



Building a Better Brookline

**Economic Development
Advisory Board**
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445
617-730-2468

Meeting Minutes: January 4, 2016

Anne R. Meyers, Co-Chair
Paul Saner, Co-Chair
Dr. Robert I. Sperber, Founder
Cliff Brown
Derrick Choi
Susan Houston
Kenneth Lewis
Carol Levin
Thomas Nally
Marilyn Newman
Alden Raine
Donald A. Warner

Attendees:

EDAB Members Present: Paul Saner, Ken Lewis, Tom Nally,
Carol Levin, Susan Houston, Marilyn Newman, Cliff Brown, Al Raine, Derrick
Choi

EDAB Members Absent: Anne Meyers, Don Warner, Bob Sperber,

Economic Development Division: Andy Martineau, Kara Brewton

Materials: Claremont Powerpoint Presentation

Guests: Elias Patoucheas, Joe Geller, Harry Wheeler, Bobby Allen, Patrick Carney,
Jr., Rob Festa

There were approximately 70 residents also in attendance, including sitting
Selectmen, members of boards and commissions, and the general public.

1. Presentation of plans by Claremont Company for the proposed redevelopment of 25 Washington Street (former Gulf Station) requiring a zoning change.
 - Paul Saner opened the meeting by welcoming the Claremont team and by explaining that the Town has recently completed a visioning study for Route 9 with the help of graduate students in Land Use Planning from MIT. The study identified multiple catalyst sites as potential redevelopment opportunities including the industrial district, which also includes 25 Washington Street. Additionally, over the past several months, EDAB has hosted two workshops aimed at facilitating a conversation about taking a proactive approach towards planning for future infill development. Finally, the Board of Selectmen have voted to establish a Zoning Overlay Study Committee for the industrial zone. The committee will be tasked with reviewing Claremont's proposal in addition to the recommendations outlined in the MIT study final report.
 - Claremont Companies President, Elias Patoucheas introduced his team and stated that his firm has 25 Washington Street under agreement with the goal of building a 168 room Hilton Garden Inn. Elias stated that he and his team want to work with the town to create a gateway building that connects with and enhances amenities like the Emerald Necklace and Muddy River.
 - Project Architect, Joe Geller gave an overview of the hotel proposal including the building program, site plan, multiple options for bike/ped improvements along River Road and preliminary renderings of what the building could look like.

Questions/Comments:

- Below grade parking would create space for more hotel rooms, but the economics can make this challenging.
- A high water table makes below grade parking very challenging.
- Who owns the park land? The Town owns it
- Are their flooding concerns for the shallow basement?
- A partial basement would be much shallower than a parking garage. Additionally, the partial basement would consist of some back of the house functions that would essentially be surrounded by a bathtub to prevent flooding.
- Has Claremont considered assembling additional parcels in the district?
- We have reached out to abutters, but they are not a factor at the moment.
- How does the parking ratio compare with Red Cab?
- Our proposed parking ratio is .38 spaces per room. Red Cab has .5 spaces per room.
- What is the lot size, # of rooms, # of parking spaces and FAR?
- The lot is approx. 18,500 SF, the gross SF including parking is 162K, the FAR is approx. 8.5, height is 110' plus an additional 12' for mechanical on the roof. There are 66 parking spaces and 168 rooms.
- Has anyone done a zoning analysis to determine if this is the best use for the site?
- The Selectmen have voted to establish a study committee to create a zoning overlay district that will examine the feasibility of a hotel and other uses that may be appropriate for the site and district.
- How many stories is the proposed hotel building?
- The proposed building is ten stories, but the height is approx. 12 shorter than the Brook House. The floor height requirements for a hotel are different than residential and other commercial/office uses so you can have more stories, but less height.
- Signs and light pollution should be a consideration for anything that happens on this site. There are lights just over the border in Boston that shine in the windows of some Brook House residents.
- What the economic feasibility of constructing another hotel so close to Red Cab?
- The site's proximity to the LMA is a primary factor. There is unmet demand for hotel rooms in the Boston area generally. The occupancy rate at the Marriott in Coolidge Corner runs in the high 80% range. Some hotels in Boston are in the 90% occupancy range. The hotel at 111 Boylston Street and the proposed hotel for 25 Washington Street do not have as many rooms combined as some of the larger single hotel buildings in Boston.
- Could the hotel share parking with Children's Hospital once they rebuild the parking garage?
- That is concept we are discussing.

