

**Climate Resilience Zoning Task Force
City of Cambridge, Massachusetts**

Meeting #3 Summary

March 21, 2019

5:30 PM to 8:15 PM

**Tour of Alewife area followed by meeting
150 Cambridge Park Drive, Cambridge, MA**

Task Force members present

1. Jason Alves, East Cambridge Business Association
2. Louis Bacci Jr, Laborers Local 151/East Cambridge/Planning Board
3. John Bolduc, Environmental Planner
4. Doug Brown, West Cambridge
5. Tom Chase, Energy & Resilience Consultant, New Ecology
6. Ted Cohen, North Cambridge/Planning Board
7. Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development
8. Brian Goldberg, MIT Office of Sustainability
9. Tom Lucey, Harvard University
10. Lauren Miller, Climate Consultant, CDM Smith
11. Margaret Moran, Cambridge Housing Authority
12. Mike Nakagawa, North Cambridge
13. Jim Newman, Resilience Consultant, Linnaean Solutions
14. Craig Nicholson, Just-a-Start
15. Mike Owu, MITIMCo
16. Kathy Watkins City Engineer/Assistant Commissioner

Project staff and facilitation team members present

1. Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, Cambridge
2. Pat Field, Consensus Building Institute,
3. Elizabeth Cooper, Consensus Building Institute
4. Kara Falise, Senior Engineer, Department of Public Works

Next steps:

- The next meeting will take place Wednesday, April 24, 5:30 PM at the Citywide Senior Center at 806 Massachusetts Avenue. The focus of the meeting will be flood resilience.

Walking tour of Alewife area – Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development

Materials distributed during the tour are available at

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/Projects/Zoning/climateresiliencezoning>

The meeting began with a tour in the Alewife area, including sites near residential areas in North Cambridge, along CambridgePark Drive, and Cambridge Discovery Park. The tour was an opportunity to view some examples of older and newer developments, and identify and discuss issues related to flood and heat resilience in relation to real buildings and sites.

Full group discussion on committee member interests

At the end of the tour, Task Force members discussed in small groups their hopes for what the group will accomplish and the issues they hoped new zoning could address. Members then shared perspectives discussed in small groups with the rest of the Task Force. Member comments included the following, summarized by themes that emerged in discussion.

- *Respecting community needs and ideals:*
 - Communities should drive the process in a ground-up fashion. What do citizens need on the ground to be safe and secure?
 - Placemaking itself contributes to social resilience (or the lack thereof)
 - Be mindful that the Task Force does not reflect all perspectives or demographics in the City.
 - Zoning requirements need to be more easily understood to be implementable and achievable.
 - If zoning requirements are onerous, small developers or residents may not be able to achieve a scale to absorb the costs.
 - New rules should aim to clarify expectations for resilience in development and streamline the process in the city's overall regulatory framework.

- *Dealing with uncertainty and adaptability*
 - A lot of scenarios have high uncertainty. What "no regrets" decisions can be made with relatively high certainty and significant benefits?
 - Plan for the future, to the degree possible given uncertainty. Build flexibility into requirements to the degree possible to deal with unforeseen changes.
 - Planning for the future includes accounting for significant economic and social changes that will occur.
 - The reality is, we don't know what the future will hold entirely, from intensity of climate change and all its local effects to other factors of change such as technology and the economy.

- *Acknowledging and weighing tradeoffs*
 - Resilience interacts in complex ways with other priorities and issues. For example, there are tradeoffs between stricter zoning requirements and development to create more housing. There are also co-benefits, for example, addressing housing affordability creates a more stable population, which is more socially resilient.
 - Resilience priorities may conflict with other city priorities, such as urban design or historic preservation.

- Open space is a community asset that needs to be preserved. Open space also contributes to resilience goals, such as mitigating heat and flooding and encouraging social resilience through public gathering places. Additional height of buildings can help preserve open space while providing space for housing.
- *Gauging the impact of various measures in context:*
 - The impact of zoning changes in Cambridge need to be considered in the context of bigger changes that will need to occur across the region and more broadly.
 - How much improvement will a given zoning tool create in terms of resilience, and how does that improvement weigh against other city priorities such as open space, housing, and other issues? Could an improvement be better achieved through a different, non-zoning tool?
 - Avoid setting the bar so high that nothing can change, particularly since much of the current development is not resilient either.
 - Zoning can have more impact at the neighborhood, rather than parcel scale. Collective action should be incentivized.
 - What is Cambridge's role regarding climate change on a global scale?
- *Considering other systems that interact with the built environment with respect to resilience:*
 - Be mindful of preserving the functions of natural systems
 - It is important to consider and protect larger, critical systems the City depends on, such as the T, the water system, and others.
 - Other areas, such as building codes, public works, environmental regulations all have significant impacts on resilience.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.