

September 1984

TO: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

FROM: Central Square Committee

The following is a report of the accomplishments of the Central Square Committee, appointed by the City Manager in response to the City Council's report on Central Square in April of 1983. From June of 1983 to date, the committee has met on a regular monthly basis in order to implement the recommendations of the 1983 Central Square Report. It is with a great deal of pride that we submit this committee's accomplishments for this time period, as well as inform the Council that the City Manager has directed the committee to continue its efforts in order to maintain continuity in the efforts to make using Central Square a more desirable experience.

The Committee initially identified the most important areas of the report to be Dirt and Litter and Crime. The committee felt strongly that if Central Square became a safe place to be and was kept much cleaner then these actions would act as the catalyst for making improvements as enhancements to Central Square in all the other areas covered by the report.

For several of its initial monthly meetings, the Committee invited representation of the Cambridge Public Works Department to participate in planning to help combat the litter problem in Central Square. The efforts of these meetings provided the proper forum for accomplishing the following:

Trash pickup has been more orderly and is now standardized. The Police have cooperated in enforcing the ordinance on trash pickup. This effort has resulted in less litter and a clean appearance.

The Business Association contacted all area merchants soliciting their cooperation in minimizing hours of commercial pickup. The Department has continued unabated its separate business collections - Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. Practically everything in the streets during the evening hours is picked up by the Department, with additional miscellaneous pickups during the day as needed, either as requested or by decision of our street cleaning foreman.

The Department has continued its cleaning program in the Central Square area each morning seven days a week, weather permitting. During the Spring of 1984, sweepers were operating early in April despite a late snowstorm, and have continued unabated to date.

In addition, the Department has had three regularly assigned

personnel working the square area with backup as necessary by two others. Because of the dedication to the job by these employees, including foreman Robert Keating, positive results are evident. In addition, the Department has placed 10 new litter baskets in the general square area this month.

The Department is hopeful to be able to man its small mechanical vacuum sweeper for use in the Square during August and September as personnel availability permits.

The Department has coordinated the Square clean-up in April as well as several other general cleanups culminating in the City-wide effort on June 2. The volunteer effort, backed up by DPW crews is to be commended and encouraged to continue. This effort will continue year to year.

The Department continues to work with the business community on an as-needed basis, practically day by day. A regular communication network now exists between the DPW and the Central Square Association. This has enabled outstanding issues to be resolved quickly and more efficiently.

It should be noted that the improved cleanup effort in Central Square has brought several favorable comments and is now a primary concern of the DPW.

In the area of Crime, the following has resulted from the efforts of the Central Square Committee:

An in-service training program for officers permanently assigned to Central Square was recommended. Program covers services offered, orientation to business and community needs, etc. With the ever-changing staffing situation in the Police Department, currently there are not sufficient permanent officers assigned to Central Square. Plans are, in the future, to once again assign permanent officers to all major squares in the City. Permanent assignments will insure officers become familiar with their routes and the community they serve. Chief Paolillo has committed to this effort.

Discussions to establish Routes 10, 11 and 12 as priority routes in Central Square and permanently assign personnel to them took place. Currently the Department is unable to comply with this recommendation. Staffing levels prohibit the manning of these three routes on a permanent and full-time basis.

It was recommended to reinstitute a police booth at the corner of Prospect Street and Massachusetts Avenue. A police booth was put in place on Massachusetts Avenue opposite Pearl Street to provide maximum coverage and visibility.

An on-going target effort to disperse groups of loitering individuals who congregate in Central Square has taken place. Officers assigned to Central Square, both mobile and walking, have been instructed to disperse groups of loiterers in Central Square. This effort has been effective.

Enforcement of the trucking ban on nights and weekends on Prospect Street, Western Avenue and River Street has taken place. Both the Traffic and Patrol Divisions have been instructed to periodically, and at random, establish enforcement in these locations. Both Divisions have successfully accomplished this goal.

A comprehensive crime prevention program for the Central Square area was requested. An attempt was made by the Police Department to put into effect a comprehensive crime prevention plan for the area. The program covered parking, crime, loiterers, litter, etc. For the most part, the program met with resistance from the residential community. Officers were consistently accused of being too aggressive and harassing people in and around the Square. Some businesses felt they were losing customers since officers were constantly tagging illegally parked motor vehicles. Efforts in this area were subsequently reduced.

Enforcement of litter ordinances around the Central Square area was ordered by the Chief. Officers continue to enforce the litter ordinances and the ordinance regarding posting of handbills in the area.

