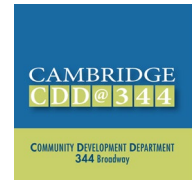


# ALEWIFE ZONING WORKING GROUP

## MEETING NOTES



Thursday, September 29, 2022

6 – 8:30pm

Virtual Meeting

### Attendance

#### Working Group Members:

Eric Grunebaum, Suhas Kodali, Mike Nakagawa, Ann Stewart, Ann Tennis, Jane Carbone, Kelvin Moses, Diana Marsh, Joe Sultan, Joe Poirier, John Chun

#### City of Cambridge Staff:

Iram Farooq, Melissa Peters, Jeff Roberts, Daniel Messplay, Erik Thorkildsen, Drew Kane, Kathy Watkins, Susanne Rasmussen

### Meeting Overview

The Alewife Zoning Working Group convened for their fourth working group meeting.

#### Purpose

- The intention of the meeting was to present, and facilitate a discussion, on infrastructure, open space, and community facilities.

#### Objectives

- To provide a platform for the Working Group and the public audience to ask questions of the key infrastructure issues, and current and future city investments in infrastructure in the Alewife District.

### Presentation

Melissa Peters (Director of Community Planning), Kathy Watkins (Acting Commissioner Department of Public Works) and Daniel Messplay (Senior Zoning Manager), presented the following Alewife-specific topics to the Working Group to solicit discussion. For presentation slides visit the project website.

#### Mobility

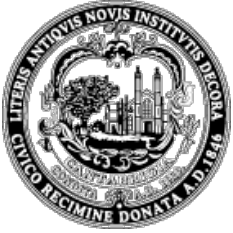
- Existing Street network
- Transportation impacts from development
- Critical sums overview - existing zoning vs proposed zoning
- Strategies to reduce congestion in Alewife
- Proposed street network
- Zoning strategies

#### Open Space

- Existing open space
- Deficient in mini-parks and neighborhood parks
- Zoning strategies

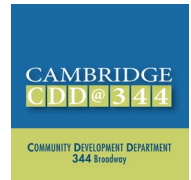
#### Climate Change

- Heat, Flooding, Coastal Storm Surge/Sea Level Rise



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- Value of trees to reduce heat
- Increasing coastal flooding - SLR/SS
- Coastal interventions
- City led strategies to mitigate flooding
- Sewer Separation
- Regulatory Requirements
- Zoning Strategies

Community Facilities

#### Discussion/Questions by working group

Eric Grunebaum (EG):

- Can the city invest in infrastructure soon without relying on developers to fund it? Then we're waiting on developer plan?
- Transportation fund doesn't really generate that much revenue to go towards infrastructure upgrades.
- Need to build the rail stop if we want to get people out of their cars. We have a great resource (being the rail line). New Balance, West Station, etc. are examples of how beneficial a rail stop could be.
- Understands the DPW site is a needed element in the area

Joe Sultan (JS):

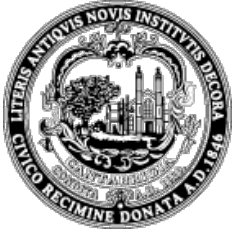
- What about the public improvements bonus? Such as Spinelli. Has it been used?
  - *Daniel Messplay (DM): - it has been used in the past, but it's mostly been about street sections and front yards being used for building out streetscape by developers*
  - *Jeff Roberts (JR) - Land conveyance to the city helps make opportunities possible for public improvements. Development bonus should be mutually beneficial but need to have zoning tools in place to get to the right outcome*

Ann Tennis (AT):

- Housing in the quad - Need both ownership and rentals, but has to be a neighborhood with parks and a place people are excited be in.
- Market rate with 20% affordable is great
- Need mini-parks for social interaction
- Specific amenities - DPW would be a welcome use in the location identified

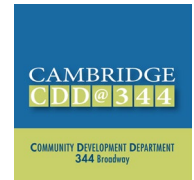
Mike Nakagawa (MN):

- In the presentation, you said that an improved the street grid is a way to reduce cars. How? Especially, at critical intersections.
  - *Susanne Rasmussen (SR) - makes is possible to reduce driving by promoting alternative forms of mobility; however, it can't control traffic into the quad or outside of it*
- Have recommendations for resiliency become requirements for stormwater for property owners?



