

ENVISION CAMBRIDGE

Public Participation Summary, Listening Phase
Spring 2016
Cambridge, MA

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This document represents a compilation of public comments collected by the Envision Cambridge planning team at public events during the listening phase of the planning process. It is designed to capture the range of opinions we heard at different public events in a way that makes the information usable both to the planning team and to the public who are curious about what opinions were shared. The notes from these public events, taken together, will give a broader and clearer feel for the concerns voiced by the participants at these events. This document does not include comments received from the survey, street teams, or mobile engagement station. Those notes are being synthesized and will be made available soon. Please note that the opinions represented here are not necessarily the opinion of the City of Cambridge or the majority of community members, but rather serve as a compilation of singular voices from the community.

Public Workshops: Listening

In late March and early April 2016, the City of Cambridge and their consultant team convened three public workshops to launch Envision Cambridge, a citywide planning process. The goal of the workshops was to hear from community members about what matters most to them and what their concerns and ideas are. This input will help create a vision for the city in coming decades. Approximately 123 members of the public participated in the workshops in total, which were held as follows:

- March 24, 2016 at the Kennedy Longfellow School
- March 31, 2016 at the Tobin School
- April 2, 2016 at the Cambridge Senior Center on Massachusetts Avenue.

The workshops used small group discussions to gather input about the concerns, hopes, and priorities that participants have for Cambridge. Each workshop followed the same sequence: Participants voted on the topics they most wanted to discuss upon arrival. Pre-identified discussion topics included mobility and transportation, housing, social cohesion, urban form, environment, economy, and “other.” Participants were invited to identify other topics they wanted to discuss, and submitted the following: community health and wellness; children, youth, and learning, and regionalism.

After a brief welcome and overview at each workshop, participants shared their ideas in two 30-minute long topic-specific discussion groups with 5-10 other individuals and a facilitation and note-taking team. Participants began by responding to the following three questions during each topic-focused discussion:

- What do you hope the plan will address (about the specific topic of the small group)?
- What about this topic is most important for the planning team to know?
- What resources or individuals should the team be aware of on this topic?

After the two 30-minute discussions, facilitators from each group discussion shared in plenary two or three of the key ideas raised during the small group discussions.

Key Themes

The following key themes were shared during the plenary report-outs at the end of each workshop. A brief overview of those themes is presented here, with much greater detail from each small group discussion topic in subsequent pages.

Housing – Seventy-two (72) people discussed housing in small groups over the course of the three meetings. Issues, concerns, hopes, and priorities about housing or housing-related topics surfaced in every workshop. Participants were concerned about increasing home and rental costs and described how the increasing costs impact priorities such as community diversity and social cohesion. They stressed the importance of planning for and providing affordable housing options for all socio-economic levels, and especially low-income and middle-class residents who are being pushed out of the city due to increasing home and rental costs and the lack of affordable options. They noted that overall housing demand is increasing, and luxury and high-end housing supply is increasing too; but the supply of housing options for low- to middle-income families is stagnant. In two of the three workshops, participants underscored the link and influence of student populations on local housing. Participants hoped the City would explore policies to increase housing density while maintaining the character of the neighborhoods, and mentioned policies such as rent control or mixed-use requirements to aid low- to middle-income families. They also hoped the City would look into strategies to encourage student populations to live in specific locations or smaller units (so that larger units are available to low- and middle-income families) or to influence academic institutions to house more students on campus.

Urban Form – Fifty-two (52) people discussed urban form in small groups over the course of the three meetings. Participants in all three workshops discussed urban form; comments relating to urban form sometimes also surfaced in conversations about social cohesion and climate and environment. Participants in two workshops commented on the relation of urban form and zoning. They suggested that urban form considerations included in the final plan should inform zoning policies that enable the use of many different design approaches to appeal to a variety of aesthetic tastes, instead of making everything look the same. They also suggested that zoning regulations should promote high-density development in a careful and thoughtful approach, recognizing that dense development may not be appropriate everywhere and that some residents may not support it in their neighborhoods. Participants also proposed that the City carefully consider how natural resources influence the urban form and how people experience city life; they suggested thoughtful design of buildings, green walls, micro parks and points of access to existing parks to connect people to open space or green spaces. Several groups hoped the City would create a forward thinking-vision that acknowledges and takes advantage of different opportunities throughout Cambridge to shape the urban form.

Mobility – Thirty-six (36) people discussed mobility in small groups over the course of the three meetings. When discussing mobility, participants underscored the importance of safety, collaboration with the MBTA, and large local institutions. In each workshop, participants commented that safety is a high priority regardless of the mode of transit and especially for pedestrians and bicyclists. Participants hoped the City would consider how to link to the MBTA to provide enhanced transit options and to partner with large local employers to incentivize alternative modes of commuting that would reduce traffic congestion and improve quality of life. Participants hoped that Cambridge would be recognized as a leader of public transportation in the future and suggested the city start to consider future modes of transportation (e.g.

driverless vehicles and bus options, car sharing services, etc.) and how they might change the way Cantabrigians move through the city and region.

Social Cohesion, and Community Health and Wellness – Thirty-five (35) people discussed social cohesion and three (3) people discussed community health and wellness in small groups over the course of the three meetings. Although social cohesion is a nebulous term, which participants suggested the Envision Cambridge team should clearly define, many participants talked about the reasons they think social cohesion is important. For many workshop participants, diversity, in its many forms, truly is the core experience of life in Cambridge. They commented that people want to live in Cambridge because the city is diverse in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicities, race, age, gender, religion, etc. They suggested that opportunities to connect with people from different backgrounds is a valuable and important element of life in Cambridge. However, some participants said that social cohesion is decreasing with the rise in home ownership and rental costs, which is displacing long-term residents, reducing racial and socio-economic diversity, and increasingly separating groups into distinct neighborhoods. They also noted that issues of racism and income inequality reduce social cohesion and hoped the City would address these issues.

For some participants, social cohesion is a facet of community health and wellness. They talked about the importance of social networks to enable community members to help each other in times of need or crisis and provided suggestions about how to create connections between residents from different backgrounds. Many participants also talked about the role of urban form in facilitating social cohesion, noting that urban areas that feel inviting and safe can serve as community gathering spots. Participants hoped the City would support both neighborhood-level and community-wide events that foster social connections between community members, institute policies or reform governance structures to enable community members to organize or be more involved in city decision-making, find new and improved ways to share information with the public, and design (or maintain, or rehabilitate) city infrastructure to encourage people to spend time in public spaces.

Climate and Environment – Twenty-two (22) people discussed climate and the environment in small groups over the course of the three meetings. Participants discussed climate and the environment at each of the workshops. Several groups commented that climate and environmental considerations, and especially stormwater management and transportation-related issues, should be addressed at a regional level. Groups at two of the workshops highlighted the link between green space or natural areas, resident wellbeing, and resilience to climate change. They hoped the City would enhance public access to green spaces for relaxation and enjoyment. They also hoped the City would consider and capitalize on ecological co-benefits such as developing the urban forest by planting trees for shade to reduce the impacts of climate change or using green space for parks and for water management (e.g. water retention, filtration, or reuse). Participants also suggested the City seek an appropriate balance between resilience and disaster preparation, and hoped the City would use the Cambridge Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment as a starting point for the city planning effort.

Economic Opportunity – Sixteen (16) people discussed economic opportunity in small groups over the course of the three meetings. Participant discussions about economic opportunity highlighted the importance of creating conditions that enable a variety of business sizes and types to thrive, providing employment opportunities for all, collaborating with academic

institutions and large employers to train or provide employment opportunities, and Cambridge's link to the regional economy. Participants suggested that maintaining a variety of stores and businesses will continue to make people want to be in Cambridge. They expressed concern that the increasing cost of office and retail space is pushing out smaller businesses and noted that some small businesses have converted homes to offices, which further exacerbates local housing challenges. Participants also said economic opportunity should mean that a variety of jobs are available for people from the full spectrum of educational backgrounds. They hoped that programs could be created with local academic institutions and large businesses to encourage them to hire local residents, or that would connect unemployed or under-employed residents to local jobs or training to prepare them for local positions that pay decent wages. Participants also recognized that Cambridge is part of a regional economy and hoped the City would consider opportunities for collaboration beyond the city's borders to increase economic opportunities. One group suggested that economic opportunity may also mean that Cambridge helps provide those in need with essentials for economic stability such access to the internet, aid for increasing utility costs, or possibly free college education for those who graduate from high school in Cambridge.

Children, Youth, and Learning – Five (5) people discussed children, youth, and learning in small groups over the course of the three meetings. One small group discussion focused on youth education in Cambridge. Participants said that schools are the backbone of the city. Many small topics (such as social cohesion, immigration, and diversity) addressed by other groups included important roles for the public schools. They suggested that more collaboration between the City, city services, and public schools would be beneficial.

Regionalism – Three (3) people discussed regionalism in small groups over the course of the three meetings. One group specifically discussed regional considerations at a workshop, and several other groups throughout all three workshops alluded to or explicitly commented on various elements related to a more regional perspective. Participants hoped that Cambridge would look beyond city boundaries when studying regional problems in order to create solutions. For example, the City might consider addressing issues of transportation, environment and climate, and housing from a regional perspective. They also suggested the need for enhanced collaboration between Cambridge and surrounding municipalities, especially Boston and Somerville.

