

Riley, Kate

From: Lisa Poma [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2020 6:52 AM
To: Kelleher, Kristen
Cc: Riley, Kate
Subject: Tobin School Project Feedback (v.2. please disregard original version)

Dear Katherine,

It was a pleasure speaking with you today; thank you for your time which I understand to be very valuable considering the sizable scope of the Tobin School project.

After attending the community meeting last Thursday, I want to echo the many voices of appreciation for the redesigns the team presented, which clearly reflect the community concerns and feedback. However, I would also like to reiterate the prevailing and higher-level concern around programming. As we heard from parents, community members (some being both), it does seem like we are trying to solve the current and future programming needs within an already problematic site.

Not only are the projections for middle school enrollment to be at or above capacity by opening, class sizes will exceed the original program targets. To then shoe-horn in a larger preschool and special services programs seems like attempting to solve too much within a site that is already stressed on space and over-extended with regard to traffic.

Attempting to solve the problem by taking away any green space is a mistake from which there is no return. For the neighboring community, they lose a park. For the sports community, they lose valuable play space with the reduction of ball fields. The students lose an essential atmosphere in which every educational development study stresses the need for open, unstructured play within a natural environment.

There were some constructive ideas presented at the meeting which either centered around relocating programs to either new or current sites, to increasing campus space (acquiring the National Guard lot would be a game changer). It is my hope that for the sake of our community and our most valued children, you are seriously pursuing any and all options.

So in the hope of ultimately having more green space to work with and in the spirit of moving forward, Design #2 (Wings v2) offers some appealing new options by relocating the green space to the Vassal Lane side of the campus.

- This new "neighborhood" placement would deliver a more peaceful, park-like atmosphere with the location being insulated between the new building, and the quieter Vassal Lane.
- Recreational green-space on Vassal Lane seems the safer option with it being easier to cross than the busier, multi-lane composition of Concord Ave.
- As Cambridge grows, Concord Ave. will only get busier and more congested. Toxic exhaust fumes and constant traffic noise pose a much more polluted environment for children, students and residents using the space.
- As temperatures increase with climate change, using the heritage trees on the current site would provide much needed natural shade.
- Design #2 does not include any additional stacking and keeps to the current three-floor structure. From the outside position, adding an additional floor (Design #1) will diminish the current vertical open space and cast a longer shadow on the site. For the students inside, there has been voiced concern about the school becoming overwhelming in size with dramatic variance from their much smaller district elementary schools.

- A bus-loop on Vassal Lane, considering the extended school capacity, will inundate neighborhood traffic and throttle Vassal Lane which was never intended to support such bus capacity. Leveraging Vassal Lane as a service-entry only cuts back on traffic volume while preserving the neighborhood.

I would be interested in understanding what kind of analysis has been done in assessing the green-space placement between Designs 1 & 2 as well as any recommendations from the team.

Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Lisa Poma

