

Cambridge Committee on Public Planting
Meeting Minutes
October 14, 2015

Present: Maggie Booz, Janet Burns, Paula Cortes, A. David Davis, Chantal Eide, Jonathan Lewis, Johan Paulsson, Florrie Wescoat;

David Lefcourt (DPW), Melissa Miguel (DPW), David Webster (DPW); Gary Hammer, Harvard U. Planning Office, Emily Mueller deCelis (Michael Van Valkenburgh Asso.) Susan Morgan (Bruner/Cott) Michele Sprengnether, Chilton St. Karin Weller, Humboldt St.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35. July and September meeting minutes will be approved at the November meeting.

Agenda Item # 5 Presentation on Harvard's Smith Campus Center Project

Gary Hammer introduced the project: the renovation and remodeling of the Holyoke Center to be the Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Campus Center, a Welcoming Center for the university and a centrally located Campus Center. London-based Hopkins Architects is working with Cambridge-based Bruner/Cott and LA firm Michael Van Valkenburgh Asso. As of October 1, zoning variances have been received and approvals from the Historical Commission, Planning Board, and Harvard Sq Advisory Board. In addition, there have been five community meetings. Upcoming is a tree hearing for the removal of 25 street trees on Dunster St. and Holyoke St. He mentioned Harvard's organic landscaping program, in place for a number of years, which does extensive soil testing for soil rebalancing through organic soils management products. The new landscape plan comprises interior and exterior components including a potential roof garden. He introduced Emily Mueller de Celis, LA, to present the landscape plan.

Interior

Plantings are in the widened arcade. A vitrine planter near the center [enclosed glass case] will be in natural light and green walls at both ends of the arcade will use artificial light.

Exterior

Forbes Plaza The raised planter will be removed and the plaza redeveloped at grade level with Mass. Ave. the existing grove of four Lindens will be replaced with five Londonplane trees, *Platanus x acerifolia* 'Bloodgood'. This is a tough urban tree chosen for high canopy potential as it reaches for the sun on the north facing plaza. The design intent is more connectivity with Harvard Yard and Harvard Sq. and more engagement with Forbes Plaza, also to meet MAAB (Mass. Architectural Access Board) code compliance.

Mt. Auburn Plaza The grade change down to Mt. Auburn St. at the south end of the arcade will be address by an extension of the arcade elevation out into the plaza with both steps and safe connectivity with a ramp. Shrubs are proposed for a large plant bed along Mt. Auburn St. using Sweetspire, *Itea virginica* and Fragrant Sumac, *Rhus aromatica* 'Gro-Low'. An existing Black Oak stays in the redesign, with deadwood removed, air spading of compacted soil and fertilization. A row of upright Hophornbeam, *Ostrya virginiana* is proposed, back of sidewalk next to the building, east of the shrub bed. The plaza design intent is to create a sense of enclosure and canopy, as well as clear indication of the arcade entrance, and compliance with MAAB code.

City Street Trees on Dunster St. and Holyoke St. The 25 trees, mostly 'Bradford' Callery Pear, were assessed by Hartney-Greymont. They prepared a report and matrix based on tree condition, potential hazard and age. Overall most are structurally compromised with high hazard potential, age varies with the most mature on

Dunster St. ADA sidewalk upgrades are overdue and there is MAAB code compliance conflict with roots and grading. The proposal is to replace all the existing trees on Dunster and Holyoke with Honeylocust, *Gleditsia triacanthos* 'Skyline' (from Halka Nursery), for its open canopy and higher branching structure. On tree species, she emphasized the selection of "right fit tree types" and that planting specs provide state-of-the-art technical details for urban street trees, structural soil; Going irrigation and aeration and will be managed as part of Harvard's organic landscaping program.

