



Dear Friend,

Every two years the City Council adopts goals to guide it in the next two fiscal years. This year we held a World Café – a structured gathering with about 75 members of the community—to guide us toward the future. Most goals were carried over from the prior two years; new this year are public safety and transportation aims.

**Council Goals:**

- ◆ Foster community and support neighborhood vitality. Support opportunities for citizens to know each other within their neighborhoods and across the city.
- ◆ Evaluate City expenditures with a view of maintaining a strong fiscal position and an awareness of the impact on taxpayers while providing a high quality array of city services.
- ◆ Strengthen and support human services, public education and out-of-school learning in Cambridge for the benefit of residents of all ages.
- ◆ Value and support the racial, socioeconomic, cultural and religious diversity of our city.
- ◆ Promote public safety and address the challenges and opportunities for multiple modes of transportation to safely share roads and sidewalks.
- ◆ Promote a healthy community and environment to advance Cambridge as a leader in public health and environmental sustainability.
- ◆ Preserve and create affordable housing for low, moderate and middle-income families and other residents across the city.
- ◆ Promote doing business in Cambridge and work to strengthen our mutually beneficial partnerships with businesses and universities.

The current goals have served us well, earning a remarkable 90% satisfaction rating for Cambridge as a place to live. To keep that level of satisfaction, I know that we must continue to improve.

**DEVELOPMENT**

**EF Zoning** ► EF, a private educational institution located at North Point opposite the Museum of Science, petitioned the City Council to relax existing zoning governing them and permit expansion of their facility. The prior zoning would have required that housing be built on the site. After lengthy deliberations, the Council permitted this expansion as it is appropriate to the site. The request for zoning relief is accompanied by a community benefit package from the developer amounting to \$914k. Community benefit packages are fairly new in Massachusetts zoning but are likely to be part of each new major zoning request that comes forward to the Council.

**Community Benefits** ► The state courts have ruled that municipalities can request that developers voluntarily contribute a community benefits package when they request consideration for zoning relief. What's new is that the benefits need not relate directly to the immediate impact of the project but can benefit the community as a whole. I support setting up a Community Benefits Fund that is managed by a board, similar to other city fund boards, such as the Affordable Housing Trust and the Community Preservation Board. They would review requests for funding annually and make recommendations to the City Council for spending. I also would like to see some funds dispersed in relation to the impact the zoning may have in the form of loss of affordable housing and additional carbon emissions impacts for instance.

**Norris St. and the North Cambridge Catholic High School** ► Last year the NCCHS was closed after decades of use on Norris St., a one-block residential street in North Cambridge. Existing zoning allows the building to be re-used for housing units as small as 700 square feet, which means that up to 40 units of housing could be built into the shell. One parking space would be required for each unit. The Council is being asked to amend the zoning ordinance to reduce the impact on this tight street, possibly cutting the number of permitted units and/or requiring average units to be larger—I like to think of them as family sized –3-bedrooms, for example.

**Sign Ordinance** ► I'll try to give you a summary of this touchy subject in 100 words or less: Last fall a big brouhaha erupted at the City Council about an ordinance passed by the majority of Councillors that permitted lighted identification signs on tall buildings in some parts of the city. I did not support the ordinance because I felt it was not sufficiently restrictive. One property owner and many citizens objected to the passage of the ordinance saying it would give a commercial character to the city that they oppose. Their opposing petition essentially forced the Council to rescind the ordinance. No further action has been taken.

**HOUSING**

**HRI/Neighborhood Apartment Housing Services** ► Homeowners Rehab(HRI) has been a leading housing agency in Cambridge for decades, developing new affordable housing and rehabbing housing for lower income homeowners. The organization also has a lesser-known service directed at absentee owners of apartments who want to improve their rental units, such as by weatherizing – a benefit to tenants. Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment Housing Services (CNAHS), a separate and independent non-profit housing organization focuses on creating new and maintaining existing affordable rental housing. This goal is accomplished by developing new rental housing and providing below-market loans to multi-family housing owners who are willing to keep their units affordable. For more information, go to <http://www.cambridgenahs.org>.

**Homeownership Resale Pool** ► The Community Development Department is currently accepting applications for subsidized rental units and homeownership units. The department also has established a Homeownership Resale Pool. In order to better match buyers to affordable units being sold by current owners, there is a new system in which a single application for housing will enter households into the Homeownership Resale Pool. All applications received will be added to the pool in the order in which they are received. Also, applicants must have a household income of at least 40% but not more than 100% of Area Median Income as defined by HUD, approximately \$90,000 for a family of four.

