Concord-Alewife Planning Study
Public Meeting
March 27, 2003
Identifying Planning Goals:
Discussion and Workshops
Agenda

- Welcome and introductions
- Presentation: A review of the study area, issues, opportunities, and challenges
- Workshops: Looking at Concord-Alewife
- Reporting back
- Next steps
A look at the study area

Concord-Alewife Planning Study

City of Cambridge
Zoning and land use
Overview of the study area

The Highlands
19 acres
210 units housing

Concord-Alewife Planning Study
City of Cambridge

Goody, Clancy & Associates
Jamaica Plain Vision: Urban Planning & Architecture
Community Planning Solutions
Overview of the study area
Overview of the study area
Overview of the study area
Overview of the study area
The Concord Alewife Planning Study – Five Emerging Goals

• Overcoming barriers and improving connections.
• Supporting and enhancing the community.
• Building a real “sense of place.”
• Forming a district of “good neighbors.”
•Preserving the natural environment and enhancing access to open space.
Overcoming barriers and improving connections: Where are the opportunities?

- Across tracks
- To shopping center
- Linking open spaces
- Within the Quadrangle
Overcoming barriers and improving connections: What are the challenges?

Physical and visual constraints
Overcoming barriers and improving connections: What are the challenges?

Difficult internal block patterns
Overcoming barriers and improving connections: What are the challenges?

Accessibility within the study area
Overcoming barriers and improving connections: What are the challenges?

Accessibility within the study area

Average 10-minute walk

Concord-Alewife Planning Study
City of Cambridge
Supporting and enhancing the Concord-Alewife community: Where are the opportunities?

• Build on the stability of the existing community.
Supporting and enhancing the Concord-Alewife community: Where are the opportunities?

• Design new places and public spaces that support the community and a range of activities

• Make them accessible

• “Think personal and interactive”
  – Committee member

Pedestrian-friendly street with mixed uses
Supporting and enhancing the Concord-Alewife community: What are the challenges?

• Lack of meeting places
• Lack of pedestrian access
• Lack of critical mass to support new community “hearts”
Building a real “sense of place”: Where are the opportunities?

- Concord Avenue and Alewife Brook Parkway as true gateways
- Internal streets that welcome pedestrians
- Reinforcing connections to great outdoor spaces

Study for new neighborhood square
Building a real “sense of place”:
Where are the challenges?

- Concord Avenue: Discontinuous street edges with awkward mix of uses
- Alewife Brook Parkway: Suburban-style development and vast parking lots
Building a real “sense of place”: Where are the challenges?

- Lack of distinction in the Quadrangle between public and private spaces
- Blurred line between pedestrian and auto realms
- No hierarchy of public uses or architecture
Building a real “sense of place”: Where are the challenges?

- Lack of physical or visual corridors to outdoor spaces
Forming a district of “good neighbors”: What are the opportunities?

• Potentially conflicting land uses in the study area
Good transitions make good neighbors
Forming a district of “good neighbors”: What are the challenges?

- Transitions in development scale in the study area
Preserving the natural environment and enhancing access to open space: Where are the opportunities?

- Fresh Pond Corridor Enhancement Project
- Fresh Pond and Alewife reservations
- Implementing “best management practices”
- “Connecting the green beads”
  - from Committee member
Environment and open space: What are the challenges?

• 90% impervious surface in Quadrangle
• Sensitivity of both Alewife and Fresh Pond reservations
• Managing development within environmental constraints
A review of the major technical considerations

- Transportation issues
- Market issues
Transportation issues:

- Study area is a small piece of the puzzle.
- Difficult to influence regional traffic.
- Auto access to the study area itself.

Regional vs. local traffic
Transportation issues:

Internal circulation
Transportation issues:

- Red Line service at Alewife – regional and local functions.
- “Feeder” bus routes to station
- Concord Avenue routes connect to Harvard Square
- Commuter rail
Transportation issues:
Transportation is one piece of the puzzle

- Enhance opportunities for making connections
- Enhance non-auto mobility
- Influence different kinds of land use
Transportation issues: Ways of dealing with limitations
How land-use options affect auto trip generation

Total daily trips

Industrial  Office  Apartments  Single-Family

Concord-Alewife Planning Study
City of Cambridge
Transportation issues:
Ways of dealing with limitations
How land-use options affect auto trip generation

A.M. peak hour

- Industrial
- Office
- Apartments
- Single-Family

Concord-Alewife Planning Study
City of Cambridge
Transportation issues:
Ways of dealing with limitations
How land-use options affect auto trip generation

P.M. peak hour

Industrial  Office  Apartments  Single-Family
Transportation issues: What impact could transportation have on development?

Making transit more attractive could change mode splits.
Market issues: Development trends for the region

- Residential
  - Ownership & rental: strong
  - Assisted Living/Independent Living: strong
  - Special Nursing Facility: moderate

- R&D/Industrial
  - R&D and warehouse: strong
  - Construction: moderate
  - Manufacturing: weak

- Retail
  - Neighborhood and community: strong
  - Regional: moderate

- Hospitality
  - Restaurant: moderate
  - Hotel: weak

- Office
  - Class A/B: moderate
  - Class C/D: weak
Market issues:
Development themes in the study area

- **Residential**
  - Mature neighborhood
  - In-fill housing
- **Transit-oriented**
  - Office/R&D park
  - High-density residential
- **Industrial district**
  - Established businesses
  - Business incubators
  - Back Streets uses
- **Retail and commercial destinations**
  - Convenience retail and consumer services
  - Restaurants
  - Hotel
- **Community service destinations**
  - Medical offices
  - School
  - AL/SNF
Market issues: 
Existing patterns of development
Market issues: 
Development trends and patterns

The nature of development to date:
- Opportunistic
- Eclectic
- Driven by:
  • parcel availability and location
  • ownership and occupancy
  • market context and timing
Market issues:

The “ambient outlook” for the study area

- No change expected
  - Mature residential neighborhood
  - Major investment within last 20 years
  - Long-term leases or other restrictions
- Areas of potential change
  - Higher-value uses or densities in the future
  - Vacant sites or buildings
  - Parking lots/yard storage
Market issues:
What could influence the “ambient outlook?”
Changes in:

- the market
- amenities
- parcelization
- streets
- access/transit
- zoning
Workshops: “A Look at Concord-Alewife”

Rules of the game

- assignments
- participants’ role
- facilitators’ role
- recorders’ role
- floaters’ role
- reporting back
- time
Workshops: Reporting out

• Where were the surprises?
• Where were the exciting opportunities?
Next steps

• Input from public meeting to inform Committee’s work
• Charrette scheduled for Saturday May 17, Tobin School