Input on Housing

The following are key points that participants in the breakout groups on housing shared. Because participants were asked to share individual opinions, in some cases comments may conflict.

What do you hope the plan will address about housing? What about housing is most important for the planning team to know?

- *Preserve diversity in Cambridge and provide a spectrum of housing options to meet different populations' needs.* Participants identified diversity as a core value for Cambridge. They expressed concern that market forces were superseding efforts to

- maintain a range of housing types and price-points for families, older people, young people/first time homeowners, and other groups. Participants want to avoid the creation of a homogenous population. They called for the City to focus on integrated housing rather than projects-style low-income housing, which increases segregation and reduces social cohesion. Participants were also concerned about segregation by neighborhood. They said more housing is needed for the middle of the population that does not qualify for low-income housing but cannot afford increasing market-rates. More creative approaches to housing, such as co-ops, should be considered. Increase availability of one-bedrooms for young and old residents to free up larger units for families. Housing options are also needed for seniors to age in place, and policies should address seniors' limited income as they age. Participants called for a thoughtful approach to how density and form of housing influence who the housing serves.
- *Address the critical housing shortage and inaccessible, rapidly climbing prices. Resolve issues around housing density.* Several participants said the housing shortage in Cambridge is critical. Some called for targeted high-density development to increase supply (and thus reduce prices), especially around transit hubs and in underused industrial areas, while others opposed more high-density housing, arguing that it would damage the character of Cambridge, and called for more “human scale” development. Strict land use policies were seen as obstacles to increasing housing supply. While some recommended increased supply to reduce price pressures, others argued that an increase in the proportion of affordable housing and/or policies addressing rising prices were needed. Others called for measures to protect the historic character of Cambridge and avoid high-rise development. One called for low-rise density (5-6 stories) in the style of Paris or Prague, instead of towers. Participants called for reduced speculation, especially from overseas investors and non-resident investors generally, including potentially limiting the number of rental/investment properties. One cited the high proportion of all-cash purchases as indicative of speculation and foreign investment against which long-term residents could not compete. One participant called for new developments to contain a large amount of medium-quality units instead of a smaller amount of luxury units.
 - *Create policies to increase and provide incentives for the creation of more affordable housing specifically.* Participants generally said that to achieve better affordability in housing, more regulation and policies at the city level were needed to temper market forces. One participant emphasized that affordable housing should be considered a right. They also said that the City needs to prioritize affordable housing more broadly, training people on Planning Board and in other important roles to be more cognizant of strategies that can achieve a balance of affordable housing. There was concern that a significant number of people are on the waitlist for public housing already, and calls for transparency about the number of residents who need or were unable to rise out of low-income housing. One participant encouraged public accountability for a plan to reach goals of providing housing to those in need. It was suggested that the City should use its land for long-term, low-income affordable housing. Policies need to encourage owners to move their housing into longer-term affordability and developers to add inclusionary housing into their developments. Participants called for more use of rent control and stabilization policies to keep affordable housing stock available. Someone suggested that the City create a published database of citywide rents. One participant pointed to the model of Somerville’s inclusionary zoning, which is in Somerville’s comprehensive plan.

- *Better coordinate planning for housing to value community over development.* Participants expressed concern that there was too much financial incentive for development, and that these resources should be redirected to affordable housing. Generally, participants commented that policies were too pro-development, without sufficient priority placed on maintaining affordability and with insufficient expectations for development-produced community benefits (such as shared public spaces, etc.) Some perceive that the City is run like a business. Someone asked whether AirBnB-like operations were appropriate. One participant commented that planning for housing needs to encompass metrics for the well-being of the city community. Planning needs to precede the zoning policy. Participants called for planning that more proactively addressed market forces that are leading to rapidly-increasing prices, including incentives for landlords to keep rental prices lower.
- *Address the pressure student populations put on the housing supply.* Many participants commented that short-term student rentals made it difficult for longer-term residents to find housing. Several called for area universities to build more housing for their own students. Some called for development of “student villages” of denser, smaller units to leave larger units available for longer-term residents. Two-, three-, and four-bedroom units are being occupied by students instead of families. One highlighted the tension of differences in community values and priorities of short-term student renters versus those of longer-term residents.
- *Support minorities and disenfranchised groups.* One participant emphasized the need to provide resources to address homelessness, including integrating social policies to address addiction issues, etc. Another shared an experience of discrimination against minority families in housing and expressed desire for more support for minority families. Another called for more fair housing protections to prevent profiling of prospective tenants or housemates. One noted difficulty in securing emergency housing for those seeking asylum. Participants expressed a general feeling that though Cambridge provides resources to its residents, for those coming from outside, it can be hard to secure resources to get housing and feel safe.
- *Take a regional perspective to housing policy.* There is a need to coordinate housing initiatives and policies among abutting cities; Cambridge’s policies won’t be effective if nearby cities and towns do not have similar measures. The increasing density in Boston is pushing into Cambridge.
- *Improve housing options for families.* Low supply and increasing prices are making it difficult for families to find homes and/or stay in Cambridge as they grow. Low- and high-density development should include priority for families.
- *Increase public engagement around the development of housing policy and the resolution of housing issues.* The public needs to understand the costs of providing housing as well as what policy tools are available. Explore creative ways (like games) to engage the public in problem-solving.

What resources or individuals should the team be aware of on this topic?

- Right to the City is a coalition of community-oriented groups all over the country taking an urban justice approach to issues for low-income and marginalized groups. It is part of City Life, which is also a good resource.
- Community land trusts, such as the Dudley Square Land Trust.

- “Design Like you Give a Damn,” a book about building affordable housing.
- Barry Bluestone
- Charlestown development strategy: public housing in need of upgrade gets 50% market rate and 50% affordable, subsidized by the market-rate housing.
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative is working to create a database of rents in the city.
- The Cambridge Housing Authority is interviewing landlords within and outside the program to increase understanding of program use.
- Cohousing is a great way to deal with number of issues, including social issues such as aging.
- Seek peer cities (i.e., Bay Area) and innovative policies in urban settings (i.e., Charleston, SC).
- Examine looser zoning regulations in Portland and Seattle that allow increased density at household level.
- Recover Green Roofs (recovergreenroofs.com)
- Renovation surveys could be good resource for planning for maintenance of public housing.
- Just a Start and Homeowner’s Rehab, Inc (HRI) are both affordable housing non-profit developers
- YWCA and YMCA both have single room occupancy (SRO) for the recently homeless
- Homemade, a NY startup that helps people sell food they make at home, might help to include more cottage industries in public housing
- Sam Greenberg at Y2Y Harvard Square is a resource for homelessness
- Cambridge at Home
- Mayors’ Meetings and other forums for Cambridge city government to participate in national/federal discussions about housing
- Cambridge Council of Realtors to get their feedback on who is coming into the city and who is leaving and why
- MIT Center for Real Estate
- Urban planners and architects – consider mobilizing individuals from these groups to offer educational walkabouts on land use and zoning policies.
- Somerville Planning Department is a resource based on their own recent experiences.

Input on Urban Form

The following are key points that participants in the breakout groups on urban form shared. Because participants were asked to share individual opinions, in some cases comments may conflict.

What do you hope the plan will address about the topic of urban form?

- *Livability*
 - *Green space.* Participants highlighted the importance of sunlight on streets and more green space, including small pocket parks, street trees, and green walls as a way to distribute green space throughout urban landscape. One also

- suggested incorporating urban farming and local agriculture in the plan, saying that Cambridge does not currently prioritize these issues sufficiently.
- *Connectedness.* Too many buildings are walled off and inaccessible, leading to “islands” all over the city. The plan should increase the connectedness of neighborhoods, and neighborhoods to green spaces and the river. A student participant commented that students tend to congregate in private spaces, and that more public places to gather and overlap with the broader community would be positive. Participants called for more community spaces and features in public spaces to entice the community to gather, such as basketball hoops. Public spaces and walkways should be kept cleaner, be made more appealing and be wider, with more benches for bus stops.
 - *Human scale.* Participants said they want development and commercial areas that are human in scale and have a neighborhood feel. This includes increased street-level interest and walkability, and includes avoiding big box stores, which have an anonymous feel. Individual neighborhood characteristics should be preserved. Several commented on how Mass. Ave. is unappealing—one called it a “wasteland.” Another pointed to Alewife as an example of how not to develop, specifically citing the need for mixed-use development.
 - *What is the purview of the plan regarding urban form?* Some participants suggested that the realistic focus of the plan would be redevelopment and new development in areas where that is a priority, such as Central Square, while others discussed issues with existing development. One participant emphasized that urban form was about more than just zoning, using Somerville’s citywide plan as an example of a plan that provides much more nuance and direction than just zoning requirements. Several emphasized the need for Cambridge to take a holistic approach.
 - *Expansion.* Whether there should be limits on development, what kinds of limits would be imposed, and what the implications of caps on development would be were top questions in these discussions. Participants questioned the priorities leading to the rush to development, including unfettered gentrification and the tech boom in the city. Participants emphasized the need for adequate parking with new development and for growth not to squeeze out parking.
 - *Zoning and permitting issues.* Participants commented that current zoning does not consider urban form issues. Too much ugly or otherwise poor development goes through a regular permitting process because regulations do not address the issues that make buildings undesirable. Cambridge’s zoning should go further to legislate design issues, as San Francisco’s does. The Planning Board needs more direction; the quality of design “judgment calls” is inconsistent. Participants expressed concern about not imposing limits on expansion, particularly when building up. Participants considered the option of capping development to maintain character. Development needs to be thought through holistically, not just on a site-by-site basis.
 - *Aesthetics.* Several participants talked about the “uglification” of Cambridge as the biggest issue with urban form and called for the plan to remember “everyday beauty.” Some participants suggested that urban form was not sufficiently taken into account in zoning and development. One pointed to the lack of any landmarks in Kendall Square as an example. Participants discussed the need to balance preserving old character and breaking the mold to create new character. Judgments about development being congruous or incongruous alone are not sufficient.

