Volpe Working Group Meeting – Notes
May 3, 2017, Cambridge Police Department

- Attending:
  - Volpe Working Group: Steve LaMaster, Kathy Born, Esther Hanig, Hugh Russell, Gerald O’Leary, Peter Crawley, Brian Dacey, Chris Barr
  - City staff: Jeff Roberts, Daniel Wolf, Joe Barr, Susanne Rasmussen, Chris Cotter, Erik Thorkildsen (consultant); Councilman Dennis Carlone
- Jeff - introduction
- Sarah Gallop - quick update from MIT – held Wellington-Harrington meeting and 303 Third St. meeting; starting to see some consistency in input

Climate, Energy, and the Environment

- Jeff - presentation
- Discussion
  - This is an opportunity to look at larger issues before you design an individual building; Site plan / street layout provides more of an opportunity than we normally have
  - How should these affect our thinking? Should we pick and choose which of these are important? Will all of these become city requirements over the next few years?
  - Overlap with what we discussed; open space can double as water management vehicle; civic space can provide shelter, resources in time of emergency
  - Energy use - heat gain, building efficiency - most relevant issues not much opportunities for energy generation, harder to do solar with high-rise buildings
  - Appalled by number of glass curtain wall buildings coming to Planning Board – seems like inefficient design
  - As temp gets higher, energy use goes up in AC use and also that energy use makes it hotter outside - vicious cycle
  - MIT - opportunity to utilize technology to be energy efficient - see Greentown Labs in Somerville
  - MIT has lofty goals, but this may be different because it is a commercial (non-campus) development
  - What are the tradeoffs between these different goals?
  - Projects may hit multiple goals - open spaces that work well when they're dry and wet - absorption
  - District type energy systems can promote energy efficiency and resilience, because they can keep running if power goes out - integrated systems
  - What are the LEED triggers in Net Zero Action Plan? (LEED gold with 6 energy points for large buildings; next step contemplated is going to 19 points)
  - Any reason why any of the projects done individually or collectively on this site would not follow the Net Zero recommendations?
  - MIT and Harvard have district energy plans - an integrated system that is connected to buildings - more efficient

Transportation
• **Jeff - presentation**

• **Discussion**
  - Grand Junction Path - frustration with DOT - they don't have the money to create transit but won't allow for a path; would be a transformative transit project
  - Parking - the tenants place a high value on the parking; if it were up to me, I would have a lower parking requirement
  - You do hear stories from employees who live far away complaining about parking, given Red line reliability is not great - companies use "coaches" (coach buses) to supplement transit for employees
  - Volpe is the biggest development project in the recent times in the region? – Tips the equation for transit
  - Cambridge and Boston will gain population and more people will be commuting from closer in, parking will increasingly be an "executive perk"
  - Won't be a lot of space for people to have cars - we should pay a lot of attention to how people get around without cars
  - Making people feel the economic cost of parking is part of City’s approach to managing traffic demand
  - Half of the surface area of the Volpe site is parking now
  - People have had a motto in E Cambridge: infrastructure first, development second
  - Transportation is crucial
  - We hear from employees all the time: Getting here by car is a disaster, is the City considering the infrastructure necessary to manage all of this new development?
  - Only way to improve the situation is to improve the situation districtwide; strategies to get people who drive to not do so
  - DOT is committing 100s of M of $ to replace the Red Line cars, which will expand capacity – given timing, those new cars will come around when these buildings come online - fragility and capacity issues should get better - question of how fast
  - Shuttles - over 31 routes (anywhere from 6-12 per day per route) - coaches, etc. - MIT, Biogen, EZRide - is there a way to increase the efficiency of all of this? Would be nice if these were consolidated - that should be looked at in this planning process - optimizing the system
  - Don’t think self driving cars will offset issue of traffic, but could impact traffic
  - Concern - ridehailing leading to big increase in driving - easy, cheap, quick – also studies from areas other than Cambridge show a big chunk of those trips are taken out of transit; if results in Cambridge are like elsewhere, up to 20% of people riding here would come from transit
  - Drop off and pick up is an issue for ridehailing vehicles as well
  - Ability to enforce the behavior we want is limited with ridehailing; state has taken regulatory authority but no plans to do enforcement; from parking perspective - hard to enforce against short term parking
  - Evidence initially that disproportionate crashes with bikes coming from ridehailing
  - Ridehailing is both an opportunity and a threat
  - PTDM ordinance provides other mechanisms to reduce driving

