

Volpe Working Group Meeting – Notes

May 25, 2017, Cambridge Police Department

Attending

- Volpe Working Group: Steve LaMaster, Kathy Born, Esther Hanig, Hugh Russell, Gerald O’Leary, Peter Crawley, Chris Barr, Brian Dacey
- CDD staff: Jeff Roberts, Suzannah Bigolin, Stuart Dash, Iram Farooq, Erik Thorkildsen (consultant)
- MIT: Steve Marsh, Sarah Gallop, Hunter Kass, Kathryn Brown, Anthony Galluccio

MIT Update (Sarah Gallop): Met with Wellington-Harrington, Cambridgeport, ECPT, meeting next week in Port; continuing meetings with Councillors Carlone and Cheung; faculty working group meeting; hoping to file zoning petition in mid-June to start public hearing process, broaden conversation

ECPT Update (Rosemary Boothe): Subcommittee to work on this issue; meeting held April 26, “world café” model, later discussions focused more on issues of density and height, these discussions focused on what n’hood would like to see in Kendall as a whole and how can Volpe contribute; high-level themes included transit connections, affordable retail; specifics included programmed performance space [slide presentation]

Additional Comments (Peter Crawley): Incredible overlap with principles we’ve discussed, also some ideas in working group that might have traction at ECPT; conducted a survey in East Cambridge, about 200 respondents, similar ideas, biggest response was “quiet enjoyment”; ECPT discussed community rec center, some reference to Harvard Ed portal, good conversation about what civic use might be to benefit communities; noted that Foundry is being developed close by, don’t want to have overlap between those two uses, Foundry more toward STEAM and job training, this space should be complementary; transportation infrastructure, talked a lot about Grand Junction, try to advance that politically, financially, in terms of community support; bus lanes and bus loading areas an area of concern, perhaps some multi-modal station or facility to allow Kendall to be a hub

Other Comments: Really impressive work

Discussion of Draft Principles Document

- Connectivity is huge – creating a neighborhood like other neighborhoods
- A lot of people who work here live nearby
- Something that can connect all of this together, similar to MIT trying to connect Kendall to campus
- 6th street, potentially 5th street as important connections
- Wouldn’t disagree with principles, think captures what we’ve been talking about in the past
- Like “heart of Kendall Square, you know you’re somewhere” – speaks to corner of 3rd and Broadway, what’s it going to look like, what are people going to see
- “Destination for people from all over” seems too general - don’t just want it to be any destination, but a focused destination for people to have some experience related to Kendall, like an event, lecture, speech, activities

- Also visitors coming to offices – 2.1 million SF of places where people are going to work, 400,000 SF as an important national function (Volpe Center), should embrace that activity more explicitly – those people will provide the life on the streets
- Cambridge is a city of neighborhoods, downtowns – Harvard, Central, and Kendall, also ancillary squares like Inman – Kendall is emerging as the main place people work, MIT the dominant institution – Kendall is not the historic downtown but is the high-tech downtown center of the city, area of greatest density – innovation is the business of the city, also on an international level
- Connectivity keeps coming up because area currently feels disconnected – MIT can't pull all the levers to connect all the different sites, but must collaborate among other players in Kendall – permeability has to be extended beyond this one area so that the Volpe work is not undermined
- Simply taking away fences would help, identified things like the Marriott lobby connection, over time should be corrected – important to create framework for future connections
- International connectivity should be reflected, stunning how international Kendall Square is
- Wonder how best to move from principles to zoning, how that happens, and when – how to achieve something through zoning principles, would you stipulate a particular size, mission, investment as part of square feet, how to build that in so it's real
- Assumption is this will be a PUD zoning process, you have to leave some particulars to interpretation by the Planning Board – constraints and allowances in zoning, then a site planning and design review process
- Will communicate working group principles to City Council and Planning Board in zoning process
- Would like to work with group on refining design guidelines, developed through K2 process and other processes
- Principles all sound good, like them, but haven't talked about amount of development being proposed, there needs to be limits – looking at designs, looks crowded, not sure how tradeoffs (e.g. tall buildings = more open space?) are being considered, additional benefits in return for community benefits – maybe zoning should withhold some GFA to say could be used in negotiations, so much extra in return for some benefit
- Document represents discussions pretty well, haven't found anything wrong yet – only thing is don't like use of word "will", should use "shall" – think there's a missing piece, want to see businesses in here – MIT will see what we're saying, think about if it can deliver, how much development is needed – as a city we don't have a lot of skill in saying if we give you this, it'll work [economically] – can't underestimate the role of the developer, banks backing it
- We're putting out our goals, MIT is going to submit a proposal in a month that will respond to this, stating what they need to have in terms of zoning entitlement to create what we want - MIT going about this as part of a larger, bold strategy
- There's lots of concern in the neighborhood about the amount of development
- Walked along greenway, didn't notice buildings as much because had open space there as an anchor point, image of large green space is reassuring - maybe tall buildings aren't that bad, but have to be done in a way that gives that sense of space, open space, to make a human, tolerable place – see concerns from ECPT 303 Third St neighbors
- Used to think 120 feet was best height and that taller buildings seemed out of place, but that doesn't leave enough room for open space – Rockefeller Center successful example of some

taller buildings and open space that we all say is a nice space – we don't say that the Hancock Tower ruined Copley Square – is a matter of how it is designed

