Central Square Customer Survey

2014 Update

City of Cambridge
Community Development Department, Economic Development Division
Introduction

Purpose and Background of the Central Square Survey
In 2009, Cambridge Community Development Department (CDD) conducted an intercept survey in the Central Square commercial district. In February 2014, CDD conducted a new online survey of Central Square users to update the results from the 2009 survey. Understanding consumers' needs will allow the City to help better assist property owners; recruit potential business to vacant spaces; and help current business owners understand their local market.

The 2014 online survey received 349 responses.

Report Sections:

- Slides 3 – 6: Demographics of Respondents
- Slides 7 – 11: General Findings (Use, Mode of Transportation)
- Slides 12 – 17: Geographic Business Questions
- Slides 18 – 22: Square Characteristic Questions
- Slides 23 – 27: Comments and Final Observations
Demographics: Residency

91% of respondents are Cambridge residents.
Demographics – Work/School

- I work in Cambridge
- Neither
- I both work and go to school in Cambridge
- I go to school in Cambridge
Demographics – Gender & Race

**Gender**
- Female: 61%
- Male: 38%
- Other: 1%

**Race**
- White: 80%
- Black or African American: 5%
- Hispanic or Latino: 7%
- Asian: 4%
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 1%
- American Indian/Alaska Native: 1%
- Other: 2%
Demographics – Age & Income

**Age**

- 0-18: 2%
- 19-24: 6%
- 25-34: 37%
- 35-44: 20%
- 45-54: 16%
- 55-59: 7%
- 60-64: 6%
- 65-74: 6%
- 75+: 1%

**Estimated Household Income**

- Less than $10,000 - 1%
- $10,000-$24,999: 3%
- $25,000-$34,999: 6%
- $35,000-$49,999: 12%
- $50,000-$74,999: 22%
- $75,000-$99,999: 13%
- $100,000-$124,999: 9%
- $125,000 or more: 23%
- Prefer not to answer: 11%
Findings: Use of the Square

Respondents were allowed to pick all that applied

- Spend time in Central Square (e.g. shop, dine, recreation)
- Use services in Central Square (e.g. doctor, city, post office)
- Live in a Central Square neighborhood (Area Four, Cambridgeport, Riverside or Mid-Cambridge)
- Work in Central Square
- Go to school in Central Square
- Other
Findings: Transportation Modes

What mode of transportation do you most frequently use to get to Central Square?

- Walk: 55%
- Subway: 15%
- Bike: 13%
- Drive: 12%
- Bus: 5%
Findings: Reason for Visits

What are the primary reason(s) you visit Central Square?

Respondents were allowed to choose up to two options

- Dining
- Transportation
- Shopping
- Post Office
- Recreation (fitness, hanging out)
- Work
- Arts/Entertainment Venue
- City Services (e.g. City Hall, Senior Center)
- Healthcare and other personal services
- School
Findings: Frequency of Visits

How often do you visit Central Square?

- Every day, almost every day: 66%
- Once a week: 23%
- Two or three times a month: 7%
- Once a month: 3%
- Rarely: 1%
- Every day, almost every day: 66%
Types of Businesses Desired
Which of the following types of businesses would you like to see in Central Square?

- Affordable, Sit-Down Restaurants
- Specialty Food Shop (e.g. cheese shop, butcher)
- Bakeries/Coffee Shops
- Movie Theater
- Independent Boutiques/Specialty Retail
- Artisan Spaces (e.g. art galleries, performance venues)
- Apparel Stores
- Food Trucks
- Bookstore
- Grocery Store
- General Merchandise Store (e.g. Target, Marshalls)
- Quick Service Food
- Toy Stores
- Home Furnishing Store
- Hair/Nail Salon
- Day care
- Other
- Music Venues
- Late Night Dining Options, (e.g. 24 hour diner)
- Year Round Farmers Market
- Bowling alley
- Large indoor public event space

Number of Times Heard
Where do people shop…

For apparel?

For specialty retail?

![Bar Chart: Apparel]

- Harvard Sq: [Value]
- Boston: [Value]
- Other: [Value]
- East Cambridge: [Value]
- N/A: [Value]
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq: [Value]
- Central Sq: [Value]
- Somerville: [Value]
- Fresh Pond/Alewife: [Value]
- Kendall Sq: [Value]
- Huron Village/Observatory Hill: [Value]
- Inman Sq: [Value]

![Bar Chart: Specialty Retail]

- Harvard Sq: [Value]
- Other: [Value]
- Inman Sq: [Value]
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq: [Value]
- Central Sq: [Value]
- East Cambridge: [Value]
- N/A: [Value]
- Boston: [Value]
- Somerville: [Value]
- Huron Village/Observatory Hill: [Value]
- Fresh Pond/Alewife: [Value]
- Kendall Sq: [Value]
Where do people shop…

For home furnishings?

For other retail?

