



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Date: September 26, 2019
 To: Members of the Historical Commission
 From: Eric Hill, Survey Director
 Re: East Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission Petition

Overview:

On June 17, 2019 CHC staff received a citizens' petition requesting the Commission to initiate the process of designating a portion of East Cambridge as a neighborhood conservation district under Ch. 2.78, Article III of the City Code. The Cambridge Election Commission verified that the petition contained ten or more names of registered voters, as required by the ordinance. CHC staff then advertised a public hearing for July 11, 2019 so the Commission could consider whether to accept the petition and initiate a study.

At the July 11, 2019 hearing, the East Cambridge resident group presented to the Commission and members of the public and explained their justification on boundaries as well as perceived concerns over unsympathetic development in the area, which seemed to be driven by proximity to large-scale developments at the perimeter of the neighborhood. At the hearing, members of the Commission suggested that the group reach out to not only property owners, but also renters, new property owners, and the business community which is located primarily along Cambridge Street.

The East Cambridge resident group presented to the East Cambridge Business Association (ECBA) - which comprises of business owners along Cambridge Street from Inman Square to Lechmere Square – on September 10, 2019. Staff attended the meeting to answer questions. The East Cambridge resident group also printed roughly 600 flyers and canvassed the neighborhood by posting notice of a neighborhood meeting to be held at the Sacred Heart Parish Hall on September 18, 2019. CHC staff included the flyer on the reverse side of the over 1,300 legal ads mailed to property owners within the boundary for the October 3, 2019 hearing to further advertise the event. Additional notice of the September 18th neighborhood meeting was posted in commercial properties throughout the neighborhood and online via the East Cambridge Planning Team.

The East Cambridge neighborhood meeting on September 18th was well attended and over 32 individuals signed a sign-in sheet at the event. The East Cambridge resident group presented to members of the neighborhood and explained the justification of boundaries as well as intent for the proposed conservation district. Staff attended the meeting to answer questions.

CHC staff believes that the East Cambridge resident group has done everything within reason to inform the neighborhood on the proposed NCD district. If the Commission initiates a landmark designation study for the neighborhood, CHC staff recommends that both the Middlesex County Courthouse site (40 Thorndike) as well as the current Lechmere Station site are removed from the study area. Staff believes that these sites are adequately governed by existing public processes and are of a scale outside the original intent of the district as originally stated by the petition group.

If the Commission initiates a landmark designation study for the area, staff recommends that the objectives and principles stated in the staff memo dated July 10, 2019 be adopted to guide its interim jurisdiction.