It was urged that the Police Department coordinate with the Department of Public Works for trash pickup and enforcement of the City ordinance regarding same. Officers assigned to Central Square have been verbally notifying merchants of the trash ordinance weekly. There have been marked improvements in trash not being placed on the street for pickup before the time limits. Several hearings have also been held for violations.

Enforcement of snow removal ordinance was stressed. In October of last year, officers began to verbally inform merchants in the Central Square area of the snow removal ordinance. The Chief reports that complaints during the past winter were minimal.

It was recommended that the Chief assign responsibilities to publicize the various enforcement programs in Central Square to one individual in the Department. Lieutenant Timothy Toomey, Executive Aide to the Chief, is responsible for public and media information. Lt. Toomey is in constant contact with representatives from the Chronicle, The Tab, etc.

A concentrated effort has also taken place in dealing with safety at the Green Street Garage and in dealing with alcoholics.

In addition, the Cambridge Police Department has sponsored seminars in the Academy for businesses in the Central Square area. The seminars have focused on crime prevention tips, shoplifting laws, etc.

Chief Paolillo has been a regular member of this committee and on several occasions has had members of his command staff, responsible for supervision in Central Square, attend meetings to discuss problems, issues and ideas with the committee.

The Traffic and Parking Department has accomplished the following:

Fifteen parking guide signs were changed to the more visible white letters on a blue background. This effort will continue through 1985 until all signs in the Central Square area have been changed. Additionally, more clearly marked signs have been installed.

Stairwells at the Green Franklin Parking Garage, previously open, have been blocked off to eliminate concealed areas. With much support and urging from the committee, the City Manager has allocated \$180,000 in the FY85 Capital Budget for much-needed structural improvements to the Garage. This work will take place in FY85.

A more organized clean-up program at the garage is now in effect.

The Traffic Department has and will continue to participate in the planning for the Red Line Station improvements.

In response to several of the recommendations made in the Central Square Report regarding "Street People", the following initiatives or actions have taken place.

In order to continue to address the problems presented by the presence of chronic alcoholics in Central Square, the Assistant City Manager for Human Services has worked with representatives of the business community, the court system, the churches, the Police Department and the Legislature to file legislation which would amend existing legislation so as to allow for a longer mandatory treatment period for the chronic alcoholic. The bill would also amend the existing legislation to allow for a speedier commitment process. At the present time, the bill has been reported out favorably by the Senate Judiciary Committee and continues to receive favorable review. Monitoring of the Bill's progress will continue with the assistance of Senator LoPresti's office.

The Salvation Army Day Drop-In Center continues to provide a very critical service to street people of Central Square on Mondays and Fridays by providing a meal, clothing, showers, and referral assistance. This collaborative program, which incorporates the resource of the City's Department of Human Services, Cambridge Community Services, and the Salvation Army is continuing to work to identify additional financial

resources which would allow the Center to operate more days of the week. The current attendance of Mondays and Fridays fluctuates between 75 - 100 people.

In December, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Mental Health conducted a tour of the various programs and facilities in the Central Square area that provide services to the homeless, alcoholic and mentally ill populations. In attendance on the tour were: Chief Paolillo, Councillor Alice Wolf, Jimmy Caragianes, William Bartin of the Governor's Office, Councillor Frank Duehay, Roger Mervis and Jill Herold. The tour served to acquaint the officials with the resources available for "needy populations" in the Central Square area.

The Lodging House Task Force, which includes representation from the City's offices of Rent Control, Inspectional Services, Community Development, Human Services, Fire, Health and Hospitals and License Commission continue to meet on a monthly basis to monitor current and anticipated issues regarding lodging houses. Several of the issues addressed by this task force over the past months have emanated from lodging houses in the Central Square area.

A special mention should be made concerning the efforts of the Community Development Department. Although Kathy Spiegelman is not an appointed member of the committee, she has attended virtually all meetings, has arranged for much staff support from her department, and has arranged meetings with various State agencies and the MBTA on a variety of related issues.

The MBTA Central Square Station Project has been the focus of several discussions by the committee. The MBTA and their architects, Ellenzweig Moore Associates, have made progress in the design for station modernization and platform lengthening at Central Square station. The impetus for the project is the need for all Red Line stations to accommodate longer trains. Although the new stations are designed for 6-car trains, at present Central can only handle 4-car trains. The lengthening will occur under the Prospect-Massachusetts Avenue intersection, adding about 150 feet of length to the station.

