

## Notes on Resident Groups Meeting

March 1, 2017

### Overall issues, changes and trends:

- **Vacancies:** There are a number of vacancies along lower Mass Avenue that have been there for a while (former Blockbuster site has been temporarily filled with Out of the Blue gallery popup, Indian Restaurant, banks, etc.)
- **Changing consumer habits:**
  - People's habits are changing: people don't spend much time going shopping as they used to so new businesses have tended to be restaurants and 'make you own pottery' type of place. But how many of these can you really have/accommodate?
  - For example, many bookstores have closed. The motivation to go to a bookstore doesn't seem to be there anymore
  - There is a real challenge: we want local stores but local stores are small and don't offer as far a range of products
- **Neighborhoods where development is happening:** Alewife and Kendall Square. "The change of Kendall Square in the last 20 years is unbelievable"; Kendall still feels like an office park: it doesn't have anything that illustrates that humans live there: a grocery store, churches, school, or a pharmacy.
- **Business environment:**
  - Businesses along the streets tend to struggle more than places at the squares
  - Cambridge Street has the only street in Cambridge where you have continuous street-level retail wall throughout its extension
  - In Agassiz there has been a lot of business turnover (e.g. grocery store and health food store closed, restaurants come and go all the time)
  - A number of new restaurants have opened in Central Square. We don't have community spaces to meet in the area, so some of these restaurants fill that gap (e.g. Flour)
  - People are excited about Target – it will be a good fit
  - Gift stores are doing ok (e.g. Follow the Honey has been surprisingly successful)
  - Some existing businesses don't have a great selection so even when you try to patronize you often don't find what you need
  - Microcenter is an example of a successful store with great selection, is a one stop shop. Trader Joes is also successful (both are not located in the typical Cambridge retail environment, more suburban, but with lots of parking)
  - Life Alive is also quite successful; there's always a line. They offer great food and experience.

- In Central Square, businesses don't have great visibility, people have to know what's there already; there are a lot of places people just don't know about.
- Coast Café on River Street (serves Southern food) is mostly a takeout place (3 seats only) have many African American folks coming to pick up food, but I don't see the same people in other places. Perhaps they're not being served by other food offerings in the neighborhood
- Cambridgeside Galleria: a lunch destination, unattractive, mostly young folks/ teenagers and new Americans go there.
- Where to go to the movies? Harvard Square, Kendall Square and Downtown Boston
- Airbnb has been very successful in Cambridge and brings a lot of people to neighborhoods
  
- **Events play a big role** bringing people to places: "Sometimes when you go to an event you have a great experience and don't shop then but you go back later".
  - Cambridge has a lot of events already: "I think we have a million events: lectures every night, many music venues..."
- **Desired businesses:**
  - A real bakery would be nice – we don't have one in Central Square
  - Would be nice to have a fabric store, some kind of maker space, something that encourages making
- **Competitive Districts:**
  - Legacy Place at Dedham
  - Assembly Row
  - Natick
  - Downtown Boston? Not really, too far
  - Union Square? Too hard to get
  - Davis Square? Mostly frequented by folks nearby