

35 Cherry Street

CET Focus Group | Haitian Creole-Speaking | 2nd Meeting | September 20, 2021

Project Summary & Community Engagement Process

The City of Cambridge is leading a public process to decide the future use of 35 Cherry Street, an approximately 11,000 sf vacant property in The Port. 35 Cherry Street will be acquired by the City as part of a real estate development agreement with Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This transfer includes the stipulation that the parcel be used in perpetuity in a way that directly benefit residents in the Port neighborhood (formerly Area Four) and surrounding communities. The City Council identified the site for affordable housing.

On September 20, 2021, staff from the Community Development Department led a focus group with Cambridge residents who speak Haitian Creole. Staff presented the results of the preceding engagement events and the group discussed additional feedback. This focus group was attended by five community members and one outreach worker from the Department of Human Service Programs' (DHSP) Community Engagement Team (CET).

Meeting Notes

Project Massing and Height

- One participant stated the building(s) at 35 Cherry St should not be taller than 3-5 floors. They said it is difficult to live on a top floor with young children.
- Most participants do not want a tall, big building.

On-Site Amenities

- Participants stated they would like to see a space for children to play.
- One participant noted that the lot is not very big, so a large playground is not an option. She would like a small space for people to gather outside.
- One participant said they would prefer units with closets and balconies.
- Most the participants stated there should be parking on-site, at least one spot for each unit. Not all the participants own cars, but they would like to have one when they can afford it.

Unit Size, Bedrooms

- Most the participants expressed a preference for 3-4 bedroom units to for families.
- One participant said bedrooms should be larger, because some of the existing multi-bedroom units have rooms that are too small to use.
- One participant stated that units with 3-4 bedrooms should also have at least two bathrooms.
- One participant said there is a need for transitional housing, so people who are on waiting list for other housing can stay in the city temporarily. This is especially important for people with children in the schools so they can keep an address in Cambridge.
 - One participant described how people move from place to place, living with friends or family temporarily. They said even undersized housing that is stable would be better than the uncertainty of not having somewhere of your own.

Level of Affordability

- One participant said housing at 35 Cherry St. should prioritize people with very low incomes. Single parents may have a hard time earning enough to qualify as moderate income.
- One participant said they would prefer housing for people with moderate incomes (between \$50K-\$100K).

Rental or Homeownership

- Four of the participants stated they prefer 35 Cherry St. be affordable rental, and two of the participants prefer homeownership.
 - Reasons for rental: Smaller units are better for rental, and the participant knows more people who are looking for rental.
 - Reasons for homeownership: Opportunity to invest and earn equity.

Other Comments

- Two participants said the affordable housing at Cherry St should prioritize families.
- One participant said the housing should serve homeless people or immigrants.
- A participant stated a lot of single parents are leaving Cambridge because they can't afford to stay. This housing should provide housing for those families.