[Bar charts showing the number of times each location was heard for home furnishings and other retail, with categories including Harvard Sq, Kendall Sq, etc.]
Where do people go for…

**Live entertainment (concerts/theater)?**

- Central Sq
- Harvard Sq
- Boston
- Other
- N/A
- Somerville
- Kendall Sq
- Inman Sq
- Huron Village/Observatory Hill
- East Cambridge
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq
- Fresh Pond/Alewife

**To eat at a sit-down restaurant or bar?**

- Central Sq
- Harvard Sq
- Inman Sq
- Kendall Sq
- Somerville
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq
- Other
- East Cambridge
- Boston
- N/A
- Fresh Pond/Alewife
- Huron Village/Observatory Hill
Where do people go…

To grab a quick meal or coffee?

- Central Sq
- Harvard Sq
- Inman Sq
- Kendall Sq
- Other
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq
- Boston
- N/A
- East Cambridge
- Somerville
- Fresh Pond/Alewife
- Huron Village/Observatory Hill

Times Heard

To go grocery shopping or the farmer’s market?

- Central Sq
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq
- Somerville
- Other
- Fresh Pond/Alewife
- Inman Sq
- N/A
- East Cambridge
- Harvard Sq
- Boston
- Kendall Sq
- Huron Village/Observatory Hill

Times Heard
Where do people go for…

The Pharmacy?

- Central Sq
- Harvard Sq
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq
- Other
- Inman Sq
- Somerville
- East Cambridge
- N/A
- Fresh Pond/Alewife
- Boston
- Kendall Sq

Huron Village/Observatory Hill

Times Heard

The Hair Salon/Barber?

- Harvard Sq
- Central Sq
- N/A
- Other
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq
- Boston
- Inman Sq
- Somerville
- East Cambridge
- Kendall Sq
- Fresh Pond/Alewife
- Huron Village/Observatory Hill

Times Heard
Where do people go for...

**The Gym/Fitness?**

- Central Sq
- Other
- N/A
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq
- Harvard Sq
- Boston
- Kendall Sq
- East Cambridge
- Somerville
- Inman Sq
- Fresh Pond/Alewife
- Huron Village/Observatory Hill

**Times Heard**

**Use Public Amenities**
(e.g. post office, library)

- Central Sq
- Harvard Sq
- Other
- East Cambridge
- Kendall Sq
- N/A
- Inman Sq
- Boston
- Somerville
- N. Mass Ave/Porter Sq
- Fresh Pond/Alewife
- Huron Village/Observatory Hill

**Times Heard**
Characteristics of the Square

Access to Parking
- Good: 28%
- Fair: 49%
- Poor: 17%
- N/A: 6%

Access to Public Transit
- Good: 99%
- Fair: 1%
Characteristics of the Square

Business Hours

- Good: 61%
- Fair: 34%
- Poor: 4%
- N/A: 1%

Customer Service

- Good: 39%
- Fair: 51%
- Poor: 6%
- N/A: 4%
Characteristics of the Square

Outdoor, Special Events & Nightlife
- Good: 44%
- Fair: 43%
- Poor: 10%
- N/A: 3%

Presence of Independent Businesses
- Good: 42%
- Fair: 46%
- Poor: 12%
Characteristics of the Square

Availability of Goods & Services

- Good: 26%
- Fair: 58%
- Poor: 16%
- N/A: 1%

Prices

- Good: 44%
- Fair: 51%
- Poor: 4%
- N/A: 1%
Characteristics of the Square

Cleanliness

- Poor: 58%
- Fair: 33%
- Good: 9%

Safety

- Poor: 25%
- Good: 22%
- Fair: 53%
Additional Comments

- People were asked if they had any comments or thoughts on Central Square.

- There were three common themes between over 100 responses:
  - what people want in the Square,
  - what they want to keep/love about the Square,
  - what they dislike/change.

- Following slides summarizes these themes
Keep/Love
Wants

affordable housing

- bakery
- more affordable places
- more creativity
- safety
- better transit signs
- brunch options
- streetscape plantings
- less parking
- affordable family options
- cleaner
- better police presence
- architecture
- casual restaurants
- hotel
- yoga shop
- public events
- healthy food options
- affordable housing
- more density
- clothing
- independent retailers
- community spaces
- more bike racks
- child friendly
- more coffee
- sidewalk retail
- bikelanes
- affordable food
- more housing
- reasonable apparel
- mixed uses
- music venue
- retail
- trans it oriented development
- family friendly public spaces
- different ethnic restaurants
- home goods
- music clubs
- music hall
- more retail
Change
Final Findings and Observations

- Similar to 2009, respondents continue to use Central Square primarily for entertainment and dining, and daily convenience goods (e.g. pharmacy and grocery) over other commercial districts in Cambridge.

- Central Square needs to expand and maintain its arts and cultural amenities.

- Respondents desire a diverse and local economic retail base in the Square.

- The request for more family friendly establishments and public spaces has increased since the 2009 survey.

- Affordability continues to be a significant issue for the community.

- Cleanliness and safety had lower ratings since the 2009 survey. They were the two biggest concerns for the majority of respondents.