

Columbia Road Community Advisory Team

The Eleventh Community Advisory Team (CAT) meeting took place on Tuesday, April 8th, from 6:00 to 7:30pm.

This month, the Community Advisory Team got a first look at some early design ideas for the Upham's Corner Section of Columbia Road. The focus of the meeting was from Bird St to Hancock St. The ideas presented to CAT Members were shaped by feedback gathered from community members throughout the project.

What We Discussed

The April CAT meeting began with a brief recap of feedback shared at the previous session.

The project team then gave a presentation focused on what makes this segment of Columbia Road unique. They described the area between Bird Street and Dudley/Stoughton as especially complex—featuring a narrower roadway, densely spaced buildings with little yard space, and a mix of homes, businesses, and cultural institutions that create an active street environment.





The team also shared updates on three upcoming development projects along the corridor—Columbia Crossing, the new Upham’s Corner Library, and Fox Hall—noting that while these are independent from the Columbia Road project, they reflect ongoing growth in the area.

To close the presentation, the team highlighted key takeaways from public engagement over the past year, including community calls for safer streets for people walking and biking, and a strong desire for more green space.

Following the presentation, CAT members reviewed and shared feedback on three potential design ideas. A summary of those ideas and comments is included below:

Option 1: Corridor Approach

- Preserves current layout: keeping all existing car travel lanes, curbside parking, and unprotected bike lanes remain.
- Adds intersection safety upgrades, which include extending the curb to create shorter crossing distances and increase pedestrian visibility for cars. Keeps all existing on-street parking.

Concerns raised by CAT members:

- Inconsistent bike lane protection may create unsafe transitions between segments.
- CAT members raised concerns about speeding, aggressive driving, and poor signal timing around certain intersections that would require extra infrastructure improvements, i.e. better signals/signage

Option 2: Promenade

- Adds a shared-use path for cyclists and pedestrians on one side of the street.
- Narrows the center median and includes raised intersections to calm traffic (i.e. slow down cars and make streets safer)
- Designated drop-off zones near key community locations.
- Removes parking in narrower areas, adds angled parking in other spots to make up for lost spaces.
- Introduces a flexible public space for events

Concerns/Suggestions from CAT members:

- Potential pedestrian-bike conflicts on shared paths, especially in busy areas.
- Concerns about traffic implications after removing parking in one area and pushing all the drivers to the area where parking is available.
- Need for clear signage, markings, and materials to guide movement and reduce conflict, especially parking signs & signs to the municipal lot.
- Unclear bike lane transitions at either end may confuse users.

Option 3: Civic Plaza

- Raise the entire roadway from Hancock to Dudley/Stoughton to create a curbless, universally accessible “plaza.”
- Narrows the median to expand pedestrian zones and gathering areas, and adds greenery.
- Uses textured paving and different surface materials to help show which areas are meant for different activities.

Concerns from CAT members:

- Some members worry about disruptive behavior, especially at night, and worry about creating welcoming spaces for loitering and unhoused populations.
- CAT Members saw this as an exciting option to re-envision the Upham’s Corner area and agreed that this design option pushes people to think differently about the segment in a way that is good for the future of the neighborhood and prioritizes different road users (i.e, pedestrians & bikers).

Additional Discussion Highlights:

- **Wayfinding:** The project team & CAT members talked about the need for improved signage and wayfinding, especially to help visitors locate municipal lots for parking.
- **Impacts on Side Streets:** Residents anticipated increased traffic on adjacent neighborhood streets due to changes along the corridor. As part of the Safety Surge, BTS is implementing traffic calming measures like speed humps to address this.

