

Mass. Ave - Harvard to Porter
Public Meeting #1 Break-out Group (Susanne's group)
3/10/11

How do you use the Avenue?

- Bike (safety a concern)
- Restaurants, Eateries
- Mass transit
- Ride bike
- Walking
- Walk to Harvard Square for exercise
- Cross 6-8 times daily
- Jaywalk
- Work on Mass Ave
- Dentist
- Spa
- Cleaners
- Specialty shops
- Shopping
- Bank

What do you like about Mass Ave?

- Variety of stores
- Not repetitive chain stores
- Merchants know you by name
- Young, energy, vibrant, fun
- Different from Harvard Square
- Art Institute of Boston and Harvard Law School
- Unique and rich history of street
- Like memorialization of street names
- Median serves as a resting point for pedestrians, prevents illegal left and u turns, speeds traffic up

Issues / opportunities for change

- Not enough parking
- Anything to bring more people
- Interpretative educational signage – history of America
- Bike safety – also responsibility of biker to be safe
- Vehicular movement and circulation especially regarding left turns and buses
- Can the median be removed? Sidewalks could be wider without it
- Planting on median is okay but keep places for pedestrians to cross
- Street trees in decline
- Too many materials in sidewalk
- Sidewalk disrepair
- Do not like the Porter Square Plaza renovation, it is too cold and rigid
- Keep and attract non locals to street – (rising rents, losing non local market)
- Create warm welcoming spaces
- Services for non residents – Mass Avenue as a destination
- Services for residents
- Signage alerting motorists that there are pedestrians crossing
- Stickers for business owners to park during the daytime
- Like to improve median strip
- Median
- Possibility of u turns?

- Non residential parking on side streets during the day
- Like Concord Ave ex of way to connect both sides of the street
- Mass Transit
- Consider providing more pronounced “pad” to land at bus stops
- Pedestrian safety
- Consider mid block crossings at these locations: Newport Rd, Between Roseland and Linnaean
- Between Garfield and Sheppard – not just frequency /quantity of crosswalks but put in right location – Mount Vernon Street
- Drainage issues – pedestrian ramps, Arlington, Roseland, Linnaean
- Sidewalk materials – concrete, durable, like continuity strip – money is better spent elsewhere
- Street signage
- History

Mass. Ave Harvard to Porter - Public Meeting #1 Break-out Group (*Taha J Group*)

Uses

- Drive /walk to Porter Square, Cambridge Common playground
- Grocery shopping by car
- Restaurants, Starbucks
- Biking, outdoor sidewalk activity, shopping
- Work
- Dog walking
- Public transportation
- Bikes
- Zipcar
- Scooter

Concerns

- Hard for vehicles to exit at certain intersections
- Garfield and Mass Ave is one of the worse intersections for cars to try and get onto Mass Ave – pedestrians, 2 lanes of traffic, lots of conflicting activities, hard to see
- Why do cyclists still ride on the sidewalk? -- Dangerous on street, potholes, short cut against traffic, not many alternative routes on bike
- What is the median used for?
- Why do some streets not have crosswalks?
- Scooter parked on sidewalks
- Parking meters used for bike parking

Like

- Diverse area with diverse uses makes it nice
- Eclectic character, identity that’s a little bit different than other areas
- Close to T, near activity, nice residential streets off of Mass Ave.
- Outdoor cafes in nice weather

Opportunities for Improvements

- Want to park bike closer to destination
- Should be more focus on the history of the area
- Why don’t more places have outdoor seating?
- Ambience makes area attractive, diversity of buildings and styles, historical significance... should capitalize on those things
- Sidewalks should be improved/cleaned up
- Art influence on improvements - ex. Bike racks, street furniture, etc..to help identify the area
- There shouldn’t be too much art focus, should be a mix of paving, lighting, cleaning, maintenance
- Additional and or improved pedestrian crossings

- More continuous storefronts
- Traffic calming/bump outs is the least that should be done
- Remove resident parking at some intersections and side streets
- Street lighting could be nicer. Currently like highway lighting, should be more pedestrian scale

Top Themes

- Sense of place /history/art
- Human scale
- Balance eclectic nature of street with type of traffic that it handles
- Crosswalks /pedestrian safety
- Bike friendly features
- Trees, plantings, landscaping... greening the median to slow cars

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Uses

- Schools – get to public elementary and universities
- Businesses – owners and residents
- Shopping
- Commuting
- Running
- Walking dog
- Short drives
- Bus
- T @ Porter
- Bike / afraid to bike
- Social meeting place – center of three neighborhoods
- Health Club

Concerns

- Driver worried about cyclists being safe
- Hot and treeless – grim in summer esp. compared to Harvard property
- Unsignalized crosswalks very hard – double threat with two lanes
- Bad pedestrians behaviors scary
- Pedestrian safety for young kids
- Bicycle left turn to Garfield
- Bank access at Garfield
- Needs to be more beautiful
- Bicycle safety is important
- *Too highway like – rhythm of street is wrong for being a desirable character
- Gathering places lacking
- Fix evil Porter Square plaza

Like

- *Small businesses and diversity of shops
- Social meeting place
- Ownership of tree pit plantings
- No condos on the edge
- *Wider sidewalk sections
- Night life
- Awnings
- Sit and hang out but not on private property
- Victorian houses/architectural diversity

Opportunities for Change

- Safer crossings of Mass. Ave like Appian Way
- Common activities – performance, food, stuff

