad and a station near Harvard Law School, established the Cambridge Gas Company with a wharf and gas holder, Cambridge Waterworks (another private company) on Reservoir Hill towards Fresh Pond, and in 1854 Cambridge Horse railroad, first rail transit in the north east (beating out Brookline by a few months). By 1865, Cambridge is closely tied to the ever -expanding transportation network and toll bridges became free in the 1850s- utilities, gas, pipe-water, mass transit and free passage back and forth and **Cambridge population began to explode.**

1877, still tracts of open land, woods and fields around southern parts of Cambridge. Central Sq/ Cambridgeport are beginning to fill up, as was East Cambridge with its marshes.

Concerns with rapid growth:

1) **FIRE SAFETY**

Folks were terrified of fire in this period of 1850s/ 70s/ 1910s)- fires on a regular basis around the country including Chicago, Boston, New York taking huge portions of downtown areas. (Portland ME-1866/ St John, New Brunswick, Chicago 1871/ Boston 1872/ Chicago 1874)

Boston had an early ordinance about construction in brick like Beacon Hill, features like mansard roofs were framed in wood creating a firetrap. Part of concern were the spread of wooden frame buildings most notably three-deckers. Some cornices on Howard St are practically touching and have no space in between which can spread fires. Bulk of buildings are around 3 ft apart (the only requirement in 1895). Triple deckers were a stand in for upper middle class white people and concerns about housing. They were built with balloon frames until 1896. Those surviving were prone to fires as late as 1973 in Chelsea.

**2) MAJOR QUESTIONS ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH-**

Outbreaks of communicable disease, TB, Malaria (1904), scarlet fever, measles, influenza (1918), small pox- people were beginning to understand the relation between water, sanitation, drainage, sewage- densities in cities were exacerbating conditions. (Map of malaria cases with red dots).

**3) POPULATION “WAS A STARTLING FEATURE”**

By 1930, population was 112,000 driven by Internal migration of the 1830s, 40s, 50s but by immigration from abroad. Foreign-born individuals in Cambridge take up 1/3rd of the population by 19-teens and 20s. And add to the stats folks who had ONE foreign-born parent in 1910 you would double the count adding another 30,000 people. This was an issue in New England cities beginning in the 1840s with the Irish following the potato famine, most of them destitute, settled in the Marshes of marsh neighborhood west of Harvard Sq (Crown Marsh). After the civil war, the Irish began to find their footing economically and they were replaced quickly in the poorer neighborhoods by Portuguese, Italians, Eastern Europe- many who had rural backgrounds. The old Yankee power structure in Cambridge and New England in general felt this was a threat to American values, that these new folks were “un-American”. They didn’t know how to live in cities and didn’t know how to keep their houses well- to some extent this was true. Cambridge developed slum areas that were quite serious reservoirs of disease and concerns.

The African American population in this period was still quite small never exceeding 4% of the population. Until the 1980s they never exceeded 10%. Cambridge ALWAYS had a small African American population to small to show up on “left hand side of the graph” but still substantial with families here for generations. Many families moved from Boston because Cambridge schools were never segregated and many came before and after the Civil War because Cambridge was a literate and fairly liberal community and “they felt respected and appreciated”. So it was a stable community living in three or four neighborhoods around the city.

These deteriorating social conditions drew the attention of citizens, Citizens’ Housing Association did a survey which came up with some startling conditions in areas they identified as being the worst slums- Brick bottom area, North of Cambridge st, south of the Jail in East Cambridge, Temple square on Main St, along Western Avenue and then West along the edges of Rindge Avenue. These were mixed roots- There was NO one ethnic group associated with any one of these slum areas but still associated with many immigrant populations. (Clark St subsumed by Newtowne Court at the Washington Elms) at the end of the 19th C was considered a problem area was considered racially mixed and the housing was some of the oldest housing in Cambridgeport.