Q & A

(definition: hazard potential refers to health and safety of pedestrians)

Q. Soil volume for new trees

A. In accordance with current research, soil volumes for the new street trees on Dunster and Holyoke and the Hophornbeams on Mt. Auburn will hit the minimum recommendation of 800 cu.ft. Structural soils will be used, with irrigation and aeration systems -which are needed for structural soils to tease out roots. A fertilization schedule will be maintained by Harvard using organic liquid biologics. The new Londonplane trees in Forbes Plaza will have the recommended ideal soil volume of 1,000 cu. ft.

Q. Is there room for another shade tree instead of the Hophornbeams at Mt. Auburn Plaza, sun exposure is intense there and more shade would help, and Hophornbeam may not thrive in the exposure.

A. The existing Black Oak is very broad and another large canopy tree in the limited space would compete with it.

Q. A second shade tree would more serve the streetscape.

A. Space is too limited. The smaller, vertical Hophornbeams are seen as a screen/veil in front of the building. The street edge of the shrub bed, shrubs and row of Hophornbeams is meant to help clarify how to move up and into the arcade. At other meetings they received feedback desiring a clear view of the entry area for safety.

Q. Size differences between Lindens coming out and Londonplane trees, and other dimensions

A. Going in, the new Londonplanes will be 8"-9" caliper, height 34'-36', limbed up to 16' and planted 15' on center. They are expected to become taller than the Lindens. The Honeylocust street trees will be limbed up to 7'-10', and be similar in heft and height to the new Honeylocusts on Mass Ave at Harvard Law School.

Q. What protection for the Black Oak at grade

A. Grade stays the same. The pavement will be taken up and the roots air spaded for inspection and corrections. No tree grate, but decomposed granite on top of soil.

Q. On problem with 'Skyline' Honeylocust, as a male cultivar it has lots of pollen and is allergenic

A. Emily said the issue of pollen allergy was not considered. Hardiness and high canopy are the main criteria.

Q. How will tree wells be treated?

A. They will be open, no grates. Decomposed granite will be used everywhere; this is an aggregate of fines with a stabilizer. It looks like stone dust but more consolidated so fines do not migrate but moves as the tree grows. The depth is 4". It is permeable and infiltrates water except when frozen. Committee members and David L. were unfamiliar with this material and the pro's and con's for tree wells.

There was discussion about how to limit street tree removal permissions sought in conjunction with projects. This is an aspect to consider more now in terms of the growing value of tree canopy. When permission is given to remove and replace blocks of trees, should there be a provision not to seek removal again for a certain

period of time, such as, 40 years. If trees are healthy and pruned for safety they would not be so vulnerable to turnover. In terms of tree variety and avoiding monocultures, it was noted that there is already a lot of Honeylocust in Harvard Sq. Most designers prefer one tree type, planted in blocks. Emily said Bradford Pear on Holyoke and Dunster was the wrong choice in terms of longevity and many are failing at this point (35-40 yrs?). Honeylocust should last up to 80 years.

Agenda #4 Concern about tree planting for Huron Sewer Separation Project- Michele Sprengenether, Chilton St.

Her lead question was, five years from now, what will the new street trees look like. What can be done to support healthy, growing trees; which factors depend on the contractor, which depend on City practices, what can neighbors do. Also, why are there so many dead trees in her neighborhood, including on the school grounds, and why aren't they removed. She asked if a resident could pay more for a larger tree or better soil and is there a better way to water new trees.

Dave said that contracts call for watering several times a week in the first 30 days and every week thereafter (for various months out). The master specs for new trees in the Huron B area were prepared by Kleinfelder and oversight is by Chester Engineering. Monthly neighborhood meetings are held on the sewer separation project; she could request that Jason Bobowski of Chester Engineering be available to talk about all her questions. He is also working on revised planting and maintenance specs for the City. Maggie expressed appreciation for Michele's perspective on her neighborhood situation and apologized for the short time for discussion.

Agenda Items #1 David Lefcourt's Updates, #2 CDD Updates, and #3 DCR Lowell Park Project will be carried forward to the next meeting. The November meeting date must be changed from Nov 18 and will be determined by email poll.

Submitted by Janet Burns