

35 Cherry Street - AHO Community Meeting #1 Notes

35 Cherry Street, Cambridge MA

May 15, 2024

@ 55 Norfolk Street & Zoom | 6:00 pm - 7:15 pm

Presentation:

Just A Start – Noah Sawyer, Director of Real Estate & Madeline Lee, Project Manager

Attendees (24 total):

Community Attendees by Zoom – 7 people

Community Attendees In-Person – 8 people

City of Cambridge, CDD – Anna Dolmatch, Melissa Peters

Just A Start - Carl Nagy-Koechlin, Yolanda Gilibert, Molly Kaviar, Vandana Sareen

Meeting RSVPs (received presentation slides & recording) – 38 people, including above.

Discussion / Q&A:

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Will the slides be available later?
 - *Yes, Just A Start will share the presentation & recording post-meeting.*
- What is the ability of the community to have input on the proposed almost-final design?
 - *There will be 1-2 additional Community Meetings before Just A Start submits designs to the Planning Board. There will also be 2 Planning Board meetings subject to public comment before designs are near-final.*
- Glad to see something is finally happening with the site.
- The site should benefit the neighborhood.
- Many attendees noted being neighbors to the site.
- There was a request for notes to be shared after the meeting.

INCOME LEVELS

- What will be income level be?
 - *The City's Affordable Homeownership Program targets households making between 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) to 100% AMI.*
- There was a comment that it is difficult to get approved for Just A Start housing.
- There were comments that many current low-income residents of the Port may not being able to afford a homeownership unit under the City's program guidelines, that affordability levels are high for single parent families, and that the target income levels should be conscious of addressing racial disparities in income and housing opportunities in Cambridge.

EQUITY

- There was a question on the contractor selection process and the inclusion of minority owned businesses, contractors, etc.
- Community members expressed wanting the project's construction jobs and contracts benefit local and minority workers.

OUTREACH

- There were recommendations to get better outreach to the community like written materials, social media like Instagram, the Pisani Center, door knocking, direct mail and website.
- People recommended Just A Start to do broad marketing for homeownership units.
- Some neighbors to the site noted they did not receive the meeting info in the mail.

UNITS

- How large will the units be?
 - *Mostly 2BR-3BR range sized to allow for families to grow (over 900 sf).*
- Will unit size (square feet) determine the sales prices of units?
 - *Sales prices will primarily be determined by the City's Homeownership Program standards and ensuring that the units remain affordable to the target income ranges.*
- One neighbor stated they would be receptive to building closer to lot lines if it meant that adding more units would result in deeper affordability of the units.

SUSTAINABILITY / CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- Questions about green building standards for the units, and the maintenance and operating costs of units if built to Passive House standards.
 - *Just A Start is building to Passive House standards in all of its current projects. For 35 Cherry Street, including systems that are energy efficient & can be easily maintained by the future homeowners and condo association is key.*

AMENITIES

- Some attendees voiced a preference for no parking on site. Another attendee would like there to be parking due to the already limited parking in the neighborhood. One person noted there may need to be an accessible parking space available.
- Will green spaces there be open to the community?
 - *Green spaces will likely be private to the condo residents.*
- Will there be a basement for storage?
 - *Due to the flood resilience standards we must meet (building at a higher elevation), there will not be a basement.*
- There was a comment about wanting to see preservation of green space and having some play space.

OTHER TOPICS

- Will the City's downpayment assistance program be available for this development?
- There were questions about the space including community space or artist residences.
- Can Just A Start help give priority to residents to stay in specific neighborhoods?

- *While preference to residents of a certain neighborhood can not be given due to Fair Housing regulations, Just A Start will implement affirmative marketing targeted approved by the City of Cambridge to residents of the Port to encourage applications from existing neighborhood residents.*
- When will the application process apply for the homeownership units?
 - *This will occur during construction; likely early-mid 2026.*
- Will residences for artists be considered?
 - *The City of Cambridge doesn't currently include any occupation-based preferences for housing. Cambridge residents do receive a preference for the lottery.*
- There was a comment about considering co-op (limited equity co-op) housing on the site.
- Follow up questions to the meeting:
 - Who will own the land beneath affordable homes; the city, the homeowners, or JAS?
 - What are the terms of ownership?

How did you hear about the meeting?

- I learned about the meeting at my son's daycare Salvation Army "our Place"
- Saw the post on fence / walking by the site.
- Got city AHO email as well as others.
- Word of mouth from neighbors.
- Flyer at Maragaret Fuller House, CAC newsletter.
- Walked past 55 Norfolk (flyer in window).
- Flyer in the mail.