

Cambridge Pedestrian Committee Meeting Minutes – April 24th, 2014

Pearl Street Walk

In Attendance: Elizabeth Bierer, Rose Billeci, Alan Breed, Victoria Farr, Robin Finnegan, Debby Galef, Magda McCormack, Benjamin Williams, Andrea Yoder

Street-wide Notes

- Crosswalks
 - All crosswalks parallel to Pearl Street should be elevated to match the sidewalk level if possible. The primary walking direction is up and down Pearl Street, and elevating these crosswalks would improve pedestrian safety and visibility.
 - All parallel crosswalks should be made square to Pearl Street. Perpendicular crosswalks should be made square where appropriate.
 - There are not enough perpendicular crossings of Pearl Street. See our notes for specific location suggestions.
 - All pedestrian ramps should be bumped out to facilitate shorter crossing times, greater visibility, and decreased turning speed.
- Sidewalk obstructions
 - There are a large number of utility poles obstructing the very narrow right of way. Burying utilities should be examined for cost effectiveness. If burying utilities is not an option, utility poles at intersections should be relocated to less obstructing locations.
 - There are many established trees along the street, which may require a larger tree well and a sidewalk bump out, as used by DPW in other tight sidewalk locations.
 - Street signs (historic square markers, parking signs, etc.) should be consolidated where possible. There are several duplicate signs creating clutter and blocking the sidewalk.
- Street concepts
 - The Pedestrian Committee is divided as to the ideal street concept. Removing a lane of parking permanently could be beneficial by encouraging alternatives to driving and decreasing traffic, but it may increase overall vehicle speeds and remove a safety barrier between pedestrians and the motorway. Two options may be worth exploring:
 - Remove roughly half of the parking, but institute a chicane along the length of the street to keep traffic moving at current or lower speeds.
 - Replace the removed parking lane with a full-scale curb-separated cycle track, to maintain safety of pedestrians on that side of the street.

Walking Tour Notes

- The notes from the walking tour were taken on a map from CDD. The map is available upon request. Notes are organized from north to south (the direction of the walk), and broken up by cross streets.

- Massachusetts Avenue to Green Street
 - Sidewalks here are extremely narrow, even compared to other parts of Pearl Street, despite no parking and very busy pedestrian traffic.
 - The #47 bus drops off a large number of people at Pearl Street and Green Street, most of whom walk through this block to Massachusetts Avenue.
 - While outside the scope of this project, the buildings facing Massachusetts Ave have very large, blank walls that should be activated in some manner.
- Green Street to Franklin Street
 - The sidewalk on the west side of Pearl Street is too narrow, particularly for access to the library. A larger sidewalk in front of the library would improve discoverability of this particular branch. This may be an opportunity for some interesting paving to highlight the library.
 - The intersection of Pearl Street and Franklin Street is well done.
- Franklin Street to Watson Street
 - The four-way intersection with Auburn Street should have all four crosswalks.
 - There is no stop sign on the east side of Auburn Street.
 - The southeast parking lot at Auburn Street is one large driveway. This lot requires some form of access management to improve pedestrian safety.
 - The eastern side of the street between Auburn Street and William Street is sinking.
 - There is an extra utility pole on the west side between Auburn Street and William Street.
 - There is currently one crosswalk shared between the two intersections of William Street and Watson Street. The current crosswalk has a conflict from vehicles turning from William Street. It may be safer and more convenient to have two crosswalks: one on the north side of William Street and one on the south side of Watson Street. There is a bus stop across from the south side of Watson Street as well that may recommend this solution, though the bus stop may not be frequently used.
- Watson Street to Lopez Street
 - The sidewalk on the east side between Watson Street and Cottage Street is sinking.
 - There are no pedestrian treatments at all at Cottage Street.
 - There is illegal drainage on the northeast corner of Lopez Street and Pearl Street.
 - The intersection at Lopez Street has no pedestrian treatments at all; there should be at least one crosswalk shared between Cottage Street and Lopez Streets.
 - There is an empty tree well at the southeast corner of Cottage Street.
- Lopez Street to Decatur Street
 - There is an established tree at 115, 124, and 133 Pearl Street. The tree at 133 Pearl Street is particularly obstructing.
 - There are no crossings of Pearl Street between Decatur Street and Perry Street; there should be at least one perpendicular crossing shared between them.
- Decatur Street to Valentine Street
 - The west sidewalk between Decatur Street and Lawrence Street is great.