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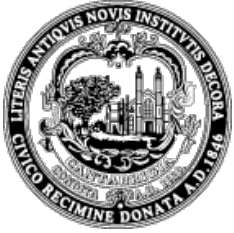
- Kathy Watkins (KW): Yes, they have. And developers are known about it upfront. They are regulations that have been updated recently especially in light of 2070 flood data.
- Street tree planting - why 20-30feet where "feasible"?
  - KW: Because there are often utilities or other infrastructure in the way of doing that.
- White walls reflect downwards. Why not have awnings instead? Would prefer green walls mostly.
- We haven't specifically discussed what we want in this area aside from just ideas. We want to make sure that this zoning reflects the uses and amenities people want.
  - *Melissa Peters (MP) - understands that there is an interest in creating an "urban design plan". Challenge because there are so many different property owners. The triangle has evolved over the years to become a mixed use districts despite real estate trends skewing people's perception of what's happening.*
- We need to be able to determine where different uses go
  - *MP - yes, that is a land use plan and we are looking at mixed-use development in much of the area, but does the group desire exclusive residential district or office district?*

Suhas Kodali (SK)

- Supports the idea of the commuter rail and is his #1 priority for this area.
- Is there a priority list for transportation improvements? Hasn't seen how we are prioritizing the suggested projects.
  - *SR - Long-term plan to prioritize a bridge crossing, combined with a commuter rail station. That will need sufficient development density to make that happen.*
  - *The rail station has lagged because density is not there yet.*
  - *The option for a rail station remains open.*
  - *Station will require state and MBTA agreement to create a station there. Work will need to be down to integrate that into the system. State suggests that a station there could introduce delay in the system, but we need to pressure them to provide a new station despite this suggestion.*
- Is there a main hang-up on the State and MBTA side of things?
  - *SR - Hasn't gotten to a phase where there is a proposal. A lot of conversations about it, but no decision about location.*
- Could we invite someone to the MBTA to the meetings so they can listen in to the conversations?
  - *SR- they are certainly highly aware*
- Seems that biggest traffic issue is Route 2 and Alewife Brook Parkway. Could that be transitioned into a round-about to improve the flow of that?
  - *SR - MA highway has looked at that and said current operations and available land makes it best option. Enhanced that intersection in recent years.*
- How can we determine is a school could be located here?

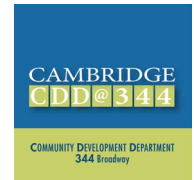
Ann Stewart (AS)

- We're talking about 10, 20, 30 years out. How do we structure zoning to it works long term?



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- Can we have an annual review that's built into the zoning to see how we're progressing?
- What about day-care as an amenity?
- What about fire station in the community?
- How will Terminal Road improve connectivity? Why are we still talking about these things? Why can't it just be built?
  - *DM - Zoning is naturally long in how it functions. That is partly its intent. Zoning is only effective where there is new development and ownership that wants to change or is forced to change by new zoning.*
  - *Much of the public improvements can't happen without new zoning.*
  - *Annual review - might be challenging. We could consider an annual report on its impact.*

John Chun (JCh)

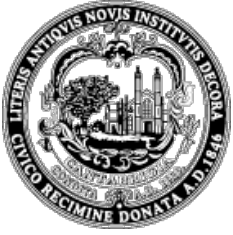
- Density bonus - density bonus should be proportional the scale of the development. Seems to be a little vague on how the developer would get the bonus.
  - *DM - The bridge bonus is subject to planning board review.*
- Need a comprehensive transportation study to understand min parking requirement or eliminating parking.
  - *SR - we have a good sense of projected trip gen from the proposed Alewife District Plan zoning. Of course, this may change depending on the outcome of this process, but it doesn't seem like there will be more commercial development being proposed as part of this.*
  - *As far as bus service is concerned, the City has opposed the MBTA proposal to reduce service on Concord Ave.*
- Bus service decreasing may have impacts on our zoning.
- High-rise residential buildings do not make a good neighborhood. We do want a mix of unit types and ownership vs rental.
- How will all of the comments be captured to help form the zoning proposal? And how will they be reflected?
  - *MP - Through council and public meetings*

Joe Poirier (JP)

- Want to voice opinion that we shouldn't be focused on improving conditions for cars if we want to get people using transit.
- There are industrial uses that still require certain roadway designs to be able to maneuver in and out of quad.

