

**Audi Brookline DAT
Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2016, 7:30 p.m.
Brookline Town Hall
333 Washington Street, Room 103**

*DAT Members Present: Linda Hamlin, Tom Nally, Blair Hines, Garry Boyce, Phil Kramer, Elton Elperin
Staff Present: Polly Selkoe, Lara Curtis Hayes*

Polly Selkoe explained the major impact project process.

Linda Hamlin, Chair of the Planning Board and this DAT, introduced the other DAT members. Linda explained how the DAT process typically works.

Attorney Allen introduced the development team. There was previously a neighborhood meeting and a preliminary Planning Board Meeting.

Architect Mark Regent, Regent Associates, described the proposal and showed the site plan, renderings, floor plans and shadow studies, and where the impact is to Route 9. The project involves demolishing the current showroom and constructing a new four-story showroom and office building and an attached four-story garage building. There is a 10 ft. buffer between buildings and abutting homes. Rooftop units should not be visible from abutting residences.

Engineer Gabe Crocker, CHA, described the site plan and went over the zoning issues. The length of the garage building is 227 feet. It exceeds the 45' height limit of the G-2.0 district. Height is between 45'-51' and will need relief. Landscape architect recommends a tall hedge to screen the rear of the building.

Linda asked staff to post the Planning Board's and DAT's previous notes on the town's website.

Tom Nally reviewed the Greater Point Neighborhood Association's meeting where the project was discussed, and summarized the points that came out of that meeting (also put in a letter to the Planning Board): the project should provide a safe and efficient traffic environment along the Cypress Street sidewalk; provide an adequate setback along the property line shared with the East Milton Road residents; increase activation of the ground floor and install more robust landscaping along Boylston Street; use materials consistent with those in the neighborhood; have building forms more consistent with the immediate context (i.e. curved walls); have adequate buffering of the impacts from rooftop equipment; control and reduce employee parking occurring on neighborhood streets. These were the critical points made at the meeting. The neighborhood association's objective is to encourage a dialogue to make a better project.

Phil Kramer said there were design guidelines adopted by the Planning Board in 1994, which specifically mention this site and have very positive points that are not reflected in the project's current design. Kramer said the guidelines are still valid and should be taken into account. Kramer said the proposed building's bulk is enormous. Kramer asked if more stackers could be used, or a car elevator, etc. in order to try to reduce the size of the building.

Elton Elperin said in general it's hard to imagine a building more antithetical to the restoration of pedestrian life in the neighborhood. Elton said it's a billboard building, meant for high traffic speeds.

Elton said the “storage box” could be made more attractive, and could be designed so it could be reused in the future by a different use once/if Audi is gone.

Linda Hamlin said she visited the Audi site in Natick, and although the site is very different, there is much more transparency with that building than with the currently proposed plan. There is more siding than glass with the current proposal. Linda said she is concerned about the one-way exit onto Cypress Street, and the project should be rearranged to avoid that exit – there is a lot of foot traffic on that sidewalk.

Mark Regent said his office didn’t design the building; the plans came from Audi’s national architect out of New York. There is little flexibility with the exterior materials. The showroom is intentionally different from the parking garage portion of the building.

Lea Cloud, CBI Studio in New York, Audi’s national architect, said the architecture of the showroom is a global standard that is used all over the U.S. and globally. The garage is a specific reaction to a need on the site. The Audi European’s desire is to have a material for the garage that is different from the showroom. There isn’t a standard for a garage’s exterior materials. Linda Hamlin said this site is a key corner in town, and we want it improved. Lea said Audi wants to work with the neighborhood, and solve some problems. Bob Allen said he had a phone call with Audi ahead of time to make sure they know there is a process, and there may be some real changes in the proposal.

Tom Nally said this site can be a really special place. The other buildings on the corners have soft curves, and this proposal has very hard edges. This is a critical location: it’s a gateway to the Point Neighborhood and the Pill Hill Neighborhood; it’s a major pedestrian crossing point; Boylston Street is very visible. This site is of critical concern.

Bob Allen said Audi is trying to create as much parking as it can, and we are trying to avoid delivering cars on Route 9 and blocking traffic. We need the balance between good design and maximizing parking.

Phil Kramer asked what defining feature of the showroom is a global standard. Lea Cloud said it is based on a raceway curve, which is translated to the curve of the wall. There are 6 standards that are components of the global standard: exterior materials; having a spatial showroom (20’ high volume); interior standards and signage components. The design is intended to be manipulated so that it can be transformed based on site conditions, which is why the design can be different in different locations. Phil Kramer talked with Lea about the San Francisco Audi showroom in comparison to this property.

