

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
HARVARD SQUARE DESIGN PROJECT
MEETING NOTES**

Subject: Harvard Square Design Committee (HSDC) – Meeting 12

Date, Time & Place: November 20, 2003, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM
Cambridge Savings Bank

Present:

HSDC Members:

Mohsen Kurd
Alex Sagan
Sean Peirce

Susan Rogers
Mary Parkin
Bill Bibbins

Nelson Goddard
Rohit Chopra
Robert Banker

Public:

David Spiller
Mike Hansen

David Loutzenheiser
Michael Wiggins

Brad Siegel
Mike Camilleri

City of Cambridge:

Susanne Rasmussen
(CDD)
Kathy Watkins (CDD)
Susan Glazer (CDD)

Cara Seiderman (CDD)
Roger Boothe (CDD)
Rosalie Anders (CDD)
Lisa Peterson (DPW)

Roger Booth (CDD)
Michael Muehe (CPD)
Sarah Burks (CHC)

*CDD = Community Development
Department*

*CPD = Commission for Persons
with Disabilities*

*TP&T = Traffic, Parking and
Transportation Department*

*CHC = Cambridge Historical
Commission*

Consultant Team:

Jerry Friedman (TAMS Consultants, Inc.)
Cynthia Smith (Halvorson Design Partnership)

Adam Kibbe (Ripman Lighting)

1. WELCOME and UPDATE (Susanne Rasmussen)

Susanne welcomed the attendees and reviewed the agenda for the evening, which will include the following:

- Revised Materials Plan: In June, the materials toolbox and an initial plan were presented. Walking tours were held in August and September. In September, City staff attended meetings with the Pedestrian and Disabilities Committees. As a result of all of these activities, we have revised the materials plan to incorporate input from these sources, and we hope to wrap up the discussion of materials tonight.
- Lighting: In September the toolbox of lighting was presented. Tonight we are going to review the initial Lighting Plan. Based on feedback we receive tonight, we anticipate having follow up discussions at the December 18th meeting.

- Jody Pinto: Jody is the artist selected to work on the Harvard Square project. She will be focusing on Palmer Street. She came to the September meeting and showed examples of her work. She is coming back to town December 10th and 11th. We are setting up a number of meetings while she is here – with the consultant team, Harvard Square Defense Fund, Harvard University, etc. Jody also wants to meet with committee members, in an informal setting, to go over her initial thoughts and ideas. This is not your only opportunity to have input on the design; she will be coming to a future committee meeting with conceptual plans. But she wants to meet with the group now to get early input. The Meeting would be at – Office for the Arts at Harvard, 74 Mt. Auburn Street, 5-6 p.m. Kathy will be sending around a sign up sheet. Let us know if you are interested in participating and if so, your availability.

Also – as a side note that people may be interested in:

- The MetroFuture project is the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) new initiative to update MetroPlan, the agency's 1990 regional roadmap. This large-scale participatory initiative will develop a vision for the Metro Boston region's future and a strategy to get there. The project, which was launched by MAPC and such partners as the Boston Foundation, Boston College Citizen Seminars and the University of Massachusetts Boston, will use public participation, data analysis and cutting-edge technologies to best inform and involve individuals across the region in this collaborative decision-making process. Handouts are available tonight for those interested in participating.

2. MATERIALS PLAN (Kathy Watkins)

As Susanne mentioned, city staff have attended a number of meetings with various groups, in addition to the many internal meeting and site visits that city staff and consultants have conducted over the last 6 months on this issue. Materials are a difficult issue, but we have made a lot of progress and feel we have developed a good plan that balances a variety of sometimes competing interests, including:

- Historical – what is the look and feel of the Square?
- Maintenance.
- Accessibility – what do we have to do to meet basic ADA standards? What can we do to improve beyond that towards universal design?

We would like to review the revised Proposed Plan, with particular emphasis on areas where changes have been made since the last meeting.

- Raised Crosswalks
 - Raised crosswalks would be constructed with concrete pavers, similar to elsewhere in the city.
 - The original plan just showed one raised crosswalk on Church Street at Mass Ave. At the June Committee meeting there was strong support for another raised crosswalk at the Brattle / Brattle intersection (between DeGuglielmo Plaza and EMS), and this has been found feasible and has been added to the plan.
 - There are a number of other locations where we looked at raised crosswalks or intersections (such as Church and Palmer, Brattle and Church) but could not incorporate them because of conflicts with drainage – i.e. there is not a drainage pipe close enough to connect to.

