

Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Working Group Meeting – Notes

Wednesday, August 1st, 2018

- Attendees:
 - Working Group: Mary Flynn, Sarah Rosenkrantz, Frank Kramer, Daniel Andrew Schofield-Bodt, Abhishek Syal, Abra Berkowitz
 - Staff: Iram Farooq, Daniel Wolf, Khalil Mogassabi
- Discussion of feedback received on draft Working Group recommendations
 - After the City posted the draft Working Group recommendations, members of the public and Working Group members were invited to submit feedback. Those comments were organized into a single [document](#) for discussion at this meeting. Working Group members and members of the public participated in the discussion. The discussion was structured by reviewing one or more comments on the document at a time in sequential order and resolving how to respond to the comment through one of the following ways: incorporate changes as suggested or with a modification, incorporate ideas in earlier “discussion” section of revised report, or omit. The following discussion is organized by comment number, designated below and in the feedback document as A1, A2, etc. In the “discussions” below, each bullet refers to one person’s comment.
 - A47-A52 (discussion on history-related feedback):
 - Good examples of what can be done; challenge: give specific requirements or recommendations about how much is dedicated to history; should be very prominent perhaps on par with tourism function; we should prescribe how much is dedicated to history
 - These comments are an elaboration of the topic; our recommendations should be concise
 - Iram Farooq: we should remain open to feedback received through the RFI and recalibrating based on that input
 - Examples can be in an addendum; we could say for example that a minimum of 20% of space is for history, etc.
 - We could say instead an amount of time is devoted to historical programming, which could relate to dates around specific events; regarding personal histories, it’s nice to capture recollections of Harvard Square, and perhaps that content could be featured around reunions, etc.
 - There should be collaboration with the Cambridge Historical Commission and the Cambridge Historical Society; invite an exhibition designer to have a role
 - Tourism and history overlap – there should be collaboration on those aspects; historical photos and timelines are a good bang for your buck (in terms of spatial footprint and cost to produce); this can be organic and could evolve and take form over time – should stay fluid; less added noise
 - Iram Farooq: is there something we would say must be incorporated?
 - Supportive of exhibit idea
 - A53: Incorporate
 - A54: Incorporate first half into recommendations, second half into discussion section
 - A55: Incorporate

- Discussion:
 - Both informational and service provision should be included; Kiosk is visible and central – opportunity to do pop up distribution of social services such as produce or other services, voter registration drive, etc.
 - Physical popups in Plaza; might be different in Kiosk
 - Lots of opportunity for anything to happen stuff that happens now relies on partnerships with service providers; City already accommodates that
 - Would an operator charge a nonprofit for provision of services? There should be some understanding around that
 - Iram Farooq: a precedent is that some portion of bus shelters goes toward PSAs
 - This activity should be done for free
 - Find It Cambridge is a clearinghouse for information online and sometimes has a physical presence; farmers markets already happen in Harvard Square
 - We could state that the operator must cater to a range of residents
 - There's an opportunity for City staff to show up once a week and provide services onsite
- A56:
 - Where and how big would a display be?
 - Provide information outside the Kiosk; think about traffic flow, etc.
 - Iram Farooq: interior fit out of Kiosk would have some input from operator
- A57: Incorporate into discussion section
- A58: Incorporate into discussion section
- A59: Incorporate into discussion section
- A60: Incorporate into discussion section
- A61: Incorporate into discussion section
- A62:
 - Institute a training program for tours, etc.
 - Intention for range of approaches to providing tourism information
 - Iram Farooq: we're anticipating that the Cambridge Office for Tourism would take that on
 - How many staff? It's a small space
- A63: Incorporate
- A64: Incorporate
- A65: Incorporate
- A66: Incorporate
- A67: Incorporate
- A68: Omit
- A69: Omit
- A70: Incorporate into discussion section
 - The Harvard Square Business Association already holds events for families like book readings, Dr. Seuss' birthday events, etc.; planter boxes provide a buffer from the street
 - Family activities in the Plaza vs. the Kiosk take on a different character
- A71: Incorporate