- One of the goals of this project is to mitigate impacts on the Emerald Necklace and Muddy River and to create an environment that leverages the surrounding parks and that enhances the pedestrian experience and connectivity to the rest of Brookline Village.
- Are you proposing to take Olmsted Park? No.
- Will the proposed hotel building take up the entire site? How much green space will there be?
- There is about 16' of space along river road before the sidewalk.
- How much congestion will be created by locating the parking entrance on Brookline Ave? Wouldn't the entrance work better on River Road?
- We looked at locating the entrance to the parking on River Road, but felt as though locating it there would take away from pedestrian improvements and connectivity to the park across River Road.
- What is the nature of the hotel services and function?
- The hotel will be a Hilton Garden Inn, which is a higher end product than the hotel at 111 Boylston Street. This hotel type will include a full breakfast buffet that is open to the public as well as dinner service. The hotel will also have a gym and a pool. We are aware that the town is creating a transportation demand policy and are looking into ways to maximize the use of public transportation and shuttle services for guests and employees. Based on the clientele we expect to serve, we anticipate that many of our guests will use a shuttle or public transit to get to the hotel.
- It is very encouraging to see a design that is trying to activate the street corner as well as improve the pedestrian experience, bike safety and connectivity with the Emerald Necklace.
- Will there be a café space on the sidewalk and where will the hotel entrances be?
- We plan to have some outside seating along River Road so there will be an entrance there as well as the main entrance at the corner fronting Washington St.
- Part of the bike accommodations that were added on to the Gateway East plan were limited by this parcel because of the curb cuts. This could be an opportunity to expand the bike/ped accommodations to make the area even more safe and comfortable for biking and walking.
- We have not gotten into that level of detail yet, but we have some preliminary ideas for improving bike/ped safety and strengthening the building's and the district's connection to the Emerald Necklace.
- Any change in zoning will likely increase property values. Property owners should be engaged in the discussion.
- Planning staff are in the process of reaching out to property owners.
- It would be great to have a small market or convenience store. Brook House residents either have to drive or walk a fair distance to get to a market.

- This particular area has a unique opportunity to leverage multi-modal transportation, proximity to Brookline Village, the LMA and other amenities. The town should market these things and use them to shape this and future projects.
- The Committee should consider closing all or a portion of River Road, at least on the Washington Street side. This would be a gain for the town.
- We have an opportunity to explore bringing some complimentary uses for this site and area. The hotel could be great for foot traffic in Brookline Village.
- What type of clientele would this hotel serve?
- It would be servicing businesses professionals and those visiting the LMA
- What are the environmental remediation challenges?
- Part of the real estate transaction includes an independent review by a Licensed Site Professional who reports any concerns into Mass DEP.
- What type of traffic would a hotel generate?
- A traffic study needs to be done, but generally hotels generate less traffic than other uses and typically peaks during off hours.
- This project is a great opportunity to enhance the pedestrian experience on Brookline Ave.
- Will the hotel have a restaurant inside?
- There will be a small restaurant that is meant for guests, but will be open to the public.
- What is the time table for construction?
- The building would take approx. 18 months to construct.
- Do you plan to pursue LEED accreditation for this building?
- The Stretch Code, which Brookline has adopted, has evolved to go beyond some LEED standards. Many buildings are often now built to LEED standards, but just might not be accredited. For instance, the 111 Boylston St. project was designed to LEED silver standards.
- Will the hotel have conference rooms?
- There will be two small conference rooms, but not the size/type that could host a wedding.
- How many SF is the finished building without the parking. Is the program all standard size rooms with no suites?
- The finished space is 110K sf with all standard size rooms.
- How did you decide on the number of parking spaces?
- We considered the urban setting, proximity to transit and proximity to Boston generally. Is this setting you typically want to have around .5 parking spaces per room, but it can be less, if transit is available.
- The Residence Inn by the Fenway has a parking ratio around .25 spaces, however, the garage is typically only full on Red Sox game days.
- Is it possible to decouple parking from the use and offer discounts for staff or customers that do not drive to the site?

- That is something that we will look into.
- The design and configuration of the drop-off area will be key.
- From a zoning perspective, a parking ratio of .38-.40 spaces per room seems reasonable. There needs to be a discussion about the appropriate amount of parking for other uses in the rest of the district.
- Stantec will provide massing images for potential buildings in the rest of the district.
- Will there be a covered structure for pedestrians and will it be easier for Brook House residents to cross Route 9?
- Making this whole area more walkable will be key for any project.
- The town should look for ways to improve lighting for pedestrians in this area. It is scary to walk at night or early in the morning.