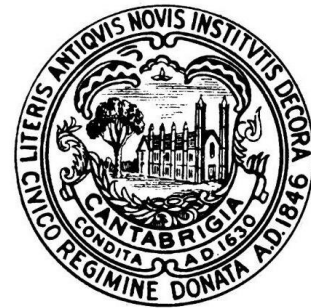


Municipal Rat Control

Challenges and New Methods

Dave Power, Project Coordinator Environmental Health
Inspectional Services Department
City of Cambridge





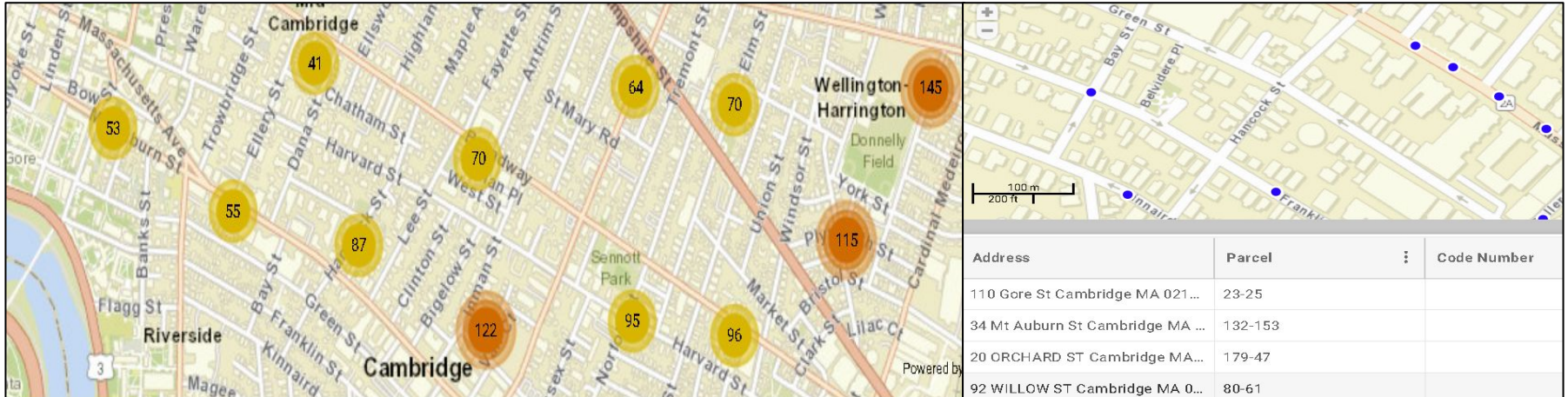
Context for current rat control efforts

- Pressure to limit rat activity in densely populated communities isn't new. **Program visibility and good communication are critical for credibility and buy-in**
- Major limitations: most activity results from private property conditions and residential mgmt of household trash, food waste, harborage. **City has limited access & few penalties**
- Pandemic resulted in major shift in rat activity from commercial to residential. **Rats were closer to people at home, easier to observe**
- Rising concerns about the non-target impact of SGARs (2nd-gen rodenticides). **Local/state rules are changing**



Communicate with residents/owners/businesses

- Reporting hotline, app-based reporting (Commonwealth Connect, 311)
- Getting good location and behavior info helps ID hot spots, sources, patterns
- Citation of conditions that support rats through routine inspections
- Rat response “heat map” raises awareness of the City’s response
- Periodic reports to City Council utilize geospatial data, specific risk factors
- Public involvement: local meetings, rat fertility study w/ engaged residents





Municipal Response to Residential Rat Activity

- Initial inspection may lead to citation (MA Sanitary Code)
- Municipal Site Cleanliness ordinance offers some leverage
- Cross-property issues common, hard to cite & to access
- Self-reported problems generally not cited, free baiting
- Larger infestations, multi-property, institutional or City-owned properties generally referred to me (Project Coordinator for Env. Health), CO2 or CO for larger burrows



Community Outreach & Public Engagement

- Owners eligible for the **free private property baiting program also** get an IPM report with guidance
- Option for rodenticide vs trapping; CO/CO2 treatment
- Neighborhood discussions may be informal (led by an active neighbor) or City-organized for larger areas
- After 4 service visits property is reassessed
- Public Health/ISD rat fertility study now underway
 - **Testing efficacy of birth control to reduce population**
 - **Involve residents to spread knowledge and share burden**
 - **Encourage resident-led campaign for best practices on residential property and awareness of City resources**
 - **Use smart boxes and data collection to report out**

Important Rat Control Information



Greetings Neighbor!

Cambridge and Somerville are launching a two-city field study to assess how well a non-toxic rodent fertility control product, called Evolve, will work in dense communities like ours to reduce the rat population over time.

We will be targeting several blocks in your immediate area



Building a sustainable local rat control program

- Obstacles include: non-responsive property owners, short-term rentals, exporting blame to other properties/construction/commercial, little coordination among owners, poor pest control services, limited City leverage
- These challenges require many changes of practice:
 - More aggressive IPM approach and greater public involvement/burden
 - More direct resident & owner involvement, awareness of major causes
 - Pursuit of new strategies, new control products, less non-target harm
 - Universal participation in food waste pickup (if available)
 - Stronger site cleanliness regs/ordinances & control of bird-feeding
 - Private baiting program (citywide or targeted to hot spots)
 - Stricter rules for short-term rentals, nonresident owners, unaccountable



Thanks for your time and attention

Questions?

Dave Power

*Project Coordinator for
Environmental Health*

**Cambridge Inspectional
Services Department**

dpower@cambridgema.gov





Scenario #1 Residential street in mid-Cambridge:

- Property line issue and both neighbors had already been paying exterminators that could not resolve
- Overfeeding of birds without maintenance (5-6 feeders in back)
- Birds leaving droppings on neighbor's rear deck and property. Heavy impact deter neighbors' use of back porch (small kids).
- Rats used harborage on property to be closer to food source
- Building interior was accessible and could have resulted in infestation inside
- Came to ISD as a referral from the Public Health Department.

Scenario #2 Inman Square (restaurants) near residential area:

- Rats don't observe property lines or city boundaries
- Sometimes need to inspect further from harborage activity to determine food source. Inter-municipal cooperation is critical.
- Rats home range can be as much as 500 feet
- Dumpsters with holes, against the fences used by 4 restaurants
- Poor maintenance of dumpster and barrel storage
- Dumpsters on different pick up schedule so rats always able to find food, Cross-training of restaurant inspections has helped
- Multiple property owners / mgmt cos = coordination challenge
- Commercial building: each business & residence is a condo, Building had a one mgmt company. Rear lot has separate mgmt.