- Crosswalk Materials
 - The majority of the crosswalks would be zebra-striped crosswalks – just like today. This treatment is the most visible, requires minimum maintenance, and is the smoothest material for peds.
 - We are, however, showing a number of crosswalks where special concrete pavers would be used.
 - For pedestrian safety, we did not use specialty crosswalk materials at uncontrolled crosswalks where through traffic has to yield to pedestrians. (For example – the crossing of Brattle Street from Wordsworth to DeGuglielmo Plaza. This is a location where drivers have to yield to pedestrians and it is critical that the pedestrians and the crosswalks be very visible.)
 - Due to maintenance concerns, we have also minimized the use of specialty crosswalk materials at higher volume locations particularly with high volume turning trucks. (for example – the other Wordsworth crossing to the triangle. This crossing has all of the Mass Ave thru traffic turning on it, including a significant percentage of trucks.

- Taxi Stands / Loading Zones / Bus Stops
 - We propose to use concrete pavers instead of the granite cobbles which exist today. Concrete pavers are accessible, which is important in all of these areas as people get into and out of taxis and buses.
 - We have generally maintained the same areas as today, and do not want to greatly increase the amount of these areas.
 - The width of these areas will be reduced slightly to ensure that cyclists riding adjacent to the areas do not have to negotiate a seam between the asphalt and the special pavement.

- Shared Streets / Super Crosswalk
 - Palmer and Winthrop streets will receive a special paving treatment, although the details are not finalized.
 - Likewise for the Super Crosswalk. People have expressed concerns about the size and operation of this crosswalk. As we move into the more detailed design phase, will be looking at this in more detail, determining treatment, size and location of curb cuts, exact dimensions, etc.

- Sidewalk Materials
 - The so-called City Hall pavers are the **molded bricks**, which is an historic brick that we have traditionally used in the City. We propose to maintain molded brick in the most historically sensitive areas. Molded bricks provide more variations in color and texture.
 - **Wire cut bricks** offer less vibration than City Hall pavers. This type of brick is proposed for JFK Street, and Linden and Plympton streets. At the Pedestrian and Disabilities Committee meetings, the discussion centered on how important the choice of material is on narrow sidewalks, since there is less room to avoid defects in the materials. The summer walking and wheeling tour also emphasized this.
 - The **Reduced Vibration Zone (RVZ)** is a new name for what we formerly were calling the vibration free zone. The idea is to provide better accessibility, although it should be noted that all materials that we are proposing are accessible materials. The RVZ is a new concept in the city and the idea is to give it a try.

- Since we last discussed the RVZ in June, we have taken a closer look at the details of how and where it can work, particularly where it is close to doorways, etc.
 - We focused on the continuity of the RVZ. We want it to make sense as an overall system. For example, it works well with the urban design element of connecting the Square to the river through Eliot Plaza.
 - We have eliminated the RVZ from lower DeGuglielmo Plaza. This area is overflowing with pedestrians, tables, people seated on the wall, etc., and the RVZ does not work well here.
- We heard concerns from the pedestrian and disabilities meetings about the slipperiness, and aesthetics, of the **granite edge strip** which was installed throughout the Red Line construction area in the 1980's.
 - The granite strip will be removed in areas where the pedestrian path crosses the granite strip. This includes curb cuts / handicap ramps as well as the larger super crosswalk.
 - The aesthetic concern had to do with the visual clutter of the granite strip negatively affecting people's view of the reduced vibration zone. As we looked at the reduced vibration zone in more detail, however, the granite strip did not appear to be a hindrance.

3. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION OF MATERIALS PLAN (Committee)

(Note: City/Consultant team comments/responses are in italics)

