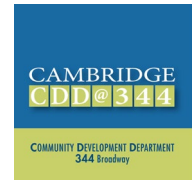


# ALEWIFE ZONING WORKING GROUP

## MEETING NOTES



Wednesday, November 9, 2022

6 – 8:30pm

In-person and virtual meeting

### Attendance

#### Working Group Members:

Eric Grunebaum, Suhas Kodali, Mike Nakagawa, Ann Stewart, Ann Tennis, Kelvin Moses, Diana Marsh, Joe Sultan, Joe Poirier, Doug Brown, Lizzie Feigenbaum, John Chun, Chris Chandor, Jane Carbone, Jennifer Gilbert

#### City of Cambridge Staff:

Melissa Peters, Jeff Roberts, Erik Thorkildsen, Drew Kane, Daniel Messplay

### Meeting Overview

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

#### Purpose

- Presented the draft zoning framework for review and discussion by the working group.

#### Objectives

- Receive feedback on the draft zoning approach for further refinement.

### Presentation

Daniel Messplay presented the draft zoning framework for future development in Alewife outlining multiple tiers and paths towards zoning for different uses and densities.

### Discussion/Questions by working group after presentation

Mike Nakagawa (MN)

- Why is the Smith area for neighborhood uses shorter than the other priority streets highlighted in the plan? It doesn't connect to Fawcett and Wilson.

Kelvin Moses (KM)

- Neighborhood Use at Concord Ave would be difficult.
- Could you move those uses north?

Doug Brown (DB)

- Moving that neighborhood use highlighted area north would create a circuit and concentrate the uses.

Chris Chandor (CC)

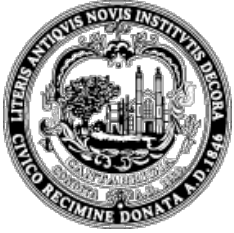
- Makes sense to have some retail near the open space as a destination.

Doug Brown (DB)

- Neighborhood use could be a good end point on the park near the bridge.

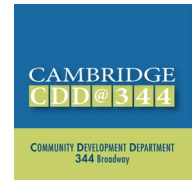
Diana Marsh (DM)

- Could there be a road along the linear open space?



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Eric Grunebaum (EG)

- What about just a bike/ped path? Davis Companies will be building that as part of Wilson Rd project.
- How will this central open space be built?

Mike Nakagawa (MN)

- Concerned that the open space won't be built and that developers will only build their development first and not implement the open space.

Suhas Kodali (SK)

- Are there other public benefits that are being discussed actively aside from the bike/ped bridge?

Doug Brown (DB)

- Any redevelopment of the mall should require a connection north across the tracks

Ann Tennis (AT)

- Would like to see a 75-foot setback on Concord Ave. Why are we showing zero front setback?
  - Melissa Peters (MP) - we are trying to make it a more urban feel for buildings and less suburban setback

Lizzie Feigenbaum (LF)

- Cambridge Highland neighbors want a green buffer and graduated heights as you move east.

Eric Grunebaum (EG)

- Makes sense to have graduated heights as you move east and away from the highlands buffer.
- Want to make sure that residential amenities are neighborhood amenities.
- DPW is not part of the public realm or a public amenity.

Jane Carbone (JC)

- It's really difficult to incorporate retail into a 100% affordable housing development. There should be relief on that. Could be a goal, but very difficult to finance with that requirement.

Mike Nakagawa (MN)

- There should be a minimum area for green space.
- Green roofs should not be counted towards open space.
- We should be aligning with citywide climate resilient zoning.

Eric Grunebaum (EG)

- Need development to pay for the bridge/rail. What is the concrete plan that Councilor C. talked about? This process is that concrete plan.
- City needs to commit to building that rail stop. People will elect to not work or live here if traffic keeps getting worse.

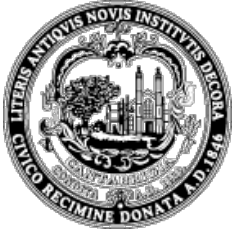
Doug Brown (DB)

- Which of the public benefits is a public responsibility?

Eric Grunebaum (EG)

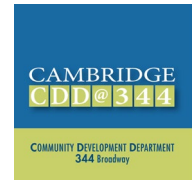
- The city is the developer of the public realm and should behave like one.
- There is funding available for the city to build some of these resources.

Mike Nakagawa (MN)



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- This will become a destination and we will be creating local traffic, not just pass-through traffic. Cambridge should bear responsibility for this traffic with new development.

Jane Gilbert (JG)

- Concern that public benefit does not include deeply affordable housing. This recommendation only suggests that inclusionary would-be part of it.
  - MP – 100% deeply affordable housing may result in less residential development overall, but this isn't necessarily the case.

Kelvin Moses (KM)

- Agrees that with how difficult 100% affordable housing is to build, but it should be included as a public benefit, otherwise it won't get built.
- Need to make Terminal Road improvement/connection, too.
- Could you have a situation where you deliver less housing that is 100% affordable in exchange for more commercial development or be held to a greater % of housing, in general.

