

**Inman Square Neighborhood Association
February 13, 2017 Meeting
S & S Restaurant**

The ISNA February meeting began as usual with a few minutes for socializing and meeting new neighbors. Amidst the 40-odd attendees, we were delighted to have 12 people who joined us for the first time.

Social Media Amongst Neighbors

We then heard from Laurin Stoler, who created and has run the @inmansquare Facebook page for several years and has generously been harnessing its reach to support the growing neighborhood association. Last month, she started a Facebook Group, a private conversational forum attached to @inmansquare to give neighbors a way to respond online with a little more depth. For those who are not entirely comfortable with social media – or who have not yet tried it – Laurin is proposing to set up some social media mentorships. ISNA can create an event to pair those of us comfortable with social media with those of who aren't for a little food, drink and relaxed mentoring. The Social Committee confirms it will take on that project.

Business Owners and Neighbors

Many of our local business owners are also neighbors. During a short break in the meeting, we introduced the crowd to Josh Gerber, supplier of many desperately needed cups of coffee at 1369 Coffee. We also introduced Jason Alves, the Executive Director of East Cambridge Business Association (which now includes Inman square), and Patrick Magee, proprietor of Atwood's Tavern and Chair of the Board of the Business Association.

Committees

With introductions out of the way, everyone retreated in groups to different areas of the room to work on the topics that most interested them. After 20 minutes of brainstorming, these were their reports:

The erstwhile Sustainable Energy Committee is now the **Climate Action Committee** to better suit their ideas and goals. Having already met during the month, they were ready to present a practical list of things neighbors and businesses could do to soften our impact on our environment, including: working with existing programs to install solar energy sources, conservation, purchasing renewable energy for household use, planting and caring for trees, and where possible, creating green roofs. The group sees these simple steps fitting into a larger picture that could involve making Inman an eco-district with net zero energy usage, street networks for all travel, fresh food available within walking distance for all households, rainwater collection, and cultural preservation. **The Climate Action Committee meets next at First United Presbyterian Church on February 27 at 7 PM. All are welcome.**

Not to be outdone, the **Social Committee** has come up with a list of events for Inman Square. The group hopes to expand on Movie Night to create a regular summer series that intersperses family-friendly movies with theater, improv or other entertainment. The Social Committee also wants to enrich the identity of the Square by making use of historical photographs and architecture. This could include a walking tour event. The Committee feels that, given our scant open space, street closing from time to

time are crucial. Paired with a “Buy Nothing” or Yard sale day, Inmanween, or just block parties, street closings will give us the chance to mingle in the heart of our Square. Finally, there was mention of some simple coffee hours and even some challenges to other Squares, whether it’s a best hamburger challenge or best crafter.

The **Economic Development Committee** noted the recent sale of the building in which City Girl Café is located and the “for sale” status of two other lots in the Square. Members have been collecting feedback from the businesses and working on their own ideas for supporting our local commercial district. The Committee has a meeting with the City’s Economic Development Division on February 23rd, and tells us they will be sending out a survey for all of us sometime in the next few days.

We next heard from the **Beautification Committee**, who had met the day before to brainstorm ideas. Our neighbors from the East Cambridge Business Association (ECBA) confirmed that they had already ordered summer flower baskets that will go all the way down Cambridge Street and into Inman Square, along with American flags. The committee is still working out whether the flags of other nations would be a good addition. All parties agreed, however, that there would be work to fill in empty tree wells in the Square and that ECBA would be supporting an application for a city grant to create a mural on one of our Inman Square buildings. The Committee also hopes to wrap our trees in white lights during the holidays and to get the side of the Urgent Care lot cleaned up. Finally, the Beautification Committee discussed increasing the number of sidewalk planters already installed in front of businesses by resident volunteers, adding storefront window boxes, and creating some sort of pedestrian walkway in the area between Beauty pizza and East Cambridge Savings Bank.

Inman Square Intersection

The final report was from the Intersection Committee, which presented a summary of its recommendations (the summary had been emailed to the full ISNA list that morning). We then asked everyone to join in the discussion of intersection issues. Amongst the comments were: 1. The bus stop in front of 1369 Coffee works helps to make the Square lively and works well for both the coffee shop and the commuters; 2. We need to not lose track of the significance of our buses and stops as a primary source of transportation for residents; 3. At least one commenter made a case for reexamining the “peanutabout” as a way to slow traffic and create a site of interest in Inman Square, and; 4. Asking the City to create a tiered parking structure on the Springfield parking lot could replace spots lost to bike lanes and wider sidewalks. The Intersection Committee will be communicating further with the City’s Transportation Department, who are compiling their own survey results. The Committee is also pairing with the Economic Development Committee on a meeting with a Cambridge Community Development staff person who has some ideas about shared business parking. Notably, a show of hands revealed that almost everyone at our meeting had attended one of the City’s Inman Intersection Workshop nights.

The end of our allotted time brought the evening to a close. The next meeting will be on March 21 from 7 to 8:30 in the same location. Committees and neighbors are encouraged to keep meeting in the meantime!