

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
HARVARD SQUARE DESIGN PROJECT
MEETING NOTES**

Subject: Harvard Square Design Committee (HSDC) – Meeting #15

Date, Time & Place: February 12, 2004, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM
Cambridge Savings Bank

Present:

HSDC Members:

Mohsen Kurd
Sean Peirce

Nathalie Beauvais
Hugh Russell

Nelson Goddard
John DiGiovanni

Public:

Mike Hansen
George Kelso

Howard LeVaux
Bette Davis

City of Cambridge

Kathy Watkins (CDD)
Susanne Rasmussen
(CDD)

Cara Seiderman (CDD)
Susan Glazer (CDD)
Owen O’Riordan (DPW)

Charles Sullivan (CHC)
Sarah Burks (CHC)

*CDD = Community Development
Department*

DPW = Department of Public Works

*TP&T = Traffic, Parking and
Transportation Department*

*CHC = Cambridge Historical
Commission*

Consultant Team:

Jerry Friedman (Earth Tech)
Adam Kibbe (Ripman Lighting)

1. WELCOME and UPDATE (Susanne Rasmussen)

Susanne welcomed the attendees and reviewed the agenda for the evening.

Agenda:

- Tonight we will be reviewing the final version of the lighting plan, and going through a second round of prioritization of the improvements.
- The goal is to develop three tiers of prioritization: An initial \$3.5 million project (which was developed at the last meeting), as well as a 2nd level priority and 3rd level priority list.
- The focus of our next meeting will be on wayfinding and signage. These are the final elements of the Master Plan.
- We will have an open house in the spring (May 20th).

2. ELIOT PLAZA (Kathy Watkins/Owen O’Riordan)

- The City has opportunities to construct some improvements outside of the \$3.5 million project. One such example, discussed earlier, is the Brattle/Mason intersection improvements. Another example is at Eliot Plaza, which received a number of dots in the first prioritization exercise (including some partial dots, indicating an interest in partial improvements) but did not reach the “first tier” level.
- Parallel to our process, DPW has been designing and constructing a storm water management plan for Harvard Square. Part of the project includes installing an overflow structure underneath Eliot Plaza.
- Installing the structure requires the removal of the trees in the plaza. There are a total of 10 tree pits in the plaza. 2 are empty and several other trees are in very poor condition. The DPW contract requires the contractor to replace the trees.
- This is a great opportunity for us to be able to coordinate some of the improvements that we have discussed for Eliot plaza.
- Specifically, we are proposing to plant the trees in locations to allow for the increased width of the pedestrian area and to better align with path to the river. We are also proposing to install the granite planter along the back of the plaza, which will buffer the view of the parking garage, and upgrade the bike parking.
- We are not proposing to install the fencing along the parking lot or change any of the curb alignments at this time, nor are we planning to install a bus shelter. These items are outside the scope of the current project.
- A tree removal hearing is scheduled for February 19th at 5:30 p.m. at DPW and we will be submitting the design to the Historical Commission for their approval.
- The construction contract for the subsurface work which includes Eliot Plaza has just been signed. Construction will take at least 2 months.

3a. LIGHTING PLAN – INTRO (Susanne Rasmussen)

- We previously discussed lighting at the September 18th meeting, where we covered existing conditions and the lighting “toolbox”. At the November 20th meeting, Adam presented an initial Lighting Plan and we had a good discussion of the subject. There has also been a great amount of internal discussion of lighting among City staff.
- Since our last meeting, the City Council has approved an initial appropriation of funds to purchase the existing street lighting from NSTAR, and also included an appropriation for a consultant to develop city standards for street lighting.
- With the City purchasing the lighting, the cobraheads can be replaced using the same bases and the existing conduit, which means replacements can be done independent of street and sidewalk construction.
- In addition to lighting providing safety and defining the character and look of a street, we are also interested in:
 - Electricity Usage – The City has adopted a climate protection plan and as part of that plan, the City is committed to reducing its overall electricity usage. Pedestrian scale lighting in general uses approximately 10-30% more electricity than tall full-cutoff luminaries.

- Uplighting – The City wants to minimize the amount of lighting that is wasted on lighting things that do not need to be lit.
- Sidewalk Widths – This is an important consideration in selecting pole types. For example, the existing ornamental acorn lights have wider bases than the existing cobraheads.
- Budget – pedestrian scale lighting requires more fixtures and significantly more infrastructure changes.

3b. LIGHTING PLAN – CHANGES (Adam Kibbe)

- There are three basic changes since the last iteration of the Lighting Plan:
- CHURCH STREET
 - We were previously showing tall full-cutoff luminaries. Based on comments from the committee, we are proposing a “medium pedestrian scale” fixture.
 - This fixture would be on par with acorns in terms of spacing and size. The City-wide process which is soon to be underway would determine exactly what it would look like.
 - Acorns are not being proposed for Church Street because they have a large base, which is a critical issue here due to the limited sidewalk width.
- MT. AUBURN STREET
 - We were previously showing tall full-cutoff luminaries on Mt. Auburn Street. Based on committee comments, we have now introduced a new zone of louvered single-acorns from the Post Office through to Lampoon Plaza.
- JFK STREET
 - At the last meeting, lower JFK Street (south of Eliot Street) received a number of “partial dots”, indicating that the full expense of installing acorns along this section of JFK Street was not a high priority. However, there was some support for making lighting improvements.
 - We therefore took a fresh look at JFK Street, and have developed a modified proposal.
 - JFK Street north of Eliot would be acorns. JFK Street south of Eliot would be “1907 fixtures” (found along many MDC roadways, including Memorial Drive).
 - The 1907’s can fit on the same bases and the same spacing as the existing cobraheads, thus saving significant infrastructure cost. We are proposing to use a flat-lens fixture (similar to the new fixtures on Cambridge Street) which would provide some cut-off, as opposed to the drop-lens type found on Fresh Pond Parkway and elsewhere.
 - These fixtures will provide a graceful transition to the acorns which are shown on JFK north of Eliot.

4. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION OF LIGHTING PLAN (Committee)

(Note: City/Consultant team comments/responses are in italics)

- Is the 1907 fixture also assumed to be the new city-wide cobra replacement?
No – the City’s new consultant will be taking an independent look at the overall cobra replacement.
- Recommend that the lighting fixtures allow for seasonal attachments on the poles.
This will be considered. On Cambridge Street, for example, the lighting poles include plugs for seasonal lighting.

- The plan seems like a well thought-out concept in terms of differentiating the retail/commercial areas (acorns) from areas that are less-so.
- Are double-acorns really needed on Mass Ave?
These fixtures were actually singles at one time, and probably are a little bright.
- Don't mind doubles at the Post Office, even though the plan presently proposes these as singles. The Polishing the Trophy study also proposed doubles for JFK Street.
- It would be nice to have acorns on all of JFK, but see the reality of budget issues. Agree that Eliot Street is a good transition. Agree that some trade-off of pedestrian scale fixtures for more energy-efficiency is a good thing.
- Since budget is tight, this plan is a good compromise.
- What will the fixtures indicated as "unique" actually look like?
These special fixtures will be integral to the design of a specific street (like Palmer, or the Pit) and may be quite different in each case.
- Would like to explore some of the other recommendations of Polishing the Trophy, including eliminating some of the glaring spotlights at DeGuglielmo Plaza, better lighting of buildings, etc. There was also some talk earlier about lighting architectural elements such as the Sumner Statue. These seem to be small dollar items – can they still happen?
- Still feel it is very important to continue some consideration of lighting improvements to public and private spaces in the Square.
We will continue to look at this issue.
- There have been some safety issues recently in the Square at night. Can lighting help to address these issues?
We would ask the Committee to help us identify those areas that do not appear to be appropriately lit.

5A. SECOND ROUND PRIORITIZATION OF IMPROVEMENTS (Kathy and Committee)

- Tonight we are going to do a second round of prioritization.
- We started prioritization last month. The committee, public and city staff have all had an opportunity to place dots on their highest priorities. City staff and the committee were nearly identical in prioritization. The public had same projects, with the exception of eastern Mt. Auburn which was their "highest priority" with 7 dots – this was apparently due to its' low cost and concerns about Mt. Auburn and DeWolfe with the buses and turning movements.
- Based on all of these dots, we have identified a \$3.5 million project, highlighted in yellow on your handouts (Church Street, Palmer Street, Super Crosswalk, Winthrop Street, JFK Street (Charles River to Eliot), and Lampoon Plaza area. The project includes a lot of really great improvements. In addition, the City will be seeking grant funding for Flagstaff Park.
- You will see that the project does not include significant areas that were redone with the MBTA redline extension. This is consistent with the fact that JFK, Winthrop, Palmer and Church have older infrastructure and are in worse shape and in more need of improvements.
- We are also looking to implement pavement marking changes – bike lanes, pedestrian improvements at Eliot / Mt. Auburn, Brattle / Brattle. These are ways to make things work better operationally without extraordinary cost.

- In addition to the high priority projects listed above, DPW may need to do some basic maintenance on additional streets (such as repaving) that would not include the level of changes and improvements that we have discussed.
- Please note that on the plans that we have split up the Brattle / Eliot loop slightly differently than last time. This was based on the comments from the Committee.
- We have 2 large plans – one for Committee and one for the public. Would like to split the remaining improvements into 2 categories. This will give us 3 tiers of prioritization. Use your dots for roughly \$5 million. Once you have identified the projects you would fund, place your dot on the improvements.

5B. RESULTS OF PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE (Susanne and Committee)

- See attached plan of 3 tiers of improvements.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Interested in the louvered acorns – seems like good improvement.
- See the logic of the lighting plan, but had hoped to have something which would define a unique character for the Square.
- Like the full cut-off lighting on Cambridge Common – helps you see where you need to go. Acorns look good in daytime, but not at night.
- Suggest full cut-off on Mass Ave near the Science Center – would improve conditions for the astronomy telescope located there.
- This plan is big improvement over November. Like lower JFK plan – urge the use of flat-lens fixture there.
- Consider adding lower-arm and ped-scale fixtures to the 1907's. Wouldn't get lighting uniformity, but would be a nice look.
- City Council has requested that City and Harvard do a walk-through of the Common. Use better not more lighting.
- Be conservative with architectural lighting. Good example is Bennington Monument in Vermont – very little stray lighting.
- Still disappointed that we are using “off the shelf” lighting in Harvard Square. New York City just started an international competition to develop unique lighting types, and parts of Europe, and Florida have done the same.
- Church Street offers real possibilities for unique lighting, but recognize need for budget sensitivity and need to limit number of light types that City must maintain.

6. WRAP-UP AND NEXT STEPS (Susanne Rasmussen)

The next Committee meeting will be in March or April.

We are planning on an open-house once we have finalized the materials, lighting, and prioritization.

Jody Pinto will be in town in early April for a public presentation in conjunction with the Harvard Office for the Arts. We will also set up some meetings with her regarding Palmer Street at that time.