- Comment: call out rallies, small demonstrations, vigils, etc.
- A72: Incorporate
- A73: Incorporate into discussion section
 - Operator will start slow and they'll build on what is successful; we'll see how it evolves
 - Iram Farooq: the Advisory Committee can watch how this unfolds and provide feedback
- A74: Omit
- A75: Incorporate into discussion section
 - Supportive of the Out of Town News sign
 - Carry forward the legacy of Out of Town News in some way; think carefully about how to do this appropriately
 - Charlie Sullivan of Historical Commission would be supportive
- A76: Incorporate into discussion section
- A77 – A82 (discussion of Kiosk operations):
 - Volunteers are crucial for visitor information function
 - Shouldn't just be one organization providing programming; there should be fairness and equity in accommodating programming; groups that don't have the right connections shouldn't be excluded from being involved
 - There shouldn't be a conflict of interest between the Advisory Committee and the operator
 - Anyone can and will continue to be able to apply for a permit to utilize space for programming; the main change will be the opportunity to take things inside (for instance, if raining)
 - Iram Farooq: we could then be explicit in hiring an operator that the Plaza won't belong to the operator and it would need to continue to accommodate other programming
 - We're changing who's in control; will we allow one organization to control what happens' in the Kiosk and Plaza?
 - Iram Farooq: envision that the operator would be a steward of the space to some degree – some responsibility; others would still be able to get a permit to put on programming; maybe we could establish a streamlined permitting system and describe that in the RFP
 - If the operator has a strong particular interest, it would be likely to deny other uses
 - Iram Farooq: the City permits the events which provides a check on the operator; the Kiosk would be managed by the operator
 - Sometimes these programs are scheduled months in advance – competition for access to use space
 - Does the Kiosk have a fund to pay for these activities? What are the revenue sources?
 - The Plaza should remain a public space; permitting through the City. Community events in the Kiosk too? Perhaps that's the role of the operator

- One would hope it is not over-programmed but you could envision events with, for example, Club Passim
 - The Kiosk should be accessible to community events; the operator is incentivized to lease out for the highest price
 - Iram Farooq: we could say that a certain percentage of the time is required for nonprofit or City activities
 - The operator could be a nonprofit; implement a non-discrimination principle
 - Cambridge Office for Tourism is collaborating with the operator, not applying with them
 - Is there consensus on having no sales in the Kiosk?
 - They could sell art, etc.
 - Iram Farooq: it would be an issue if there are sales all the time; we don't want it to be a shop; but we can allow for occasional sales
 - Does that limit potential for the operator to make revenue?
 - Maybe restrict any sales to a portion of the space
 - Image a bookcase along the front displaying miniature models of the Kiosk; tourism activity wanes around 4 or 5pm; need to keep the space lively at late hours
 - People spend a fair amount of money on souvenirs; tourism produces more business for the whole square
 - There must be a reliable draw beyond tourism; include news – people could peruse after dinner; there's already coffee, etc. in the square; include some half-shelves for news, possibly movable
 - Iram Farooq: City's Retail Strategy plan recommends providing great experiences in commercial areas so that people come and shop; during the Food Truck Pilot process, there were concerns raised by nearby restaurants about competition; suggestion: include question in the RFI about the respondent's perspective on sales
- A77: Incorporate
 - A78: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A79: Incorporate first sentence
 - A80: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A81: Incorporate
 - A82: Incorporate
 - A83: Omit
 - A84: Incorporate
 - A85: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A86: Omit
 - A87: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A88: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A89: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A90 – A93 (incorporate into discussion section):
 - A certain percentage of the display content should be public service announcements

- Iram Farooq: there could be a dedicated display for PSAs
 - If there is advertising, it should not conflict with the historic status of the Kiosk; advertisements on top don't align with the historic feeling of the building
 - Signs on roof would be too much; advertising income may need to be a part of the mix; we could use something on top or elsewhere; we could use sponsorship type activities; not three signs – just one of them
 - Okay with ads if they generate needed revenue; the Kiosk has been wrapped in ads for a long time (news covers, other signage, etc.) and it's been fine
 - What aspect of history are we trying to represent? Ads weren't blaring; strive for balance; sales are unlikely to generate a lot of revenue – the main source is likely ads
 - A display could be not directly on building – elsewhere in Plaza
 - Iram Farooq: goal would be balancing historic integrity with displays
 - Ads are necessary (national or local ads) – this needs to be viable for an operator; leave it up to the operator
 - There used to be ads on the Paul Revere home; side window/wall/counter would be the best location for any displays; the roof itself is iconic; the neon signs are a beacon – would hate for ads to replace that
 - The historic register has a picture of the three roof signs on its website – 900 square feet between the headhouse, elevator, and information booth; there would be 25 square feet on the Kiosk roof – overall a drastic reduction
 - Allow some breathing and not too many rules
 - Not keen on a lot of ads; Advisory Committee should play a role in managing some of these issues under discussion; ads permeating everywhere in public space is overwhelming
- A94: Incorporate
 - A95: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A96: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A97: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A98: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A99: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A100: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A101: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A102: Incorporate into discussion section
 - A103: Incorporate
 - A104: Incorporate
 - A105: Incorporate
 - A106: Incorporate into discussion section