**4) HUGE GROWTH OF INDUSTRY**

Industry in Cambridge was huge in the 1870s. Previously, industries were “clean” industries like printing and soap manufacture. In late 19th C and early 20thC industry exploded mainly because of the presence of the railroad (grand junction branch) and presence of a labor market, developed very diverse industrial base next to Boston so they became a ready market for Cambridge goods i.e. shoes, automobiles, structural steel, electrical goods, furniture, Piano works, Slaughter house in East Cambridge, etc. Earlier, businesses were on the periphery so they wouldn’t bother anyone.

Cambridge from 1900 to 1920s would be compared to Detroit as an emerging industrial city as it traded places with Worcester as the second most industrialized city in the Commonwealth.

Expansion of Industry was a major concern. Cardinal Medeiros was across the street from a residential neighborhood. Expansion of Industry lead to the incompatible uses in residential neighborhoods, example: where Fleishmann yeast co. building was built right next to its owner’s residence on Inman St. close to Inman Square. Established neighborhoods were being infiltrated by commercial companies that were not appropriate. A couple of Knitting Mills were in East Cambridge(1920s) because of the large immigrant population, so small factories could follow the labor market or wherever they found it to be convenient and could settle in established neighborhoods. This mix of business and residence was a troubling concern.

**5) RAPIDITY OF CHANGE IN CAMBRIDGE-**

Between 1860-1910, Mass Ave through the Cambridge Common towards Porter Square was entirely residential, no commercial or public buildings at all. 1895, 2 large 6-story apartment houses were erected (1648 Mass Ave.) on the corner of Shepard St. replacing a single family house. This was the first incursion on Mass Ave. And as the subway opened in 1912 with still no effective zoning in place, the Avenue developed very rapidly with more apartment buildings with stores in front of pre-existing houses. 1914-1930, Mass Ave building explosion “completely discombobulated” the Cambridge population. Speed of development- Three Deckers and two-family houses between Chilton and Standish streets, off Huron Avenue (1929).

This spread of development was a major discussion leading to the topic of Zoning, whether to allow triple-deckers or favor two-family houses. This is what struggling people were dealing with.

The Municipal response was gradual and sped up quite rapidly from the 1890s.

First Ordinance was dealing with encroachment on public places (1863). The only way to control this was in a private deed from a seller to a buyer. These were very common. It was a way to keep soap works out of your subdivisions, create setbacks, require a minimal investment of new construction, and very very very occasionally there may be a restriction in sales. I (Charlie) came across one document that specifically restricted sales to Irish and Negros on Webster Avenue, Cambridgeport. That was extremely rare. That private action was the only way to regulate the character of the city. So in (1877), they start regulating on the basis of fire safety- firewalls, fire escapes.

In (1885), the city established its first building code covering all aspects of structure- from foundations to roofing to heating, plumbing and fire safety. (1894), the City limited building heights to 125 Ft. city wide but had to be fireproof. 1895, 97 wooden buildings were restricted to 3 stories. 3 stories and 4 units scattered around Cambridge being built. There had to be egress and if you were building a tenement, ceilings had to be at least 8 ft. By (1908), the height was” limited to 2 ½ times the width of a street” and establishing a yard requirement for tenements.

In 1911-1913- The Court adopted a statute (the Tenement Act) that allowed cities and towns to prohibit 3ple deckers. 3ple deckers were associated with Immigrants and undesirable people as well as being fire hazards. They were banned in East Arlington soon thereafter and Belmont immediately banned them and have very few. In 1916, 3ple deckers were prohibited in Cambridge and then in 1923, allowed them to be built again and a few more were constructed through 1930.

Legislation also allowed towns to establish Planning Boards required in 1913. Zoning was enacted by General Court by 1920, another ordinance was fairly idealistic and was enacted to protect single family zones but what was adopted was something else. Height was limited to 40-80 ft (1920). The old building code of 100 Ft (1924) was limited along the avenues and allowed residential apartment buildings. In high density unlimited business and residential, height was limited to 100 ft. (Mass Ave, Main St and parts of Cambridge St).

