

CRA Design Review Committee
Held Virtually on Zoom
Meeting Notes
June 3rd, 2020

Attendees – Kathy Born (CRA Board), Barry Zevin (CRA Board), Hugh Russell (Planning Board), Suzannah Bigolin (CDD), Khalil Mogassabi (CDD), Jess Hamilton (MYKD), Ian Downing, (MYKD), Tom Evans (CRA), Alex Levering (CRA), Ellen Shore (CRA) Carlos Peralta (CRA), Heather Hoffman (Public).

In response to the COVID-19 State of Emergency, on March 12, 2020, Governor Baker issued an Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. The Order allows government bodies subject to the law to meet using remote participation, without presence of members of the general public, the chair, or a quorum of the public body in a physical location at a specified meeting location. In accordance with the Order, the CRA held the Design Review meeting virtually via Zoom webinar, with the ability for the public to access and participate either through a computer or by calling in via a cell phone or landline.

Ames Place Open Space – Concept Designs

Mikyong Kim Associates (MYKD), Jess Hamilton and Ian Downing presented concept designs for Ames Place's Open Space (APOS). APOS is the interstitial space within Parcel 3, a block in Kendall Square bounded by Ames St, Broadway, Galileo Galilei Way and Main Street. MYKD's presentation began with an overview of the APOS space, reviewing the project's location and parcel ownership and tenants. The presentation also reviewed the process for collaboration and engagement with Parcel 3 stakeholders and the public, and a review of the project's goals. MYKD presented concept designs that focused on creating a space that reflects Parcel 3's innovation, that provide safe and accessible pedestrian pathways, balanced contemplative and active uses, and embrace biophilia.

Committee members noted their interest in revitalizing and connecting the interstitial space through improved design, and saw the benefit of strengthening the east-west and north-south connections. It was identified that shifting the north/south service drive west toward 75 Ames to accommodate an improved connection between the open space behind Whitehead and Danny Lewin Park was a good design move, as long as it afforded a decent truck turning radius. Concerns were raised regarding grade change in the area where the two parcels connect and specifically the loading dock area behind 150 Broadway.

Questions were asked about making Ames Place one-way going east to west for vehicles (two-way for cyclists), considering the level of deliveries that occur. It was noted that additional studies would be needed to determine the feasibility of turning the street one-way, and to understand the impact of that decision on nearby intersections.

It was suggested that a better balance between paving and greenery was needed, and consideration that trees often prevent the ability to have successful lawn. Additional points were raised regarding the angular shapes of the plantings and paving patterns, instead suggesting they should relate to the form of those spaces and buildings and include more curvilinear patterns. MYKD noted the surface design on the existing concept plans is largely graphical, and that additional conversations are needed to determine a patterned design.

It was suggested that elements emphasizing play, accessible to all, be integrated into the concepts. There was discussion over the addition of a half-court basketball court, which was also noted as a concern in a correspondence received from the Whitehead Institute. It was identified that additional research would be needed to understand the acoustic effects of the game on operations of the parcel. Concerns over fencing were also identified, suggesting it might lead to the space feeling too private or exclusive.

Next steps in the design process were discussed and involve the following action items.

Action Items: *Continue discussion with stakeholders, the public and city agencies to review design concepts. Conduct a transportation study to understand the impact of making Ames Place one-way for vehicles, and understand the impacts of active sports on the parcel. Next steps will involve the development of schematic designs.*