

the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

February 2015

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ANC News

NOTES FROM THE JAN. 13 MEETING

Harvard University Updates

Remediation Continues at 1607-1615 Mass. Ave.

1607-1615 Mass. Ave., corner of Mass. & Everett St. (known to neighbors as "Bence Pharmacy"), remains unoccupied related to the remediation managed by Harvard University. This process has been underway since 2010, when the University discovered dry cleaning solvents as it was conducting routine soil testing for the new building at Harvard Law School.

Tom Lucey, Director of Community Relations at Harvard, explained, "This is a complicated remediation due to the geology of this site and the utilities network below the public streets. It's an iterative process, which means testing, treating, and then testing again. While there is significant process, the remediation has been going slower than we hoped."

To help reduce the impact of the long-empty building, Harvard has installed full color posters in the windows of the site. Responding to requests from residents, Mr. Lucey agreed to look into lighting for the windows and street.

Although the future of the current structure is

in doubt, Mr. Lucey reiterated Harvard's commitment to working with the neighborhood, as well as adhering to regulatory requirements.

"We understand that the neighborhood wants ground floor retail at that site," he concluded.

Landscaping at Harvard Accelerator

Responding to inquiries regarding work near the Harvard Accelerator adjacent to Hammond and Gorham Streets, Mr. Lucey reported that the University is doing groundwork and preventative maintenance.

Harvard Community Programs

The Ice Rink is coming back to the Cambridge St. overpass. Free for everyone and part of the Harvard Common Spaces programming, you can learn more at:

www.commonspaces.harvard.edu.

Holyoke Center Becomes Smith Campus Center

The Smith Campus Center, formerly the Holyoke Center, is being converted into a campus center. In 2014, the city initiated a discussion about the Out of Town News kiosk and its immediate surroundings in the square. Community members considered how the kiosk and adjacent area could best fit the uses and

NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



MAR. 10 - 7:30 PM

Maud Morgan Arts
20A Sacramento Street
2D Studio, 2nd Floor

Agenda:

- **The February 10th ANC Meeting has been canceled. Please join us in March.**

needs of the community. Harvard is considering ways to improve the Smith Campus Center for community and University use.

Q&A:

Q: When will the Tanner Fountain in front of the Harvard Science Center be working again?

A: The fountain needs significant repair and Harvard is looking into it.

Q: It seems that Harvard plans to let the 'Bence Pharmacy' building lay fallow until the 15-year statute is up, after which the site reverts back to residential use. Even if the University honors its commitment to ground floor retail, I'm concerned about what will be placed above.

A: The lengthy clean-up process has been frustrating for the University as well. Most of the building materials are contaminated. We are reaching the point where we believe taking the building down will expedite remediation. The University is working to develop a plan to advance this work during the next six months.

Zoning in the Agassiz Neighborhood

Cambridge Community Development's Stuart Dash, Director of Community Planning, and Ellen Kokinda, Assistant Planner, joined the Neighborhood Council to explain zoning in the Agassiz neighborhood, with specific focus on the Residence C-1 District.

Via a quick overview, Ms. Kokinda detailed how zoning regulates development in the city. She explained that the city's Zoning Ordinance sets limits on the amount of floor area that can be built, the number of housing units that can be established, how tall buildings can be, how big the yard areas surrounding them must be, and how much parking must be provided, as well as other aspects. A proposed development must follow all of the rules in the zoning ordinance to be allowed 'as-of-right'. A proposed development that is not allowed 'as-of-right' might

still be built, but would need to apply for and receive a 'variance' from the Cambridge Board of Zoning Appeal.

Following a resident's inquiry about the potential for "down-zoning" Agassiz's C-1 Districts (i.e. changing the C-1 District to a Residence B District), Jeff Roberts, Cambridge Land Use and Zoning Project Planner, created an analysis. According to maps and information passed around to Council members at the meeting, it appeared that the majority of lots in Agassiz's C-1 District are already 'built-out', meaning it is likely that very few additional units can be built.

