

June 29, 2011

Central and Kendall Square planning study
Central Square Public Workshop, June 9, 2011
Summary of public/stakeholder comments

Major topic areas (addressed below in further detail)

- Amount and diversity of **retail**
- Amount and range of **housing**
- Amount and kind of **public open space**
- **Arts, culture and identity:** current and future
- **Balancing access needs** of pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, drivers

*Within each of these topic areas, predominant messages are indicated in **boldface** text.*

Retail

1. Attract more neighborhood-focused retail serving daily needs

- Bookstores, drug stores, shoe stores, clothing
- Echoes results of City's 2009 retail survey

2. Maintain diversity of retail price points, especially less-expensive stores and restaurants:

- e.g., Cheapo Records, Rodneys, Shalimar
- Don't allow success to drive out admired existing businesses (e.g., Cantab, All-Asia) and associated identity/diversity as square becomes more successful

3. Address blank/uninteresting retail storefronts

- Particularly the concentration of banks
- Develop display program for temporarily-empty storefronts (arts displays, temporary "pop-up" arts or event-related tenants etc.)
- The Quest buildings at Lafayette Square are priority locations to add retail that engages the sidewalk and square, replacing the existing blank facades.

4. Overall, good array of restaurants, from high-end to relatively inexpensive

- Some concern that there's not enough of the latter: Inman Square presents larger variety at the low end
- Concern regarding the cost of opening new restaurant
- Need more restaurants serving the African-American community

5. There is need for an anchor store(s)

- Star Market referenced: hidden from Mass Ave.

6. Add covered, permanent market/food court
 - Food carts at Lafayette Square

Housing

1. More housing serving a broader range of households is desired

- Mixed-income: maintain diversity in the face of economic pressures. “Who will be able to afford to live here in the future?”
- Family housing, associated with more/higher-profile public amenities geared to families/children
- Lofts
- Smaller units for singles, couples

2. There are multiple opportunities to add more housing

- Above retail in mixed-use buildings
- On existing city and private parking lots
- Need to create policy incentives for mixed-use development
- Added households will expand demand for retail

3. New housing should be sensitive to established surrounding neighborhoods

- Preserve houses in surrounding neighborhoods
- Include appropriate transitions of scale, use
- Ensure that additional housing comes with on-site parking to prevent impacts on neighborhoods

Public Open Space *(see also related Arts and Culture points below)*

1. Intensify programming of existing public spaces

- Lafayette Square is a success, with arts events etc.
- Annual dance event on Mass Ave is a big success – make it monthly, perhaps in alternate locations?
- Do more frequent programming targeted to more spaces:
 - o Music events etc. in University Park would make it feel more public and take advantage of a quality space
 - o Smaller events & buskers in underutilized sidewalk space
 - o More events in temporarily-closed streets
 - o City Hall lawn cited as useable public space
- Consider adding small open spaces serving specific needs:
 - o Nearby pocket parks cited [Dana Street]
 - o E.g., community garden (“love Lopez community garden)
 - o A park should be added near/at Newtowne Court: great location, adding vitality
 - o Need more places to walk dogs
 - o Counter: too many existing “little open spaces” with too little connection

2. **Make more use of the successful Lafayette Square – visible, accessible, an “event space,” a civic gathering space**
 - Add more food carts at Lafayette Square
 - Add restaurant(s) that front on Lafayette Square
 - Create another space like it?
3. **Add more public art to public spaces**
4. **Address problematic spaces**
 - Barron Square is seen as dangerous and otherwise problematic
 - o “bad reputation” with locals
 - o Lots of transients – homelessness and in particular drunkenness are issues that impact the appeal of the space and its function during concerts etc that do happen there
 - o Address cleanliness and rodent issues
 - o Furniture badly positioned
 - University Park is empty, not inviting to the public, even though well-landscaped; doesn’t connect to neighborhood; the “people’s park” that was required doesn’t exist

Arts, Culture and Identity *(see also related Open Space points above)*

1. **Illuminate “Dancing lights” in trees all year ‘round**
2. **Hold more dance parties**
3. **Make connections with local universities more visible** (i.e. music events)
4. **Preserve the dance center**
5. **Artists must stay!**
6. Can banks become more active patrons of art/music? (in part to compensate for their poor storefronts)

Transportation, traffic, streets, and parking

1. **Verify that new development will continue to accommodate sufficient parking to support retail and other business activity**
 - Example: potential redevelopment of Municipal Parking Lots 5 and 6:
 - o Removal may affect local businesses
 - o Suggested location for farmer’s market
 - Explore the possibilities for below-grade parking
2. **Step up transportation/traffic-related enforcement**
 - Bike lane important: Ensure enforcement re illegal parking in bike lane
 - Some residential-only parking is being used by club-goers
 - Need more vigorous enforcement around issues of personal safety, esp. for bikers and pedestrians (incl. no bikers on the sidewalks)
3. **There is need for more traffic calming**
 - Some concern expressed re auto traffic overall (too much)

- Steps to discourage driving?
- Can tank truck traffic be moderated?
- Separate pedestrians and vehicles at intersections ... Pearl-Mass Ave intersection is particularly dangerous
- Streets feeding into Mass Avenue are “mean.” Exception: Franklin/Western Ave (visible, proper scale, well-maintained, sidewalks wider)

4. Improve walkability

- Sidewalks need more trees
- Need better lighting from storefronts
 - o Tree canopy blocks light

5. Overall, transit accessibility is great, but improvements are needed

- No. 1 bus takes too long at rush hour
 - o Too much distance between stops
 - o Need stop at Nora Theatre
- Improve character of bus shelters at Carl Barron Square