- Early – T plaza
- Early – trees

Future Vision

- Big trees and bigger tree wells
- Wider sidewalks
- Bike lanes and parking
- Fountain
- Art opportunities
- Make evil park/plaza nice and give to City
- Farmers market
- Hot dog cart
- Nicer bus stops
- Distribution of bus stops
- Consistent feel long the avenue
- Green wall

Mass Ave Harvard to Porter Square - Public Meeting #1 Notes

Neighborhood Culture

- Aesthetic continuity – visual element
- Maintaining small shops, small businesses, support senior housing, higher density, (more people living above shops)
- Enhanced local services within walking distance, ADA regulations all along Avenue, inconsistent buildings and voids (example parking lots better landscaping for buildings which are set back)
- Improve existing green/open space (example Charles Street Boston); there is better character, currently, closer to Porter Square than Law School. Lack of visual draw from Harvard Square and Law School, make more enticing. Signs from Harvard Square, bike and pedestrian paths
- Create and identify
- Art & Music Neighborhood
- Historical markings maybe not so important
- Celebratory Character – “You are in a special place” hanging banners – tree lights

Streetscape & Landscape

- Street trees are enticing – TREES!
- Median plantings
- Plant bigger trees to begin with
- Signature type of light fixture
- Make sure trees are maintained
- Businesses that provide lots of varied and important services within walking distance
- Making businesses (esp. corporations) adhere to an aesthetic approved plan
- Promote smaller businesses
- Support the character of small, local businesses
- Smaller grocery stores and Pharmacies
- Sidewalk cafes are good
- Planters – light post
- Nice sidewalks
- Too many confusing signs
- Better public signage nicer pavement

Safety & Transportation

- Bumper to bumper traffic Garfield Street to Porter Square
- Cycle track – separate from cars – look at global examples, Amsterdam is a model example
- Make biking sustainable – it is the future
- Public outreach for obeying rules/regulations
- Bike sharing in Porter

- Pavement quality is poor for bikes
- Median strip crossable for handicapped people
- Make sure handicapped people can move easily
- Travel lane width for cars
- Traffic light need better sequencing
- Need to decrease speed of driving
- Organize the crosswalks, more crosswalks
- Enforcement of speed/U-turns
- Curb extensions in select areas only such as Garfield Street
- More crosswalks
- Pedestrian signals/lights – push buttons
- Nighttime safety – businesses that stay open later so there is some life at night
- More walking. Less driving – what about less parking
- Traffic calming – elevated bumps – narrow lanes

Lower Mass Ave Cambridge Common to Porter Square – Public Meeting #1 Notes (ET)

What do you like about the Ave?

- Low
- Building
- Some buildings are too low but not high rises
- Trees Mitigate height
- Perfect retirement community
- Grocery store
- Businesses
- Pharmacy
- Wonderful shopping
- Local stores
- Great texture with local shop variation
- Variety for walking
- No need for a car
- Can see from Common to Porter Square when move along the road
- Historical older buildings give character depth to the street
- Variety – fear in future will become more like Harvard Square, (Likes Belmont Cushing Square as example),
- Lost a lot o practical businesses – tipping toward too much residential
- Variety of restaurants in different price ranges
- Not too many bricks like Harvard Square

What do you want?

- All trees, more bushes, plantings
- More trees with better engineered, larger size
- Use technology for more soil and air
- Fewer trees wells
- Three Acres Pizza Block site improvements
- More benches as soon as the weather breaks
- Seating area opportunities” North Hall
- Important where benches go, in building zone where people walk and not at edge on the street like the West Side Lounge
- Boulevard – huge capacity for outdoor space
- Median is an opportunity for plantings – (Haynes Convention Center)
- Trees make outdoor space
- Bicycle lanes

Identity of the Ave in future?

- Shops
- Outdoor seating in restaurant

- Is there room to widen the sidewalks
- Low rise makes it different
- Not need a car, can walk everywhere, can buy what you need, Zip Car and Door-to-Door
- Avenue of the Arts
- Sunken area by Porter Square Park needs help
- Law School building massive too large
- Rocks in Porter Square Park not user friendly, get rid of them

Opportunity for Change

- Parking buffered bicycle lane (propose – median, traffic lane, traffic lane, parked car, bicycle lane, curb, sidewalk)
- Sheppard Street crossing at light more time for left turn
- Going into underpass people cannot see light
- Allow U-turns on the Avenue
- Planting in the median
- Bikes a danger to pedestrians – they do not follow traffic laws
- Crossings; as a driver no, as a pedestrian: yes
- Crosswalks improve retail
- Sidewalk too narrow by Commonwealth Lock
- No rocks sticking out of sidewalk-Porter Square Plaza, tree wells
- Phone projecting from building into pedestrian travel path –Commonwealth Lock
- Bus stop narrows walk
- Make Avenue “Avenue of the Arts” public art, gallery stores, builds on the institution
- Need to support the Evergood Market
- What will make the trees better
- More arts culture
- Permanent public art installations are tricky
- Some residents may not want an art avenue
- Randomness of the stores is a big plus
- Vet
- Restaurant
- Shopping
- Bikes if had bike lanes would be more likely to shop
- With vacant stores fewer reasons to stop on Ave
- Social meeting place
- Maintain locally owned business places

Most Important

- Trees, better trees
- Perfect retirement community
- Planting median
- Local stores – Businesses
- Theme –art- “Avenue of the Arts”
- Walk ability of sidewalks
- Public safety – crossings
- Seating opportunities
- Bike lanes – buffered
- Porter Square Park needs improvements
- Crosswalks important
- Fix sidewalk by Commonwealth Lock
- Social meeting place