**Are You Eligible for Subsidized Housing?** ► For information about renting or owning an affordable unit, applying for available units or to obtain information about Cambridge affordable housing in general, call the Community Development Department, Housing Division, at 617-349-4622. Cambridge subsidized units are available to low or moderate and, in some cases, middle-income families and individuals.

## AGING IN OUR COMMUNITY

**Housing for an Aging Population** ► The baby boomers are coming, the baby boomers are coming! I'm pleased to announce that I have been appointed to chair the Mayor's Silver Ribbon Commission, charged with addressing housing needs of older residents. This commission will consist of community members, city staff and housing professionals and will follow up on city studies of housing trends and desires. Early analysis shows that there are twice as many people aged 55 to 65 living in Cambridge as there are people who are older than 65. What this hints at is a growing group who will retire here. Many will want to age at home or move to supportive facilities. How should we prepare our housing stock to meet that need, to match the housing desires of aging Cantabrigians? Please contact me if you wish to be considered to serve on the commission or to be kept informed of issues related to aging in Cambridge.

**Door 2 Door** ► This van service, available to people over 62, is available for shopping trips and other errands. It means less need to drive a car as you get older. A donation is requested. Call 617-625-1191 to reserve.

**Educational Opportunities for Older Cantabrigians** ► I recently heard by email from someone who had received my publication *Savings for Seniors*, which lists 29 discounts for persons as they get older. This individual used the information get started in a new career direction! She began by taking advantage of BU's Evergreen Program, very low cost classes with the permission of the instructor, and is now enrolled (and paying) for a master's degree. I have additional copies of *Savings for Seniors* if you would like one, and it is also available on line at [henriettadavis.org](http://henriettadavis.org), under Useful Info.

## SCHOOLS, KIDS, AND EDUCATION FOR ALL

**Schools Study Groups** ► School Committee members are taking the lead in examining elements that relate to the future of our public school system. Deciding which school buildings to fix up is tied to how schools will be used in the years to come. Last year when the School Committee and the Superintendent looked into the possibility of developing middle schools, they discovered that the facility issue was important to solve at the same time. Look for recommendations from the Superintendent in February.

**Trauma** ► As co-chair of the Healthy Children Task Force, I've been involved over the years with a number of health prevention initiatives, including a nationally recognized program for preventing obesity. This year, with School Committee member Alice Turkel, I have convened a series of meetings to see if we can promote success in school for children who have experienced emotional trauma. Some of these children have experienced domestic violence or been bullied or abused and for them the classroom can feel like a dangerous place. We're expecting that after a year of study our subcommittee may recommend additional training for the adults in the schools. In years past the School Department was able to have a closer relationship with social service agencies; this kind of relationship may need to be revived.

**Alcohol and Substance Abuse by Cambridge Young People** ► If you were guessing, would you say that Cambridge public school students were better or worse than their peers in private school when it comes to using and abusing alcohol and substance? The Teen Health survey has shown that Cambridge private and public school students use and abuse alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs such as inhalants, at roughly the same rate. As for comparisons with other communities, marijuana use is higher here than the state average, leading some to theorize that too many young people believe that marijuana is harmless.

**Tax Credits for Families** ► Two important tax credit programs are now available for families. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) can result in thousands of dollars of payments to low-income families and individuals. For information and to make an appointment to have your tax return completed, call CEOC at 617-868-2906. Also important, the College Tuition Tax Credit can return \$2500 to any college student or family.

**Community Learning Center** ► Ever since I was first elected to the City Council, I have been hopeful that the Community Learning Center, the city's adult education program where many new citizens learn English, would have a new home, and move from its poor quality rental space. I'm pleased to say that CLC will move to the empty Central Square police station sharing the facility with the Cambridge Housing Authority. The City Council approved a loan order of \$14 million for rehab and the work is scheduled to be completed in approximately two years.

## ENVIRONMENT

**Trees** ► As chair of the Environment Committee, I've been holding a series of meetings on how to strengthen the city's planting and maintenance of our urban forest. Cambridge is home to approximately 17,000 city-owned trees and is responsible for the planting and maintenance of street trees and trees on public reservations. While last year the city planted more than 600 trees, more and more we're hearing from the Public Planting Committee, a group of volunteer stewards of public trees, that we should turn our focus to maintaining trees, including enlisting members of the public to help water all street trees, especially during times of drought. Look for a better-publicized and more robust public stewardship program in the months to come.

