



JURY REPORT STAGE III

To: Connect Kendall Square Open Space Competition Governance Group

From: Competition Coordinator on behalf of the Competition Jury

Date: April 8, 2015

The Connect Kendall Square Open Space Competition was a unique exploration into the creation of urban form. Rather than the design of an icon or an iconic place, this competition addressed the creation of a “framework.”

The intent of the exploration was to create a plan or mechanisms that would tie each of the new open spaces with the existing public realm in a system of open space, provide connectivity between and among the public spaces, and create an unforgettable public realm that will contribute to the evolving identity of Kendall Square as a place of innovation, a place of urban activity, and a place for all ages to live and enjoy.

During the process there was ongoing discussion, both within the Jury and within the Teams, about the definition of “framework” and how to implement the idea. The discussions included activation strategies, whether design of the parks should drive the framework or the framework should drive the design of parks, the integration of infrastructure, how to build upon what is currently in place, and what future interventions will ensure implementation of a coordinated and connected open space system. In the end, the Teams delivered the desired result—four diverse proposals for the Framework, each with unique characteristics that define the future form of the Kendall Square area.

The Jury evaluated all submitted materials, met with each Team to receive the Team presentation and to have a conversation regarding submittal details, and deliberated on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. This Jury Report is a record of the Jury’s evaluation and recommendations to the City of Cambridge.

Jury’s Evaluation and Recommendation

The Jury feels the Teams produced extraordinary results that are innovative, achievable and memorable. Each Team took a different approach and provided contrasting solutions—a stage for ephemeral activities versus the permanence of landscape as the defining feature; “dendritic” connections versus a strong cross axial connection; a central hub with activity outposts versus a toolkit of activities for all areas; more prescribed loops of circulation versus an opportunistic weaving of circulation to a core.

However, while each proposal is unique in its approach and definition of the framework, strong themes and commonalities are evident in the plans. These include:

- Recognizing the importance of the Charles River and basin and of connecting the river to East Cambridge, and acknowledging the need for more long-term thinking about how to make the Charles River more accessible and resilient;
- Extending the connection of water from the Broad Canal to the Volpe site; and
- Addressing stormwater management as an integral component of urban form and sustainability.

In its evaluation process, the Jury considered the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal in the context of the 10 Planning and Design Goals and overall ability to guide implementation of the vision that calls for Kendall Square to be a place “where the main attraction is the area itself, rather than employment, transit or any one particular building, space, structure, or event and its identity is defined just as much by quality experiences as it is by physical attributes and geographic location.”

The Jury rigorously discussed the merits of each proposal and their collective understanding of the “framework” and how it would best serve the City of Cambridge. Through this evaluation, **the Jury selected the proposal by Richard Burck Associates** as the submittal that best meets the intention of the Planning and Design Goals and provides a true framework for the ongoing design and development of Kendall Square’s public realm.

Jury’s Selection

Richard Burck Associates

This framework is rooted in a rich and graphic understanding of the site’s natural history and cultural evolution. The idea of first to “create” Kendall Square, and then “connect” it, is an excellent premise and produces a powerful network of proposed landscape and program spaces. The “dendritic” diagram effectively conveys the central design concept and lends it the needed flexibility for changing uses, circulation patterns, and evolution over time. The result is a beautiful and believable master plan that creates a strong connection to the river. The central connection from the created wetland at the Volpe site to the extended Broad Canal and the Charles River transforms the entire study area and makes this proposal outstanding.

- The central spine created by the new constructed wetland, the extended canal, and the effective connection to the waterfront will establish a powerful place, where there currently is none. The placement of the constructed wetland had logic and gives purpose to the extension of the canal as integrated infrastructure.
- An appropriate level of landscape design was provided to give adequate direction for the future design of the parks. The strong evocation of landscape experience suggested through the schematic plans and perspective views of the component landscapes defines a powerful sense of identity for the framework as a whole. The suggestion of consistent materials and construction details reinforces this effect. This is a framework that will not rely on special events or elaborate programming to establish an identity, but will accomplish this goal through unique and emotionally powerful experience of designed landscapes.

- The schematic designs for the four parks establish a complementary range of places, facilities, and experiences. While the programming and activities of individual landscapes is evoked in the plans and perspectives, the overall programming of the framework components is suggested as flexible, even portable.
- The innovative spatial analysis of current and proposed multi-modal connectivity created an integrated and legible street network between the four open spaces and a finer scale structure supporting a walkable urban environment.
- The approach to play distributes opportunities for play for all ages throughout the area. The core and dendritic paths are enlivened through strategic insertions of public arts, programming, and/or interactive play elements.
- This proposal has the strongest and most fully elaborated ideas for public private partnerships and development strategies of any in the competition. The flexibility of the “dendritic” model allows for the negotiation of various strategies for new development, the management of existing private-public spaces, and the creation of advantageous new private-public spaces. The result is the description of an effective process and priorities in the evolution of partnership-driven development.

