

D R A F T

Cambridge Redevelopment Authority Transition Planning
Report
Submitted to Cambridge Redevelopment Authority Board
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I. INTRODUCTION

In April of 2012, the Cambridge City Manager appointed four new members to the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) Board as follows: Kathleen Born, Margaret Drury, Christopher Bator, and Conrad Crawford. The Cambridge City Council approved the appointments and the four new members joined Barry Zevin, previously appointed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The new CRA Board has demonstrated a commitment to shaping the future with clarity of intent and openness of process. The Board has deliberated and taken actions regarding imminent and ongoing infill development in the Kendall Square Urban Renewal Area. The Board has responded to public concerns, past administrative actions and questions about past board membership. A review of those issues is ongoing at this time and is independent of this report that seeks to support and inform future decision-making by the Board about its mission and work for the future.

In preparing this report, interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders involved with the Kendall Square Urban Renewal Area and the work of the CRA, and more broadly, urban renewal work generally. These interviews confirmed that Kendall Square is at an inflection point as is the CRA Board. Many of the original urban renewal parcels have

been built out. Jobs and tax revenue have soared. Infrastructure and open space improvements have been put in place along with private development and both continue at a steady pace in the Greater Kendall Square Area. But there remains a challenge for Kendall Square to capitalize on its development success while staying ahead of the curve and avoiding complacency. For the Board there are several challenges including defining the appropriate role for guiding future growth, addressing the desire for mixed use, ensuring stewardship of the public realm and linking urban renewal plans to citywide planning and economic development.

This report is offered to assist the Authority in moving forward with strategic planning for its future.

II. GOALS and Action Items

- Short term (Through January 2013)

Staffing

As the new Board started engaging with the Authority's business, irregularities surfaced regarding administrative actions preceding the board member appointments. While counsel was reviewing the impact of these irregularities, the three members of the CRA staff resigned. This made securing necessary staff assistance at this difficult transition time imperative. The City Manager and the Assistant City Manager for Community Development offered to make time available for Susan Glazer, the Deputy Director for Community Development, to serve as the Acting Director of the CRA. They also provided for her support from other municipal staff as needed. It is anticipated that this arrangement will be maintained until a new full-time staff position is filled. (See mid-term goals.)

Board Meetings

The Board has met monthly from May through December. Agendas and minutes have been posted online since September. Each meeting has included time for public comments. Meeting discussion has included active business in the Kendall Square Urban Renewal Area as well as a

review of past actions and practices, as appropriate. These efforts to promote transparency for CRA business remain a goal for the Board going forward.

- Medium Term (January 2013 to September 2013)

Staffing

The need to secure management of daily activities has delayed the Board's efforts to develop a strategic plan going forward, including an assessment of the mission of the Board and a potential work plan. It is the Board's intention to hire a Redevelopment Officer for a full-time one-year term while the Board conducts a strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning

The Redevelopment Officer will guide the Board in a strategic planning process to accomplish the following:

- Review the powers and responsibilities granted urban renewal authorities in the Commonwealth to prioritize how the Board can best assist the City to implement a successful economic development strategy, including confirmation that the Authority should continue to exist.
- Clarify the structure of governance for decision-making in accordance with bylaws that are under review by the Board and counsel at this time.
- Reflect the interest of Board members and citizens to promote a vibrant public realm and encourage mixed use in Kendall Square by setting goals for housing, open space and commercial development.
- Suggest potential revenue streams.
- Identify business practices that reflect innovation, transparency and effective management.
- Create collaborations with the Community Development Department, the Department of Public Works, the City Manager's Office and other municipal departments that can assist the Board and its staff in carrying out the work identified in the strategic plan. This may include Community Development Department staff with expertise in design review,

zoning or other related skills that could benefit the Authority's work.

A job description for a Redevelopment Officer has been submitted to the Board for final review and will be publicly advertised in January 2013.

- Long Term (Implementation of the Strategic Plan)

Once a strategic plan is developed, ongoing goals for CRA priorities and activities will be clarified. To assist the Board in getting started, interviews have been conducted with a sampling of stakeholders in the City and with individuals engaged with successful redevelopment efforts elsewhere to advise on best practices. (See summary of interview comments in Section III of this report.) These interviews generated the following suggestions:

- Establish clear policies and practices to support sustainable economic growth and to consider the limits of growth;
- Provide the ability for the Authority to be nimble as situations demand while creating a stable staff and business procedures;
- Ensure that the Authority promotes development that is complementary with City development policies for sustainable economic growth which must encompass real mixed use;
- Create measurable goals against which progress and effectiveness can be assessed; and
- Link urban renewal activity and the City's planning, zoning and infrastructure initiatives such as the East Cambridge open space planning and the K2C2 urban design study.

To ensure that there is a plan to build and strengthen key relationships, regular meetings and appropriate partnerships should be defined with the following:

- City departments (particularly those involved with planning, infrastructure and development), the City Manager and the City Council;

- Cambridge businesses, institutions and real estate developers who participate in urban renewal in the City;
- Cambridge citizens with an interest in economic development and sustainable growth; and
- State and Federal officials involved with regulations and funding related to urban renewal and economic development.