- Genzyme building is an example of a project which varied from the city's design guidelines – did not have punched windows - but accomplished goals the city had not envisioned, and was considered very successful
- Problem perhaps with University Park might be that it doesn't exceed the design guidelines
- North Point, in planning process, resulted in a much larger open space because developer realized the value of that particular open space in placemaking, better than if it went exactly according to the plan
- Design studies have been a little scary in terms of height, is going to require some good design to make it really work – have to be prepared to be surprised a little at how design responds, e.g. MIT Kendall Plan, 5 large buildings with large linear open space
- Hope that process of writing zoning could value n'hood input – ECPT advocated hard for recreational space in MXD development, suggested could be a tradeoff for open space requirement, but ultimately wasn't any reference to that kind of n'hood benefit ... hope some of these, other things Rosemary mentioned, can be committed to as part of the vision – would go a long way in neighborhood
- (Galluccio/Marsh) supportive of this group continuing, process is priority #1, no project is going to supersede that value – other stakeholders have to weigh in as well, want to engage with those people – job is to align interests
- Important to think about how developments impact neighborhoods, but talking about something that may not get built for 20-30 years, so has to be built for generations to come – bigger picture, what are the needs of the future population going to be like?
- Inclusiveness, discussions about who's going to live here, 30-40 years from now – understand sentiment that people are committed to neighborhood, stability, but not sure you can have a formula that delivers that

Public Comments

- City has changed and will continue to change – Central Square used to be a commercial center, Harvard Square was more of a transit destination – important to calculate what the population of the area is likely to be, already 400 children already living in neighborhood, which could increase to 600-800 children, need to provide open space and resources for children – depending on one subway line is insane for developers, need to get behind effort for circumferential transportation
- (Councillor Dennis Carlone) have had discussions w/MIT – any major change in zoning has to have an urban design plan that shows density – principles document has helped - also need design review and ongoing dialogue with staff – in PUD said there had to be master plan architecture – walls, setbacks that give it character, e.g. Rockefeller Center has an overall composition of smaller buildings and towers, three architects, master plan architecture tied together - selection of materials, attractiveness – Rockefeller Center put in the deed that there will be open space, also extensive art at ground level that humanizes buildings – materials, proportion of windows important for character and sustainability, only need 40% glass for light – disagree about Genzyme building, cannot see interior space – urban design master plan as part of zoning petition is key –the more in-house amenities a company puts in, the less people come

out, exterior entry points from parking tend to animate ground level – if you make a fun place, will be a destination for families of Cambridge and Boston – in PPG Place, Pittsburgh, made every building of glass, retail went away, most dormant public space – zoning can be done in different ways, base zone as of right, only go to increased FAR if you meet guidelines, principles in spirit, don't automatically have it as given – Kendall Square is the new downtown, Central Square will still be significant, but makes sense that new downtown is next to Boston – if developers, institutions, all went together and went to governor [re: transportation], would have a greater impact

- One photo showed round kiosk in Harvard, nice to have something like that in Kendall – not a lot of people in Kendall are doing other stuff in other parts of Cambridge, something to promote tourism, culture and arts in Cambridge citywide, hybrid of Bostix and Cambridge arts, might help connect Kendall to Cambridge – for people who don't live here, can still feel like home away from home – many people in Kendall don't know much about Cambridge, like to change that – like stuff about families, encourage longevity instead of churn – cars important for families with children, what if you said parking spaces are only for people who have children, how to balance less parking but still family-friendly - like that Rockefeller Center open space is bounded on either side by 6 or so story buildings, for light, but not talking about 6-story buildings here – difference between 10 and 20 story building, wind, perceptually different, don't want everything to feel like Marriott with wind, darkness and cold – downtown Boston has tall buildings, better now that people reside there, but never felt like a pleasant area – parts of Manhattan I enjoy, but don't think this proposal feels good the way Manhattan feels good – want to talk about zoning and tradeoffs, basing program on K2 but so many residents were not happy with K2, thought this group was going to try to come up with a program
- Have a fixed set of buildings, % commercial and residential, don't see anything for tradeoffs to get more green space, original had 7.5 acre park, how would it look different if we had that
- Expectation that this group would look at zoning, process wasn't clear – this group would be a kind of review filter, could be after MIT petition is pulled together, but thought would come before that – like there to be continuity – human tolerable place is what we want here, doesn't feel like Rockefeller Center is apt analogy – it's too big, Kendall isn't going to be like New York City – looking for light, sky views, active enterprising place where we work, live
- In Third Square, wanted place where more of MIT family could live close to work, failed because of economic circumstances, other reasons – would like to leave grandson with a place to live in Kendall – most of us who live there really appreciate the small open space courtyard there now, hope one recommendation is to ensure that will be added to other space, create a fully sunlit space, central to the whole area – who's going to live here, many faculty members, students do, part of the vitality

Additional Working Group Comments

- Think this is a very good place for a recreational component, CRA excited to participate in making that happen, being a player
- When coming down Broadway you do feel changes when going by Marriott, most notably on southwest side, worst kind of impact – it's a long façade and it's on the southwest side of Broadway

- Want residents who will build a good neighborhood, but can't pre-select, if you build a good neighborhood they'll come, but hard to say who's going to stay in Cambridge – don't necessarily believe in homeownership as the solution – rent stabilization makes a difference, even in small number of units – many buildings now including big play rooms, recreational facilities geared to families – millennials are more urban
- If we want people who are going to stay, we need family housing
- On zoning issue, if we're leaving this at principles, why not bring the zoning proposal back at some point – don't think as a group we should try and conceive the zoning