

Eastern Cambridge Kendall Square Open Space Planning Committee
May 29th, 2013
Summarized meeting notes

Committee members present: Carole Bellew, Charlie Marquardt, Christine Dunn, Christopher Perkins, Conrad Crawford, Daniel Norman, Lara Gordon, Michelle Lower, Patrick Magee, Rose Billeci, Sam Valentine, Susan Morgan, Thayer Donham, Victoria Farr

Staff present: Taha Jennings, Stuart Dash, Roger Boothe, Iram Farooq

Taha Jennings, of the Community Development Department, welcomed the Committee members and guests. Committee members then introduced themselves.

Committee members were each supplied with background materials including an Eastern Cambridge Kendall Square Open Space Study Map, the Healthy Parks and Playgrounds Task Force Report (2009), and the Cambridge Riverfront Plan: Reconnecting People to the Water (2011)

Taha Jennings then discussed the process moving forward. The Study Committee will be working closely with the community, City staff, and yet to be hired consultants to create a comprehensive open space plan for Kendall Square and Eastern Cambridge. The process is expected to last for about a year. It was explained that this process provided a unique opportunity to think comprehensively and creatively about open spaces and public spaces in the area, and come up with a truly innovative plan for the entire network of open spaces. Further, that it will be important to not only attract top firms to the process, but also create interest and enthusiasm and encourage participation within the community at all stages of developing the plan.

Roger Boothe, Director of Urban Design in the City of Cambridge Community Development Department, gave a presentation on open space, urban design, and private development in Eastern Cambridge and Kendall Square entitled: East Cambridge/Kendall Square: Inventing Places for People, 1960-present.

Committee Discussion

A question was asked if there will be separate design processes for the open spaces and the timeline for the new spaces particularly the parcel on Rogers Street.

There was a question regarding the Constellation Center site and if there is a garage underneath the property. Staff explained that there is a group in the process of raising funds, but any plans would probably go back before the Planning Board at this point. There is an underground garage at the site that was purposely designed so that users must exit to the outside before entering other buildings.

Another committee member asked about the maintenance of North Point Park. Staff answered that the State is responsible for maintenance there.

A suggestion was made to include more data at future meetings for example, the number of visitors to Broad Canal.

A committee member asked if any of the open spaces that are going to be created had more relevance or priority than the others. It was noted that the open space planning process will help make those kinds of determinations. In addition, it will be important to think about wayfinding and connections.

There was a question regarding the type and timing of the community process.

Information was also requested on the roadway Improvements in the area, and a map displaying all of the planned improvements, as well as a map showing open space ownership.

It was suggested that streetscapes should be considered as part of the scope of the study

There was a question regarding how much funding considerations should be taken into account. Staff noted that one of the factors that make this process unique is that there is both land and funding available.

Public Comment

Someone asked if there are any plans for transit expansion in the area.

An attendee stated that the proposed path along the Grand Junction line can complement Somerville path connections and become a valuable asset to the community. It was also stated that there are examples of successful public spaces near MBTA stations because of the availability of wi-fi, which can transform a space. Land Blvd was noted as unsuitable for pedestrian safety.

Someone asked if there are any East Cambridge natives on the committee. It was also suggested to explore proposals to link (via pedestrian bridges) the Science Museum to the other side of the River.