- *Decision-making and community engagement.* Participants said that the decision-making process needs respond to a top-to-bottom review of big questions like what the city should look like, how much it should be allowed to grow, and what it should do/be. The plan needs to follow what the community envisions, rather than the inverse. One commented that the boards and commissions charged with developing and carrying out these plans were not serving the residents, and that resident perspectives are discounted in city meetings. Participants commented that forums for addressing disagreements were inadequate and one suggested a neighborhood ombudsman.

What about urban form is most important for the planning team to know?

- Participants expressed concern over several developed areas including the “wasteland” of Mass. Ave., the lack of mixed-use development in Alewife, and the kiosk and construction at Holyoke Center. One was concerned over the “Kendallization” of Main Street into Central Square.
- Participants commented that the Western Ave. development was inviting and attractive.
- One participant commented that residents feel that the City favors developers.
- Another expressed concern that new housing was being built in flood zones.

What resources or individuals should the team be aware of on this topic?

- Biodiversity for a Livable Climate
- Million Trees Program in NYC
- Todmorden, a post-industrial old mill city in the UK where they planted food trees and plants and have bees in the city
- Boston Food Forests
- Lower East Side Ecology Center
- The Neighborhood Farm gardens in people’s backyards, sells in farmers’ markets
- City Sprouts
- Somerville’s comprehensive plan, SomerVision
- Portland, Pearl District
- Ithaca, New York, and Cornell have made a beautiful downtown
- Columbus, Ohio’s mixed-use planning
- Fresh Pond Residents Alliance and other neighborhood associations
- City Councilor Dennis Carlone is a planner
- Charlie Sullivan, Cambridge Historical Commission
- Cambridge Plant and Garden Club has tremendous knowledge of plantings and volunteer opportunities
- Members of the old Harvard Square defense fund

Input on Mobility

The following are key points that participants in the breakout groups on mobility shared. Because participants were asked to share individual opinions, in some cases comments may conflict.

What do you hope the plan will address about mobility?

- *Accessibility*
 - The City should work to ensure that residents, especially the elderly and disabled, can access core venues like grocery stores. It is difficult for disabled residents to navigate the city safely and easily.
 - Cambridge should develop so that residents have access to local shops, instead of serving as a thoroughfare to Boston.
- *Automobile Travel*
 - To improve driving in Cambridge, the City needs to greatly reduce congestion, particularly near Alewife on Sherman Street and on Massachusetts Avenue.
 - Residents drive and park dangerously, creating an enormous safety issue. The police do not enforce driving laws sufficiently. In addition, dangerous driving makes it unsafe for children to walk to school, so parents have to drive them, leading to more vehicle congestion. The city should set a reduced citywide speed limit of 25 MPH or less, which could also generate revenue through traffic tickets.
 - The City should make driving more difficult to encourage people to use other forms of transit. The City devotes too much funding and street space to car travel.
 - The City should have more car-sharing and encourage car-pooling, especially for transporting school children. Cambridge should also partner with, instead of fight, ride-sharing companies like Uber. These groups could help supplement the T and create equity if managed appropriately.
- *Biking*
 - To improve biking in Cambridge, the City should install more bike lanes, protected bike lanes, cycle tracks, complete streets, and contra-flow lanes (particularly on Brattle Street); make the Fresh Pond rotary, Cambridge Street, the plaza on Mt. Auburn Street by Star Market, and Massachusetts Avenue less dangerous for cyclists; follow Somerville's tactical urbanism approach and place bike stickers on the street; install more bike racks and leave installed ones in place during the winter (additional bike parking could also boost businesses' revenues); build a bike path along Fitchburg Right-of-Way to Porter Square; extend free Hubway rides to 45 minutes; ensure traffic lights change for bikers; calm car traffic; remove the bump outs that force bicyclists into the street; and make biking "family friendly."
 - The city should control dangerous biking. Bikers ride too quickly through sidewalks near City Hall, Rindge Avenue near Alewife, Jill Brown Park, and Lafayette Square. Bike riders on the Fresh Pond Parkway create an unsafe situation for pedestrians. Bike riding should not be privileged over pedestrian safety, and the City may be too responsive to vocal bicycling advocates. The City should develop a multimodal strategy. While infrastructure can control biker behavior, the city also needs a stricter enforcement regime for rule-breaking bikers.
 - Biking in the city is unsafe, given aggressive drivers and dangerous road conditions. Many residents feel too scared to bike and shared-lane markings do not sufficiently protect bikers.

- *Concord Ave* – Concord Avenue is too narrow and overdeveloped. There should be an overpass at Concord Avenue and Cambridge Park Drive. Development should stop until the T work is finished.
- *Parking*
 - Increasing the size of the Alewife parking garage to encourage more transit use (but this would also increase congestion on Route 2).
 - The City should rationalize the cost of parking permits so they are equivalent to the true cost of the space. The cost of parking should be increased overall.
 - The City Council should reduce the number of parking spaces. As of now, it is too responsive to a minority of vocal parking proponents.
- *Partnerships with the MBTA, Institutions, Advocacy Groups and the Private Sector*
 - Cambridge needs to build strong relationships with other stakeholders, including the MBTA and the Bike Alliance, to improve the transit system. MIT is spurring development around Kendall Square, but the T is already at capacity. Additional parking will only create additional congestion. MIT and other Kendall Square employers should help work to improve the public transit system.
 - Major institutions and business need to take responsibility for the traffic created by their employees and be part of a transit solution by providing alternative modes of transportation and encouraging biking.
- *Public Transit*
 - Public transit in the city needs to be improved, particularly to reduce car traffic, increase mobility for low-income residents, and transport workers who do not live in the city.
 - To improve transit, the City should work to give buses priority lanes; increase bus frequency; improve the #68 bus on Broadway and the #1 bus; run shuttles; operate different sized busses in response to demand schedules; improve the MBTA system, specifically by completing the Green Line extension and expanding the Red Line; subsidize ridership; develop systems to allow riders to enter both the front and rear of buses; encourage alternative, middle-scale transportation options in Cambridge, Belmont, and Watertown through private or supplemental means; make Harvard and other private buses available to the public; and tax developers to fund the MBTA.
 - Cambridge may be unable to improve the condition of the MBTA, in which case it need to figure out ways to complement its service.
 - Social justice should figure into public transit to ensure that transit is truly accessible to all who need it.
- *Regionalism* – Cambridge needs to work with its neighbors, especially Somerville and Boston, to develop regional transportation solutions. MAPC should improve its involvement in the Green Line extension. However, naming transit as a regional problem is sometimes used as an excuse for not working on improving the system, and Cambridge needs to focus on enhancing the system addressing those things within its power.
- *Supply Side* – Cambridge should focus on the supply side of transit in addition to the demand side by studying what motivates people to travel to parts of the city and by creating policies, such as supporting work from home or relocating grocery stores, that reduce the need for travel.

- *Sustainability* – Cambridge should support green transportation options and value sustainability over speed.
- *Walking* – In general, the City does not focus on pedestrian needs adequately and does not sufficiently work with residents on pedestrian issues. To improve walking in Cambridge, the City should install additional, safer and more visible crosswalks; establish more permanent pedestrian zones, with Harvard Square as a permanent pedestrian zone; build a pedestrian bridge at Iggy’s to connect the Quad and Triangle areas; construct a bridge to connect Fresh Pond with the Jefferson Park Development; improve the condition of sidewalks (which is especially important for disabled residents and people using strollers); improve the safety of the intersection of Fresh Pond and Huron by improving the infrastructure or hiring a crossing guard; and lay down molded clay brick more carefully or install wire cut brick instead.

What about mobility is most important for the planning team to know?

- *Congestion is All of Our Problem* – The City needs to work with developers and other private sector actors to reduce congestion.
- *One Size Does Not Fit All* – The City needs to invest in a number of transit improvements. There should be improvements to the MBTA. The State should help with congestion in the city. There should be balanced and sustainable ideas to improve safety. Public education should be integrated into all transit programs.
- *Study Current Transportation Patterns* – Cambridge needs to first understand its transit problem by conducting a study of resident movement. Many residents do not trust existing transit studies. There is a need for a more rigorous and critical approach that incorporates more extensive data into planning.
- *Long Term Vision* – Cambridge needs to develop a long-term plan to address an increasing number of moving residents and commuters. This will involve real fixes to the MBTA and proactively exploring and adopting emerging technologies. Emerging technologies could be the key to alleviating traffic issues in the city and should be readily implemented.
- *Safety* – Safety needs to be at the core of transportation planning for all modes of transit.