- How are bricks installed?
Bricks are laid in a stone-dust setting bed which is placed on a concrete base. There are other ways to set them, such as on an asphalt mastic base.
- Will Winthrop Street remain one-way as it is today?
Yes – one way from JFK to Eliot.
- Will Jody Pinto be involved in the overall materials plan?
She will be focusing on Palmer Street only.
- How wide will the RVZ be?
The concept is for a 4-foot wide strip.
- Will the RVZ deter shopkeepers from putting their wares out on the sidewalk?
We don't necessarily want to do this, which is why the RVZ has been eliminated from lower DeGuglielmo Plaza, for example.
- What happens to the loading zone at Palmer and Brattle?
It is not intended to eliminate this. We will look into this.
- Concerned about how trees will deal with the concrete base. What is the existing brick installed on?
In the MBTA area, it is on asphalt mastic.
- Why no brick on Church Street?
This is not an area of historic brick, and this street needs to work well for pedestrians. We will be extending the brick on the Church side of the street, and replacing the other side of the street with concrete.
- The JFK/Mt. Auburn intersection has a mix of materials at the four corners. Should pick one or the other type of brick.
Yes – this makes sense – this will be revised to be consistent.
- Upper end of Dunster Street near the bank should be brick.
- Why not looking at entire project area, example rest of Mass Ave towards Putnam St.?
We are trying to prioritize for a reasonable foreseeable term. It will be easier to fill in the other areas later if we can first agree on an approach for the inner area.

- Why doing a paver crosswalk across top of Dunster? This does not meet the criteria of having either a stop sign or a traffic signal.
All vehicles crossing this crosswalk are turning, they are not driving straight through the crosswalk.
- Can Plympton and Linden be considered for shared street treatment?
We feel the best way to address accessibility on these streets is to try and move all of the vertical elements (meter posts, lights, etc) to one side of the street. (Although both sides of the street will be accessible). Part of our approach is contingent upon the Traffic Department implementing a "Pay and Display" method of parking on these streets.
- What kind of transition will be done at the ends of the shared streets?
No details on this yet. May have a raised crosswalk if practical. We need detailed survey to work this out.
- JFK/Eliot and JFK/Mt. Auburn are signaled intersections. Why not using paver crosswalks?
There are high numbers of turning vehicles at these locations. This would be a maintenance issue for the pavers.
- Could Church/Brattle crosswalk be raised?
We wanted to do that here, but would not work with the City's proposed drainage improvements.
- Pedestrians really like the paver crosswalks. Gives them more cues than zebra stripes.
- Will there be any connection between the Palmer and Winthrop designs?
These are fundamentally different streets. Palmer Street offers more freedom for design.
- What does Disabilities Commission think about the lack of RVZ in many of the molded brick areas, especially north of Church Street on Mass Ave?
The Commission had a fairly strong consensus that wire-cut brick was a great improvement over molded brick (example – at the Charles Hotel). The Churchyard north of Church Street is an historic area, however.
- Why not wire-cut brick on Mass Ave between Holyoke and Plympton? Why not on Mt. Auburn? There seems to be a strong north-south use of wire-cut brick and RVZ, but weak in the east-west direction. Harvard has used wire-cut within the historic Yard. Not clear who's interest is served by maintaining molded brick in so many areas.
It is felt that molded brick, which is accessible, is a more appropriate material in the more historic areas of the Square. However, we will reevaluate the east-west connections which were noted.
- Can a large mock-up of the different materials be constructed?
There are many good examples of these materials in-place throughout the City. Dawes Island, for example, even provides an "accidental" example of a RVZ.
- Will a better installation practice for the molded brick help reduce vibration?
Yes. Both installation and maintenance are very important, however certain characteristics are integral to the material. Example, wire-cut can be butted very tightly together.
- Color of wire-cut brick is not as good as molded.
New wire-cut bricks can vary in color, as can molded.
- What colors will be used for the concrete pavers?
Would be similar to today, i.e. red for pedestrian areas, gray for taxi/loading/bus.

3A. MATERIALS WRAP-UP (Susanne)

- There seems to be reasonable concurrence on the crosswalk materials.
- There is concurrence on the areas where wire-cut brick and RVZ have been shown to date, but there is interest in exploring whether wire-cut and/or RVZ can be expanded to some of the east-west streets.

4. INTRO TO LIGHTING PLAN (Kathy Watkins)

In September we presented the toolbox of lighting and reviewed the existing conditions - the various types and sizes of poles, fixtures, etc. in the Square today. We also discussed maintenance concerns. Every specialty fixture is a concern, since the City has to maintain spare fixtures, poles, bulbs, etc. for each design.

There are also concerns relative to sidewalk widths, as some fixtures, such as acorns, have much larger bases than cobras and require nearly twice as many fixtures to light the street. There are also issues related to dark sky issues, light trespass, energy conservation, etc.

