

Group 1 – Overcoming barriers

Open space

Access to Rafferty playground, Blair Pond and other open spaces and recreation areas is an issue

Pedestrian connections that are needed

- from Jefferson Towers to shopping center
- from T station to the school
- From T station to Cambridge Highlands
- Make walking along Concord Av. more enjoyable
- Change pathway on south side of Concord

Safety

- Isolation of T station – homeless people nearby in Alewife Reservation
- Need safe walking paths
- Need better lighting along Concord Av. and Blanchard Road

Bike paths

- Concord Ave. bike path is not used because it doesn't connect to anything; connect it to Belmont and Minuteman Trail
- Improve path along north side of RR tracks.

Traffic

- Rush hour traffic creates a “wall”.
- Deter cut through traffic, especially on Blanchard Road
- Improve the Concord/Blanchard intersections
- Don't allow a cut through from Loomis into the Quadrangle
- No connection across railroad should increase neighborhood traffic

Land uses

- No more industrial uses near Sancta Maria Hospital
- Concern for flooding with new development

Group 2 – Supporting and enhancing the community

Community Identity

- What is the Concord Alewife Community?
 - Includes area up to Mass Ave., to Belmont and East Arlington
 - It is a huge neighborhood, not just 218 Houses
 - Could include parts of Strawberry Hill and West Cambridge (neighborhood 10)
- There is a lack of a coherent identity in the area

Regional Issues

- Municipal neighbors need to be taken into account (Belmont and Arlington)
 - Flooding effects areas of these municipalities and vice versa
 - Traffic problems require regional solutions
- What is the status of Belmont's sewers?
- There needs to be coordination between Belmont and Arlington regarding sewer and transportation networks

Traffic Safety

- Traffic safety issues are a top concern
- The railroad crossing is a bad idea
- Flooding causes an increase of traffic on Magoun Street. This is a dangerous situation for pedestrians.
- Need a safer way to cross streets
- Good connections within the Quadrangle are the key to creating better connections throughout the entire study area.
- Pedestrians and cyclists should have separated ways (from automobile traffic)
- Parking should be minimized
- Shuttle buses should be used to travel across barriers
- There should be a special travel lane on Route 2
- Traffic bottlenecks at certain locations are an important issue: Concord Ave. and Fresh Pond Parkway, Mass Ave. and Route 16, Alewife Brook Parkway and Route 2.

Open Space Amenities

- There should be community meeting places
- A park on this side of the pond
- A park at the shopping center
- A green connection between Fresh Pond and Alewife Reservation
- Community apiaries
- Create a footpath out of Route 16

Housing and the Public Process

- Some people felt that townhouse residents are more transient than those who live in single-family homes. Should encourage single-family homes to create a community feel.
- Area should receive its share of affordable housing
- There was concern that the Committee members were from the study area only.
- There should be opportunities for questions from the larger group
- The money spent on this process should be used for something else

Group 3 – A sense of place

Safety

- No reason now to “wander” into Quadrangle
- Quadrangle = dark, narrow/fear of attack
- Enforce 20 mph near Fayerweather School

Land uses

- Neighborhood post office (vs. uses in Belmont)
- Drug store/library/supermarket
- Park in addition to Rafferty Park
- Mailbox on Sunset or Griswold
- “Invitation” to other businesses if the current businesses left. But do they want to/should they leave?
- Developable site on Concord (or close) as “foot in the door”

Pedestrian/bicycle connections

- Real motivation to walk
- Bike path on south side of Concord Ave says: “This is Cambridge.”
- Moving sidewalks
- Defined pathways
- Bridge as potentially stronger pedestrian way
- Separate walkway on bridge that would invite people to walk
- Pedestrian path from Highlands to T – make it safe – surrounded by skate park

Transportation

- Need to address traffic in whole area, traffic is the “dinner,” the rest is “dessert”
- Ban parking on access road

Open space options

- Skateboard park-creates a destination in Quadrangle
- Skateboard park should say “Sponsored by Alec, Lucas, Brandon, and Chris.” Thanks
- Dog walk/sitting park

Other issues

- Recycling household toxic waste
- Talk to/coordinate with all committees working in area

Group 4 – Forming a district of “good neighbors”

Land Use

- Desired future land uses should be decided, especially since different land uses have different traffic impacts.
- A land use strategy for the Quadrangle should be the first step.
- Envision that future uses in the quadrangle can continue as light industrial – low scale, low rise
- Need mixed use in Quadrangle – add more residential and retail. Need more density, especially residential.
- Concern that improvements might make land in the Quadrangle too expensive – can we imagine some mix that includes light industrial uses?
- Need more open space
- Need to create a livable place
- Concern about transition between residential Highlands and industrial uses in Quadrangle (sand and gravel piles). Is MDC land being used for industrial uses?