What resources or individuals should the team be aware of on this topic?

- The MBTA
- The Cambridge Transit Authority
- The Town Gown Master Plan
 - The plan provides a leverage point to get buy-in from major institutions and employers on city initiatives.
- Best practice transit examples from around the world

Input on Social Cohesion and Community Health and Wellness

The following are key points that participants in the breakout groups on social cohesion and community health and wellness shared. Because participants were asked to share individual opinions, in some cases comments may conflict.

What do you hope the plan will address about social cohesion and community health and wellness?

- *Forge Connections*
 - The City should create and support the social, physical, and policy infrastructure to connect residents with one another, other neighborhoods, and local institutions. Examples include buses from the Senior Center to shows at Rindge; creating zoning that aligns with resident interests, such as allowing outdoor bars and dance parties; promoting more ice cream trucks; and hosting more neighborhood-level and citywide events like the Cambridge Dance Party, Pecha-Kucha events, soup kitchen events, block parties, street parties, and yard sales. The City could provide small grants to help people organize these events. The City could identify best practices from other communities and replicate promising ones.
 - In particular, the City should work to connect students at local universities with more permanent residents.
 - The City should promote the value of diversity in its schools for children from daycare programs to high school.
 - Strong social networks play a central role in personal wellness. Strategies to connect residents should empower people to help one another and could involve the use of online platforms such as Nextdoor.com. Make it easy for the community to organize by providing residents with access to neighborhood email groups. Rebrand and rethink what and how community centers function (younger generations think that community centers sound stale). The City could consider partnering with more businesses and events that are seen by younger generations to serve the role of a community gathering spot.
- *Preserve Community*
 - The plan should address the declining number of families and children in the city, support intergenerational communities, and prevent intergenerational divisions. Rising economic inequality is at the heart of communal disruption, with Cambridge polarizing due to the economic divergence of its residents accompanied by increased costs of living.
 - It is important to maintain livability through social-cultural resource, to identify what aspects of Cambridge have value for residents, and to clarify this with a mission statement for the plan.
- *Promote Diversity* – Creating a community comprised of people from various races, religions, gender identities, cultures, and ethnicities could improve the quality of life for Cambridge residents. It is important that the diverse perspectives of the city all feed into the planning process. The City needs to intentionally work towards diversity with specific and clear goals. Jobs, libraries, and schools can also be used to promote diversity.
- *Encourage Social Rehabilitation* – The City needs to address local drug and alcohol addiction. These problems are especially visible around Harvard and Central Squares. The high cost of housing also contributes to homelessness.

What about social cohesion community health and wellness are most important for the planning team to know?

- *Definition of Social Cohesion* – Social cohesion needs to be better defined in the planning process. It is difficult to define and has different values for different people. To some, social cohesion means diversity, while to others it means communal harmony, embracing differences, neighborliness (or leaving your neighbors alone), forming community, or learning to value other residents for their unique qualities. In addition, some support social cohesion as an end to itself while others view it as a means to further other objectives such as economic equality. Others question uncritically working towards social cohesion without analyzing its benefits and impacts and note that many residents simply do not relate to one another.
- *Unity* – To achieve social cohesion, residents of mixed neighborhoods must be able to coalesce around political and social issues. The city must also be unified as a whole and, to some, the city does appear to be becoming more unified. Residents must be exposed to diversity to achieve cohesion. Investing in school and early child social cohesion programming could be effective.
- *Neighbors* – It could be important for residents to know one another. This can be facilitated through local events like block parties, which the City could support and finance. Existing neighborhood associations provide an existing point of contact. However, some residents value their privacy and are not interested in deeper community interactions.
- *Housing and Buildings*
 - Multistory, denser housing may promote community by making neighborhoods more walkable and lowering housing costs, allowing residents to remain in the city. Alternatively, it may be more difficult for communities to form in dense, high-rise buildings than in neighborhoods composed primarily of single-family houses.
 - If possible, housing should be designed to facilitate cohesion, for example, by including porches and spreading affordable units throughout a building. Building design also promotes wellness if done correctly by encouraging communal interactions. For example, the lawn in front of City Hall provides a welcome gathering place for residents. Communally oriented housing may also encourage students to stay in Cambridge post-graduation.
- *Demographics, Income, and Diversity* – Social cohesion has decreased with the rise in housing and rental costs, which is displacing long-term residents and leading to declines in economic, racial, and ethnic diversity. An influx of wealthy young professionals has accelerated this trend. The long-term vision should be to maintain livability and affordability so that families are not displaced and a wide range of economic, racial, and ethnic groups can live and work in Cambridge. This diversity is a valuable element of Cambridge, and one that participants want to see flourish. Furthermore, while many Cambridge neighborhoods are diverse, others are relatively homogenous. Many of the city's residents value diversity, though others question if it is simply a goal without defined benefits. Race is an important part of social cohesion in the city.
- *Learning from Residents Who Have Moved* – The team should survey residents who have moved out of Cambridge about what factors caused them to leave.
- *Engagement* – When engaging diverse groups in city decisions (both within and outside the context of the Envision Cambridge process), it could be effective to engage them both separately and jointly as appropriate. It could also be effective to run programs in different

languages with translators. In addition, some groups, including immigrant populations, should be actively engaged through door-to-door outreach programs. The City should focus on outreach to remedy low voter turnout and engage residents more actively in decisions like participatory budgeting.

- *Kendall Square* – As Kendall Square grows and changes, there needs to be an effort to be sure it forms a real community.
- *Youth* – The City needs to improve the quality of life for youth who do not attend college and create more adult-supported but youth-led programs to increase engagement. The City should also promote events to limit youth violence and create safe environments for recreation. The City should also focus on encouraging young people to return after they have attended college.
- *Interactive Spaces and Programs* – To increase social cohesion and promote community health, the City should maintain existing and develop new infrastructure that provides community gathering spot for people of all ages and backgrounds. For example, Cambridge could improve public swimming pools, create ice skating rinks in the winter, build bocce ball courts, develop more parks, and host other opportunities for outdoor recreation along the Charles River. The City could also expand the Memorial Drive Sunday Summer Closures to the Boston University Bridge; continue to hold the Cambridge Dance Party, the Caribbean Parade, Riverfest, and the Port Café community event; and host new events, such as a community health fairs and nonprofit service fairs. Participants suggest that neighborhood-level events and funding to organize them, along with the designation of a community liaison, would be especially helpful in creating social cohesion.
- *Dog-Friendly Places* – Dog-friendly policies in buildings and workplaces could create more social cohesion, as dog interactions lead people to interact. Dog parks, especially, increase social encounters.
- *Local Governance* – Local government strongly impacts quality of life, with governance influencing social cohesion. Since Cambridge does not have a strong mayor position or wards, residents cannot hold elected officials directly accountable for their actions.
- *Safety* – Residents have to feel safe in their neighborhoods to feel well and to form bonds with other residents. If residents feel safe, they tend to interact with others more frequently in the neighborhood and form trusting relationships.

What resources or individuals should the team be aware of on this topic?

- Faith-Based Organizations
 - Churches, temples, and mosques
- Neighborhood Organizations and Local Alliances
 - The Cambridge Health Alliance, Fresh Pond Residents Alliance, West Cambridge Neighborhood Association, East Cambridge Neighborhood Association, North Cambridge Neighborhood Association, Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Association, the Social Committee of City Council, East Cambridge Families Group, and the Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods. Also, local neighborhoods groups and tenant associations, though not all neighborhoods have a cohesive group.
- Educational Institutes and Students

- Universities, including Lesley, Harvard, MIT, and public schools and their students. The planning team should target local school students including those at CRLS, and speak to them during events.
- Local Events
 - Block parties, the city dance party, Riverfest, the local jazz festival, movie and pizza nights at the Larch Road Park, and the Caribbean Festival
- Public Institutions
 - The Cambridge Senior Center, the Moore Street Youth Center, and CCTV, which could act as an information channel for residents
- Interactive Spaces
 - The team should target environments where many people already interact, work, play, and learn together. For example, the small park near the former Russell School is a social nexus for the local community and the Central and Porter T stations provide potential advertising venues.
- Local Programs
 - Hoops and Health, Mayor’s Summer Youth Program, and the City Peace Talk. Pemberton Farms host frequent events, which attract residents.
 - The team should connect with those residents who are already engaged and who participate in local institutions and tap into their networks to bring in less engaged residents.

Input on Climate and the Environment

The following are key points that participants in the breakout groups on climate and the environment shared. Because participants were asked to share individual opinions, in some cases comments may conflict.

What do you hope the plan will address about climate and the environment?

