

## Alewife Working Group #7

March 9, 2017  
6:00p – 8:30 pm  
Tobin School Cafeteria

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### Committee Attendees

James Butler, Eric Grunebaum, Karen Dumaine, Jennifer Gilbert, Margaret Drury, Doug Brown, John DiGiovanni, Geoff Wood.

### Staff / Consultants

City Staff: Stuart Dash, Melissa Peters, Gary Chan, Wendell Joseph, Luke Mich, Stephanie Groll  
Utile: Tim Love, Nupoor Monani  
HR&A: Kyle Vangel  
Nelson/Nygaard: Jason Schreiber

### Committee Members Absent

Mark DiOrio, William Ahern, Catherine Connolly, Tom Ragno, Sam Stern.

About thirty members from the public present.

### Meeting Overview

Presentation from the consultant team on outcomes and analysis of the Alewife planning scenarios ([available here](#))

### Committee Discussion

- Members wanted to know if there was a local precedent of maker districts that could be applicable to Alewife. Consultant team said that it has been proposed for the Boston Marine Industrial Park (BMIP) but it is different because the land values in Alewife are relatively higher and industrial zoning may be seen as taking some of that value away.
- Members noted that industrial uses imagined for this neighborhood would be very different from traditional “inner core” manufacturing. They asked the planning team to evaluate this difference and rebrand it as “maker space” or fabrication space. Consultants explain that this consideration is in process.
- Members wanted to know if the parking concepts are worked out for the industrial scenario. Rethinking truck parking and circulation could create opportunities to add more commercial and residential uses to the industrial scenario. They would like the planning team to look into the capacity added by allowing trucks to back up onto City streets. The consultant team agreed that this was an important consideration for the next round of iterations.

- Members wanted to know more about the financial implications of the industrial scenario and what is happening with the revenue generated by recent development in the Triangle today. They wondered if any of the future value from development in the Quadrangle may be used to create parks, streets, water retention facilities, or other public improvements and cited examples of Back Bay and Central Park, which financed public realm improvements through new development. City staff responded that there isn't a specific target to capture land revenues from Alewife. In the past the City has stayed away from a localized approach towards funding infrastructure and other public improvements. Revenues from development are distributed based on citywide need and may not always be invested back to the area from which they are generated.
- Members made the point that lots of public infrastructure in Kendall Square predated the large level of buildout in recent years, emphasizing that investment should go where it is needed. Lot of public infrastructure in Kendall was put in place before the current building boom, and it is important to recognize the development pressure that is on Alewife to be prepared for it.
- Members want to know if the commuter rail stop was considered while modeling traffic impacts. Consultants explained that large-scale infrastructural additions like increasing red line capacity, commuter rail station were not a part of the model but the reductions consider other transit improvements like improved bus service and shuttles to the Alewife T.
- Members wanted to know what is "acceptable" traffic on Concord Ave. Consultants explained that "acceptable" traffic would be based on the level of tolerance of the community. From a technical standpoint, the roadway can handle any amount, it's the intersections that are a problem.
- Members asked if there was anything about Alewife that would make it different from other parts of city in terms of the revenue analysis. The team clarified that the cost side would generally not vary. On the revenue side there may be differences. For example, rents in Kendall are higher, so the assessment would be higher. Similarly, Alewife may have higher revenue amounts, but the relative difference between the costs and revenue among scenarios would still be similar.
- Members asked if assumptions were based on what has been built over the last ten years. The team clarified that they depart from the market scenario because of the proposed 20% inclusionary policy with a higher percentage of three-bedrooms.
- Members were interested in seeing the mixed use industrial scenario becoming truly mixed use with as much residential uses and community spaces as much as possible. The emphasized the need to make a commitment to work with the state and other towns to achieve this. They noted the need to improve connections to Danehy Park.
- Members would like to see mixed use explored at the scale of a building with office, maker space, and residential within the same structure and creative solutions to parking. They would also like the planning team to look at opportunities for connections in the future, like the transfer station or a second bridge over the tracks by Rindge Towers. To increase connectivity within the district they would like the blocks to be much smaller with more connections. They see engaging with the existing land-owners as a critical first step in doing this.
- Members suggest that if revenue is not a critical consideration for Alewife, maybe this gives the planning team some freedom to try more innovative strategies like stormwater management to become a model for the rest of the city. They were concerned about the City not prioritizing this area if it is not assumed to be a revenue generator. The consultant team responds that there is a tension playing out between the funding of early improvements in Alewife vs. other funding priorities in rest of the city.

- Members felt like the scenarios are currently not very inspiring in their imagination. The planning team responded that they are developed as pragmatic possibilities and not just a vision, and the emphasis was to get the framework before getting to “wow.”

### **Public Comment**

- Attendees wondered how development of Alewife would affect the prices of new housing in Cambridge. Consultant team explained that this needs to be assessed regionally, and not only for Cambridge.
- One member of the Blair Pond Association brought attention to Danehy Park saying it is beloved in the community because of the juxtaposition of wildlife and green spaces. They would like to see the plan build on the green space that exists through connections from Concord Ave to Blair Pond.
- Attendees also raised questions about modelling and wanted to know when data from anticipated projects would get integrated into the plan.
- Attendees were concerned with the scale of development overall. They noted that adding more affordable units in the floodplain would increase vulnerable populations at risk. They recommend maker space/industrial scenario as it poses the lowest impact on neighborhood from traffic, number of residents/employees in flood risk area and provides a greater diversity of job opportunities.
- One attendee noted that the 2030 planning horizon is only 13 years away and is not a very long time in the life of a city.
- Attendees emphasized the need for a diverse demographic in this neighborhood. Saying that the community needs a mix of children, seniors, and single people, and would like to see different types of housing for each. They stressed the need for providing urban amenities such as a corner store, tennis courts, walkways that help create a community.
- Members of the Fresh Pond Residents Alliance felt that their comments were not reflected in the presentation. The consultant team responded that the data generation process is quite lengthy and a decision was made not to change the scenarios partway through process of getting feedback until outcomes were generated and more thoroughly discussed at this meeting. The planning team’s goal was to collect comments and then revise based on the feedback heard about preferred scenario/s.
- The Alliance members would like to see a scenario that considers less density than a full buildout.
- A question was raised about the mix of rental and ownership units in the scenarios. According to some, homeowners are much more invested in the community.
- The scenarios should better reflect the goal and vision.
- Attendees wanted to understand the possible mechanisms for acquiring land to build streets. They were worried that that facts on the ground make it harder to realize the scenarios, particularly to create public space. They stressed the urgency to build a community and asked the planning team to study mechanisms to realize this in the short term.
- Attendees were concerned about projections for serious flood impacts. They noted that the Amelia Earhart Dam is projected to be breached by 2045 and worry about how the scenarios address this. The planning team clarified that all scenarios have assumptions that address this baked into their urban design considerations.
- Attendees noted that industrial scenario seems to be preferred but the City would have to subsidize land cost significantly to realize this. Considering that the mandate of City is housing, there should be more housing shown here. They would like to see amenities such as a library or residential square, or pre-primary school (since there are not many in the city.) They noted there has to be a transit connection, perhaps two bridges - one where shown, another at end of Cambridgepark Drive

- Attendees would like to see a commitment from the City to build the ped-bike bridge. And seriously consider rehabilitation of existing uses like Iggy's and the Fayerweather School.
- Attendees were concerned about packing residents in the floodplain and concerned about the assumption of 7 kids per 100 units saying this is different from the present situation.