III. Record of Stakeholder Interviews

During the fall of 2012, I met with each of the members of the CRA Board as well as a number of stakeholders who are actively involved with the work of the Authority. Some of these meetings were one-on-one and some were groups. I am very grateful to everyone who took the time to meet with me and share his or her views. In addition to the five members of the CRA Board, I met with the following:

Richard Amster, Director, Facilities, Campus Planning, Engineering and Construction, MIT

Larry Bluestone, CRA Design Consultant

Barbara Broussard, President, East Cambridge Planning Team

Kelley Brown, Senior Planner, Campus Planning and Design, MIT

Michael Cantalupa, Senior VP of Development, Boston Office, Boston Properties

Pam Delphenich, Director, Campus Planning and Design, MIT

Sarah Gallup, Co-Director, Office of Government and Community Affairs, MIT

Robert Healy, City Manager

Bryan Koop, Senior VP and Regional Manager, Boston Office, Boston Properties

Jeff Lockwood, Global Head, Communications, Novartis

Steven Marsh, Managing Director, Real Estate, MIT Investment Management Company

Travis McCready, Executive Director, Kendall Square Association

Brian Murphy, Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Michael Owu, Director, Real Estate, MIT Investment Management Company

Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager

Tim Rowe, Founder and CEO, Cambridge Innovation Center

Hugh Russell, Chair, Cambridge Planning Board

Tim Toomey, Chair Cambridge City Council Committee on Economic Development

Joseph Tulumieri, former Executive Director, Cambridge Redevelopment Authority

In addition I received comments from members of the public in attendance at the CRA Board meetings.

The interviews were informal and guided by the following questions:

- How do you see the role of the CRA now? in the future?
- What are the most important issues for Kendall Square? For the CRA?
- Do you see a role for the CRA outside of Kendall Square and environs?
- Do you have a view of preferred governance structure - CRA with its own staff, CRA with shared city staff, CRA folded into CDD, other?

Here is a sampling of comments from the interviews:

On uses in Kendall Square:

“Everyone wants a grocery store.”

“We need housing and small, independent retail.”

“Want an environment that is work, live, play”

“Height isn’t a problem if the uses are right.”

“Incubator space needs to be addressed in zoning.”

“Zoning does not create good neighbors, it takes more.”

Issues raised for Public/Private Partnerships:

“Looking for a collective vision for Kendall Square”

“Plans should have flexibility to get best from market place.”

“Private and public interests coherently linked are more successful.”

The need to build Trust:

“Everyone should take a moment to celebrate successes and use them as trust deposits for the future.”

“What has been lacking are trusting relationships among everyone in the picture.”

The need for Clarity:

“Infrastructure suffers from fragmented oversight - some DPW, some CRA, some private.”

“Make today’s vision clear and things can happen faster.”

“Clarify respective responsibilities for CRA and Planning Board.”

Kendall Square today:

“Point of inflection in the plan, the Board, the City.”

“Be careful not to get complacent because of current success in Kendall Square – needs to stay at edge, needs to be more diversified, needs a more vibrant public realm.....”

“Kendall Square is part of East Cambridge.”

“We need better maintenance of the infrastructure.”

“Kendall Square is the economic center of the City.”

“Kendall Square was the City’s economic engine 100 years ago.”

“District is bigger than Urban Renewal Area.”

“CRA needs to focus on physical form, not programming.”

Recognizing Competition:

“Wall Street and Palo Alto have more institutional support.”

“Kendall Square needs to be hipper which can happen with housing.”

“Use CRA to be agent for all of Kendall Square to reach out to the world.”

“Business needs to know that commitment to work culture and environment will remain despite any political changes.”

“Workforce housing, innovation housing, grad student housing harder and harder to find on the redline. If grad students can’t afford to stay they will take their brainpower elsewhere.”

“Cambridge has a reputation for a difficult and antiquated permitting process at the same time trying to project innovation.”

A role for the CRA beyond Kendall Square:

“Need a strong, independent voice for growth needs in the City”

“Looking for advocacy, not interested in more bureaucracy”

“Overlap board members on Planning Board and CRA”

“Why doesn’t CRA help to “sell” the City to prospective tenants?”

“Transportation planning lacking for growth”

“Opportunity for Cambridge to lead is there, but there are other places to go if the hassles get too much.”

“CRA has great tools that should not be vanquished, especially important in Kendall Square.”

The Volpe site:

“DOT site is the crux of the issues for the future.”

“Make sure Volpe plan is implemented and works for the community.”

“Volpe Center is a white elephant.”

“Volpe site needs to be about open space.”

Pertaining to a new CRA staff position:

“Needs to understand economic development, have experience or exposure to life sciences and real estate, understand how Massachusetts works, willing to push the envelope, but productively, someone who can articulate and execute on a vision”

“Someone to go after innovation elsewhere and bring lessons back for cultural and economic development”

“Practical, political and analytical experience”

“Someone who understands what constitutes good built form. (See Kevin Lynch, *A Theory of Good City Form*.)

