

**Trolley Square Committee Meeting Notes**  
**Thursday, August 29, 2002**  
**6:30- 9 PM**  
**North Cambridge Senior Center**  
**2050 Massachusetts Avenue**

**Attendance:**

**Members**

Helen Kukuk (HK)  
George McCray (GM)  
John Danehy (JD)  
Martha Older (MO)  
Cara Cheyette (CC)  
Ruthann Rudel (RR)  
Tom Buffett (TB)

**Staff**

Susan Glazer  
Stuart Dash  
Darcy Jameson  
Chris Cotter  
Iram Farooq  
Rebecca Sozanski

**Architect/ Urban Design Consultant**

Dennis Carlone

**Members of the Public**

24 people signed the attendance sheet

In response to the large turnout by members of the public who were new to the Trolley Square process, Stuart Dash began the meeting by introducing staff and giving background information about the process thus far. Dennis Carlone then presented a new design scenario that showed twenty units located along Mass Ave on the thin portion of the site. This scenario had on-grade parking behind the buildings and a larger portion of open space than previous scenarios shown.

Committee members responded with the following comments about the new design:

The committee should remember the North Mass Ave Overlay District Guidelines require retail on the ground floor. Being able to walk to a retail service should be considered a public benefit. The final design should not focus only on affordable housing or open space, but should integrate many uses. (GM)

The newest design scenario is appealing because it has a lower number of units and more open space. It feels like it would fit in with the community. However, the community's expressed concern about density makes it seem like nine units would be enough on the site. Surface parking is also a problem. (MO)

Open space seems particularly important on this site, as there are many other sites in the neighborhood that have the potential to be densely built upon. Even the 20-units presented in the most recent design scenario seems like a lot on this site. It would be a good idea to get more input from the community. (TB)

The new design scenario is a move in the right direction. Green space is necessary to provide relief on Mass Ave. It would be a shame to have a parking lot—perhaps there could at least be some sort of raised first story to accommodate parking underneath. If

below-grade parking is not possible with this design, perhaps there is non-contiguous surface parking that could be found on the MBTA portion of the site. (RR)

While the idea of open space is appealing, the space might be uninviting without retail to enliven it. (CC)

While the increased green space in this new scenario is appealing, a few more living units might be good. Perhaps management could operate a parking lot underneath the green space. There should also be a plan to ensure effective long-term maintenance of a park space. (HK)

The site should have housing for the elderly. The edge along Mass Ave should have a strip of retail. (JD)

Dennis Carlone gave a slide presentation of some different buildings and open spaces that have elements that might be transferable to the Trolley Square site. Staff also distributed photographs of a development in Arlington Heights that seemed to incorporate many of the elements that the committee had been discussing. There was then a public comment period, which included the following:

A traffic study should be conducted. The community would like to know the timeline of the project. (Robin Yearwood)

Automobile traffic is the major problem, not density. This project is an opportunity to increase design coherence in this area. Ownership is preferable to rental housing. (Tim Murphy)

This site should be the focal point of the community. It should reflect the intention of recent rezoning. (Ed Sear)

A park might not work in this location because of the surrounding uses. This location serves as more of a pass through. (Dave Barker)

North Cambridge does not need more affordable housing, but does need a community center (especially for NoCa and other arts groups). A site with only open space might not work in this location. Housing could cause the site to feel private. (KD Mernin)

While an advocate for affordable housing, the discussions about other uses have been compelling. The tour the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee took the previous evening was helpful in creating a context for possible designs. One precedent might be the Modern Continental building, located across the street from the trolley site. (Cliff Boehmer)

Renters might not be as committed to the neighborhood as owners. (John McLaughlin)

Mass Ave divides the community. Any development should increase the sense of vitality. A park might become run down or unsafe over the years. (Steve McCabe)

There is the potential for mixed-income housing with a smaller number of units (6-8 affordable, 6-8 market-rate). Any development should enhance the Mass Ave retail edge. Any open space should be connected to Linear Park. Given that there are no acquisition costs, below-grade parking should be possible. (Nina Schwartzchild)

As a long-time renter, disagrees with the idea that renters are less invested in their community than owners. (Mike Feloney)

Any new residents on the site should feel invested in the community and want to remain for a long time. (Ken Toth)

The Community Development Department should be respectful of the neighborhood. (Craig Kelley)

Three housing developments built in recent years have placed pressure on the neighborhood. There should be underground parking and mixed-use on the site. (Hope Kelley)

It would be good to be able to walk to retail services (what happens on upper floors of buildings is of less concern). There should be below-grade parking. (David Bass)

Any development should respect the neighborhood and be mindful of traffic on Mass Ave. (Ron Jackson)

A community space could be used by a variety of community groups. Any development should have an active ground floor to animate the open space. (Jen Fuchel)

There are many children in the neighborhood, and a community center would be very useful (especially in the winter). The most built-out design scenario is not appealing, as the open space feels very private. (Danrey Toth)

North Cambridge should not have to bear the burden of more affordable housing. A community center is preferable in this location. (Rhea LaSage)

The neighborhood appreciates the hard work done by the committee. North Cambridge already has a significant proportion of the city's affordable housing. (Joe Joseph)

Planners should link this project to Linear Park and to proposed improvements in the intersection of Mass and Cameron Ave. Other vacant lots in the area have the potential to be densely developed. The public process should continue for this project. (Michael Brandon)

Because there was no land acquisition cost for this project, a wide variety of possibilities exist (such as affordable housing, below-grade parking, and a community center). How does the expiration of the public benefit clause affect the project? (Carolyn Miethe)

It was announced that the next committee meeting would take place on Thursday, September 12, at 6:30 PM (location TBA).