



# CENTRAL SQUARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## REGULAR MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

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Wednesday, June 28, 2017

6:00 – 7:30 PM

344 Broadway, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Meeting Room

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### Overview

The Central Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on June 28, 2017 to receive updates on various projects in Central Square (the “Square”), on the non-transportation section of the Square Non-Zoning Recommendations, and to set priorities on recommendations moving forward.

### I. Charge to the Committee

Wendell Joseph reviewed *Central Square Overlay District* (Section 20.300, Zoning Ordinance), the affecting legislation of the Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to: a) establish a formal, ongoing body that will review all major development actions in the Central Square Overlay District (the “District”); b) provide a forum within which a wide range of perspectives on development actions can be heard, c) establish a citizen/professional body which can advise both public agencies and private interests as to the development and urban design issues raised by a development; and d) following the K2C2 Study, to make recommendations on and monitor the progress of non-zoning recommendations.

### II. Central Square Updates

The Committee was updated on the following projects and initiatives in the Square: Mass + Main; an appeal against the Planning Board decision was resolved and construction is expected to begin shortly; 907 Main Street, currently in the design process, this project will begin in earnest over the summer with a targeted opening date of Spring '19; the Central Square Public Toilet, site work began in May '17 and below grade utilities are expected to be installed in July '17, at the earliest; and the Central Square Restoration Zoning Petition, changes include, but are not limited to, increases in residential and total FAR, exemptions for residential balconies and rooftop spaces, exemptions for retail spaces less than 1,500 SF, and reductions in yard setbacks and open space requirements.

#### Central Square Advisory Committee - June 28, 2017

### III. Central Square Non-Zoning Recommendations

The Committee was updated on a number of completed projects and recommended items in the Square including, but not limited to: the improvement of existing public spaces and encouragement of the expression of creativity in the public realm through enhanced programming such as the Dance Party, Taste of Cambridge, and the Central Flea; the creation of small plazas at the edge of Parking Lot 5 - as part of the H-Mart renovations - and at the intersection of Bishop Allen Drive and Main Street in keeping with the initiative to create more pocket parks; the addition of the Novartis Courtyard and its connection to the courtyard created by the 610-610 Main Street project, providing a strong east-west access through the Osborn Triangle; improvements to the streetscape and active edges through the installation of roughly 90 hanging baskets from City Hall to Lafayette Square; and improvements to the pedestrian experience on Blanche Street, the intersection of Albany St and Portland St, and Windsor Street.

## A. Discussion

After the summary of completed projects in the Square, the Committee began discussing ongoing projects. Comments and questions are as follows:

- **Sidney Street**
  - Current zoning limits how much retail can exist along Sidney Street, in some respect, as a way of not competing with Mass Ave. However, are there ways retail can be sited along this street as a way of activating University Park Commons?
  - University Park Commons, similar to Lawn on D, could be a really great space and an asset to the Square if it could be activated.
- There are many sidewalks in Central Square that feel rather dead. Some of them have depth but there's no street furniture, the trees are not in great shape, etc.
- walking tours - include DPW, Suzannah Bigolin
  - purpose would be to identify locations to implement diverse types of amenities
- How can we use public spaces to create community interaction and information, to introduce technology, and to create various kinds of gathering spaces?
- Lafayette Square works because there's a sense of ownership, there are "eyes on the street", and business owners tend to the space so it works well with what businesses are doing.
- **Carl Barron Plaza**
  - There are plans to redesign it as part of the River Street Reconstruction Project, but there are no designs just yet.
  - There needs to be conversations between those running this project and with the property managers of the Holmes Building
  - Are there ways of activating the space through play? How can we bring in families?

## IV. Next Steps

The Committee agreed that subsequent meetings should be a series of walking tours around the Square that focus on various categories and recommended action items from the Non-Zoning Recommendations. The Committee's efforts will also include meeting and speaking with representatives from the City and/or organizations from the non-profit and private sectors who can speak to some of the recommendations for and current active projects in the Square.

There were two members of the public in attendance.

The Committee's next meeting has not yet been determined.

This meeting was adjourned at 7:35pm.

### Committee Members in Attendance

- Melissa Greene, Chair
- Esther Hanig
- Drew Kane
- Michael Monestime
- Christopher Sol Gully
- Robert Winters

Committee Members not in Attendance

- Joel Altstein

Committee Staff

- Stuart Dash
- Wendell Joseph

The background is a photograph of a city street, likely in New York City, featuring a large sign that reads 'CENTRAL' and 'OUTBOUND TO ALEWIFE'. A 'NO TRUCKS' sign is also visible. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. A solid yellow rectangle is positioned in the top right corner.