We would like to first update you on a few citywide issues which affect the Harvard Square project:

- City plans for purchasing lighting
 - Currently NSTAR owns and maintains streetlights in the City. The City pays NSTAR for the electricity, lights and maintenance.
 - In some locations, the City has installed and maintained our own lighting, even though NSTAR owns the bulk of the lighting. This requires all new wiring and boxes to meter the electricity. This is what happened with the acorns currently in Harvard Square.
 - In order to replace the lighting in this way, it has to be done at the same time as sidewalk and roadway work and it also unfortunately requires a utility box.
 - Over the years, the City and residents have had increasing concerns about the length of time it takes for NSTAR to respond to lights being out. So, the City has been pursuing purchasing all of the streetlights from NSTAR. The City would be able to respond quicker to maintenance calls and would also save money.
 - The City is currently negotiating with NSTAR and anticipate taking over the lights July 1, 2004.

- Implications for Harvard Square project
 - If the City purchases all of the lights, the City will be maintaining over 6,000 lights, which is a significant undertaking. The City is committed to doing a good job with maintenance, but also need to be realistic about the number of different styles of lighting that can be maintained. It will become very important to have citywide standards for lighting.
 - In some ways we will have more flexibility. If we want to replace the lighting, we can use the existing conduit. Lighting replacement, if done on a 1 to 1 basis, could be done independent of street and sidewalk work. For example, if we develop standards for a light fixture that has a similar height and light distribution as a cobra, we can replace them using the same conduit feed without disturbing the street or sidewalk.
 - This would allow us to reconstruct sidewalks and roadways today and then change the lighting when it needs to be replaced. We wouldn't have to do it all at the same time.
 - This is a citywide issue. The Electrical Department would like to develop standards for lighting fixtures, with the idea of approving 8-10 types of lights that can be used throughout the City. The range would need to be appropriate for various locations in the city – smaller streets, Harvard Square, Central Square, Kendall Square, etc. There would be a range of appropriate designs.

- The plan we are presenting tonight for lighting shows a number of locations with cobras. Although there might be sentiment to see a plan that shows all acorns, given the limited sidewalk widths, budgetary concerns and larger citywide context, this, like almost everything else in Harvard Square, is not quite that simple.

4A. REVIEW OF LIGHTING PLAN (Adam Kibbe)

- Overall Approach: The plan represents a first pass at what a logical long-term end-product might be for the Square, not accounting for some of the specific practical details of how the project would be phased, individual light locations, etc. It aims to be a simple, consistent, logical plan.
- Today there are generally 3 types of lighting in the Project Area (not counting various specialty fixtures at specific locations):
 - Single acorn fixtures
 - Double acorn fixtures
 - Cobra heads of various styles
- Each type of fixture helps provide a certain type of guidance and identity to the street where it is located, and the different types rarely share a street together. For example, the acorns tend to connote pedestrian activity, such as retail areas, etc. Individual zones are thus created according to lighting type.
- Our proposed plan recognizes this, and thus would include the following:
 - Mass Ave: Would remain pretty much as-is, with double-acorn fixtures defining the major thoroughfare through the Square.
 - JFK Street: This would be the biggest change from existing conditions. This street functions in a way similar to Mass Ave, and also has a similar scale, so we propose acorn fixtures. These would be single-acorns, however, as there is a different type of retail energy and street function on JFK Street.
 - Mt. Auburn Street: We propose to leave cobras as the lighting type. It is a very long street, and unlike Mass Ave and JFK Street, it is hard to define exactly where a different treatment, such as acorns, would begin and end.
 - Brattle Street: We propose to extend the existing acorn treatment to Appian Way, which is the end of the retail zone.
- Specialty Zones:
 - The Pit: Clearly needs something to set it apart as the heart of the Square.
 - Wordsworth Triangle: Another node where seating is located and where performances happen, and thus deserving of a special treatment.
 - Lampoon Plaza: Will take on importance as a node due to the proposed re-design
 - Sumner Statue: This is a “gateway” to the Square, and thus a specialty treatment would not be appropriate.
 - Shared Streets (Palmer and Winthrop): The lighting on these streets will be an integral part of their design.
- Ladder Streets (Linden and Plympton):
 - These streets have very tight sidewalks. We cannot widen the sidewalks, but we want to make them accessible and have them work as well as possible for pedestrians.

