

# Volpe Working Group Meeting – Notes

January 5, 2017, Cambridge Police Station

Attending (VWG/staff): Peter Crawley, Brian Dacey, Esther Hanig, Steve LaMasters, Gerry O’Leary, Jeff Roberts, Hugh Russell, Erik Thorkildsen, Stuart Dash, Iram Farooq, Daniel Wolf, Suzannah Bigolin

Initial comments:

- Project deliverables?
- Site context: subway entrances (secondary entrance now gets more use), bicycling routes, buildings/uses at edges, future residential, car access – importance of how the pieces fit together, flows into/through site
- Examples of other developments: Battery Park, Toronto, Vancouver, Westwood, Assembly Square, University Park. How were these successful or not? (Future discussion topic?)

Presentation: Exploration of different typologies of community spaces that may be desired at the Volpe site

Exercise: Attendees expressed priorities for community space typologies by placing dots on two boards

Topic Discussion: Community Spaces and Ground Floor Life

Key Points of Discussion:

- Market halls
  - Insulates from unpleasant weather
  - Conjures image of a vibrant cluster of small retail establishments
  - Not typically affordable
  - Large scale might not fit with site
  - May create unused space
- Childcare
  - Important
  - Not an “activating” use on ground level (due to issue of privacy, doesn’t want to be exposed to street)
  - Doesn’t need to be prominent feature at the ground level; could be located in interior or on upper levels
- Function hall, flexible space, meeting space
  - A space that can adapt to many different kinds of functions could be good value
  - Small scale performance space would be nice. Would a medium to large performance space be difficult to repurpose for other uses? Seats can be taken up and put down (example from Middlebury College)
  - Lectures, activities, something with a civic bent – could be especially interesting and a defining element of the site if located at Third/Broadway
  - District Hall is permeable from all sides, makes it very approachable from street and feels civic
  - Could include community innovation space
- Retail

- Outdoor dining – is the season too short for it? Better if it is outdoor extension of indoor restaurant. Associated with extension of Broad Canal.
- There is a strong desire for activity on corridors, but there may be a limit on how much retail the site can support. Will likely have to prioritize activity on specific corridors
- Large retail – could use underground space
- Destination uses, like a grocer, can pull people into the site.
- Small and innovative stores
- Individual, quirky businesses that make streets interesting
- Indoor recreation
  - Brooklyn Boulders in Somerville is an example of a fitness center that incorporates aspects of community programming. Accommodates a range of ages. However, it's expensive. Feels vital and community-oriented – families, children, teenagers, millennials
  - Fitness Centers
- Outdoor play space – could be not just for kids
  - Water works for everyone
  - Plaza outside Union Station, Denver – water fountain, and ringed by restaurants/cafes. Multi-use and captures different age groups
- Community office space
  - A large space that could have multiple sections (see Daniel's Spectrum in Toronto – art galleries, event spaces, multifunctional)
  - Office/meeting space on ground floor isn't terribly active, but could be on upper floors
- Rental structure
  - Consideration of subsidizing rents to diversify retail types
  - Policies that incentivize owner-operated retail
- Other
  - Opportunity to create sense of arrival for Kendall Square at Point Park

Public Comments:

- Cambridge University game room, collapsible seats
- Pedestrians are jumping fences, going through parking lots
- Child care issues
- More affordable housing
- All-ages meeting space, places for kids to be in bands, make noise, not just in school
- Thoughtful about what more traffic means for people with physical limitation
- Local spaces: Somerville Armory (café, small function spaces, big performance space, cheap; Out of the Blue Gallery (50 tiny booths that change, unprogrammed space in back for performances, serves younger people, “funky”)
- How does the Foundry affect these other needed spaces? Don't need two similar spaces so close together
- Updated context plans