

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300

FAX 349-4307

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

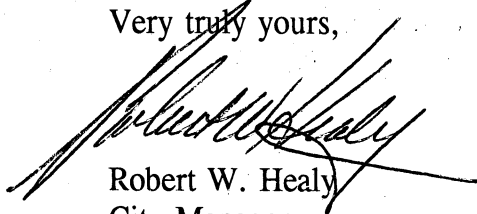
April 24, 1995

To The Honorable, The City Council:

The Central Square Committee has finalized the Central Square Urban Design Plan for review by the City Council.

At this time, I respectfully request a public hearing be scheduled for Monday, May 8, 1995 at 7:00 p.m.

Very truly yours,


Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev

Consent Agenda #15

Transmitting communication from Robert W. Healy, City Manager, relative to a request for a public hearing for review of the Central Square Urban Design Plan.

In City Council April 24, 1995

Public hearing scheduled
for Monday, May 8, 1995
at 7:00 pm.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER,
*Assistant City Manager for
Community Development*

May 8, 1995

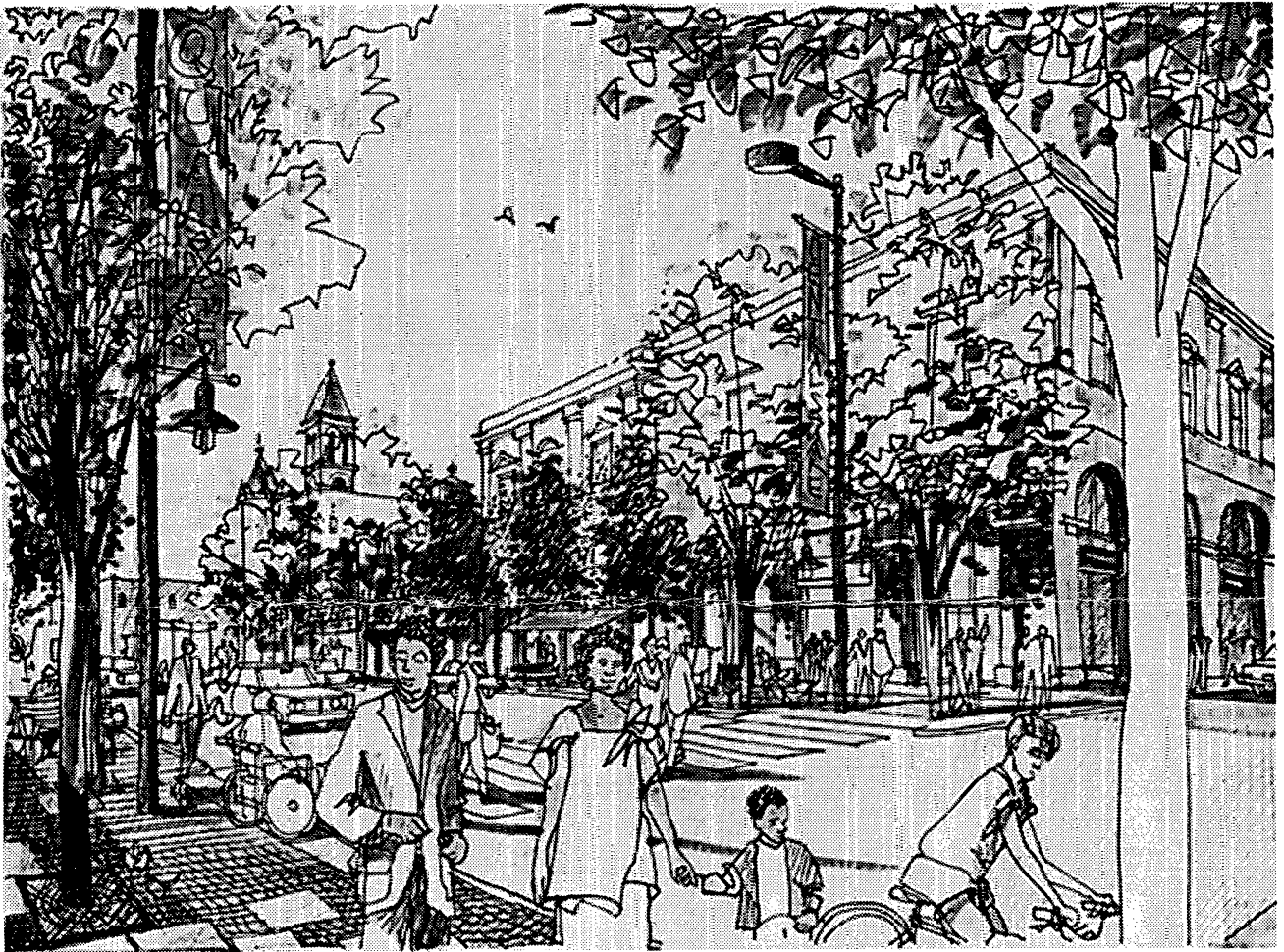
To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: Susan Schlesinger, Assistant City Manager *SBS*
for Community Development

