

35 Cherry Street Community Meeting #2

September 23, 2021

Project Summary and Process

The City of Cambridge is leading a public process to decide the future use of 35 Cherry Street, an approximately 11,000 sf vacant property in The Port. 35 Cherry Street will be acquired by the City as part of a real estate development agreement with Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This transfer includes the stipulation that the parcel be used in perpetuity in a way that directly benefit residents in the Port neighborhood (formerly Area Four) and surrounding communities.

The City Council identified the site for affordable housing. On June 3, 2021 the City hosted a community meeting to present background on the site and identify different affordable housing options. The goal of the meeting was to understand the community's affordable housing priorities to guide the development process. A recording of meeting #1 can be found [here](#) (passcode: &g7sJdpz). The presentation slides can be found [here](#). The meeting was attended by approximately 55 community members.

On September 23, 2021 the City hosted a second community meeting to discuss the future affordable housing at 35 Cherry Street. The goal of the meeting was to refine community feedback to inform the developer selection process. City staff presented a summary of input from a community meeting in June 2021 and a series of three focus groups in August 2021. Staff presented a series of proposed project goals, proposed design principles, and siting possibilities. The presentation slides can be found [here](#). The meeting was attended by approximately 32 community members.

Meeting Notes

General Comments

- Participants noted that only one percent of affordable housing stock in Cambridge is homeownership. Participants stated there is a need for more homeownership units and that homeownership provides stability.
- One participant asked if a homeownership program can serve people with lower incomes. Representatives from the City replied that homeownership units are not as common as rental for low-income housing programs because homeownership comes with unexpected costs, and out of pocket expenses can be especially challenging for those with low incomes.
- One participant asked if the City could prioritize long-term residents for the new affordable units. City staff responded, no; that such prioritization would be discriminatory and infringe on fair housing laws.

Breakout Groups Discussions

- Participants expressed interest in having some three-bedroom units to allow for more families and children.
- The group discussed how many total units should be included, and there was a stated preference for eight units instead of fifteen.
- Participants expressed interest in providing family-friendly play equipment on the project site.

- Participants mentioned a recent affordable housing development at 830 Main Street. They stated the ten units on that site is a good size.
- Participants suggested 35 Cherry Street be developed as affordable homeownership units, as a way for people to move out of poverty.
- This group supported the proposed design guidelines.
- The group discussed front porches, saying that front porches help create community.
- One participant expressed interest in having a portion of 35 Cherry St be used as public open space. It was acknowledged that this would decrease the amount of private open space for the affordable housing residents.
- Participants discussed homeownership units for people earning up to 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI).
 - This discussion included a statement that homeownership may provide stability.
- Participants stated that on-site parking is not needed. They mentioned that 35 Cherry St is near transit, so the space should be optimized for housing.
- The group expressed interest in active streetscapes, porches, and facades that engage with the street; avoid having parking between the buildings and the street.
- Participants stated the development should match existing site setbacks.
- Participants said smaller sites make more sense for homeownership.
- One of the discussion groups discussed accessibility, and how units in townhouses or flats may or may not be able to comply with ADA.
- Participants discussed placing parking underground or along the ground floor.