

Eastern Cambridge Kendall Square Open Space Planning Committee
November 26th, 2013
Summarized meeting notes

Committee members present: Alexandra Lee, Carole Bellew, Christine Dunn, Christopher Perkins, Daniel Norman, Lara Gordon, Patrick Magee, Rose Billeci, Michelle Lower, Susan Morgan, Thayer Donham, Victoria Farr, Charlie Marquardt

Staff present: Taha Jennings, Stuart Dash

Taha Jennings notified the group that an RFP had been issued for a Competition Coordinator. The group was also informed that once hired, the Competition Coordinator will work closely with the Eastern Cambridge Kendall Square Open Space Planning Committee throughout the planning and competition process. Materials were also distributed to the group, including an open space ownership map and a packet which illustrated related projects recently completed, underway or planned in the Kendall Square area.

It was also noted that the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) was in the process of coordinating with Boston Properties on developing wayfinding strategies. Some initial ideas include more modern and or changeable signage and maps and appropriate connectors through the atrium of the hotel.

A committee member asked if there were any plans for branding along Main Street, and if the process will be conducive to banners on the poles along Main Street.

There was a question about how much time it would take for the green vertical elements in the lobby of the new Alexandria building to reach the sizes shown in the illustrations? It was noted in response that it would probably take several years.

A committee member asked if the proposed housing at 270 Third Street was moving forward. Staff noted that initial concepts include 98 residential units with ground floor retail, but that the project is not part of the current phase of work.

There was also question regarding details on the Volpe site. The group was informed that some kind of process regarding the site is anticipated in the near future.

Visioning exercise

For the remainder of the meeting the Committee was given an opportunity to respond to some general questions regarding a vision for the public spaces in Eastern Cambridge and Kendall Square:

Think about public spaces in Eastern Cambridge and Kendall Square – visualize how the public spaces in the area look and operate currently and then visualize the same area(s) in the future with all of the elements you think the area should have:

- *What are both short term and long term ideas that are a part of that vision?*
- *What open space opportunities would you like to see in Eastern Cambridge and Kendall Square?*
- *What connections should be created and/or enhanced?*

Committee responses:

- Some kind of physical wayfinding structure
- Public café seating
- Removal of the fencing at the Volpe site
- Safer access to the Charles River from Kendall Square
- Creative play elements in the parks
- Gateway with wayfinding to communicate that Kendall Square is special
- Amenities for pet owners
- Street furniture and more gathering areas
- Safer connections to the river
- Enhance Point Park as a destination
- Wayfinding features, integrated open spaces.
- Think about how spaces and buildings relate to the streetscape
- Pedestrian and bicycle friendly networks
- Public gardens
- Programming and educational features
- Outdoor music and/or theater venue
- Whimsy/colorful banners
- Educational campaign about the open space network and available amenities
- The Union Square Farmers Market is a good example with a nice combination of activities
- A running track around one of the parks,
- Places where kids can learn to ride a bike and people can walk
- Display historical facts
- Evening programming outside of typical work hours
- Consider shutting down Cambridgepark Drive for activities
- Sidewalk improvements can make a big difference
- The corner of Binney Street and Third Street should be cleaned up
- Seasonal public art, such as water, steam, ice sculptures
- Include water features similar to the Greenway
- Pedestrian lighting
- Improved crossing of Land Boulevard and Memorial Drive
- Recreational space for adult leagues
- A blanket alcohol ban can be a disadvantage, there should be some flexibility

- Shaded seating
- Some kind of seasonal activity at one of the new public open spaces (ice skating, pool, etc)
- Maintenance is important
- Public art that can also communicate history, for example, bronze statues and plaques with information
- Davis Square is a good example of programming
- Work closely with the Cambridge Arts Council
- More information about Farmers Markets which help get people out
- Better accessibility for physically challenged

Members of the public in attendance responded to the same questions:

- Better lighting on the Longfellow Bridge
- Connecting to history of neighborhood
- Lighting, history, and the use of public art
- Public seating and tables, especially for students
- Outdoor performance space (for example a smaller hatch shell, or similar to space at Prospect Park)
- A large playing field
- Gazebo at Lechmere park. Historic information also probate building
- In downtown Salem there is a giant map in the sidewalk
- Art should be an integrated part of the parks
- Space for flexible programming
- Some kind of connection (for example similar to the Emerald Necklace) between the open spaces
- Better connections to the river
- Parks should include water based design features
- Redesign of Cambridge parkway, Binney Street environmental system, pluralistic oasis
- Education and branding of the neighborhood to provide increased visibility
- Wayfinding features
- Different parks that are stitched together well, even if they are designed separately
- Fountain as a draw for gateway
- There needs to be adequate lighting and electricity
- Park and open space app for the area
- Shaded seating area with wifi access that can offer a chance to relax as well as provide workspace
- Rotating art exhibits with opportunities for local artists

- Some way to mitigate the wind tunnel at the end of Third Street
- Kendall Square is relatively large with no central space and lack of identity as opposed to Union Square and Davis Square
- Enhance partnerships with the art community