# Central Square Advisory Committee

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017 – 344 BROADWAY

# Agenda

- ▶ Committee Overview
- ▶ Central Square Updates
  - ▶ Mass + Main
  - ▶ 907 Main Street
  - ▶ Public Toilet
  - ▶ Restoration Zoning Petition
- ▶ Discussion
  - ▶ C2 Non-Zoning Recommendations
    - ▶ General Comments
    - ▶ Priorities
- ▶ Next Steps
  - ▶ Cambridgeport Vacancy
  - ▶ Next Meeting



# Committee Overview



# Central Square Advisory Committee

- ▶ Established in May 1989 due to changes in the Zoning Ordinance (Section 20.300) that rezoned Central Square and created the Central Square Overlay District (the “District”)
- ▶ The purpose of the Committee is to:
  - ▶ establish a formal, ongoing body that will review all major development actions in the District
  - ▶ provide a forum within which a wide range of perspectives on development actions can be heard
  - ▶ establish a citizen/professional body which can advise both public agencies and private interests as to the development and urban design issues raised by a development
  - ▶ following the K2C2 Study, the role of the Committee has expanded to include making recommendations on and monitoring the progress of non-zoning recommendations

# Central Square Updates



# Mass + Main

- ▶ Special Permit – January 24, 2017
- ▶ new, two-building mixed-use development
- ▶ 250,000+ GFA
- ▶ 17,279 sq.ft. of ground-floor retail space
- ▶ 285 residential units
- ▶ 95 off-street parking spaces (below grade)
- ▶ 39 spaces off-site at 65 Bishop Allen Drive (three spaces to be used for car sharing)



# 907 Main Street

- ▶ Special Permit – February 21, 2017
- ▶ conversion of an existing mixed use building into a 58-room hotel
- ▶ an addition of 5,264 sq.ft. in GFA
- ▶ ground floor retail & rooftop bar
- ▶ located in the Central Square National Register District



② COURTYARD VIEW



② COLUMBIA & MAIN



# Central Square Public Toilet

- ▶ one of the winning projects from 2015 Participatory Budgeting
- ▶ will be modeled after the public toilet in Harvard Square
- ▶ clean, safe, and environmentally-friendly
- ▶ free to the public and accessible 24-hours a day
- ▶ the City worked to identify potential locations based on:
  - available space (above and below ground)
  - access to utilities
  - visibility to ensure that the facility can be easily monitored
  - proximity to restaurants, transit and pedestrian traffic

"The Portland Loo" in Harvard Square.  
(Photo Credit: Jesse Costa/WBUR)

# Central Square Restoration Zoning Petition

## ▶ Context and Catalyst

- ▶ “Depression-era politics”
- ▶ The 1987 Central Square Action Plan

## ▶ Intent and Purpose

- ▶ to restore the historic status of Central Square as a commercial hub and strengthen its identity as a State Cultural District
- ▶ “...to increase the potential for housing, expand the local retail footprint, enliven side streets, and activate the streetscape”

## ▶ Referenced Reports and Studies

- ▶ 2011 – The Mayor's Red Ribbon Commission on the Delights and Concerns of Central Square
- ▶ 2013 – Central Square Study (K2C2 Plan)

# Central Square Restoration Zoning Petition

- ▶ allowed residential FAR increased from 3.0 to 4.0 in the Business B (BB) District, and allowed an increase in total FAR to 4.0 by special permit in the Overlay District, so long as non-residential FAR does not exceed base zoning limits
- ▶ residential balconies and publicly-enjoyable rooftop spaces are exempt from FAR limitations
- ▶ retail spaces of 1,500 square feet or less are exempt from FAR limitations
- ▶ removed limit on the total number of fast order food establishments in the district, and established a special permit requirement for formula business
- ▶ allowed, by special permit, entrances to establishments where alcohol is served and where dancing/entertainment is provided to be located off of Mass Ave., Main St, or Prospect St
- ▶ allowed yard setbacks and open space requirements to be reduced, and allowed required open space to be provided at above-grade levels by special permit
- ▶ established maximum parking ratios for some uses, allowing required parking to be reduced by an “in-lieu-of” payment for public improvements, and allowing required parking for a use to be located on another lot within the overlay district