- Should the zoning be different to create a transition?
- Green space/park in the Quadrangle could serve as a buffer between the Quadrangle and Highlands
- Would like to see retail along Concord Ave.
 - Desired character
 - Do we have enough people to support it? There were restaurants and stores that went out of business.
 - Maybe more housing in the area could help
 - Don't want retail that people drive to
- Heights should be about 45' along Concord Ave. Taller buildings along Concord Ave (e.g. 725 Concord Avenue, which is 9 stories) seem out of scale.
- Would like to see more housing within the study area
- Fayerweather School was a fabulous land use change –though unplanned and unanticipated

Connections

- Improve character along the Alewife Brook Parkway from the rotary to Alewife station.
- Improve pedestrian access to open space resources – Alewife Reservation and Fresh Pond
 - Lights and improvements
- Can't see Fresh Pond water due to vegetation
- Is the fence around Fresh Pond really needed? It was mentioned that the fence is important to protect water quality in the reservoir. Explore the issue more to determine if the fence is really necessary.
- Connect Concord Ave bike path to the Minuteman trail. It was mentioned that there is already a connection along the Parkway. Perhaps better signage is needed to make the connection clearer.
- Could run a road from Quadrangle (Wilson Road railroad spur) to the shopping center under the Parkway bridge, enhancing connections all the way to Danehy Park.
- Blanchard Avenue needs sprucing up
- Coordinate with MDC master plan for Alewife Reservation

Transportation

- Pedestrian crossing lights at the rotary are too close to where vehicles have to yield for the rotary. This is a safety concern. It was pointed out that this is an improvement for pedestrians. However, the safety concern for vehicles remains. It deems a closer look at balancing pedestrian and vehicular concerns in this area.
- Important to fix past mistakes and think of unintended consequences when making future proposals.
- Reducing Concord Avenue from 4 to 3 lanes is problematic. Bike lanes on both sides of the street are a problem. Reduced capacity of the street would be more of a problem with future development generating more traffic.
- The Triangle and Quadrangle currently have completely separate access. The only route for people wanting to go the Quadrangle is from either end of Concord Ave – from Blanchard Ave end or the Alewife Brook Parkway end. Connection between the two may help traffic. However, there was also concern that this may cause short cut traffic. It was also mentioned that the railroads don't easily allow new surface crossings.
- Get people out of cars

- One option is to get a commuter rail stop in the area and use it to create a pathway connection between the Triangle and Quadrangle. MBTA not wanting to do this but the group should still try.
- Think of using the street behind shopping center
- Shuttle buses could be used to connect the Triangle and Quadrangle. It is important to remember, though, that this is a long term active solution and will require constant financial input.
- Need better crosstown transit -- Alewife buses should go to Cambridge, and Concord Ave. buses should go to Alewife. The plan to extend the Red Line to Lexington didn't materialize.

Group 5 – Preserving the environment

History

- It is vitally important to understand the history of the site. The “great swamp” of the 18th century was slowly eliminated through extractive industries including grazing of animals, ice cutting on the ponds, and clay mining. Manufacturing of brick and, later, steel further transformed marshes into an industrial district.

Ecology

- Ecologic principles could offer a framework for redevelopment.
- A more responsible approach to directing surface run off should be a priority. Most of the site is paved today and does not conform to the city's requirement that the 2 to 25 year storm event be retained on site. Enforcing this modern requirement will make a significant difference. In addition separating sanitary and storm sewers will reduce “flashiness” – flash floods.
- A lofty goal would be to fully use no-piped methods for handling surface run off during storms.

Open space and links

- There are major open space amenities near by but the links are either missing or hidden. Better pathways and signs are needed to direct people to the great open spaces near by.
- An open space system needs to be developed within the quadrangle that dramatically increases the amount of pervious surface and accommodates the surface run off allowing it to infiltrate back into the ground.
- Increasing the percentage of open space will decrease the amount of developable land but, if done well, can bring added value to the remaining development parcels.

Image

- We can't bring back the great swamp but it may be possible to evoke it through site design.
- The complex system of curves evident in the orthophoto are not a product of nature, they are the traces of the rail lines that served the area. How can these curved alignments add richness to the future development?
- Alewife “parkway” no longer looks like a parkway. A parkway is a park with a road in it. Concord Avenue could be redesigned as a parkway with generous landscaping not just on one side but both.