Garry Boyce said most of the standards you’ve talked about relates to the showroom, which is the nicest part of the project. The garage is what most people have problems with. Garry talked with Lea about the garage’s design and the standards for the project. Linda Hamlin said the current proposal doesn’t have massing appropriate for this site. Linda asked if they considered underground parking, or if they considered other ways to address the objections. Mark Regent said the water table is too close to the ground level for underground parking.

Blair Hines asked if there have been any changes since the Planning Board meeting. No. Blair said one question brought up at the Planning Board is why there is no massing on top of the one-story garage. Mark Regent said the biggest reason is the service portion of the dealership needs to be kept in operation the entire time the site is being developed. Mark reviewed how they would like to phase the project during construction. Blair said some of the storage could be put above the service area, which would have its own impact, but might be an option to reduce the overall size of the garage. If there is disruption to the service operations, then is the project not viable? Mark said it makes the project much less viable. Mark said there are zoning implications with that building as it is built nearly to the lot line in

many places. Additionally, it might be difficult to address the structural issues that go with that possibility.

Blair Hines said the DAT is meant to address design issues, so the DAT should consider other options for distributing the bulk of the project. Linda Hamlin said we need to know there are other avenues with the project. We're searching for ideas.

Linda Hamlin said the Planning Board will be very concerned with parking on neighborhood streets, and will accept no excess parking in the neighborhood.

Phil Kramer said the elevations right now show what looks like a warehouse with some windows cut in it. It doesn't do much for Audi's image, and it doesn't do anything for the neighborhood. Phil said he doesn't want to walk next to a 45' high wall, as shown on Cypress Street – this is a walking town.

Garry Boyce said another concern is the impact to the other side of Boylston Street. The view from the 6th floor of the condo building across the street should be considered, and that view needs to be mitigated. There should be some plans showing what would be seen from that perspective.

Tom Nally said the conflict is between something that is regional in scale (the current project) and a local neighborhood. Tom said this particular use doesn't draw people together and doesn't relate to the other uses in the immediate neighborhood, which are locally oriented. Tom said this project doesn't fit, and the developer needs to be sensitive to the neighborhood's concerns.

Anne Lusk reviewed her background, and said there are two kinds of customers: one that will drive a long distance to buy a car, and one that brings a car for maintenance and will leave the car. Lusk said the developer should strive for the latter option. Lusk said the dealership wouldn't need to give out loaner cars because they could use the T, which is close to the property. Lusk said she knows there are standards for Audi, but that will only result in negative press. Lusk said she looked at Automobile Road on the BU campus – this should be the most environmentally aware dealership. Anne said there should be a cycle track along Boylston Street.

Kathy Neil said she would like this to be a project that embraces Audi's innovation in research and form, where you can buy a car without seeing it in person. Don't make this a car storage place. Kathy said you are setting yourself up for graffiti, and there's already a huge amount of pedestrian activity there.

Dennis DeWitt, TMM Pct. 5, said if this building was in the nearby local historic district, we'd be having a different discussion. DeWitt said the plans should show the sidewalk lines, currently missing on the floor plans. DeWitt asked if the 3rd and 4th floors will be heated and cooled because that would affect the amount of HVAC units needed. DeWitt said this is Brookline, not Tokyo, and the showroom isn't as much of the problem, it's the warehouse on the corner. DeWitt said the building across the street has two levels of underground parking, and this issue needs to be investigated further.

Lenore von Krusenstiern, TMM Pct. 5, and a Walnut Street resident, said the exit onto Cypress Street feels really unsafe, and asked if other options have been considered. Bob Allen said that egress is necessary in order to allow for people to take a left onto Route 9. Linda Hamlin said currently there is real traffic conflict with that intersection. Garry Boyce suggested Audi try to implement a temporary policy restricting that exit to a right-only exit to see how it works.

Charles Osborne, 74 Davis Avenue, said everyone is focused on the corner. Charles said he understands there are a number of issues going into this project, but he suggested the showroom be put on the

corner. There has to be a really strong reason why the showroom isn't already shown on the corner in the plans.

Susan Rothstein, a resident, said the DAT has already mentioned a lot of her concerns, but the neighborhood needs some clarification about the design guidelines, and how they will be used. When the zoning was increased to G-2.0, the guidelines were adopted as a "promise" that the neighborhoods would be protected from future development. Brookline has a brand, including appreciation of historic buildings and design, and the façade of this building looks like it would hurt if you had to lean against it. Susan said the building looms over the neighbors.