- *Climate Change*
 - Climate change, especially as it relates to flooding, is an issue of paramount importance. Cambridge should support technologies, like those produced by Biodiversity for a Livable Climate, that allow residents to individually sequester carbon.
 - Alone, resiliency is an insufficient response to climate change. Cambridge should develop mitigation strategies along with resiliency approaches. Energy reduction will be a major part of local mitigation, and to this end, the City should install more solar panels and electric car charging stations.
 - Sea level rise could jeopardize the city, especially Alewife. The City should recognize the climate change will constrain its planning options.
 - Cambridge can and should do its part to control local emissions, but cannot deal with climate change alone.
- *Emergency Planning* – The City should create emergency disaster response, evacuation, and resiliency plans. It needs to be prepared for major electric grid disruptions and to prepare its neighborhoods for these events. Transforming the Alewife golf course into a farm would help the city during catastrophes by providing a local food source.
- *Flooding and Stormwater Management*

- While stormwater is an immediate problem, flooding from climate change could increasingly damage Cambridge. The City should focus on green infrastructure, like bioswales, and other proactive solutions to control damage, treat water before it enters sensitive water bodies, and improve the environment. Alewife and Route 16 could be especially impacted and need protective infrastructure. Planning should prioritize the use of green infrastructure when possible, especially to control flooding and stormwater through bioswales, wetlands, forests, and rain gardens.
- Cambridge should support rainwater harvesting through rain barrels and other technologies to reduce stormwater runoff. This could be integrated into the city's building code. DPW has an existing rain barrel program, which could serve as a model. Cambridge could also recover water on major streets, like Concord Avenue.
- Given the risk to Alewife, the City may not want to develop it into a transit hub. The Tobin area is also vulnerable to flooding.
- Increased flooding could also impact residents' ability to stay in the city because of increased damage and flood insurance costs.
- Massachusetts has not signed onto federal stormwater regulation standards. This is a huge problem, and USEPA gave the city a D- grade for stormwater control, as sewage flows through the city. Additional development in the Quadrangle will only exacerbate this issue.
- Cambridge should partner with a city in central Massachusetts that needs jobs as a place to relocate Cambridge residents whose properties have been flooded out in the future.
- Flood control will require joint action with state and federal governments and agencies to research and develop major public works. The City should work with Arlington and Belmont to manage stormwater and flooding in the near term. In addition, the City could work with Boston and other partners to close off Boston Harbor.
- *Health*
 - The environment directly impacts human health. Cambridge should work towards the "Colorado model" of an integrated outdoors lifestyle and actively link the city to the outdoors when possible. The City should better preserve and maintain its natural spaces, though density poses a challenge to this goal.
 - Noise, congestion, and pollution from cars ruin the local environment and adversely affect human health. Loud noises, like leaf blowing, also contribute to lower quality of life.
- *Net Zero*
 - Achieving net zero is an important goal. The City and private entities should work toward it together. The City should not work towards net zero solely through purchasing credits.
 - The net zero standards do not seem to be influencing building designs yet. The City should mandate that developers build energy efficient buildings with tight envelopes and solar panels.
 - The net zero goal may be unachievable in the city, especially with MIT constructing a second power plant.
- *Open Space*

- The City should take full advantage of its existing open spaces and natural areas. In particular, the Charles River's bank could be a fantastic area, but at the moment, it is ignored, underused, and poorly managed. In addition, the City should explain to developers why preserving open spaces furthers their own interests by increasing property values and raising the quality of life for everyone.
- The City should ensure that open space at the Volpe Center is preserved and benefits the public.
- The City too often prioritizes parking over open space.
- *Transportation* – Encouraging sustainable, public transportation should be at the center of the City's environmental planning. Sustainable transit must accommodate those with disabilities. The City will also need to control car traffic.
- *Urban Forests and Tree Canopies* – Urban forest should be recognized as natural environments. Cambridge should plant more trees, take better care of existing ones, and focus more on its tree canopy policy. This would beautify the sidewalk-scape, cool the area, control stormwater, remove pollutants, improve mental health, and raise property values. Cambridge could run a backyard tree planting program.
- *Urban Issues*
 - The City should incentivize the retrofit of existing buildings to decrease their energy usage through low-interest funds and block discounts for work.
 - Highly developed areas, such as Kendall Square and Alewife, could be prone to urban environmental issues, like heat islands and stormwater runoff.
 - Light pollution degrades the environment.
- *Water Pollution* – Cambridge's water is impaired due to upstream communities' phosphorus loads.

What about climate and the environment is most important for the planning team to know?

- *Envision Cambridge*
 - The planning process needs to improve the city rather than redirecting resources from other projects. As the city already has many active climate and environment groups, it should tap into their expertise rather than duplicating efforts. It is concerning that the City has not followed the recommendations of previous reports. For example, a 2001 report recommends against development in hotspots, but the City responded to developers' interests and allowed construction in Porter Square. The planning process needs to weigh conflicting interests around development and other environmental issues and may even be able to develop win-win solutions if it listens and develops the right policies.
 - Environmental and climate topics connect to all of the other planning topics and should be addressed in an integrated manner.
 - The plan should seamlessly integrate urban and natural spaces together to facilitate more human interactions with nature, which would improve quality of life.
- *Outreach and Education* – The City should communicate its current environmental efforts to residents and educate them about how to improve the local environment, increase their households' sustainability, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Education should be paired with incentive programs.

- *Policies* – Cambridge should create policies that encourage environmentally sound behavior, for example, paying for permeable pavers to reduce runoff.

What resources or individuals should the team be aware of on this topic?

- Academic Resources
 - MIT, particularly Antonio DiMambro and Alan Berger (expert on using zoning for protecting vulnerable areas)
- City Resources
 - The city forester/arborist should engage the public
 - Public transportation can be used for awareness and advertising
- Environmental Groups
 - Friends of Fresh Pond, Friends of Mt. Auburn, Friends of Alewife, the local Audubon Society, and the Appalachian Mountain Club, Green Streets, Green Cambridge, the Charles River Watershed Association, and Livable Streets
- Existing Climate, Environmental, and Disaster Plans
 - Cornell University and Ithaca’s Forestry Master Plan, Los Angeles’ volunteer block-by-block disaster system, and Cambridge’s climate change plan
- Government Agencies
 - The USEPA, Army Corps of Engineers, and MAPC (though it lacks sufficient power)
- Literature
 - [The Great Swamp](#) by Sheila Cook provides a history of Alewife
 - [Light’s Out](#) by Ted Kopple reviews the risk of electricity grid failure
- Local Volunteers
 - The City should communicate with existing environmental volunteer groups to ask their members to discuss, act, and lead on local environmental issues. The City should have more environmental actors rather than advisors.
- Outside Funding Opportunities
 - 100 Resilient Cities funded by the Rockefeller Foundation

Input on Economic Opportunity

The following are key points that participants in the breakout groups on economic opportunity shared. Because participants were asked to share individual opinions, in some cases comments may conflict.

What do you hope the plan will address about economic opportunity?

- *Affordability and Equity*
 - Cambridge is facing an increasing problem with divergent economic fortunes among its residents. The city has a unique and extreme range of economic opportunities. There is an influx of high-paying jobs that benefit certain residents but leave low-skilled residents worse off, as housing and rental prices increase due to the increased demand from high-paid employees. High housing prices also push young people out of the city. Cambridge could provide housing supplements to reverse this trend.

- Cambridge should work to understand both the barriers facing and possibilities for those not benefiting from the post-factory economy. The City needs to develop an approach to employ this group.
- Changing economic conditions are reducing the size of the middle class in the city and lowering the quality of life for those middle-income residents who remain.
- Cambridge should track local purchasing power parity (PPP), which provides a measure of economic equity.
- *Business Partnerships*
 - The City should work jointly with both small and large businesses when developing sector policies, so all sides can work together to create the most mutually beneficial regulations possible.
 - Cambridge should encourage new businesses to develop the land around them in a manner that will benefit the greater public.
- *Job Training*
 - The City should support vocational training for locally relevant skill-building like coding. Job training programs must teach skills which are marketable. These programs should focus on lower-income youth, recent immigrants, and residents who speak English as a second language. The high school should provide skills-based programming tailored for students who want careers that do not require a college education.
 - Businesses might partner with the City to develop training programs.
 - Second language programs would provide a valuable skill-building opportunity for all residents.
 - The City could run a program to train bilingual high school students as interpreters for community events and meetings.
 - The residents who most need training and work are not connected to existing development, training, and job opportunities. There are not enough training programs overall, and those who know about the existing training programs are normally already in privileged positions.
- *Large Businesses*
 - Big business brings benefits and limitations, which both need to be considered. Big businesses are increasing the cost of housing and office space, changing homes into offices due to the lack of affordable office space, turning small businesses into collaborative office spaces, and limiting the diversity of local businesses. On the other hand, large businesses are central to Cambridge's economy and development. With planning and a cohesive vision, Cambridge could ensure that big business benefits the city and control its drawbacks.
 - Programs could be created, or requirements established, that help local unemployed or underemployed residents work at some of the new bigger business. Those organizations could identify positions that are suitable for these underserved individuals, instead of hiring typical applicants.
- *The Regional Context*
 - Cambridge should work to understand and then capitalize upon its role in the regional economy and to develop an integrated regional economic development strategy. The City should lead other municipalities to jointly develop the greater regional economy.