**Housing**

• **Jeff - presentation**
Discussion

- Housing is important to sustainability - will take strain off, so people can walk to work etc
- How do we do middle income housing?
- Always concerned we make sure we're trying to attract families to Cambridge; families are what make up the fabric of the community
- City tried expanding middle income rental units through inclusionary-like zoning in Kendall Square, experience so far is not incredible demand for them
- In comparison - low and moderate income households have more applications for inclusionary
- Heard that rents were too high at middle-income level (30% of income)
- Another approach is to add a lot of supply - hope that affects the market to reduce cost, particularly in older stock; you could see the converse on that. Incredible demand on existing units
- Just updated inclusionary policy; studies showed dramatic change in demographics in income, particularly at moderate and middle income
- Middle income people have more options, mobility, can look at value
- Not enough examples of middle-income housing to draw conclusions - possibly more interest in limited equity vs. rental at that income level?
- Overall, market is rising beyond what people can afford - cost burdening affecting people at higher and higher incomes
- Need for 3 bedroom units? Very few being created in the market
- In terms of predicted household formation, will see increasing demand for larger units for larger households, multifamily developers will start to respond to that - already starting to see some of that in market
- Desire for more homeownership - but hard to regulate in the market because hard to control whether condos are owner-occupied or rented
- A lot of rental created recently, before that was a lot of condo development, but many leased up as rental
- How does the specter of Airbnb fit in?
- Were more federal and state subsidies for homeownership. Public funding for affordable homeownership also low
- Is Kendall a family friendly location? Doesn't have that sense of neighborhood, lot of traffic, not a lot of open space; many younger workers, a lot of the middle management who have children, they choose elsewhere
- Difficult to know what decisions families will make; cognizant that the neighborhood will change; seeing more families living in denser housing and towers, many families would be happy to be anywhere in city, not leave school system - survey of recent properties showed about 30% of market-rate units had kids, almost all in 2+ bedroom units
- So many children on Cambridgepark Drive; it's becoming a transportation challenge to get them to schools
- City survey on quality of life, going back many years, very high satisfaction among people living in Cambridge - if people could stay here, they would
- Enrollment at schools drops off significantly around 5th grade or so, growing families
- NYC wouldn't on paper sound so attractive but families live there
- Kids add a lot to the experience of a city - a lot of kids in 303 Third Street courtyard after 5pm
○ Taking a serious look at optimizing built environment to attract families; look at Vancouver examples - feasible to design portion of units to adequately serve needs of families with children
○ A lot of people moving into the city with children are people of foreign origin, accustomed to living in urban areas

Public Comment

- Dennis Carlone: Ordinance Committee looking to this committee for main recommendations - hope you get to that point so we can discuss alternative site plans and massing locations; we've told MIT to make this work it has to be a superb urban design; I've seen early work from Manfredi and Erik that starts to get at that; will be design guidelines with this petition; meet almost every week with MIT and hope they all come together
- Jeff - Have had discussions of urban design, which will come back; the following meeting with be synthesis
- Carlone - Land uses, activities that make sense from Working Group perspective; MiT wants active retail presence; street grid going through; not feel like a campus but not heavily congested city area; Planning Board will be active participant in this
- Is it unrealistic to elicit proposals from developer themselves?
- Stuart - will meet the main concepts; establish principles of site planning and permeability and connection and intend to weave back in
- Carlone - Could have 500 kids in this area - that's an elementary school; Connections to CRA, Boston Properties on west edge;
- Our job is to be clear about what our priorities are, MIT will modify project based on input, could complete our feedback process in short amount of time
- Was my sense that this group could be an organizing group for all the offshoot conversations, would recommend that the group stay constituted into a phase two
- Carlone - agree
- Role of this group has been to reaffirm earlier planning efforts, haven’t seen anything so far that leads us to think there should be a radical change in course