Jane Gilbert (JG)

- We aren't producing enough deeply affordable units in Cambridge. If this must be a tradeoff, then affordable units are prioritized.
- Could this be paid for by impact fee to develop in Alewife?

Doug Brown (DB)

- Our transportation issues have no stream of income, but housing does have the impact fee from all development.

Chris Chandor (CC)

- Linkage fees in general can help to pay for affordable housing.

Doug Brown (DB)

- Linkage fees are necessary to help offset the demand on housing that new commercial development causes.

Mike Nakagawa (MN)

- New housing is being built but can't catch up with general housing demand as a result of new commercial development.
- We're now talking about commercial development that is even bigger than what was planned in the Alewife plan.

Suhas Kodali (SK)

- Stopping development is not the solution to the problem. Therefore, we need to incentivize more housing. The problem already exists.

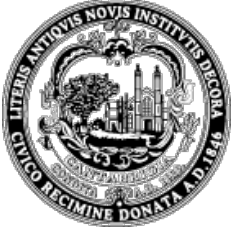
Jane Carbone (JC)

- There are more services that go along with deeply affordable units than inclusionary zoning. Inclusionary zoning doesn't have family size unit requirements
- The neighborhood can use more than one Finch Cambridge.

Lizzie Feigenbaum (LF)

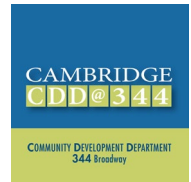
- How can you deliver those services to units that might not be concentrated in single buildings?

Ann Stewart



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- On site-specific slides flood storage should not be an option; it should be a requirement/priority.
- Public space should be protected in perpetuity.
- Is there any discussion of centralized parking underground?
- Is the bridge only bike/ped? What happened to the discussion of vans/shuttles to bring people to the Alewife Station?
- What about community parks and tot-lots? The rendering only shows stormwater retention as a feature in the park.
- Is the Fawcett St park show in the drawing a good place for a park?
- What about an annual review of this zoning to make sure we are getting what we want?

Doug Brown (DB)

- Why are we showing increased heights for developers that don't show up for a process?

Joe Sultan (JS)

- Would base requirements change?
  - DM - yes, they would.

Doug Brown (DB)

- As of right numbers around the buffer zone should be higher, but there should be clear rules around how the buffer is managed.

Jane Gilbert (JG)

- Seems that every project near the buffer zone will have to go to special permit since the base requirements are so unappealing.

Ann Tennis (AT)

- Can HealthPeak share their plans for the Quad? They certainly have some. We need more visuals for this.

John Chun (JCh)

- The heights for residential buildings in the Quad are too tall.
- Finch Cambridge seems like a good size for housing in the district
- Tall buildings do not make good neighborhoods.
- Likes a lower scale mixed income neighborhood.

#### Public Comment:

Raffi M

- As of right heights seem low, especially for housing. That should be increased.
- Can be more aggressive on heights. 12-story limit is a little low. We should be thinking 20-30 stories for housing development.
- Concerned about making setbacks too large.

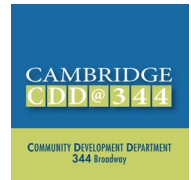
Lee Farris

- Have the committee discuss a rank ordering of benefits. What's the most important thing for the community to get?
- We won't get a school or library unless the City puts money forward.



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- TIF makes sense for this area.
- There hasn't been a discussion between labs and commercial.
- We should separate labs from commercial uses, and this is a discussion in city council.
- We should be talking about how much housing we want; how much lab we want; and how much commercial development we want. We should be designing the zoning around that.

James Zall

- As of right seems way too low. Should be increased or else nothing on small sites will be built.
- We need to provide all types of housing, not just deeply affordable housing.

Allan Sadun

- Shares a concern that working backward from profitability is problematic.
- Worried that people will build to as of right. Even boosting it to 5-6 stories is a waste of height.
- We should not make it a gauntlet to go through special permit. Will not produce housing.

James Williamson

- Simplex as a precedent.
- Vision - sometimes you don't want a lot of new stuff. You want restraint, but people aren't given that option. If we want certain things, we should spend public money on it and not incentivize private developers to build it.
- Put numbers/dollars towards the benefits to determine what needs to be built.
- Mixed income housing is the best way to go instead of building individual developments to different tiers of affordability

Dennis Carlone

- Vision plan should show all the buildings, too, not just the parcels.
- Insufficient amount of open space.
- Need wider sidewalks if we're going to allow taller buildings.
- Why are we not setting a requirement for 60% housing split?
- We don't need more labs in the City. We have 10x more lab space per capita than Boston.
- Need to study the impact of bonuses - need to draw these things to know what we're building.
- Need to look at current landownership to determine where parks and open space go.
- Add pre-K.