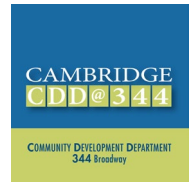


# ALEWIFE ZONING WORKING GROUP

## MEETING NOTES



Wednesday, October 12, 2022

6 – 8:30pm

Virtual Meeting

### Attendance

#### Working Group Members:

Eric Grunebaum, Suhas Kodali, Mike Nakagawa, Ann Stewart, Ann Tennis, , Kelvin Moses, Diana Marsh, Joe Sultan, Joe Poirier, Doug Brown, Lizzie Feigenbaum, John Chun

#### City of Cambridge Staff:

Melissa Peters, Jeff Roberts, Erik Thorkildsen, Drew Kane, Susanne Rasmussen

### Meeting Overview

The Alewife Zoning Working Group convened for their fifth working group meeting.

#### Purpose

- Present and facilitate a discussion on draft zoning principles.

#### Objectives

- Confirm working group's shared priorities on zoning principles.

### Presentation

Melissa Peters (Director of Community Planning) presented the following Alewife-specific topics to the Working Group to solicit discussion: Land Use, Street Network, Open Space, Public Benefits and Bonuses.

### Discussion/Questions by working group

#### Topic – Land Use Priorities

Eric Grunebaum (EG):

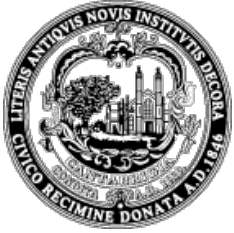
- Residential amenities shouldn't be an "active use"

Kelvin Moses (KM):

- Has heard mixed use being a priority
- Feels like there needs to be a balance of uses, and not necessarily that housing is a greater priority
- Should clarify what "light industrial" uses are.
- Light industrial could be upper floor uses, too. Not just ground level industrial space
- There is a main street, but retail can't be everywhere right now.

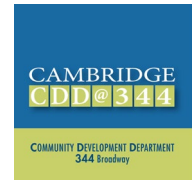
Chris Chandor (CC):

- Retail should be clustered to be successful. Stringing it out won't make it a successful district.
- Be clear on what "residential amenities" means.
- Need to have residential amenities on the street. It appeals to residents.



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- The light industrial will not put feet on the street for the neighborhood. Should consider where that use goes.

Diana Marsh (DM):

- Perhaps there are two categories of active uses: fully public ones like café and library; less public ones like lobby, lounge, gym. Would love to have public active uses, but they can't be everywhere. Can you provide designated priority areas for active use? Publicly accessible.
- Other areas could be residential amenities since not the whole length of a façade will be retail or a publicly accessible use, especially away from priority areas.
- Need to have transparency at the ground floor.

Mike Nakagawa (MN):

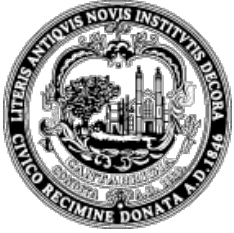
- Early in the Alewife process, there was an emphasis on commercial mixed-use, but it switched at some point to light industrial as a priority
- There was a response that might create too much activity and traffic if it were all commercial mixed use
- There was a sense that light industrial jobs paid more. Created economic diversity.
- CDD then added commercial above the light industrial use saying that it would fund the presence of the light industrial use.
- Will be a lot of traffic generation with either plan.
- Also, we're planning for 4 feet of water in this area. Even building adaptation won't solve things since it will be difficult to get emergency vehicles there. Why are we suggesting putting people in flood zones when we should advocate for removing development from flood zones?
- Agrees with Kelvin about the possibility to put industrial on upper floors.
- This is the last area of the city that has light-industrial. We should encourage more of that use.  
Want to retain light industrial
  - However - Very difficult to immediately put light industrial uses on the upper floors. Makes the logistics of the operations more difficult.
  - MP - the reality is that it will require commercial development to subsidize industrial uses. The real estate is just too expensive to only allow for light industrial.
- When it was zoned to limit heights, it limited land value, but if it raises heights, it makes the land more valuable and light-industrial can't compete.

### What is the desired use mix in the quad?

Doug Brown (DB):

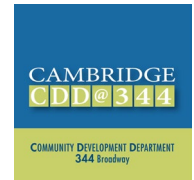
- “Residential amenities” means focusing on amenities for people inside the buildings themselves. Perhaps change to “neighborhood necessities”. Things you need to have to be a neighborhood.
- For example, daycare. Not necessarily “active” but it is a necessity. Same goes for dry cleaners or places to grab some milk.
- Beer gardens in residential development are active, but not accessible or a necessity.