Although in some instances property owners can presumably create more units by subdividing the floor area, or by adding on to an existing house in the C-1 District, Ms. Kokinda clarified, "There are lots of hoops to go through for a resident who is thinking about adding to his/her lot."

Mr. Dash agreed, "I don't anticipate new housing to be a pattern in this particular district."

Fred Meyer, ANC Meeting Chair, noted, "I've seen market pressure towards large, single-family homes, so the market is also a constraining factor. However, I believe the real danger is not so much developers building new structures as a catastrophic event, like a devastating fire. Why isn't the whole neighborhood zoned as Residence B?"

Mr. Dash explained, "When we changed the zoning in the city, we looked at the density in neighborhoods and open space. Most of the neighborhoods in Cambridge were slightly more dense than what was allowed, which tends to keep things pretty stable. The B District shows some different characteristics."

As there are a number of sites currently under consideration in the area, and one undergoing development, residents expressed interest

in learning about zoning for Mass. Ave. The Community Development representatives agreed to return at a future date to speak on that subject.

Citywide Planning

CDD invited Council members to take part in Cambridge's new citywide planning process. Developing a plan is expected to take the next 2.5 to 3 years and includes community outreach to gather resident's opinions, ideas, desires, and concerns. The planning process will also incorporate existing sustainability and climate-resilience efforts.

Learn more at: bit.ly/cambridge-conversations

Q&A

Q: I'm seeing more and more parking in front yards. How can residents respond to or prevent this?

A: Call Inspectional Services to report these types of issues (617-349-6100). Enforcement comes down to the city hearing from the community.

Q: Are parking spaces and lots assigned to certain businesses? I'm wondering if businesses can share parking.

A: The city has been allowing more shared parking. For example, if a newly constructed office building requires parking, and a nearby residential building also needs parking, the city will encourage the two to combine parking to reduce the number of spaces overall.

New Community Projects

Many Voices

The Many Voices project was created to help grow a conversation about race, equality, and justice in Cambridge via an unusual medium: haiku poetry. People who live, work, or play in Cambridge were invited to submit poems. The project ran through the end of January 2015 and over 200 poems were submitted. They can

found in a published booklet, "Many Voices Project, Poems by the people of Cambridge," or online at:

manyvoicescambridge.wix.com/manyvoices

People's State of the Union

This January, community members were invited to take part in a nationwide project called the People's State of the Union, a free one-time "story share" event that encouraged people to speak on "the condition of our culture and the state of our union locally, nationally, globally."

Learn more at: bit.ly/ppl-state-of-the-union

You can still submit your own story at: peoplesstateoftheunion.usdac.us/submit



Community

19TH ANNUAL HIP HOP FESTIVAL

Join us for the 19th Annual Hip Hop Festival, a showcase of Hip Hop dance and music. This popular event draws talented performers from all over Cambridge, including:

- MC Naheem Garcia
- DjBOSS
- The Hip Hop Transformation
- FloorLords
- Deborah Mason School of Dance
- Community Arts Center
- OrigiNation
- King Open Extended Day Dance Crew

What: 19th Annual Hip Hop Festival

When: Thursday, February 19,
2:00-3:00 PM

Where: Maria L. Baldwin School Stage,
28 Sacramento Street

Tickets: \$2 per person, \$5 per family;
Agassiz Baldwin Children's
Programs families free;
afterschool programs free, but
please call ahead

Community Calendar

February 2015

Wednesday, February 11	6:00-7:30 PM	ABC Board Meeting Public welcome
Monday, February 16		President's Day Holiday, ABC programs & office closed
Thursday, February 19	2:00-3:00 PM	19th Annual Hip Hop Festival, Maria L. Baldwin School Stage, 28 Sacramento St.

The Whistler is published monthly September - June by the Agassiz Baldwin Community, distribution 2,000. Call (617) 349-6287 to receive by mail or email. The newsletter is also posted each month online at www.agassiz.org. Items of interest to the neighborhood should be submitted for consideration no later than the 15th of the month prior to publication date.

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