- The crosswalk on the south side of Lawrence Street has no curb cuts and runs to a drain.
- The single crosswalk between Lawrence Street and Valentine Street may be complemented by an additional crosswalk at Valentine Street or at Lawrence Street.
- Valentine Street to Erie Street
 - The intersection with Corporal McTernan street is good.
 - The sidewalk on the north side of Corporal McTernan is obstructed by a USPS mail box and a utility pole.
 - There are a lot of parking regulation signs between Speridakis Terrace and Erie Street, some of which are unnecessary.
 - There is a great example of a back-sidewalk tree on the east side of Pearl between Speridakis Terrace and Erie Street.
- Erie Street to Hamilton Street
 - The intersection with Erie Street is the first four-way intersection since Auburn Street. It may be suitable for a speed table, as it's roughly halfway down the length of Pearl Street. This intersection should have all four crosswalks.
 - There is too much paving material variability on the sidewalks through this section. Replacing like with like may be aesthetically unappealing.
 - The intersection with Hamilton Street has a utility pole blocking the sidewalk on the northwest corner.
 - There is an established tree on the southwest corner of the Hamilton intersection.
 - The intersection at Hamilton Street should have all four crosswalks.
- Hamilton Street to Allston Street
 - The sidewalk grade is too steep at two driveways (~230 and 231 Pearl Street).
 - There is too much sign clutter at Allston Street, including a duplicate memorial square.
 - The intersection with Allston Street should have all four crosswalks.
- Allston Street to Putnam Avenue
 - There are not enough trees along this block. More should be planted if there is room.
 - There is a mid-block bus stop on this block.
 - The intersection at Putnam Avenue needs to have curb bump outs on at least three of the four corners. (The northwest corner might be hindered by bus and truck turning radii.) There should be tighter turning radii on all corners, and all corners need much better ramps. As all trucks and buses have to turn onto Putnam Avenue here, it might be appropriate to narrow the entrance to the next block of Putnam Avenue even more, as a signal to traffic. This intersection is an opportunity for more dramatic treatment or art. (Cambridge Pedestrian Committee Square! ☺)
- Putnam Avenue to Chestnut Street
 - Traffic south of Putnam Avenue drops off significantly, creating a very different feel for the street between Putnam Avenue and Granite Street.
 - There are three established trees on this block that may need special sidewalk wraparound treatment: 269, 266-B, and 289 Pearl Street. The tree at 289 leaves the sidewalk nearly impossible to navigate.

- Sidewalks at this point transition to all brick.
- There are steep ramps in front of driveways at 276 and 280 Pearl Street.
- The intersection with Chestnut Street should be redesigned to remove the blinking traffic light and to slow traffic, as the traffic light is barely visible. This may be another opportunity for a speed table. This intersection should also have all four crosswalks, and at minimum generous bump outs.
- There is a badly placed utility pole on the southwest corner of the intersection with Chestnut Street.
- Chestnut Street to Henry Street
 - There is an established tree at 306 Pearl Street.
 - The intersection with Tufts Street could have all three crosswalks without hindering the low amount of traffic.
 - The crosswalk parallel to Pearl Street across Henry Street should be squared to the corner. This intersection could also have all three crosswalks.
 - At minimum, there should be one more crosswalk shared between Tufts Street and Henry Street.
- Henry Street to Granite Street
 - The crosswalk parallel to Pearl across Glenwood Avenue should be moved in closer to Pearl Street, and there could easily be three crosswalks for this intersection. This intersection should have at minimum one perpendicular crosswalk.
 - The intersection with Granite Street needs bollards in multiple locations: along the south side of Granite Street, and blocking the bump outs on both sides of the north of the intersection. These bollards could be made unique or representative of the neighborhood. This speed table and any other raised intersections along Pearl Street should match aesthetically.