# Non-Zoning Recommendations Completed Projects



Dance Party, Taste of Cambridge, 2015  
River Festival

Photo Credits: David Kong, Cambridge Arts Council



## The Central Flea

Photos courtesy of: Kyle Klien Photography, CSBA, and New England Open Markets



# Small Plazas & Pocket Parks



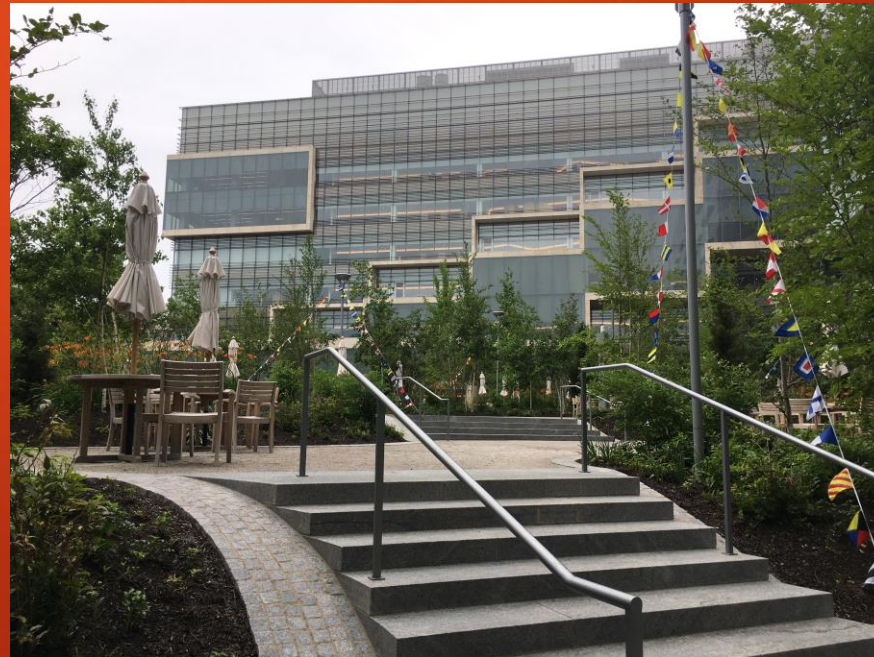
Bishop Allen & Main



Parking Lot 5



Parking Lot 5



## Small Plazas & Pocket Parks Novartis Courtyard



Priority Streetscape and Active Edge Improvements

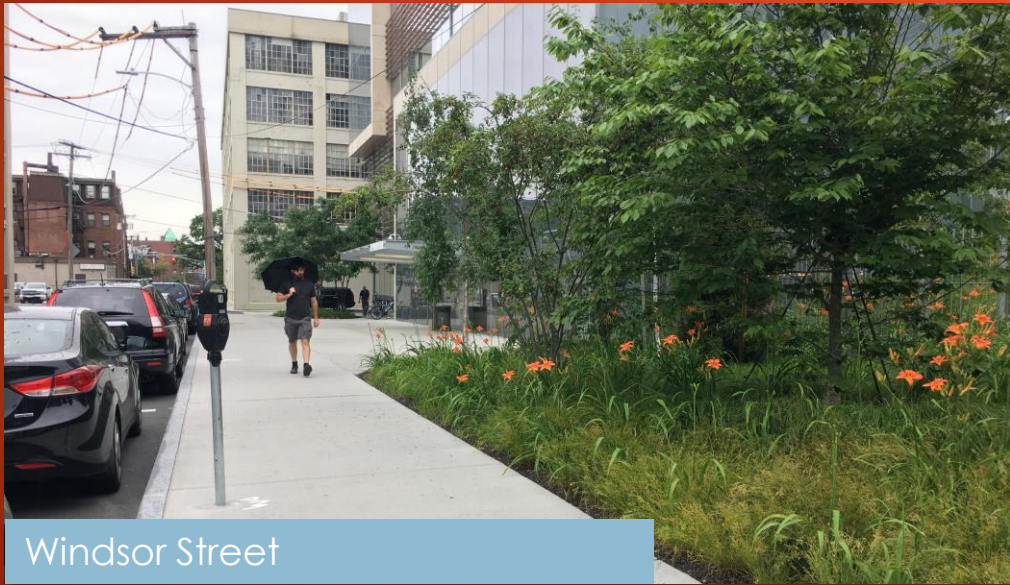




Windsor Street



Blanche Street



Windsor Street



Albany Street & Portland Street

# Non-Zoning Recommendations

## Works In Progress