IV. Best Practice Research Scan

To launch the Board's search for precedents of successful urban renewal transitions elsewhere, inquiries were made with persons involved with changing urban renewal structures in other communities. These were phone interviews intended to suggest some broad lessons learned. It would be useful for the Board to make such networking a constant part of the responsibilities of permanent staff once selected. In the meantime interviews were conducted with the following people:

April Anderson, Massachusetts Assistant Secretary for Economic Development in charge of coordinating state funding and regulation for economic development

Brenda MacKenzie, Boston Redevelopment Authority former Director of Economic Development and instrumental in Boston's Innovation District development

Tim McGourthy, Worcester Redevelopment Authority, (Plan E form of government) and currently Chief Development Officer for the City and the Redevelopment Authority

Tom O'Brien, former Boston Redevelopment Authority director and real estate developer for North Point who has both public and private experience and familiarity with Kendall Square

Peter Park, former director of planning in Denver and Milwaukee with experience in reorganizing planning and development to foster better alignment of priorities and consistent messages from City government

Patrick Quinton, Portland (Oregon) Development Commission, which has become more integrated with municipal departments as independent funding has diminished and has focused on job creation rather than real estate (by phone)

Greg Shelko, former redevelopment director Milwaukee and Tucson (by phone)

Jim Tierney, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Chief of Staff responsible for balancing planning and economic development project management

Harriet Tregoning, Washington DC Office of Planning, issues of jurisdiction and focus now all on creating jobs (by phone)

In addition I attended the annual meeting of “Big City Planners” at the Lincoln Land Institute where this year’s topic for discussion was economic development. More than 20 planning directors from the country’s largest cities attended and shared stories about the economic development challenges facing their communities.

Here is a sampling of the comments from the scan for best practices:

“Challenge to not become complacent and think that one decade’s success will be sustainable.”

“Urban renewal plans need to be a part of something bigger in the community.”

“Cluster theory should be considered for future of Kendall Square.”

“Look for new business model that can provide more stable, recurring form of revenue with more flexibility.”

“Write a business plan.”

“Make sure public knows where the money comes from and where it goes.”

“In many cities job creation has overtaken placemaking as the number one focus for urban renewal agencies.”

“Revenue is the key. Be careful and strategic about protecting funds.”

“Need goals.”

“Make sure higher levels of government see the City as a partner.”

“Drive spatial efficiency as part of sustainable economic growth.”

“Create a culture of continuous problem-solving.”

“Redevelopment Authority is place to do necessary economic analysis, not planning departments.”

“Independence for redevelopment authorities allows for sustaining a vision.”

“Redevelopment authorities should be protected from shifting political winds of local elected body by having its own staff.”

“Need to avoid priorities changing constantly. This scares business and makes long term deals hard to secure.”

“Pay attention to need for diversification and risks of downsizings.”

“What about a form-based code? Innovation housing? “

“Organize a round table of developers about the housing stock, population and the neighborhoods to learn what direction to go in for more housing.”

“City should have someone energetic representing the City to potential employers.”

“Examples of arts and food enlivening commercial areas in Chicago and Portland.”

“Incubator for inexpensive entrepreneurial start-up space seeds innovation.”

Kind of person for lead staff:

Professional planner who knows how to close a deal

Knows the city but without political aspiration

Examines incremental steps towards a long range plan

Strong personality needed to put a stake in the ground

Entrepreneurial

Right kind of leadership with practical, political and analytical experience

V. Recommendations and Conclusion

The recommendations in this report can be summarized as follows:

1. Recruit a Redevelopment Officer for a one-year term to help the Board create a forward-looking agenda.
2. Conduct a strategic planning process upon which to build goals for the future. This process should include an analysis of if and how an independent redevelopment authority can provide benefit for the City
3. Develop and implement a budget that is congruent with the outcome of the strategic planning process.
4. Identify key relationships and partnerships necessary to support the authority's future agenda.
5. Build on the work that has begun for a user-friendly web presence for information about the authority's business.
6. Support practices that reflect a commitment to innovative ideas for enhancing Kendall Square's economic success and the vitality of the urban environment.

In conclusion, this is truly a time of transition for the CRA and it is imperative that the Board evaluates the benefits of an independent redevelopment authority for the future in a thoughtful strategic planning process. Circumstances have created the opportunity for a fresh approach. Looking ahead the CRA Board needs to examine today's redevelopment needs in Kendall Square, explore these needs in the context of city-wide economic development, and determine whether the city needs the CRA to continue as an independent organization and if so,

in what role. It appears that the opportunities afforded a redevelopment authority for the City of Cambridge are valuable tools for economic development and should not be relinquished. However, whether the level of activity for the Board reduces, remains or expands will be determined in the strategic planning process that the Board is committed to conduct at the onset of hiring full time staff.

Kendall Square is recognized as a center for technological and scientific innovation. This is a moment for the CRA to embrace innovative urban renewal strategies with broad implications for Kendall Square and the City as a whole.