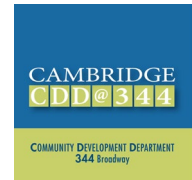
Jan Carbone (JCa)

- Inclusionary zoning will not do enough here in the quad. Need to designate other developments to be 100% affordable.
- Inclusionary zoning doesn't hit the lowest income tier of people that need housing.
- Finch Cambridge has been able to do this.
- Need to go beyond typical inclusionary zoning



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- Need to tie open space to the housing production
- Need an urban design vision - one-off development will be a challenge to creating a neighborhood.
- Glad to see that climate resiliency will be incorporated into the zoning.
- Getting to Fresh Pond needs to be easier. Tough to cross the street to get there especially if we're going to see more residents in the quad.
- Supports the density bonus to gain community benefits.
- Concerns about power grid.
  - *KW - increased coordination on long-term development. Eversource doesn't really look at long-term projections for population growth and development. Need to increase electric supply to the area.*
  - *SR - Eversource needs to do projections based on City policies, too. Looks at natural gas and electricity, but we are moving towards 100% electricity. Also, next year all new development needs to be NetZero*

Diana Marsh (DM)

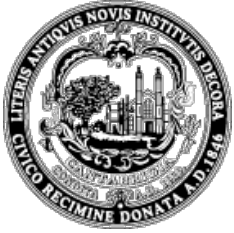
- Agrees it would be helpful for a general urban design plan such as streets and locations of open spaces.
- Seems important for city to find a way to pay for a bridge very soon. These future parking requirements will be a problem if bridge is not built.
- Likes the idea of shared parking between office and residential.
- FAR bonus is a good idea but seems low. Not enough of an incentive for developers, especially if we want more housing.

Kelvin Moses (KM)

- Would be helpful to have a clear set of priorities for the community including infrastructure, public benefits, retail, open space, also ensuring there is a mix of uses and housing affordability.
- Incorporating light-industrial, too.
- Need list of priorities before you determine what the neighborhood looks like.
- A master plan or PUD like concept would help establish that vision
- A lot of items that require input from outside agencies - we need to endeavor to bring them to the table. MBTA, the State, Eversource

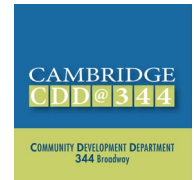
Ann Tennis (AT)

- Personally, doesn't think we need a school in Alewife
- Would take up too much space
- Route 2 and 16 - City needs to talk with state about how long it takes for people to get out of the Triangle
- Great if the labs could be on the tracks and could be at a greater heights.
- Is the City talking to Eversource about Terminal Rd?
- Does the master plan come before the zoning or the reverse?
- Who owns the Bay State pool property?



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- *MP - They still own it.*

Mike Nakagawa (MN)

- What about easements for underground storage tanks, especially for 100% affordable housing developments. Can the City help pay for that? How do we help affordable housing developers with infrastructure needs
- Needs to incorporate climate resiliency into zoning for Alewife.

#### **Public Comment**

Jan Devereux

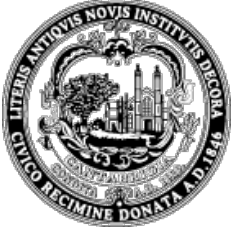
- 40% driving is a lot. We should build the infrastructure that supports the mobility we want.
- Let's try not to create a driving environment within the quad.
- What about electric shuttles within the Quad?
- Likes Mike's idea of TIF (Tax Increment Financing) in the district to support public improvements
- Likes childcare idea

Dennis Carlone

- Felt it was a great discussion
- Wants to emphasize
  - Percentage of different uses is key to this plan. Residential uses have way less impact on traffic
  - Only have 40% of pre-K that we need.
  - School committee before COVID said we needed two new schools.
  - Schools include open spaces
  - PUD - can have a base zone and if you want to go higher there needs to be an incentive/bonus for that.
  - East Cambridge plan - 95% of what's been built is what was designed. There were 28 owners in East Cambridge. A PUD worked.
  - East Cambridge was built with state and federal money. City had little involvement in it. If we don't have public money, developers will control it.

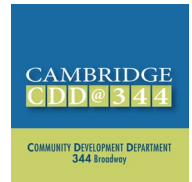
Cal Davis (James Williamson)

- It would be nice to have a settings (Zoom) for these meetings that are friendlier to the public.
- They don't feel accessible. Why is chat and Q&A shut down? We don't know how many people are at the meeting. It would be nice to see how many attendees are there.
- The heaviest concentration of low-income people is close to the Quad and it's not part of the discussion of this process. Why?
- Poor connections from North Cambridge across the bridge. Are there ways to improve the connectivity for these residents.
- What about CRA proposal for paths from Rindge to Alewife Station and how do they get to Fresh Pond Mall.
- The MBTA is the most critical part of this.



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- Residents are the "City" and should be driving the process. Staff are administrators.

The next meeting will be on October 12. The Working Group will discuss the draft zoning principles and zoning framework.