Districts: 4- strictest was West Cambridge, 3- Cambridgeport , 2 – Mid-Cambridge, but these regulations were not necessarily protection against apartment houses and construction. In the 1923 code, apartment buildings were not allowed in residential neighborhoods.

There were 4 apartment buildings on 2 blocks built within 2 years of each other, each of them replacing single family homes. It was not clear what the original intent was if the zoning was to protect these residential neighborhoods where single families got torn down.

The Code allowed quite intense development. (1912, 1927, 1929 intense development with Linnaean, Avon and Bowdoin streets and areas).

6 years after the code was adopted, was the depression and Cambridge stopped for about 5 years after 1930 and only gradually picked up after WWII and then stopped again until the 1970s. The effect of this code was not so great in that in the 1920s, buildings filled almost every available corner of the city and was built out in this period. Very little space left over to build in.

By 1940, the 1924 building code was obsolete. A new code was developed to separate the zoning and building codes and reduced the size of industrial districts and reduce height limits. Nothing was happening in 1943 because of the war. Only a very projects were built, notably along 100 Memorial Drive through 1949. This was the result of the code of ethics of 1943.

The bottom fell out of Cambridge which lost 10% of its population in the late 40s through the 1950s. Industry went south and we were no longer being compared to Detroit. Detroit was booming and Cambridge was crashing economically and had only Harvard and MIT to sustain it.

Cambridge turned to Harvard where Louis Sert was the dean of Harvard School of Design. He had jobs as a modernist architect and the City appointed him to the PLANNING BOARD which he eventually chaired. Johnson was also appointed. Institutions were where the “experts” were. Sert was also head of Harvard’s planning board.

It was no surprise that he and the city collaborated on some projects at that time and adopted modernist design principles and parks and introduced the AREA-FLOOR-RATIO and NO HEIGHT LIMITS in vast areas (1962) (1960- Holyoke Center taking 19th C town houses with bay windows). Huge expansions over the 100 Ft height limit of the 1920 and 1934 codes. So now Central, Harvard, Porter, East Cambridge were all becoming commercial and residential with extremely lax zoning restrictions. It triggered about 40 yrs of zoning work here in neighborhoods around the city as people realized the implications of these zones in neighborhoods and Agassiz and Shady Hill and Riverside and Observatory Hill, each one in turn

had to go through a down-zoning process that always required 2/3 majority of the City Council to bring back zoning to a corresponding existing density.

These skirmishes went on for quite a long time. The physical form of the 1960s code brought us Prospect Street, Mather House in Riverside, Rindge Towers- the zoning was such that a fourth tower could have been allowed on the same piece of land. There were many projects sprinkled around, many developed by Harvard and MIT in the 60s and 70s, to help alleviate housing problem with the Inman Square apartments in 1972. These were isolated surrounded by low-rise traditional neighborhoods.

Another product of 1960s zoning were “pill boxes” or square buildings, square windows (5 Centre St 1970) that exactly fill out the zoning envelope and “they caused horror in the design community”. Pill boxes were miniature apartment buildings with one entrance and hallway. In the 1970s, the Council passed a “Town House” amendment that encouraged the building of row houses. (318, 320, 324 Harvard Streets). Row houses were one building but with two different designs for scale to fit into Harvard Street (One replaced a Greek Revival House), some Row Houses had up to 6 units connected. This was an attempt to address design considerations from the pill boxes. These were not popular in the neighborhoods either (example: modernist with balconies on Harvard St Mid-Cambridge).

It led to the institution of Neighborhood Conservation Districts (Mid- Cambridge in 1983).