Suhas Kodali (SK):



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- Previous slides - Doesn't believe that light industrial should be a priority the way it was in 2019. Feels that there does need to be an increase in housing.

Jane Gilbert (JG):

- Likes the move to call residential amenities “neighborhood necessities”.
- Does think providing day care is necessary. If we want people to stay employed and have a successful career. We need daycare.
- No one who is on the CHA waitlist can qualify for "inclusionary" housing. Need deeply affordable units if we want to get an income mix in the area.
  - MP - Agrees that we need a spectrum of affordability with residential

Joe Sultan (JS):

- Residential needs to be higher since they get lower rents than commercial. Meaning, if you want more residential, there should be taller buildings.

Ann Tennis (AT):

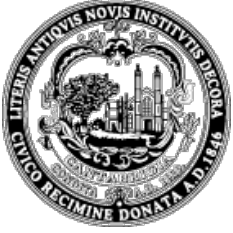
- People are OK with where DPW is sited
- Agrees that residential on Concord Ave would be a great idea. Perhaps areas for green space, too. Not too large. Like Trolley Square and not high-rise buildings.
- Also agrees that residential is a priority.
- Doesn't think adjacent to Highlands need to be all residential. It's more about the scale of development.
- Height is more important to focus on than use near the Highlands. Residential where DPW is located is inconvenient.

Lizzie Feigenbaum (LF):

- Agrees that it is really about height near the Highlands. Supports residential near the bridge.
- Also likes “neighborhood necessity” terminology.
- Thinks daycare would be a great ground floor use.
- Real need for afterschool programming. This could be a great place for a community center.
- Feel like there really needs to be a balance of uses. Open space needs to be a priority. Flood plain needs to be integrated into the area.
- Wants to make a plug for light industrial. This is one of the only areas where that is possible. Light industrial to training opportunities for people in the neighborhood to stay in place because they have higher paying jobs.

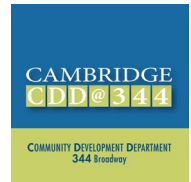
Mike Nakagawa (MN):

- Make sure that businesses are creating low barrier to entry jobs
- Not against height except to the point where it affects heat island impact
- Tall buildings delay tree growth because they don't get sunlight. They often die especially on the south side of an east-west street.
- Reflective walls could help the buildings with cooling. If it's reflected down, provide shade for people at street level.



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Ann Stewart (AS):

- Seems important that we clarify the definitions that we are using for non-planners
- For example, is commercial development just labs in this scenario or broader like offices or studios for artists, too

Kelvin Moses (KM):

- Need to think about use mix and where the open space is located.
- Need to create place and sometimes light industrial makes it a challenge.
- Think about what sits in the level of priority.
- How do we activate the linear open spaces?
- Only housing near open spaces make it a residential amenity. Should be multiple uses.

Suhas Kodali (SK):

- If we want to bring a mix of businesses here, we need to have a diverse mix of housing price points.
- Need to take into consideration what the Highlands residents want but feel like we should continue to push for residential uses. We shouldn't just give up on it.

Joe Sultan (JS):

- Not asking for more height necessarily but saying that if it becomes residential it has to be higher.
- Feels like we shouldn't be prioritizing sustainability (added costs of sustainable building designations/elements) over providing housing for people.

### Where do we put active ground floor space in the Quad?

Doug Brown (DB):

- Likes the concept of the "active use" square diagram. Seems like streets would be a viable place for active ground floor uses. Maybe not everywhere, but some of the places.
- Envision called out Wilson Rd to be a main street, but Fawcett seems like a better location.

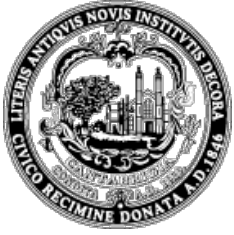
Kelvin Moses (KM):

- Right hand of Fawcett is already developed. Retailers want both sides of the street to be used. If you want to create an active space or "core". Retail will be scattered along streets.
- Thinks Fawcett is a good center of activity due to its location proximate to the bridge and future development, especially workers that will be coming sooner than later.