Werner Lohe, TMM Pct. 13, said he's on the Selectmen's Climate Action Committee and on Climate Action Brookline, and he doesn't want to minimize a lot of the neighborhood issues that have been raised. Werner said there is a group of people who are interested in doing community shared solar, and there would be a lot of space on this roof for solar. Werner said it is really important that any development this major should add to the community – it should enhance things. Werner said for a company that is very top end in design, and progressive on environmental issues, we'd expect something more for this site. There should be a solar component with 70,000 s.f. of open roof. Werner said green roofs are much better aesthetically, but their contribution to greenhouse gas mitigation is relatively minimal; however there are new projects out there that combine both green and solar roofs together.

Betsy DeWitt, former selectwoman, said she agrees with most of the comments said, but she is embarrassed as the owner of an Audi, if this is how Audi proceeds with its development. Betsy said she is upset that the plans are exactly the same tonight as what was presented at the Planning Board meeting. Nothing has changed, and she wants to see something new and different and better.

Bill Reyelt, Chestnut Street, TMM Pct. 5, said he would like to see the site developed, but he is upset that the use is even allowed under the zoning, which is a wake-up call. Bill said Audi's standards are irrelevant, this is a design review process, and Audi's standards are the dealership's problem. Bill said Audi's standards shouldn't have any input in the design review. Bill said this is a lousy use for a transit-oriented location, and it would inhibit any improvement in the pedestrian environment for this corridor. Bill reviewed the design guidelines for the region and how they might apply to the site, especially regarding parking, window transparency, etc. Bill urged the DAT to use all of its leverage to exact program and design changes.

Diane Rubin, an attorney representing resident Rosenblatt, said she wants to talk about East Milton Street. This process should protect East Milton Street, and the monolithic structure is proposed to be right next to the residences. Rubin said the zoning doesn't appear to permit the amount of cars on this site, and the building should be smaller.

Clint Richmond, TMM Pct. 6, said the current site is at least open, and he objects to the hostile design of the project. Richmond said the development offers nothing to the neighborhood, which would be hosting a parking facility. Richmond said the applicant could consider energy efficiency improvements, solar development, landscaping on the front, and noise mitigation. This project is asking too much of the neighborhood.

Cindy Draper, East Milton Road resident, said Audi isn't building this building, Herb Chambers is, and asked the applicant to come back and reflect Herb Chambers' buildings. Cindy is upset that the comments in November were completely ignored, and the Audi brand is used as a shield for the design. Cindy said she wants to see more thoughtfulness.

Hugh Mattison, TMM Pct. 5, said there are a number of cars parked at the Golf Course, and asked if those are related to this site. Hugh said this number of cars doesn't have to be parked on site if they're being parked at the golf course.

Larry Dudley, Cypress Street resident, said the showroom would be much better on the corner. Larry said the roof can be landscaped. Larry said the exit onto Cypress Street now is from an open parking lot – the proposed exit has much more restricted visibility. Larry said a hotel is going up across the street, which also has a national standard, and it has a brick façade and a setback story.

Narcissa Champion, 255 Walnut Street, said an environmental impact study should be required before any proposal to build on top of the "barn"/garage. This is the third meeting she's had to talk about this project, and no changes have been made, which is extremely disheartening.

Randolph Meiklejohn, TMM Pct. 5, asked if a garage can be laid out that is 25-feet narrower as required under the zoning. Mark Regent said no. Mark reviewed the way the garage is currently laid out.

Dennis DeWitt asked whether underground garages can go right to the property line. Lara Curtis Hayes said there is a setback requirement for underground accessory structures, but she will look at it more closely and give that information to the development team.

Garry Boyce asked why nothing has changed. Bob Allen reviewed the process, and said he wanted to show the DAT the same plans so they could give feedback on the proposal. The DAT is a better forum to discuss design issues. Blair Hines suggested circulating objectives that the developer will be examining. Bob said he would meet with staff to make sure we're on the same page, and develop points to focus on.

Meeting adjourned.

Materials reviewed during meeting: Proposed plans and elevations prepared by Regent Associates Inc. and CHA

Summary of general issues discussed during meeting:

- Bulk of garage structure too massive and too close to residences
- Building forms and materials should be more appropriate to the neighborhood
- More building transparency
- Relocation of showroom to intersection corner
- Review underground parking options and/or garage elevators, more stackers, etc.
- Safety and traffic related to Cypress Street exit
- Impacts to pedestrian environment, particularly along Cypress Street
- Need more landscaping on street edges
- Reduce/remove employee parking from neighborhood streets
- Reduce noise from rooftop HVAC equipment
- Improve view of rooftop from neighboring buildings
- Possibility for solar and/or green roof
- Possibility to relocate bulk to the one-story repair garage building
- Relevance of already adopted design guidelines to this project/site
- Site is close to mass transit; cycle track along Boylston St.