Subject: Executive Summary
An Urban Design Plan for Central Square

I am very happy to transmit to you the Central Square Committee's recommendations for a Central Square urban design plan. The urban design plan and commitment to fund this plan reflect the City's strong support for this important commercial district. In getting to this point, we have been engaged in an intense and rewarding process, involving more than a dozen full Committee meetings, innumerable subcommittee sessions, many special reviews with businesses and resident groups, as well as a large Saturday "charrette" (brainstorming) meeting. The plans that the Committee has been able to develop with our consultant team headed by Carr, Lynch, Hack & Sandell are, I believe, very creative and responsive to the wide variety of inputs in this extensive process and have wide support from both the business and residential community.

I should also mention that there has been an extraordinary commitment of City staff energy and creativity in this effort, with major inputs from the Traffic and Parking Department, the Environmental Program, the Public Works Department, the Electrical Department, and the Water Department. This has truly been an interdisciplinary undertaking by the community on all levels, and will succeed in making Central Square a better place because of the quality of work from all concerned.



Executive Summary
May 8, 1995

An Urban Design Plan for Central Square



Submitted by
The Central Square Committee
and the Cambridge Community Development Department

An Urban Design Plan for Central Square

In October, 1993, the Commission to "Promote and Enhance Central Square Now!" made a series of recommendations for making the Square a more desirable commercial destination and a safer and more comfortable place for pedestrians. To implement these recommendations, the Central Square Committee was established in early 1994. This 18-member group, with members of the four neighborhoods surrounding the Square and of the Central Square Business Association, has been meeting intensively to consider how best to utilize the three and a half million dollars endorsed by the City Council for Central Square public improvements.

On September 1, 1994, the City of Cambridge, working with the Committee, issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) asking for design services to create an urban design plan for Central Square. The RFP specified that the plan was to be finalized by May 15, 1995. This executive summary, which quotes from key sections of the RFP, presents the plan.

The RFP stated the following: *"To develop a unified, comprehensive plan, there are five separate pieces of research that will be required: a physical survey (done under separate contract); a traffic transportation analysis and implementation program; a street lighting analysis; a streetscape plan; and a coordinated signage system."*

Following review of the proposals that were submitted, a team led by Carr, Lynch, Hack & Sandell was selected; this firm, a highly respected urban design and landscape architecture office based in Inman Square, was joined by transportation specialists from Rizzo Associates, lighting designers from Ripman Lighting Consultants, and graphic designers from John Lees & Jeffery Dawson Associates. Working with the Committee over the last several months, they responded to the program as described below.

Traffic Transportation Analysis & Implementation Program

"The City intends to engage the services of a consultant team that will design physical improvements to provide a safer and more attractive environment serving all users."

Urban Design Plan

- Reorganize traffic flow along Massachusetts Avenue, in general reducing travel lanes from four to three and retaining left hand turning lanes.
- Widen sidewalks on Massachusetts Avenue by 5'
- Narrow pedestrian crossings by use of sidewalk flare-outs from a very wide 70' down to a much more comfortable 45-50'
- Rework traffic signals so that pedestrians do not have to wait so long
- Organize bike flow with 5'-wide bicycle lanes on both sides of the street and provide an adequate number of bicycle racks
- Reorganize loading areas to become more efficient and less conflicting with pedestrian paths





Streetscape Plan

"From the extensive community participation that has been undertaken in the last two years, it is clear that an overarching concern is how to make the Square safer and more accessible for pedestrians at all times of day and night.

A fresh view is needed to make the Square function as a destination for people, while at the same time facilitating the movement of vehicles. It is important to recognize that the retail business community of Central Square is dependent upon the ability of its patrons to park their automobiles in the Square. Accordingly, priority must be given to retaining the current inventory of parking spaces."

Urban Design Plan

- Coordinate a whole series of design choices (of lights, landscaping, signs, bus shelters, paving materials, etc.) to achieve a unified urban design image
- Transform image of Massachusetts Avenue from that of a traffic-filled highway to a "Main Street" with ample, well-landscaped spaces for pedestrians
- Emphasize the areas of pedestrian crossing with new trees and lighting to create a series of people-oriented "rooms" along the Avenue, instead of a long, vehicle-oriented "corridor"
- Encourage pleasant activities along the sidewalks, including sidewalk cafes where appropriate, and attractively landscaped areas for sitting, waiting for the bus, etc.
- Create a friendlier urban space at the heart of the Square, in Carl Barron Plaza; expand the area and add trees, benches, and artwork
- Provide more spacious bus shelters throughout the Square
- Improve the walkway linking Mass Ave to the parking lot at the corner of Norfolk and Bishop Allen Drive—use historical photographs in a mural, lighting, and a colorful canopy to make its image more pleasant
- Reconfigure parking in parking lots and on side streets to provide a net increase in parking spaces in the Square



Street Lighting Analysis

"The kinds of changes that need to be evaluated include better street and sidewalk lighting."