In the 1970s, worked with councilors to develop a hybrid between historic and conservation districts that allowed much greater flexibility and allowed neighborhoods to target particular issues that were felt to be degrading the character of the neighborhood. In Mid-Cambridge, the issue was excessive infill, and has been operating ever since. Other conservation districts were established on Avon Hill, Marsh Half -crown district, each with similar issues with zoning code where the zoning was “substantially more generous than the existing context”. This was the same time that Agassiz and Observatory Hill were promoting down-zoning through petitions to get the actual zoning amended to be closer to context.

THAT’S WHERE I’M GOING TO STOP (46:49) because that where it is comfortably a break from current issues.

QUESTIONS:

**Doug Brown**- (very lengthy and partly inaudible) about fire issues and prevention which was self-imposed. “was common practice to have factories in back yards”, we benefit from past zoning. What drove Red-lining”? According to the chart it didn’t seem to be racially driven (inaudible comment).

Charlie- “*I didn’t address Redlining directly because it seemed almost irrelevant*”. By the time redlining was established in the mid-1930s there was no new construction happening. In the neighborhoods that were redlined, they were 80, 90, 100 yrs old and many were not populated by immigrant groups and low-income families who could not maintain them effectively. If you take the redlining at face value, they were trying to assess the areas that were older and deteriorated just by nature of the housing stock as being what it was – substandard, poorly cared for, densely populated by immigrant groups and by African Americans for sure. It is “clear to me” that redlining, in Cambridge anyway was not an instrument of segregation because one of the areas Cambridge was expanding in the 1920s was west on Concord Avenue Chilton, Vassel Lane, Alpine, all of those streets and up over the hill towards Fresh Pond- many of those houses were owned by black families some of them who may have been displaced from Newtowne Court and Elms neighborhoods, but these were families that had steady jobs through the depression and were able to buy 2-family houses that had been constructed during the 1920s. And that neighborhood still has a substantial African-American population. We don’t know how they financed the properties- whether the home loan programs prevented that, but it was a new neighborhood that wasn’t redlined. It did not operate the way redlining operated in Mattapan or Boston of the 1970s where predatory acts carved out an area, drove out the old population, brought in another group. It didn’t happen in Cambridge. And again, population wise, African Americans were only 4% of the population. We are talking 3000 individuals. It’s a very small population throughout this period.

Question: You said that zoning was “substantially more generous than the existing context”. Does that mean that buildings were getting too big?

CS: That was the issue when the 1962 zoning was adopted. The up-zoning competed with current scale and one by one, neighborhoods tried to bring down the zoning to approximate current context.

**James Williamson**- How long did Sert last on the planning board, what else can you say about the constitutional make up of the planning board, were other people appointed as well, brought on and inspired by Sert’s leadership? Can you elaborate on that? What was the direction of the planning board when he was appointed and then became chair although it is not clear to me how influential being chair is in my experience in decision-making.

CS: The city always relied on academics to help out. In the 1920s there was a Harvard professor, In the 1940s, there was an MIT professor. That’s where the talent was. The city planning department didn’t really exist. The planning board’s budget, I just happened to read, was…. They had no staff, just a collection of individuals. Sert was an architect but was also head of Harvard’s first planning office about the same time the city manager appointed him to the city planning board. At the time, the city was absolutely desperate for economic growth. It had been shrinking drastically for a couple of decades. The authority was planning for urban renewal projects throughout Riverside, Cambridgeport, West of Harvard Hsq, even planning a little project for Harvard Sq itself. It was a crazy time. Whoever Sert’s colleague’s were they supported him and in the absence of a professional staff, I’d say that Sert had a great deal of influence and power.

BOB SIMHA: (requesting to jump forward to the HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT C. 1960)-

He was involved in some of the things he is talking about. Your observation about the planning board is interesting. The predecessor to Sert was Fred Adams who was founder and head of the planning at MIT. In 1956, Simha was a graduate student at MIT, was hired by a consulting firm made up of MIT faculty members including Kevin Lynch to work on the impending changes in the Cambridge zoning ordinances. People still felt that the ordinance was not adequate for the time.

