

Inman Square Neighborhood Association: January 10, 2017 Meeting Notes

NEXT MEETING: February 13th 7 to 8:30 PM at S&S Restaurant

We've now had three meetings and different times of day and in different venues and despite the holidays and busy lives, Inman residents have come out in surprising numbers. With another 40-person turn out this week, we have well over a hundred members and growing daily. Thank you! Before we get into the summary of the meeting, here are some upcoming events around the Square. **We are really encouraging you to come to the City's Inman Square Redesign Workshop** (details below). This is probably our only chance to steer the direction the City will take in changing the intersection at the heart of our square.

UPCOMING IN INMAN SQUARE

- The Cambridge Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department will hold the Inman Square Redesign Workshop on **January 24th at 6 PM at Cambridge Hospital, 3rd Floor**
- The Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association hosts a special community meeting with Vice Mayor Marc McGovern and new City Manager, Louis DePasquale to discuss the City budget, tax rates and upcoming initiatives on **January 18 at 6:30 PM in the Cullinane Room at Spaulding Hospital, 1575 Cambridge Street**
- Tutoring Plus, a nonprofit in our area that has provided free schoolwork help to Cambridge children for over 50 years, will hold a wine tasting fundraiser at The Rising in Inman Square on **January 24th from 7 to 8 PM**. Tickets can be purchased for \$30 at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wine-tasting-to-benefit-tutoring-plus-tickets-30571698774>. Volunteer tutors are always wanted, as well!

SHORT SUMMARY

All of this interest means we have started shifting the meetings to a more open format, so while we started with updates and announcements after our "get to know your neighbor" period, we spent most of the meeting in small topic-focused groups to brainstorm change and improvements we would like to see in our neighborhood. In addition, Amy Witherbee announced that we will be doing our best to spread news of our general meetings but also committee meetings and other relevant events and issues in the Square. The Inman Square Neighborhood Association website is now up at <http://inmanneighbors.com> to complement the email list. For those who use Facebook, we will also be using the @inmansquare address that Laurin Stoler has cultivated so carefully.

Just prior to our meeting, the neighborhood received notice that the date had been set for the Inman Square Redesign Workshop. This workshop will help the City begin to focus on one of the proposals for reconfiguring our Hampshire/Cambridge Street intersection. To prepare for that workshop, we used the last 30 minutes of our meeting to talk about the two proposals that have gotten the most traction in your comments, discussion and emails (more on that below).

INMAN SQUARE TOPICS

Aside from the flurry of interest around intersection reconfiguration plans, the focus of our meeting was letting people start to talk with their neighbors about taking on the issues you have all been commenting on and writing in about. We kicked this process off by having people gather in small groups based on a topic that interested them. Here are the topics that drew people in during this meeting:

- Beautification of the Square
- Economic Development in the Square (a topic that emerged at the meeting on the heels of news that three significant commercial properties on Hampshire Street in the Square have just been put up for sale)
- Traffic Reconfiguration
- Creating a system to share commercial parking after business hours
- Resolving garbage, litter and rodent problems
- Social gathering around the Square
- Renewable energy

We asked each group to introduce themselves to one another and begin talking about their concerns and goals. At the end, we collected a one-page sheet from each group with the names and emails of your participants. We are in the process of emailing you all back with that information. Neighbors should feel free to start working, letting us know about any resources that might help (i.e. places to meet, contacts with the City, website space, social media announcements, etc...).

THE INTERSECTION

Our infamous intersection at the heart of the Square has already been the subject of plenty of commentary and debate in the first two meetings of our Association. We decided to continue that by first inviting anyone interested to have a group discussion as the Traffic Reconfiguration Committee during the meeting. Following the group meeting, we reconvened with the entire group to focus on the two proposals that have had the most interest throughout our meetings. We were unable to get a representative from the Boston Cyclists Union to present their innovative “peanutabout” design. So we had Amy Witherbee explain how that proposal would streamline traffic flow and significantly improve safety for bikes and pedestrians at the intersection. Dennis Carlone (in his capacity as an architect and urban designer rather than a Council member) countered with a similarly brief presentation on some variants of the City’s “bend Hampshire” proposal that would involve relocating Vellucci Plaza to the much larger space created in front of Punjabi Dhaba. After a lively discussion amongst the crowd, it became clear that there was a consensus around choosing a plan that would give us the accessible outside gathering space our Square lacks. We then called an informal vote on the crowd’s preference, with an emphasis on moving Vellucci Plaza to supplement the City’s current Hampshire “bend” proposal. The Plaza move got unanimous approval with one member noting that his vote was simply that he had no objection to the Plaza move.

The current Neighborhood Association organizing team will let Joe Barr and Patrick Baxter, our contacts at the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department, know about the discussion and informal vote, so that they can be prepared to talk to us more about the potential for moving Vellucci Plaza.

To find more information about the Neighborhood Association and links to the intersection plans, or to sign up for our email list, go to the website at <http://inmanneighbors.com>.

Next Meeting:

February 13, 2017

7:00 pm at the S & S