Mike Nakagawa (MN):

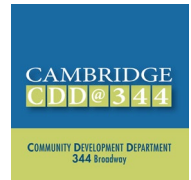
- The working group doesn't include anyone that lives in affordable housing.
- Who will the retail and active uses serve? They may be out of reach for a lot of people that may be living here in the future if we plan on living in a mixed-income district.
- Seems like conversation is leaning to people with higher incomes.
- How do you provide services and retail for people with moderate or modest incomes?

Diana Marsh (DM):



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- Really need to focus on linear open space and can we land retail near there so people can access it if they're using the open space?

#### **Street Network**

Doug Brown (DB):

- Fully supports what he sees on the map, but we need to move beyond the map. Each segment is a separate project. We need more detail on this.
- We have different landowners.
- How are we going to get to this vision of a street network? Would like to know what our method is.
- Need to drill down to a deeper level. Not a zoning thing, but it's hard to know what's not going to get built unless we change the zoning. Are there areas that are already going to be "checked off"?
- Would like to know segment by segment what's going to get built or what the status is, even if nothing is happening yet.

Ann Tennis (AT):

- With all the different developers in the city, it will be helpful to know what the city can do and what we will rely on for developers?

#### **Open Space/Civic Structure**

Eric Grunebaum (EG):

- Need to incorporate more water - water storage, water features, things that can flood. Example is North Point Park (Cambridge Crossing).
- Pocket parks and plazas can also make a big difference for activation of space and community gathering spaces.

Doug Brown (DB):

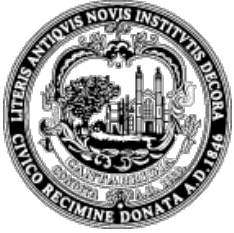
- Parks should be open to major streets to be active, although some parks do succeed if they are not on busy streets.
- Doesn't think rooftop open spaces are publicly accessible or shouldn't count towards public open space.

Kelvin Moses (KM):

- Linear park totals somewhere between 4-6 acres. A pretty expansive large park
- Getting control of the Bay State Pool site is necessary for park to be built. If the group is focused on the linear park, that's great. It is achievable.
- Pocket parks throughout the district would be helpful

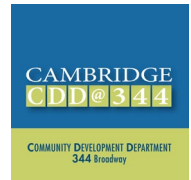
Mike Nakagawa (MN):

- Agrees that pocket parks would be great



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- Large parks tend to be destinations, but local or pocket parks serve the immediate residents or workers.
- The area has a lack of large destination parks already. The linear park is nice, but smaller parks would be better than large parks.

Diana Marsh (DM):

- Would love to have park across from Fayerweather School
- A linear park along Concord and Smith to the linear park would be great.
- Currently, there is not a way to get public access to Rafferty Park for anyone in the Quad

Ann Stewart (AS):

- What guarantee do we have that the open space will be protected in perpetuity?
- Also, don't like roof top open spaces
- Tot lot makes sense near the Finch Building

Jane Gilbert (JG):

- Doesn't like rooftop gardens or parks. How can that even count or be on the list?
- Thinks that park along Fawcett seems large and we'd be better served by smaller parks scattered throughout the area

Kelvin Moses (KM):

- There needs to be environmental remediation for some of these areas to be usable parks

Ann Tennis (AT):

- Has traffic and parking done a study of Concord Ave?
- Will traffic and parking make a study for this area a priority?

#### **Public Benefits**

Doug Brown (DB):

- What is the mechanism that ties the scale of the benefits to height?
- If we need millions of dollars for a public investment what does that mean in terms of how much development is needed?
- Open to height, but only if it gets the public benefits they need
  - Would basically like to see a development pro-forma that includes costs of public amenities

Suhas Kodali (SK):

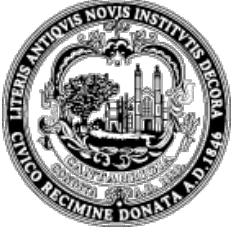
- Thinks that shopping center and buildings on Concord Ave could go taller.
- Likes idea of raising FAR and height limits

Joe Poirier (JP):

- The height is not necessarily what's on his mind, but rather what are the impacts of development? What sort of impacts will it have on traffic and its negative impacts on the area?

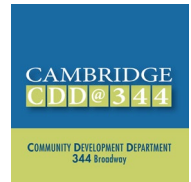
Jeff Roberts (JR):

- Helpful to talk about what are the consequences of height



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- Understanding what development outcomes, we value and balance that against concerns

Ann Stewart (AS):

- Will the city fund and pay for critical infrastructure?