Plans for the underground area include new lighting and signs, new surfaces throughout; elimination of the "unpaid zones", which are unsafe, narrow passageways parallel to the train tunnel and platform; and better security systems. These proposals have not been very controversial, as they are straightforward and clearly improve the quality of the station.

The plans for the surface level have been more difficult to finalize, although there has been some progress here, as well. There will be new entrance structures (called headhouses), new bus shelters, an elevator for handicapped access, new sidewalk paving, and granite curbs throughout. The MBTA has committed to a high-quality job of surface restoration. However, the issue of bus service continues to pose problems which appear to be difficult for the MBTA to resolve to the community's satisfaction.

The community has asked whether the number of buses on the streets of the

Square at any one time could be reduced without sacrificing service. The MBTA has been considering ways to address this issue. However, no major improvement appears to be workable, given the complexities of schedules and the many competing uses of the limited street space in the Square. The MBTA will continue to study ways of adjusting schedules and lay-overs in an attempt to minimize bus congestion.

The recommendation concerning a sign ordinance has been dealt with as follows:

Cambridge finally has a new sign ordinance, following many unsuccessful attempts over the last 10 or 12 years to revise the old regulations. On Monday, June 11, 1984, the City Council adopted the Planning Board's proposal for amending the zoning ordinance to include new controls on the size, design, and placement of new signs. The code does not affect existing signs. Over time, the ordinance should help improve the City's appearance, particularly in the business areas.

The old ordinance was one of the most permissive in the Boston region, allowing very large areas of signs with no design review or few restrictions of any kind. The new ordinance, loosely modelled on the Boston and Brookline codes, diminishes the allowable size of signs and requires design review for large or conspicuous signs. The Community Development Department plans to issue design guidelines and review procedures based on the language of the new ordinance.

Although economic development issues identified in the Central Square Report were consistently brought up for discussion during the course of the past year, the Committee was unable to reach a consensus on the best method of addressing the issues. It was clear that Central Square presented a unique, complex set of problems to deal with and would require a more concentrated approach.

The Committee, therefore, has recommended that an Economic Development Subcommittee be established to prepare an Action Plan designed to revitalize the Square's economy by making it a more attractive place to shop, with a better retail mix without destroying its special character through gentrification. The Subcommittee will have a membership of ten, which will consist of the following representation:

- 4 representatives of the business community
- 4 representatives of the neighborhood surrounding Central Square
- 1 representative of the institutional community including churches and social service agencies
- 1 representative of the Community Development Department

The Subcommittee will meet at least twice a month and will report to the Committee on a regular basis. Their recommendations will be the basis of a full Committee recommendation to the City Manager for implementation of a revitalization strategy and Action Plan.

The Central Square Committee formed a subcommittee to discuss cultural and artistic planning for Central Square. The committee met in the latter part of FY84 and have a draft proposal to be discussed by the committee in the fall of 1984.

Their report is as follows:

On May 31, 1984, the following committee met to consider proposals prepared by the Arts Council staff. Present were: Wendy Landman (area resident), Roger Mervis (Rent Control Board, assigned by Mr. Rossi to this committee), Chris Connaire, John Chandler (Director of Public Art, CAC) T. J. Latimer (Director of Community Arts, CAC) Stephen Baird (invited guest, national leader in street performers' movement). A representative of Central Square business, to be designated by Mr. Carl Barron, was not present.

The following proposals were discussed:

Provide payment to street performers of all kinds for a large number of performances -- say four one-hour performances for 60 days over a period of 20 weeks. The performances could be 12-2 and 4-6. A long experience of performing in Central Square could turn around both the performers' and the potential visitors' perception of the Square.

Location: Until the MBTA rebuilding is completed we are ignoring the area they will treat. Our suggestion is the half block of Massachusetts Avenue (river side) from Brookline Street toward Boston. In this half block there are:

Vouros
Supreme Pizza
Middle East
Oh Calcutta
Vietnam
A non-restaurant
Bradford Cafe (a bar)

This is unparalleled anywhere. Not even Quincy Market has such variety in so few feet.

Start with this cultural richness and build on it. Widen the street that half block, take out the four parking places and extend the sidewalk out into the street there another 12 to 15 feet.

There are already trees planted on that block, which would provide shade enough when grown. Put some money into a few brightly-colored canopies, leaving some unshaded space for the sun worshipers, and encourage the restaurants to put out tables and chairs, like on Newbury Street in Boston. This could become the most popular place for lunch in the City. I would have

the street musicians play near there, too, away from the trucks on Prospect Street, where a violin could be enjoyed or traditional ethnic instruments for the Vietnamese, Italian, Greek, Indian and Arabic foods.