- When we reviewed the lighting toolbox in September, we showed example of wall mounted lights because we thought we might want to use them on Linden and Plympton.
- Although building mounted fixtures free up sidewalk space, there are a number of maintenance concerns related to accessing the fixtures, wires and conduit in the future.
- On Linden and Plympton, in addition, the inconsistency of the building facades and the historic nature of the buildings also made it more impractical.
- It would be easier to keep the pole-mounted lighting, but try and move the poles onto the adjacent private property. This is a promising concept for these two streets, since most of the property is under single-ownership (Harvard). The slight additional setback of the poles on these narrow streets would not impact the light levels significantly.

5. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION OF LIGHTING PLAN (Committee)

(Note: City/Consultant team comments/responses are in italics)

- Explain the logic of double acorns on the JFK side of the Pit area.
This was intended to be a visual cue for the heart of the Square. We have done something similar near the Eliot bus stop – provides a higher light level.
- Why not continue the Brattle acorns all the way to Mason Street?
It's tough to decide where to transition, but the end of the retail at Appian seemed a logical choice.
- Explain the coordination with Jody Pinto on Palmer Street.
We understand that Jody's design will include important lighting concepts. She will establish the vision for the street and work with Adam Kibbe and the rest of the design team to develop the plans.
- Like the JFK proposal. Will make a big difference.
- Why maintaining cobras on Church Street?
Church Street is difficult. It has narrow sidewalks, with no room for traditional acorn bases. Could consider acorns on narrow bases, but as a new item there would be maintenance and aesthetic issues. Also, are trying to minimize the number of poles on the street, consistent with the overall Church Street goals.
- Consider use of existing "niches" on Church Street where poles could be placed.
- How does design address light pollution?
Acorns tend to be light-polluters by definition. This can be mitigated through either full-cutoff shields (look terrible) or by fitting the fixtures with louvers, which seem to be a good compromise.
- What about Flagstaff Park lighting?
Interior lighting of the park would be done as part of it's final design. There may be only minimal additional lighting needed, as the park is surrounded by light fixtures at present and is fairly well lit.
- What about Bennett Street / Charles Hotel area?
There are some acorns at the hotel right now. Probably don't need to change much there.
- Would like to consider acorns on Mt. Auburn, with the existing double-acorns at the Post Office forming the west entrance to the Square.
- Consider double acorns on JFK, starting at Eliot Street. Would be entry treatment similar to Mass Ave entries coming from Central Porter Squares.
- Also consider double acorns on Brattle Street from JFK to Eliot Street.
There are important hierarchies established by using doubles versus singles, etc. Brattle Street is not like Mass Ave, for example. Single acorns would reinforce this fact better.

- Should reconsider Church Street. The cobra lighting will seem like a disappointment after coming up Palmer with its artistic interest. Church will seem like a “back street”.
- Like the plan overall.
- University Road?

This street “feels” OK with it’s acorns.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Will double-acorns with louvers added, adequately light four-lane roads?
Yes. Depends on what photometrics are being used, and this will be studied during detailed design.
- If we are going to be replacing lots of fixtures, at great expense, we should be looking at what is the best fixture – not just continuing with what we have out there now.
- Is the Church Street raised crosswalk really needed? Like the zebra crosswalks on Mass Ave, and raised crosswalks on streets such as Rindge Avenue where speeds have been an issue. But don’t really have speed issue at the entry to Church Street. Will drainage and snow-removal work?
The raised was thought to be appropriate since there is such as heavy pedestrian desire line here, and vehicle yielding is sub-par at present. The drainage will work in conjunction with DPW’s planned improvements, and snow clearance has not been an issue at other raised devices in the City.
- Mt. Auburn Street seems to have a speeding problem at present. Won’t cobra lighting, which is highway style, encourage speeding?
- Linden and Plympton have different traffic volumes, and are fairly residential streets. Will light trespass be an issue?
We think these street will look less cluttered with higher, fewer, fixtures. Plus, cobras can be shielded effectively. Acorns can be shielded too, but less effectively.
- Can the overhead utilities on Plympton be put underground?
The City has had initial discussions on this. All of the service users must be willing to participate in the cost. These lines do feed some buildings on Mass Avenue, further complicating matters.

7. WRAP-UP AND NEXT STEPS (Susanne Rasmussen)

The next Committee meeting will be on December 18, at which time we hope to wrap up lighting issues. We will also begin discussion on design details such as newspaper boxes, landscaping, street furniture, etc.

On January 15 we will begin the prioritization process.

We are also trying to schedule a February meeting around school vacation, and will have an open-house following the prioritization process.