Eric Grunebaum (EG):

- Helpful to understand where the City is on its contribution
- Not opposed to height, especially near tracks.
- Agree that \$5 per SF is not enough

Mike Nakagawa (MN):

- Everyone will be building to their maximum if you increase allowable height because land value will skyrocket
- What are we estimating for SF of development?
- Do we have any information on car usage in the Triangle? That would be a helpful comparison.

Ann Tennis (AT):

- Losing the sense of what this is supposed to be, which is a neighborhood. All the discussion is around height.
- 22 story buildings don't make a neighborhood. That is just a way of housing people.

Jennifer Gilbert (JG):

- Knowing the full buildout would be helpful to determine what sort of benefits can be expected from this.
- Rindge Apartments are tall, but it is a neighborhood. Height doesn't determine what's a neighborhood.
- Also, who is the public for public benefits? Who can live in this neighborhood? Who are we building projects/benefits for?

Doug Brown (DB):

- Case needs to be made why we should allow more height.
- Every building doesn't need to have the same bonus.
- We should be savvy about how we give away bonuses in exchange for public benefits/infrastructure

### **Public Comment**

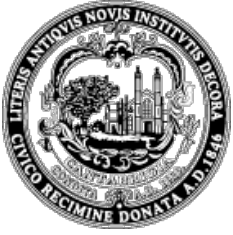
James Williamson (JW):

- Still doesn't understand the settings of the meetings. Why are they so exclusive?
- Most retail is over the bridge from Jefferson Park. Difficult to get to.
- How do people more easily get to the other side. Can there be stairs down to Terminal Road?
- Need to get serious about protecting pedestrians from bicyclists. Separate paths are critical.

Councilor Dennis Carlone

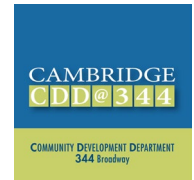
- Height means that land value will increase. What is that worth?
- Fawcett Street Park - every new district needs an open space. You have to show it.





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- The linear park shouldn't be broken up by roads.
- Good to add the Burger King site to the park – its crucial to announce the park to Concord Ave.
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) - hopefully the city manager will look at this method
- Cambridgeside showed where the parks should be, and they expected the developers to contribute to it. Same with Lechmere Canal
- This could be a condition in a zoning proposal like a PUD
- Cambridge should have more open space – it has only 51% of national average.
- All parks should be city owned and maintained by developers.
- Be wary of heights - A 120' precedent means that everyone will want that.
- Maybe 85' on Concord Ave and 65' in the middle of the Quad?
- Council will want more than a 40% housing requirement like Kendall.

Kristen Anderson

- Alewife Brook is a dirty water body, as is Little River
- We have the opportunity to address this problem with a combination of green and gray infrastructure
- Demand that MWRA update the sewer and conduit in this area

Rachel Delucas

- Linear park is nice, but a nature connection from Alewife to Fresh Pond
- Would help with flood management
- Build over the tracks with something more substantial than just a bridge
- You could provide amenities and cap over the tracks
- Thinks that light industrial jobs will not get attracted here, but the CHIPS act may help with fabrication in US and goes beyond just R&D/lab spaces
- These could be high quality jobs. Something like this rather than generic light industrial

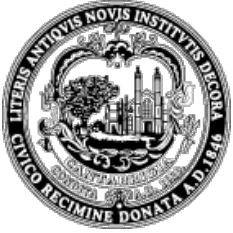
Gwen Speeth

- According to Cambridge's sewer maps, there are still combined sewers.
- There will be a massive increase of wastewater going into the system with new development
- How can they contribute to mitigating the impacts of this increase?
- Who can I talk to that will tell me that this is not a big issue?
- Looks forward to the public meeting

Lee Farris

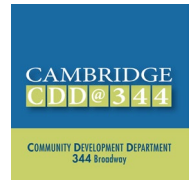
- Can the city offer different options for public benefits that are tied to heights? Mix and match.
- Is there a threshold number of residents to support small businesses or public goods? For example, how many people do you need to support a small business?
- Wants to make sure that the zoning can deliver what people want. There should be a review (annually?) to see if it is doing what was promised.
- There should be triggers for public goods. You should have X amount of housing before you can build commercial, for example.





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- PUD should be a consideration

The next meeting will be a public meeting on November 3. The City staff will present a status update on the project.