Seating and the creation of a few oases: Opposite this block put in a few benches. There are very few places to sit on Massachusetts Avenue/Central Square. And though benches are places for the indolent, there is no place for the ordinary weary either. A place needs a section for people-watching, a favorite urban activity. Benches could be designed by artists. A few benches on Massachusetts Avenue, river side, from Pearl to Brookline would be good also.

Do something to encourage artists, craftspeople and Sunday painters to display their art on the wide sidewalk by the TAX MAN. Noise won't affect them, and the sidewalk there is very wide. Also opposite by the bank where there is an arcade or overhang of sorts is another wide sidewalk for displays of paintings, etc. This would serve to animate the street further. A few Saturdays or Fridays and Saturdays of this would be sufficient. We would not charge the artists and craftspeople a fee to do this, but would offer them a small amount to set up, and give them a little publicity, for say four weekends, and see if anything develops from that.

The Central Square Business Association might consider making and renting street vendors carts like the attractive Bull Market carts in Boston at Downtown Crossing and Faneuil Hall Market. Over a few years this could better than pay for itself.

Concern was expressed to coordinate our actions with the MBTA aboveground plans for Central Square and Chris Connaire undertook to get the latest information on these and to influence these plans, if possible, by all available means.

Stephen Baird spoke informatively on the concerns which keep street performers out of Central Square: crime (relating to both their "take" and valuable instruments), air pollution, noise, and lack of a suitable location. Steve will be helpful in all possible ways, however, in executing the committee's plan to create a sidewalk cafe with street performers' entertainment, paid for by the Arts Council (at \$15.00 per hour) and with permission to pass the hat as well. Lunchtimes are the best times to start this project.

A proposal to move the Farmers' Market from Norfolk Street parking lot on Monday afternoon to Massachusetts Avenue on Saturday was endorsed.

Chris Connaire expressed the necessity for others to assist the Arts Council staff in implementing the priority sidewalk proposals and other actions, though the CAC will take the lead. Wendy Landman offered her help. There will be a need for funds to supplement what the Arts Council can raise for these projects.

Our committee's neighborhood representatives have identified as their main goal for the future of Central Square, to "improve the pedestrian experience in Central Square", and have offered the committee the following issues to deal with for the future:

As residents of the Central Square are interested in influencing the future development of Central Square¹ and are committed to making it a better place to live, the following suggestions are respectfully submitted to the City Council and City Manager. In composite, they address a single goal: to improve the pedestrian experience in Central Square.

1. Establish a moratorium on siting additional institutional residencies in the Central Square Area.
2. Encourage the development of residential usage in the Square. New construction should be small in scale. All developments should be mixed income.
3. Encourage more intensive use of upper story spaces on Mass. Avenue especially for cultural and arts related uses.
4. The MBTA street improvements should be designed to include the following:
 - a. broaden the sidewalks
 - b. reduce traffic lanes to one going towards Harvard Square and two lanes in the Boston direction.
 - c. increase tree plantings
 - d. eliminate parking spaces on Mass. Avenue
 - e. improve signage directing Mass. Avenue traffic to Central Square parking lots
 - f. rehabilitate triangle park to include benches and greenery
5. Institute a sign ordinance that will have the effect of bringing signs to a consistent, pedestrian-oriented height.
6. Improve the alley passages to Central Square parking lots.
7. Secure funding for continued facade improvements. Encourage accurate historic preservation where the buildings' original design is of notable value.
8. In warm weather, hold early evening cultural events on City Hall lawn.
9. Establish a moratorium on fast food stores and liquor establishments (retail sales and bars).
10. Construct and install at least one billboard for posting announcements of local events.
11. Paint high quality murals in public spaces.
12. Encourage installation and maintenance of attractive flower boxes (similar to those found in the Huron Ave. commercial area).

1. Unless referred to as "Central Square area", use of "Central Square" in this report makes reference to the Central Square Advisory Committee's definition of site.

13. Pass a zoning ordinance mandating that all new developments must maintain active use of street level (and windows to it).
14. Promote Central Square as an area of international peoples and restaurants.
15. On Brookline Street between Franklin and Cottage Streets, enforce the regulation which would call for zoning and shrub plantings on existing parking lots.
16. Improve police protection of pedestrian rights. Specifically, patrol the bus stop in front of the library more actively, enforce the speed limit for auto traffic, and enforce the License Commission's regulations.
17. Encourage the License Commission to monitor Central Square liquor establishments more strictly.
18. Keep the library open more evenings.
19. Encourage neighborhood institutions and shelters to create or further develop round-the-clock services for their users.