- Cambridge has a too many regulations, which make it a less attractive city in which to start a business when compared with neighboring municipalities.
- *Service Provisions*
 - The City should provide social services to help people with limited economic opportunity. Specifically, the City could provide free community college and salary equity workshops and coaching on negotiation for specific community members similar to the women-focused negotiation courses provided by the City of Boston.
 - The City should stabilize the price of electricity through a municipal provision program; provide free internet to help residents with all things job-related including training, communication, and the search for employment; and supplement the earned income tax credit (EITC) for low-income residents.
 - Cambridge, especially the Community Development Department, could provide internships to high school students to provide them exposure to skill-based fields like architecture and planning.
- *Small Businesses*
 - Small businesses provide key economic services to residents, support employment, and preserve the character of the city. However, small businesses suffer from a lack of parking spaces and increasing competition with large chains. In particular, Concord Avenue is at risk of losing its local businesses if it gets developed into a commercial corridor.
 - The City should expand the diversity of small businesses to improve local economic health and provide employment opportunities for different types of people.
 - Central Square needs an overhaul to help local businesses. At the moment, it lacks an adequate customer base, a cohesive retail stretch, and does not feel like a shopping district.
 - The entrepreneurial economy is suffering in the city due a lack of office space and services. Cambridge should support entrepreneurial activities and the startup economy.
- *Universities* – MIT, Harvard, and Lesley should be at the center of creating economic opportunity for local residents. They have the expertise and resources to provide relevant, high-quality training for city residents. During WWII, MIT ran a training program that could serve as an educational model for the future. MIT could also manage trainings targeted towards STEM fields. The universities should also provide life-long learning opportunities for adults.
- *Walkability* – The more businesses and jobs there are throughout Cambridge, the easier it is for residents to walk to nearby stores. In return, walkability and first-floor retail spaces boost the success of local businesses that rely on foot traffic. Easy access to markets also reduces car use. Specifically, it is unpleasant to walk to the Alewife shopping center, and the Triangle/Quadrangle area needs an overpass for pedestrians, which could be a park like the Highline in Manhattan.

What about economic opportunity is most important for the planning team to know?

- *Two Worlds* – Cambridge is increasingly a place of haves and haves-not in the local economy. While the City is benefiting from the growth of large, high-tech businesses, it needs to bring along those at the bottom of the economic ladder with fewer skills to

maintain a healthy community. Not all jobs require extensive education, and the City should connect low-skilled workers with these opportunities.

- *Vision* – Cambridge should prepare an intentional business development plan for the next 20 years that includes strategies to attract certain business, preserve local businesses, and create sustainable economic development.

What resources or individuals should the team be aware of on this topic?

- Businesses and Associations
 - Local First, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Central Square Business Association, local stores, and the Concord Ave Neighborhood Association
- Experts
 - Geeta Pradhan, President of the Cambridge Community Foundation
- Programming
 - Salary negotiation workshops, especially for women and minority groups, and the Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment program
- Universities
 - MIT, Harvard, and Lesley
- Vocational and Community Organizations
 - Jewish Vocational Services in Boston provides excellent employment training and career connection services

Input on Children, Youth Learning and Schools

The following are key points that participants in the breakout groups on children, youth learning, and schools shared. Because participants were asked to share individual opinions, in some cases comments may conflict.

What do you hope the plan will address about children/youth learning and schools?

- *Better integration of city services and the schools.* Teachers are often aware of issues facing families, but don’t know about resources they could share with families to get help for the families. Teachers should be trained on City and non-profit resources for families. The plan should take a comprehensive view that includes the home life for children and parent involvement. One participant commented that schools are like the “spine” of the city; they are anchoring institutions like hospitals. Participants commented that it was strange that the topic of schools and children was not identified upfront as a topic for these Envision Cambridge workshops.
- *Provide resources to families to support children’s education.* Help parents get connected to computer and English classes. Help get internet access into homes.
- *Desegregate schools and communities.* Wealthier, more educated families should want to keep their kids in public school. Address segregation in neighborhoods that impacts schools.

What about children/youth learning and schools is most important for the planning team to know?

- Public schools are a valuable and integral part of the city.
- Schools are politically separate from the rest of the city because the school council and the City Council each have their own realms of control.
- The diversity of cultures in the city is valuable, and the schools should support that.
- Schools are forums where the issues that Envision Cambridge has highlighted are discussed, and in some cases addressed, so school representatives should be at the table in planning conversations.

What resources or individuals should the team be aware of on this topic?

- Universities
- Google and other companies, especially information technology companies in Kendall Square
- School principals, especially Robin Harris
- Community leaders running youth centers
- CRLS
- Civic leaders who went to the schools
- Teachers
- Family liaisons
- The public library system

Input on Regionalism

The following are key points that participants in the breakout groups on regionalism shared. Because participants were asked to share individual opinions, in some cases comments may conflict.

What do you hope the plan will address about the topic of regionalism?

- *Improve transportation through Cambridge and nearby cities.* Improve public transport in metropolitan area broadly through better coordination. Coordinate priority for bus routes that are shared between cities (i.e., #1 bus). Cross-license taxis through Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville, so taxis are not making empty return trips.
- *Improve coordination of housing plans across cities.* Cambridge is just one component in the region, and housing priorities are interconnected between cities (especially with Somerville).
- *Climate change preparedness.* Actions in one municipality have an impact on climate preparedness in neighboring cities. Plans should be made at the regional level. Boston and Cambridge will both experience effects if Charles River rises much more.

What about regionalism is most important for the planning team to know?

- Massachusetts does not have county government, but the jump from city to state can be too large. More coordination in planning between cities is needed.
- MAPC does not have authority to implement policies to integrate cities.

What resources or individuals should the team be aware of on this topic?

- Somerville affordable housing groups
- SomerVision process, which is Somerville’s comprehensive plan
- Meetings at the Armory
- Cohousing
- Joe Beckman, who lives in Somerville, was a long-time housing advocate in Cambridge; a potential bridge-builder between cities
- DCR meetings
- MAPC meetings

Focus Groups with minority and linguistically-isolated groups

In early April 2016, the Envision Cambridge planning team held several invitation-only focus groups to reach members of minority and linguistically-isolated communities within Cambridge. The goal of the focus groups was to hear from community members about what matters most to them and what their concerns and ideas are. This input will help create a vision for the city in coming decades. Cambridge Community Engagement Team (CET) workers invited approximately forty (40) members of the public to participate in the focus groups in total, which were held as follows:

- April 7, 2016 at the Margaret Fuller House
- April 13, 2016 at the Peabody School
- April 15, 2016 at the Windsor Street Care Center

American-born Black

As part of the three-year Envision Cambridge process to develop a long-term plan for the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, the project team held a focus group for representatives from the American-born Black community. In parallel, several other focus groups were held with linguistic minorities (people who do not speak English as their first language). These invitation-only focus groups of 12-18 people were designed to engage those who might not be sufficiently represented at larger public meetings and allow for a smaller, more intimate environment. They are one piece of extensive engagement efforts conducted by the Envision Cambridge team to learn from the community what they see as current strengths and challenges on topics such as housing, mobility, economic opportunity, urban form, and climate and the environment. At the April 7 focus group there were a total of twenty (20) individuals present: fifteen (15) Cambridge residents, three (3) members from the Envision Cambridge team, and two (2) Cambridge Engagement Team (CET) workers.

The group focused primarily on the questions:

- What do you like most about living in Cambridge?
- What’s your biggest concern about living in Cambridge?
- Do you feel like the African-American community has voice in the development and growth of the city?

The group highlighted the many resources that the city has to offer: programs for young children and adults; the school system; the park system. Generally, they expressed that, due to its many resources, programs, and amenities, Cambridge is a great place to live, have children, and raise a family. Additional positive city qualities identified by participants included the city's walkability, its neighborhoods, and its diversity. Together, these elements support strong communities and a strong sense of place and belonging – made evident by the generations of families that have lived in Cambridge, some dating back over a century – which allow for a high quality of life.

Participants then talked about their biggest concerns about Cambridge and challenges faced living here. There was one primary response to this question – the challenge of housing affordability. Prohibitive housing costs force working class people to make hard decisions. People said the housing crisis has already changed the social fabric of this city and threatens to continue to do so. Many families have lived here for generations, and some have had to move out or expect to be forced out by housing costs increase in the future. *“How much am I willing to pay?”* Moreover, a young woman finishing a Master's program commented that even if she were to land her dream job, she still could not afford to live in Cambridge. She would make too much to qualify for aid but not enough to sustain herself. She told a short story about her friends that have a child together who have chosen not to get married because city policies are such that it would become almost impossible to afford a house together. They are not the only couple who have had to make this decision. So, not only has the increase in housing costs affected families that have been here for generations, the increase is also affecting families that would establish roots in Cambridge.

Following the statewide referendum that dissolved rent control, participants noted the entire city changed when many of its residents could no longer afford to stay. Some of those who left were anchors in their communities and exerted great influence. These were people who would invest in younger generations and serve as mentors and role models, many of whom were 2nd or 3rd generation Cambridge residents. As many of the residents forced to move were African American men, there is now a void of men in the city's African American community.

