

Cambridgeport Study Sessions – Part II 2/19/19

1. Greetings from Cathie Zusy

2. Board members introduced themselves

3. Bob Simha introduced the topic:

A chance for neighbors to express their concerns and desires, and to think about factors that affect our neighborhood and what we can do proactively to shape its future

4. Neighbors introduced themselves

5. Bob Simha's opening comments:

Cambridgeport has low ratio of open space to population, example of what you might want to change.

Examples of Issues:

Development of Trader Joe's / MicroCenter property (Memorial Plaza)

MIT property development plans

Development of properties along Mass. Ave.

5. Steve Kaiser comments on transportation issues

Cited February 18 *Globe* article on failure of Cambridge to reduce cars.

His handout listed ways of doing this, such as better bus and rail transit, higher gas tax, more Zipcar parking spaces, better bike facilities, prioritizing pedestrian, reduce zoning requirements for parking space, and direct aid for affordable housing. (See below.)

Feedback from neighbors:

6. Transportation

Varying quality of crosswalk controls, crosswalks need dedicated 4-way pedestrian crossing Lights. (Simha: Get Joe Barr to come explain why we don't have this, ask for police report on local accidents.)

Crosswalk buttons don't really work.

Paint the intersection so that people don't block the intersection.

Private shuttle buses should be accessible to neighbors during non-peak times.

I-90 impact, BU Bridge, ride hailing services (e.g., Uber) clog the streets

Designated pick up and drop off spot for ride services

Uber drivers in "no standing" spots

Illegal U turns by Uber drivers

We have data on all sorts of traffic related patterns and events; we should use this resource.

Police should enforce traffic laws.

Walkability! Accountability around shoveling.

Poor quality roads for biking.

More bumps and raised crossings to slow down the cars (Magazine and Putnam)

End the Route 47 diversion.

7. Green spaces and community spaces

Map out our spaces and think about best uses.

Alberico Park needs its basketball court restored, need multi-generational park, not kick the teenagers out

Tubman Park cordoned off by bushes. Make it more accessible.
Community gardens.
Mixed heights with spaces in between needed.
Need a community center. Community spaces in general.
When we build, keep areas attractive.
Square footage value maximization trumps beauty.
University Park buildings crowd out park space, built for stakeholders

8. Housing, development, and zoning

Lots of meetings about Envision Cambridge.
City Council Housing Committee will have hearings about EC at City Hall in March: March 5 @ 3:30pm, March 20 @ 5pm, March 28 @ 5pm
Multigenerational co-op living spaces.
I-90 favors Boston. Cambridge not allowed a voice.
Two neighborhoods: residential vs commercial/institutional
Zoning sets density. We must propose changes to zoning when we're not happy with development impact.
More small shops in the neighborhoods. Shops have turned into luxury condos. Zoning ordinances provide mechanism to mandate retail space on ground floor of buildings.
Grocery stores go out of business because of no parking. People don't walk to buy groceries.
Need a big grocery store in Cambridgeport.
A lot of people shop online.
What is neighborhood getting back from commercial tax revenue. Cambridgeport getting the short end of the stick.

Other insights from Bob Simha:

When property value goes up, developers want to maximize profits. Most don't care about preserving historical appearance.
Value of land goes up when zoning goes up
There is a device in the ordinance that allows you to demand retail in developments.
What kind of leverage can we exert on issues of importance? BS: E. Cambridge gets police to every meeting and the traffic director.
Most of the affordable housing comes with the development of market rate housing.

Respectfully submitted

Brian Aull