Overall, the proposal provides a clear and inspiring framework that best balances process and design and integrates street connections, stormwater management, and play.

Jury’s Commendations

There are strong elements from each of the proposals that the Jury hopes would be included in the final Framework Plan.

SITELAB urban studios

- The “tactical implementation” of activation strategies, including prototyping events, will hopefully find their way into programming and ideas for open space in Kendall Square.
- A sense of fun and experimentation as a way to design landscape.
- The diversity of disciplines brought to the team sets a precedent for how to go forward.
- A new way of thinking about public space and a fun and flexible approach.
- The visual connection between Kendall Square and the river and Beacon Hill in Boston through a physical connection/strategic design move.
- Flexibility and prototyping is required by the pace of change of contemporary life, technology, and character of Kendall Square.

Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates

- Landscape as part of the identity of Kendall Square and a strong focus of urban design.
- The four parks were used very effectively to structure the overall image of the area, and to enhance the wayfinding and visibility of Kendall Square.
- Thoughtful analysis of user groups expressed in an imaginative way.
- Suggested potential to introduce a diversity of landscape in a compact walkable area.
- The change of Memorial Drive's eastbound lane under the bridge to create a pedestrian and cycle promenade.
- Creating great public landscapes that attract diverse human use and become places for evocative programming.

Framework Cultural Placemaking

- The emphasis on improving the connection between the T stop and the other parks, creating connections, including continued improvements through the Marriott, north into Kendall Square.
- Recognized the importance of partnership between the city and the historic sources of strength in the city, such as MIT.
- The Space Center and outposts as an interesting operating structure for managing programming.
- Interesting idea to swap a section of Roger's Park and the Foundry to draw people out of the maker's space and into the park.
- The active, innovative strategies for public engagement and participation as a means of assuring inclusivity of the diverse communities of East Cambridge.
- The "Canal Under Park" extending the existing canal boardwalk under the bridges to connect directly to the Charles River.

Stage III Process

From October to January, the four finalist Teams each developed a planning and design framework for the project area. The competition period began with a Briefing of the Teams and a "Meet the Teams Night." The Stage III Briefing included confirmation of the schedule, submittal requirements, expectations of Stage III activities, dissemination of other timely information regarding the area and project, and guided tours of the project area. The "Meet the Teams Night" provided an opportunity for the community members to learn more about the competition process and hear directly from each of the team leaders about their team composition, philosophy, experience, and initial approach to responding to the open space vision and design goals for the area as set forth by the ECKOS Study Committee.

The frameworks were required to respond to the Planning and Design Goals as listed in the Competition Manual and explore the potential of private and public open space to function as contributing elements of a larger system. To assist the Teams with this assignment, they had the opportunity to meet with the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for two separate Mid-course Reviews during the competition period. These reviews included focused discussion of planning and design, technical functionality, response to program criteria, and feasibility of implementation in Cambridge. The Teams were also given an opportunity at each review to participate in a discussion with the ECKOS Study Committee for additional insight.

The final submittal was a set of presentation boards depicting the framework, including drawings, narratives, and diagrams to explain the proposed concepts and a narrative and graphic report to provide supporting detail.

The Technical Advisory Group reviewed each of the submittals. The TAG members were requested to evaluate, from their perspective, how the submission and team addressed each of the Planning and Design Goals as stated in the Competition Manual. The TAG was specifically requested not to compare the four submissions, but to conduct an independent evaluation of each. The findings were compiled into an Advisory Report to the Jury to inform the Jury's analysis, evaluation, and determination.

The Jury received electronic copies of the submittals to review prior to convening in Cambridge on March 25-26, 2015, to hear presentations from each Team. The Jury session began with a review and discussion of each submittal in the morning, followed by presentations from SITELAB urban studio and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates in the afternoon. The second day began with presentations by Richard Burck Associates and Framework Cultural Placemaking in the morning, followed by Jury discussion, deliberations, and decision in the afternoon.

In the end, the Teams delivered the anticipated result—four diverse proposals for the Framework, each with unique characteristics that define the future form of Kendall Square. The Jury evaluated all submitted materials, met with each Team to receive the Team presentation and have conversation regarding submittal details, and deliberated on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. This report records the Jury evaluation, deliberations, and recommended action to the City of Cambridge.

The Governance Group will review the Jury recommendation, confirm the Jury's evaluation has been executed in accordance with the Competition Regulations, and forward the Jury Report to the City of Cambridge for their confirmation.