Land also expensive

Cambridge housing space limited

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comes through federal assistance. However, even with federal assistance, there are obstacles to large-scale housing programs, the major problem is the high cost of land. While there is very little land in Cambridge that is available for less than $1 per square foot, it is necessary to hold land costs to under $1 in order to meet FHA price level requirements for federally-assisted privately-sponsored housing.

Urban Renewal Program

The most likely solution to the problem of land costs can be found under Title I of the Urban Renewal program. Through the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, areas of "underutilized land not now used for "residential purposes" can be obtained cheaper by means of federal subsidies accounting to 2/3 of the land cost. The Cambridge Corporation is now investigating certain parcels of land which might be obtained through urban renewal. However, this method of obtaining land is limited by the political decision that results from any displacement of industry or families as grounds of urban renewal.

Advis to Neighborhoods

In addition to providing housing, the Cambridge Corporation tries to advise the people who are trying to improve their neighborhood from within. For example, the corporation has been providing continuous staff advice to the Wellington-Harrington Citizens' Committee in relation to urban renewal already being undertaken by the federal government in their neighborhood.

Another area being given consideration by the Cambridge Corporation is Neighborhood Four, which, as a neighborhood has been striving hard to better itself, has been the subject of much study, including a major portion of the "Urban Change" conference held at MIT last spring. Neighborhood Four is a prime example of what the corporation is trying to encourage—a homegrown organization that has been guided by the Cambridge Corporation "in the refinement of its own self-generated plans for future development."

Neighborhood Four

In Neighborhood Four, one of the specific problems hindering the community is a conflict of interests between the residential and industrial segments of the neighborhood. Although industrial demand for land is a traditional threat to the security of the homeowners, this problem has recently been heightened by demands for parking space. However, intervention by the Cambridge Corporation solved this problem by effecting a compromise through which the Polaroid Corporation released some land which is to be used for playgrounds and other neighborhood facilities. The corporation also tries to aid Cambridge by analyzing more general aspects of redevelopment. With other organizations, it devotes "time and energy to the necessary planning processes for Cambridge as a whole." It studies closely federal programs, such as Urban Renewal and Demonstration Cities, to discover how Cambridge can avail itself of federal aid.

The "Catalyst"

Mainly, the Cambridge Corporation tries to "act as a catalyst," rather than a sole supporter of development proposals. Emphasizing this role as a catalyst is the corporation's role in providing low-cost land through urban renewal. This action is being undertaken jointly with the Interfaith Housing Corporation of Cambridge and the Interfaith Housing Corporation of Boston.