Several things were suggested that needed attention. One of which, in the post-war period we suddenly had a large infusion of automobiles, many people in Cambridge were able to buy cars which created competition for on-street parking. One of the ways people asked us to do to control that problem was to require off-street parking. In the 1962 ordinance- back in 1956, it was Bob’s job to do an inventory of the densities of the city and to map out, which you showed, ass to what the existing densities in the city were at that time and to pursue a couple of objectives, one of which included the continued concern of the expansions of institutions in the city, particularly Harvard University. One of the techniques used- interestingly, the planning board did have staff at that time- and the head of that small staff was a gentleman who grew up in West Cambridge and his solution to this problem was to allow institutions to increase density. Other industrial areas already had height. But there was a concern that if zoning was to preserve or cap heights in favor of neighborhoods that industry would be forced out faster because of height restrictions. This was a time when Cambridge was extremely poor without tax revenue, industries leaving every year and losing tax base so there were a lot of concerns at how the 1962 zoning would impact Cambridge. So Ordinance changes were made.

So one problem dealt with the parking problem, and the other was to constrain institutional development in concentrated ways so they wouldn’t impose themselves on existing residential areas. This was a particular concern in the Harvard Area. Bob was appointed to the planning board in 1961 and served for 5 years during this transition and it was interesting to see how the city was responding to the changing demography of the city.

In those days, we had no Hispanics or Asians in the city, we had essentially immigrant populations. This was also a time when populations began to grow significantly. There were more people trying to preserve what was here in Cambridge, the rate of construction was largely lead by institutions, there was in general, very little investment in the city, and only in 1959 did we slowly begin to change that situation. The first big development was initiated by MIT in Technology Square after Lever Bros. Soap factory decided to leave the city. The mayor was desperate to try and replace the loss of that industry so that was the seed to a new kind of development in that part of the city. The Ordinance allowed for significant development on that site and that was certainly a consideration as to what kind of development was to be done there which started “Kendall Square”. The same time, between the 1950s-60s the city was threatened by a major interstate highway which certainly had a very negative effect on development and was the source of great consternation.

**Carol O’Hare-**

Charlie, you may know or maybe not- In the connection with the Missing Middle Petition, given what you described, in particular about Redlining not existing, I think that the planning board in connection with the Missing Middle petition on zoning needs a presentation about that so THEY are aware of the history of zoning before they assume, apparently with poor historic research that redlining related to race. I am sympathetic with housing and all efforts to remediate and improve housing for those who are not advantaged, but I don’t really appreciate the distortions that seem to have been promulgated publicly about redlining. And I certainly don’t see the planning board as an administrative agency of the city should be making decisions based on ignorance**,** that the city take advantage of your knowledge and educate its governance as to the Missing Middle petition before the governance makes major zoning decisions based on ignorance. Lack of Education is administrative malpractice.So that is my suggestion.

**Wilma Nathanson**- What do you consider some of the major zoning issues now?

C- That’s a loaded question- I think that Cambridge is in a really awful place. It is built on a completely 19th Century street network and pattern of neighborhoods that cease to evolve in any functional way since 1930. Since then the city has grappled with how to accommodate change by redeveloping Kendall Square, Lechmere Riverfront, Alewife, creating one of the hottest real estate markets not quite on the planet but in the country. Somehow the city that we made has become so completely desirable to people around the world that they have driven up housing prices to astonishing levels and are willing to buy multifamily houses and convert them to single family houses, to redevelop old houses leaving a few sticks of wood to claim its original presence, investing huge amounts of money to do this kind of thing.

 At the same time we have this obligation to supply housing and support people who are working here and if you want to live here. That is the conundrum. This is what Cambridge is facing and I am not sure that zoning is the panacea. I am deeply suspicious of broad-brush, across the board zoning like what was performed in the early 1960s where the city in its desperation adopted the modernist philosophy of Urbanism favoring towers, open space, and connective highways. And that generated more controversy and re-zoning and down-zoning. So, Zoning is part of the answer for sure and I don’t have any ideas about how it could be best employed, but I think there are lessons from the past that can help inform housing that zoning is not good for.