Urban Design Plan

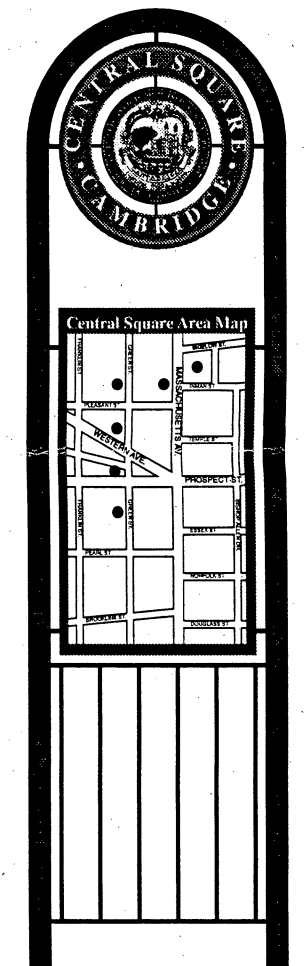
- Provide low pedestrian lighting to illuminate sidewalks
- Use high, bright light fixtures to accentuate crosswalks and to illuminate streets
- Provide better lighting and new landscaping along all side streets connecting Mass Ave to the surrounding neighborhoods
- Upgrade the parking lots along Bishop Allen Drive with a more efficient layout, new trees, and better lighting

Coordinated Signage System

"Also, consideration should be given to improving the utilization of existing public parking lots, through better signage. The pattern of traffic, the use of crosswalks, and the design of signage may all be modified to make this a safer and more pleasant environment for people on foot and on bicycles."

Urban Design Plan

- Implement a new system of signs to help identify Central Square as a special place, and to help orient people to the features of the Square, including bus service, the street pattern, commercial uses, public toilets, etc.



Next Steps Towards Building the Vision

Final design plans will be prepared for a series of construction contracts. This year, a first phase of work will include improvements to the two City parking lots along Bishop Allen Drive, and the mid-block walkway to Mass Ave from the parking lot located between Essex and Norfolk Streets. In 1996, the work will focus on Massachusetts Avenue from City Hall to Main Street. Side streets leading from surrounding neighborhoods to Massachusetts Avenue will be improved by adding street trees and new lighting fixtures.

Further consideration will be given to other amenities, such as public toilets, outdoor vending areas, improvements to the Farmer's Market, and, if future traffic volumes are sufficiently reduced, the potential for removal of an additional lane of traffic and provision of a median.

Acknowledgements

Central Square Urban Design Plan

The Central Square Committee

Co-chairpersons:

Robert Boulrice, Central Square
Neighborhood Coalition

George Metzger, Central Square
Business Association

Neighborhood Representatives

Vici Casana
William Cavellini
George Greenidge, Jr.
Geneva Malenfant
Iona Nze
Eric Pfeufer
Robert Winters
Fran Wirta

Business Representatives

Teddy Arvanites
John Dietrich
Arnold Goldstein
Jamie Leef
Norman McIver
Morris Naggar
Joseph Sater
Phil Trussell

Participating City Departments

Community Development Department

Susan Schlesinger, Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

Electrical Department

George Fernandes, City Electrician

Environmental Program

Liz Epstein, Director

Historical Commission

Charles Sullivan, Director

Public Works Department

Ralph Dunphy, Commissioner

Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department

Susan Clippinger, Director

Water Department

Michael Nicoloro, Director

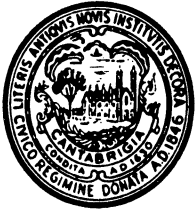
Urban Design Consultants

Stephen Carr, Principal
Carr, Lynch, Hack & Sandell

Barry Pell, Vice President
Rizzo Associates, Inc.

Adam Kibbe, Project Manager
Ripman Lighting Consultants

John Lees, Partner
Lees and Dawson (Signage)



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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI

Deputy City Manager

May 8, 1995

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached the Central Square Committee's recommendations for a Central Square Urban Design plan, received from Assistant City Manager for Community Development Susan Schlesinger.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over the typed name.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachment

Consent Agenda # 7

S-162

Central Square Committee's recommendations
for a Central Square Urban Design Plan.

In City Council,

May 8, 1995

*Referred to Public
hearing scheduled
for 5/8 /95 at 7 P.M.*