

Volpe Working Group Meeting – Notes

December 1, 2016, Cambridge Innovation Center

Attending (VWG/staff): Chris Barr, Suzannah Bigolin, Peter Crawley, Brian Dacey, Stuart Dash, Iram Farooq, Esther Hanig, Steve LaMasters, Gerry O’Leary, Jeff Roberts, Hugh Russell, Erik Thorkildsen, Daniel Wolf

Introductions, update on GSA process

Topic Discussion: Public Open Space

Presentation: Examples of public space in various communities; discussion of what qualities and characteristics define different types of public spaces.

Key Points of Discussion:

- Relationship to surroundings
 - Character of edges is essential; Volpe site shouldn’t feel walled off or isolated; should be permeable to surrounding neighborhoods including Wellington-Harrington and the Port as well as East Cambridge
 - Binney and Broadway have potential to feel like barriers
 - Open space can help knit site to surrounding buildings and uses
- Location and distribution of open space
 - Kendall needs a defining square, something that feels like the center of a larger area; this is the appropriate site
 - Consider multiple interconnected pocket parks within the site
 - Where the extensions of Fifth Street and Broad Canal Way intersect could be an active space
 - Locating open space on the southeast corner of the site
 - Could allow for desired sun and openness
 - That corner has a landmark quality and is along some of the district’s most active corridors
 - Could be a good value – perhaps a more compact space but high utility
 - Open spaces should form a network that contributes to Kendall Square as an enjoyable destination
 - *What is a square?* A square is where you meet; relates to the public transportation and street network; outdoor room; “center of gravity” for an area
 - *Where would you meet now?* Working group members named various locations clustered between the T station and the Third Square Apartments, mostly near businesses
 - Small space next to Third Square, outside Abigail’s and coffee shop, has emerged as a meeting place because it is defined by uses
 - Main and Third Streets are psychologically central here
- Character of open space
 - People
 - Consider 3,000-4,000 new residents expected for area

- Spaces and amenities that cater to all different ages
 - Children playing
 - Multiple generations of people; not just 20-35 year olds
 - Dana park: complementary and integrated neighborhood uses
 - People draw more people; critical mass of users is necessary
 - Opportunities for people-watching are a draw
 - Adjacency to activating uses at all times of day and evening and weekends, including housing and ground-floor retail to populate the space
- Features and feel
 - Trees
 - Water features
 - Movable furniture and programming, like at Harvard's Science Center Plaza or Bryant Park (food trucks, skating, events) – needs people to support it
 - Sunlight and warmth
 - Protection from uncomfortable wind
 - Lighting and eyes on the street for sense of safety and informal surveillance
 - Edges should feel open and inviting
 - Something that can be used multiple times of year, not just when weather is nice
- Uses
 - Interactive, interesting, multi-use spaces
 - Consider creative winter uses
 - Destination uses, such as concert or open air market
 - Consider large indoor or covered spaces that could be open to the public (e.g., Rotterdam Markethall, winter garden)
 - Would need to be activated at all times
 - Would need real height and scale to work, this is one of few possible sites for that
 - Careful not to deaden the surrounding area by putting all activity inside
 - Careful not to give short shrift to green space