Although, to date, this committee has not dealt with every aspect of the Central Square Report, its efforts in the areas mentioned above have dealt with problems and solutions in a comprehensive manner. As you have requested, the committee will continue to function as it has since April 1983.

In preparing this report our committee felt it was important for you to have an assessment of our activities and our future goals from the viewpoint of both the business representatives and the neighborhood representatives to the committee. The following summary was submitted by the business community representatives:

You have asked for a report of activities of the Central Square Committee over this past year and recommendations going forward. It is the business community representatives' pleasure to submit the following regarding economic development activities.

Having in mind that Rome was neither destroyed nor built in a day, the Central Square Committee, for the past year, has been engaged in activities to begin to implement the excellent Central Square Report of April 1983 submitted by the Central Square Sub-Committee of the Cambridge City Council. The Committee's time and effort has been directed toward the issues of litter and dirt, the MBTA situation, traffic and parking, street people and crime. There has been excellent progress made particularly in the areas of litter/dirt, street people and crime. We have enjoyed first-class cooperation from the City Manager's office, the Police Chief, and the Public Works Department. Having made some considerable progress in those areas, the Central Square Committee is now engaged in plans leading toward the potential for economic development of Central Square. Following is a list of assets and liabilities as we see them now:

ASSETS:

1. Good police visibility
2. Improved cleanliness
3. The MBTA Red Line
4. Location midway between Harvard and Tech Squares
5. Proximity to Boston
6. Major traffic artery - Massachusetts Avenue
7. Good City transportation system
8. Government services in the immediate area
9. Large diverse surrounding area population
10. Multiple financial services available
11. Heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic
12. Reasonable parking facilities, compared to City as a whole
13. Variety of eating establishments

LIABILITIES:

1. Poor image, but improving
2. Lack of diversity of retailers and poor range of quality choices for the consumer
3. Deteriorating real estate, lack of uniformity - building exteriors
4. A lack of professional planning

The Central Square Report recommended that the City Police and License Commission vigorously exercise their authority with regard to known problem establishments. The Central Square Committee believes that these two public authorities are now doing just that. It is our understanding that the City Manager is requiring the License Commission to establish tough standards for the granting of additional pouring licenses and enforce regulations for existing establishments.

Going forward, we recommend the following:

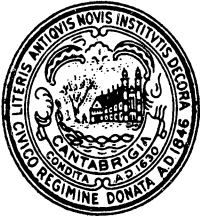
1. That a subcommittee of the Central Square Committee be established to deal exclusively with economic development consisting of selected members of the existing Central Square Committee and other representatives from the business and residential community.
2. That the services of a professional planner be engaged to study the Square and all its aspects but particularly to make recommendations regarding upgrading, parking, beautification, signage, types of store diversification needed, etc.
3. We badly need to get information to and output from the merchants in Central Square. Accordingly, we propose that the subcommittee circularize all the merchants in the area about their opinions about conditions and needed improvement in the area.
4. We badly need up-to-date input from the neighborhoods contiguous to the Square and therefore recommend that a professional survey, possibly a telethon, be done immediately to gain information on demographics, shopper preference, why people are or are not shopping in Central Square, etc.

5. An up-to-date inventory of property owners in the Square be done to facilitate communication with landlords about conditions and plans for the Square as they are developed.
6. As we develop potential plans for the Square, a major campaign effort should be undertaken to promote the Square.
7. Coordinate future plans with the Arts Council for cultural and artistic programs.

In concluding, may I state that what has taken place is an effort which has brought together City, Neighborhood and Business Leaders, all working together to improve the Central Square area and make it more appealing to all potential users. The committee has successfully used the Central Square Report as a guide for developing strategies and solving problems. Our effort will continue and is a more coordinated, efficient effort in our attempts to improve the Central Square climate. We will continue to inform you of our efforts as further progress is made.

FOR THE COMMITTEE

Richard C. Rossi
Chairperson



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

December 3, 1984

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Enclosed for your information is a copy of a report submitted by the Central Square Committee on the accomplishments of the committee from June of 1983 to date.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

Agenda Item No. 11

5741

Re: copy of report enclosed for informational purposes for the Central Square Committee on its accomplishments from June of 1983 to date.

In City Council,

December 3, 1984

11/3/84

Placed on file