While Cambridge offers many programs for children and adults, some participants who are parents indicated that their teenagers no longer have the programming they need to continue their development through adolescence. Whether due to age-based cut-off points, or available programs failing to appeal to teenage interests, or simply the increase in fees to participate in certain activities, participants described teenage kids as idle and expressed concern that such a lack of stimulation and direction can lead to problematic and even criminal behavior. Another parent noted a lack of integration between major institutions and corporations and Cambridge residents. Participants said entities such as Genzyme, Biogen, Harvard, and MIT do not appear to have programs directed at the city's younger population (kids or schools or young adults) to help train them for local jobs. They said that there should be a greater degree of integration between these large entities and the surrounding community. If big companies buy property in Cambridge, they should be expected to create economic opportunities for more of Cambridge's youth and their parents. The Cambridge community should benefit directly from their presence. One of the participants said that 30 years ago people had the impression that MIT and Harvard would take over the city, and now, they have, and residents are not sure what they have to show for the change.

Participants were asked if they felt like the American-born Black community had a voice in the development and growth of Cambridge. They were unanimous in saying that they do not. What could the city do about it? People recommended an increase in communication, saying African-Americans are not part of the conversation. As one parent pointed out, it is hard to be involved and have a voice when you have a family to look after. Harder still to do so when a parent has to work multiple jobs in order to provide for their family. They said the city should not take this as a desire not to be involved. Participants said they have much to say and that they bring a good deal to the table. Project team members asked what the city can do to engage with those who do not generally attend big public meetings. Participants expressed a sense that Cambridge leaders are no longer community-oriented, with very little interaction among those who get elected and the people that elect them. Representatives are not personable, do not show up to events, answer calls, or respond to emails. As far as these members of the African American community are concerned, the sense of community connection to city leadership has disappeared.

Following prompts on a few other topics, the following comments were also shared:

- Representation – It would be nice to have an increase of African-Americans in leadership roles throughout the city.
- Transportation – There needs to be accountability on the part of the biking community in terms of following the rules, biking safely, and sharing the right of way with vehicles and pedestrians.
- Recreation – Magazine Beach should be completed. This is a beloved resource of Cambridge and, for many years now, residents have not been able to fully enjoy it.
- Parks & Open Spaces – There should be a continued focus on building new parks and upgrading existing ones, with accommodations for children with disabilities in parks.
- Consumer Demographics – Sometimes, residents find themselves in other cities to do basic shopping because they cannot afford to do so in the shops that are available in Cambridge. As one resident pointed out, “Shaw’s is just as expensive as Whole Foods.”
- Resiliency & Climate Change – Does Cambridge have a flood plan for Charles River?
- Housing Discrimination – Those who buy affordable condo units in mixed housing buildings are sometimes treated differently than those paying market-rate prices. Furthermore, there is no backing from the city for these individuals: they feel alone.
- Social Services – What’s being done for Cantabrigians who suffer from alcohol and drug addictions? Residents sometimes go out of their way to avoid walking through certain parts of the city where addicts congregate.
- Teachers – CPS teachers are not allowed to park on Cambridge streets. It is common practice for teacher to leave their classrooms in the middle of the lesson to either feed the meter or move their car. We ought to have programs that take care of those that are teaching Cambridge kids.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

The project team also held two focus groups for representatives from the English as a second language (ESL) community. These invitation-only focus groups of 12-21 people were designed to engage those who might not be sufficiently represented at larger public meetings, and to create smaller, more intimate environments. They are one part of extensive engagement efforts conducted by the Envision Cambridge team to learn the community’s views on current successes and challenges on topics such as housing, mobility, economic opportunity, urban

form, and climate and the environment. A total of twenty-one (21) individuals attended the April 13th focus group: fourteen (14) Cambridge residents, three (3) members from the Envision Cambridge team, and four (4) Cambridge Engagement Team (CET) workers, and 18 individuals attended the April 15th focus group: eleven (11) Cambridge residents, three (3) members from the Envision Cambridge team, and four (4) CET workers.

The group focused primarily on the questions:

- What do you like most about living in Cambridge?
- What is your biggest concern about living in Cambridge?
- Do you find it easy or hard to get where you want to go and why?
- What outdoor places in Cambridge do you use most, and are there any improvements you would like to see in the outdoor places?
- What should the city be more aware of for disaster planning?
- Who in the community should team members working on the Envision Cambridge plan work with?
- What community services get used most often, and what ones should be expanded?
- What kind of job opportunities should be expanded?
- What should the city work to improve on in the next 20 years?

When asked about the positives of life in the City, many participants praised the diversity, multiculturalism, and welcoming environment, which helps immigrants feel part of the community. City services directed towards immigrants and outreach workers also provide an important support structure. Others appreciated the safety and peace; numerous and well-resourced services offered to the elderly, young mothers, immigrants, homeless, and children, especially those with special needs; the quality of local public schools as well as the amount of after school and summer programming; the environmental consciousness of the city and its citizens; robust public transportation; walkability; job training and adult educational opportunities, especially language classes; availability of churches, farmers' markets, public libraries, and green spaces; the seasonal climate; the ease of accessing shopping and healthcare centers; and the iconic nature of the area.

Participants also highlighted the challenges of living in the city. Above all else, they worried that the rising cost of living, especially housing costs, strain their finances, force them to live in houses too small for their families, and could potentially push them out of the city. Participants supported low-income and subsidized housing programs and building a greater number of tall buildings, especially with low-income units. Some noted that the cap for existing affordable programs is too low, with many "middle income" residents ineligible for assistance but also unable to afford housing prices. Housing is further complicated for recent immigrants as the city requires proof of address, and they often are not allowed to work at first, unduly straining their finances. In addition, participants noted a lack of some amenities and services, including: free programming for children and teenagers; frequent buses; street space and public parking, especially during emergency declarations, with too many parking tickets given; nursing homes; public high schools, as it is hard for many families to access it; public parks; library books in languages other than English; city documents in French/Kreyol for Haitian immigrants; public meeting spaces; Head Start programming; and public restrooms. Participants also said that people sorting through the trash leads to rats and health problems; the quality of local schools are declining with classes growing too large; certain areas, including Central and

Harvard Squares and North Cambridge, are unsafe with drug usage; and traffic congestion limits mobility.

In terms of transit access, participants noted that ease of mobility depends on the time of day with varying levels of traffic congestion for cars and busses. Many noted that, while biking can bypass the traffic, they feel unsafe biking given unprotected bike lanes and will not allow their children to bike to school. Some noted that the buses are slow and infrequent with the stations lacking adequate seating. A participant suggested adding more express bus lines. Others commented that the frequent weekend construction on the red line has made travel throughout the city difficult. Finally, many pointed to particular parts of the city that are difficult to access with public transportation, especially West Cambridge.

When discussing the city's outdoor areas, many commented that, while they appreciate the current number of outdoor areas, the city should develop additional parks, especially with specific amenities, like pools, playgrounds, and sports fields. In particular, participants suggested, installing little libraries, building more public restrooms, running programs for children, adding more flowers and art, and gating off the marsh at Danehy Park. Some noted that the open hours of the public facilities at the high school should be expanded and the pool should have single-sex swimming hours to accommodate cultures where sexes cannot swim together. Many voiced a need for more community gardens, with residents now having to wait over four years to receive a plot.

During weather emergencies, group members said they go to the mall or community centers, which are too crowded, or the high school, which is hard to access, especially since the electric buses stop running. Others suggested using office spaces with AC and running water, given that it costs too much for many residents to run their own AC units. In general, participants thought the city should prepare more for weather and snow emergencies and provide additional emergency shelters. They also voiced different views regarding school closures due to snow, with some noting that the schools stay open too frequently compared to Boston schools in conditions that limit accessibility while others praised limited closures as many parents still need to work even if schools close. Finally, some participants advocated for additional tree plantings to improve the local environment and quality of life.

When the team asked who else it should talk with, participants recommend team members attend local events, including the River Festival, the Caribbean Festival, and events at Broadway Park; partner with the Centers for Family and Children to table at their events; produce online and print media in multiple languages; provide children with information at school to give to their parents; and collaborate with the local volunteer community.

In terms of community services, people pointed to the senior center, Center for Families, and the recreation center as examples of heavily used and quality local services. However, some noted a need for additional, affordable public fitness and sports centers, with many sports facilities limited to North Cambridge.

When asked about jobs in the city, participants noted that many of the incoming jobs are primarily accessible to high-income, well-educated, younger residents, with most others excluded. Many raised a need for additional job training for low-income residents, especially to train them for technology-oriented opportunities. Many recommended that the city partner with local universities to develop joint training programs.

Finally, the team asked the participants to voice a vision for the city 20 to 30 years in the future. Residents raised a range of goals, including more community centers to help immigrants congregate and preserve their cultures; a safer city, especially for teens; an environmentally conscious city that confronts climate change; a walkable city with improved public transit; affordable, universal childcare centers; revitalized public education that caters to a diversity of needs; and a denser city, with more vertical buildings to control housing prices, allowing a diversity of residents from all walks of life and regions of the world to stay at home in Cambridge.