NEIL MILLER - The impression that down-zoning in certain neighborhoods were because density made them less desirable. Parts of Cambridge were places for immigrants, lower income etc. Were there any organizations for these groups to help fight back against down-zoning? (he gave link to Will McArthur’s redlining report).

CS: I’m not aware of any- Riverside fought FOR down-zoning, that is/was a minority community. That was very much in Harvard’s sights in the 1960s. They were the last neighborhood after Agassiz. Much of North Cambridge west of Porter Square was outside the institutional expansion area but got itself down-zoned from C to B in 1970s early 80s. Cambridge was much less middleclass than it was today. So no, I am not aware of any one group promoting density from a grass roots perspective. I reviewed a lot of the literature, newspaper stories from the 60s, 70s, 80s and it’s all about reducing zoning and even pointing out the strange irony that pointing out streets like Antrim St in Mid- Cambridge where Robert Campbell, architectural critic for the Boston Globe lived- was often called one of the most beautiful streets in Cambridge that could not be replicated under current zoning because it was too dense. Even in that context, I am not aware of any efforts to up-zone.

**Becca Bowie:** The question in the Chat is followed by a link to an article on redlining in the city of Cambridge (Will McArthur- McGovern’s aide at the time of the AHO petition). I will give you a chance to look at it. It seems that neighborhoods were getting to big to control, but it does seem that the City of Cambridge is using a different definition of REDLINING. What is your definition of Redlining?

CS: Redlining is based on an organized effort, but I disagree that they were targeting black neighborhoods, there were neighborhoods where blacks were not present. Redlining is an economic class issue. Yes there was racism of course. It permeated life everywhere in America even in our Holy Cambridge people were still racist and discriminatory for sure. **But the black community was fairly closely confined by affinity if for no other reason** in areas like Riverside, Area 4, Wellington-Harrington, in West Cambridge, around North Cambridge, and places like that. But there were much larger areas that were highly deteriorated linked in by all sorts of ethnic groups- Canadians, Italians, Irish, Eastern Europeans, and they were all scattered across Cambridge. So I would REALLY take issue with this. The only way to settle this is to do a story map from the 1940 census then you could really develop this correlation. It is true that Redlining was present across the US. That is absolutely true. Louisville, Nashville, New Orleans, Kansas City had active planning efforts to eradicate black communities in very specific areas, segregate them on the other side of the tracks, that never happened here. There was prejudice at every level. There was prejudice against Catholics, against Jews, against Irish, against Polish. We are all aware of ways people can be prejudice **but I think this is an overstatement to say that the housing commission was racially driven and intended to segregate African- Americans. They were not segregated by it.**

**Marie Saccaccio**

I’m 4th generation East Cambridge. It primarily housed immigrants from Portugal, Ireland, Poland, and Italy. All my ancestors were able to get loans and all the housing here was essentially owned by immigrants. If I was back in time and the Federal government came to me and ask if this was a high-risk neighborhood, I would have said yes. In the 19th C, we had the first public health trial in the country and it had to do with 8 slaughter houses that surrounded the neighborhood. The case was brought by the residents themselves. In the 19th C, slaughters went up in flames and 20 acres burned down. Slaughters went up twice in my lifetime. The remarkable thing about East Cambridge is that it still exists today. The point about Redlining is that it was a high-risk area. We were surrounded by industry and toxic industry, so the redlining was based on reality. It definitely wasn’t based on race although you could make the argument that it was an immigrant population. But the reality was that it was not a healthy neighborhood. There were loads of fires and the remarkable thing as I have said is that it exists today. I did make a comment to the planning board and I did suggest that the CDD get in touch with the historic commission and special services because there is kind of a void in their report.

(some early phrases in the lecture were paraphrased but the comments at the end are fully transcribed and accurate).