**ICLEI and Adaptation** ► Cambridge belongs to the non-profit group ICLEI/Local Governments for Sustainability, and it's through the assistance of this organization that we first evaluated our carbon emissions. Now Cambridge has been selected as one of eight cities nationally to participate in ICLEI's Climate Resilient Communities Program. This will give us technical assistance to adapt our city to the range of impacts from climate change. First we must evaluate our vulnerabilities as a coastal city, then plan so that we keep our city safe from sea level rise. We need to answer the question: how will we protect our residents from extreme weather such as heat waves? Also, I'm proud to say that I have been appointed to the U.S. Board of Directors of ICLEI. As a member of the board, I will share our experiences here in Cambridge with cities across the country and around the world.

**Public Information about Renewable Energy** ► Among the projects I've been working on this year with community members who participated in last year's Climate Congress is to deliver information to the public about renewable energy. While energy efficiency must be the first way to decrease carbon emissions, in the long run it is essential to create more energy capacity from renewables, such as solar. This past year we have held two informational sessions on solar and seen several films on sustainability. Look for more events from the public information group which is named CREATE, including one in January about Eco-Communities in Sweden and the U.S.

**Randi Mail, Cambridge Recycling Director, Reports:** "Single Stream Recycling Starts Strong. Cambridge residents have been recycling at high levels during the first month of the City's new recycling program. During its first full month, recycling increased by 125 tons (20%) compared to November 2009! We recycled 781 tons in November 2010, compared to 656 tons last November. This recycling program serves residences, city buildings, schools and houses of worship. Single stream means that you can place clean bottles, cans, paper and cardboard together in the same bin. Also, over 150 residents and city employees toured the Casella Recycling facility in Charlestown this year. It was impressive to see the cutting edge sorting technology used to separate our recyclable materials, which are marketed to companies that make new products."

**The Cambridge Energy Efficiency Hot-Line** ➤ Do you have questions about how you can become more energy efficient? Have you already installed CFLs and want to take more action in your home? Wonder who to contact about having a home energy assessment completed? Call the CEA Hot-Line at 617-491-0488 x121 during the Energy Advisor's in-service hours, Monday-Friday from 10am-noon. If you can't call during in-service hours, leave a message any time or email [eadvisor@cambridgeenergyalliance.org](mailto:eadvisor@cambridgeenergyalliance.org) with questions.

**Other Useful Energy Efficiency Contacts**

**HEET** ➤ The Home Energy Efficiency Team is looking for non-profit buildings where they can bring a team to weatherize. Contact <http://heetma.com>.

**Fuel Assistance and Weatherization Program** ➤ This is a city program for low income residents that helps homeowners and residents to lower their heating costs. Contact 617-349-6252.

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Better for Bikes and Pedestrians** ➤ Cambridge is continually improving for bike riders and pedestrians. One example is the new plan for reconstructing Western Ave. Initially pushing the reconstruction is the need to accommodate storm water that needs to run to the river, rather than to Deer Island where it would be unnecessarily treated as sewage. The plan developed with the community involves a separated bike lane between parked cars and the sidewalk with buffer strips. Construction is expected to be completed by September 2013.

**Bicycling Enforcement** ➤ It's time once again to remind bicyclists of the rules of the road. After hearing complaints of near collisions from a vocal group at the World Café community meeting, I joined other Councillors in asking for more education and enforcement to motivate bikers to stop at crosswalks and red lights. Ironically, on the way to the meeting I'd been narrowly missed by a bicyclist who bombed through the Inman St. crosswalk where I was crossing with the light and she didn't even slow down or seem to notice that she was about to hit a pedestrian. Ouch.

**A GREAT HONOR**

I am so proud to announce that last month the National Democratic Municipal Officials (DMO) named me as Democratic Municipal Official of the Year 2010! The DMO is the largest coalition of Democratic officials in the United States, and represents more than 50,000 Democratic leaders in local governments of all sizes, geographies, and composition. Nearly 400 mayors, city council members, and other elected municipal officials from around the nation were present at an early morning breakfast in Denver when I received the award which especially cited my work on the environment, for seniors and for children. I was joined at the awards ceremony by members of the home team: my husband, Richard Bock, Mayor David Maher, Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi, Lisa Peterson and Ellen Semonoff. I couldn't be more proud. I want to thank my colleagues, city staff and especially you and other voters for giving me the opportunity to serve as a Cambridge City Councillor and now as Vice Mayor.

My best to you in the New Year,



P.S. **Save the Date.** The fifth annual Cambridge Science Festival will run from April 30 to May 8. Mark it on your calendar for a week of science fun for all ages.