Drop-in sessions at Senior Centers

Project staff held drop-in hours on May 2, 2016 and May 5, 2016 at the Central Square and North Cambridge Senior Centers. These informal meetings were open to the public and specifically targeted at senior citizens, most of whom were already present at the Senior Center for lunch. The drop-ins are one piece of extensive engagement efforts conducted by the Envision Cambridge team to learn from the community what they see as current strengths and challenges on topics such as housing, mobility, economic opportunity, urban form, and climate and the environment. At the May 5 session, there were twenty-seven (27) individuals present: twenty-one (21) senior citizens, four (4) members from the Envision Cambridge Team, and two (2) staff members from the Senior Center.

Participants expressed concerns around several key themes.

Mobility: The comments were mostly concerning accessibility of public transportation to seniors, given their limited mobility. A comment that came up quite regularly was a lack of benches, especially on prime walking corridors such as Mass Ave or the Linear Park. Benches are also needed in between bus stops and in squares, so that there is a place to sit down every block or two. They would like to see expanded bus routes, and bus stops placed more frequently together. The seniors articulated that walking multiple blocks can be an extreme challenge, if even physically possible. Adding benches and shortening the distance between bus stops would help mitigate that challenge.

A second theme within mobility was a sense of feeling unsafe on the streets. Seniors mentioned that they often feel rushed across crosswalks by impatient drivers, or are afraid to even attempt crossing. Bikers were also mentioned. Participants felt rather unfavorably about bikers in Cambridge, especially when they behaved erratically or didn't follow the rules of the road.

Social opportunities: The seniors all noted that the Senior Center is closed on weekends, which results in a lack of social programming. They do not want to rely on their children to provide social stimulation but often have no other choice, especially on weekends. Several participants expressed a desire for more adult-oriented community programming and community spaces, where groups could gather to play cards, screen films, or have discussions. They compared this to teen-oriented spaces throughout the city. Participants listed several hobbies they had, including knitting, reading, and playing scrabble, which could all easily be turned into a social opportunity if given a community meeting place.

Affordability: Affordability of food, retail, and housing was a prevalent issue for the seniors. In both sessions, a need for more affordable restaurants was expressed. When asked "What stores would you like to see in Cambridge," an answer that received cheers and applause was "dollar stores." One participant said she would like a Costco or Walmart in the city, which received a mixed response. The clear theme is a need for affordable retail. Participants also asked for more corner grocery stores, clothing and shoe stores, affordable food markets, and fast food. Many participants supported the idea of bringing fast food options to Cambridge, including McDonald's and Wendy's. Mostly they supported fast food establishments because "fast food is a cheap source of food for people who may not have another option."

Housing: Following a general trend in the Cambridge population, participants at the drop-in sessions were concerned about affordable housing for seniors. They also expressed a concern about long-term residents being pushed out, since there are few options for affordable senior living or assisted living in Cambridge. Participants wanted to keep families in Cambridge, and work towards a more integrated community – current developments are "silos of poor and rich, side-by-side". They are watching Cambridge become a younger city, with the younger generation disconnected from the older generation. There was also a request for more middle-income housing, since home ownership opportunities are essentially unavailable for middle income families and folks who were raised in public housing.

Urban Form: Participants wanted to maintain the current urban form of Cambridge's neighborhoods. They liked low buildings and attractive buildings, and felt that most prefabricated buildings were boring and ugly – just rectangles stacked on top of rectangles. Participants also wanted a requirement of publically-accessible space in any new mixed-use development.

Community Services: A particular complaint that came up was the prevalence of ATMs instead of full-service bank locations. Participants also discussed how Central Square had become overrun by banks, and how there did not need to be as many options as long as the banks continued to provide teller services. A participant noted the need for a full-service bank on Fresh Pond Parkway, not just an ATM. Customer service is very important to the senior community, and they find it very inconvenient to travel just to reach a full-service bank.

Appendix: Public Workshop Participants

The following people attended one or more of the public workshops. They are listed in two groups: first members of the public, then the project/city team. After each person's name is a number that indicates which workshop (the first, second, or third) the person attended.

Public Participants

Karl Alexander (1)
Jeanide Altidor (1)
Michael Altman (2)
Jason Alves (1)
Marlina Antoine (1, 3)
Tara Aubuchon (3)

David Bagotiossian (2)
Dinah Barlow (2)
Elizabeth Bartle (2)
Pat Barton (2)
David Berger (3)
Gile Beye (2)
Larry Bluestone (3)

John Boesen (1)
Mark Boswell (2)
Kelley Braun (1)
Phyllis Bretholtz (2)
Rachel Burckardt (2)
Srin Chakravotty (1)
Anne Charette (3)
Catherine Connolly (2)
Liz Coxe (2)
Alicia Crothers (1)
Rosie Delacruz (2)
Lizzie Devane (2)
Jon Devereux (2)
Scott Devoid (3)
Emily Dexter (3)
Stephen Diamond (3)
Terry Drucker (2)
Margaret Drurg (2)
Chantal Eide (1)
Constanza Eggers (2)
Rob Ehkart (2)
Don Epistein (2)
Louise Eward (2)
Samora Fairbank (2)
Toby Fairbank (2)
Lee Farris (1, 3)
Alison Field-Juma (2)
Robert Filene (2)
Susan Filene (2)
Ann Fleck-Henderson (3)
David Forney (2)
Everflow G. (1)
Margaret Gadon (2)
Debby Galef (3)
Monica Gerber (3)
Michael Gilligan (1)
John Gintell (3)
Esther Hanid (2)
Josh Harkinson (1, 3)
Laios Heder (2)
Alvin Helfeed (2)
Joanna Herlihy (3)
Heather Hoffman (1)
Jesse Janson-Benanau (1)
Amy Jarvis (3)
Critt Jarvis (3)
Kent Johnson (2)
Peter Johnson (2)
Kiana JP (2)
Stella Kafka (2)

Jay Kleponis (3)
Korsman (2)
Rozanne Kraus (2)
Richard Krushnic (2)
Michael Kuchta (2)
Daniel Lander (2)
Liz Layton (3)
Gabriella Loha (2)
David Loutzenheiser (2)
Claudia Majetich (2)
Donna Marcantonio (2)
Nadeem Marzen (2)
Walter McDonald (2)
Bill McGee (1)
Kelly McGee (1, 2, 3)
Alec McKinney (2)
Heli Meltsher (2)
Judith Nathans (2)
Jim Newman (1)
Charles R. Norris (2)
Carol O'Hare (2)
Gwynneth Caitlin O'Donnell (3)
Alexander Offing (2)
Sarah Ouadghiri (2)
Stephanie Park (3)
Joel Payne (2)
John Pitkin (3)
Cheryl-Ana Pizza-Zeoli (3)
Jim Rafferty (2)
John Riley (2)
Irene Rogan (3)
Deborah Ruhe (3)
Ruth Ryals (3)
Nancy Ryan (1)
Ruth Ryan Allen (2)
Elise Selinger (3)
Gagan Singh (1)
Christine Smaglia (1)
Elizabeth Stern (1)
Bethany Stevins (3)
Tom Stohlman (2)
Arthur Strang (1)
Len Sussman (2)
Helen Suwick (1)
Saul Tannebaum (1)
Brian Taylor (2)
Kenneth Taylor (2)
Sherri Tucker (3)
Serge Vil (2)
Emily Ware (3)

Kathy Watkins (2, 3)
Chuck Weed (2)
Carol Weinhaus (2)
Florrie Wescoat (3)
Phoebe West (2)
Linda West (2)
James Williamson (2, 3)

Robert Winters (3)
Berry Zevin (1)
Cathie Znsy (3)

Project Team and Support

Suzannah Bigolin, City of Cambridge (1)
Marco Borini, Interboro (1)
Abby Brown, Interboro (2, 3)
Gary Chan, City of Cambridge (1, 2, 3)
Will Cohen, Utile (1, 2, 3)
Cliff Cook, City of Cambridge (2)
Elizabeth Cooper, CBI (1)
Chris Cotter, City of Cambridge (2)
Elliya Cutler, City of Cambridge (3)
Stuart Dash, City of Cambridge (1, 2, 3)
Meera Deean, Utile (1, 2, 3)
Dan D'Oca, Interboro (1, 2, 3)
Anna Dolmatch, City of Cambridge (3)
Iram Farooq, City of Cambridge (1, 2, 3)
Ona Ferguson, CBI (3)
Marco Gorini, Interboro (2, 3)
Stephanie Groll, City of Cambridge (2)
Carri Hulet, CBI (2)
Wendell Joseph, City of Cambridge (1, 2)
Elliot Kilham, Interboro (1)
Ellen Kokinda, City of Cambridge (1, 2, 3)
Tim Love, Utile (1, 2, 3)
Angela Lufkin, Utile (1, 3)
Kelly Lynema, Utile (1)
Nupoor Monani, Utile (2, 3)
Liza Paden, City of Cambridge (2)
Paige Peltzer, Interboro (1)
Melissa Peters, City of Cambridge (1, 2)
Allison Quach, City of Cambridge (2)
Eric Roberts, CBI (1, 3)
Jeff Roberts, City of Cambridge (2)
Annie Ryan, Interboro (2)
Griffin Smith, CBI (1)
Cleo Stoughton, City of Cambridge (1)
Tricia Tuccinardi, City of Cambridge (2)
Cyrus Western, CBI (3)