



Coolidge Corner Study Committee January 2, 2019

MEETING NOTES

Chair, Neil Wishinsky
Alan Christ
Anne Meyers
Catherine Donaher
Elton Elperin
Frank Caro
Ken Lewis
Lauren Bernard
Linda Hamlin
Linda Olson Pehlke
Maura Toomey
Roger Blood
Sergio Modigliani
Steve Kanés
Susan Roberts

Committee Members Present: Lauren Bernard, Roger Blood, Frank Caro, Alan Christ, Catherine Donaher, Elton Elperin, Linda Hamlin, Ken Lewis, Anne Meyers, Sergio Modigliani, Linda Olson Pehlke, Susan Roberts, Maura Toomey.

Committee Members Absent: Neil Wishinsky, Steve Kanés

Staff: Kara Brewton

Guests: Representatives from Chestnut Hill Realty including Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert (Law Office of Robert L. Allen, Jr.); three residents including Regina Frawley.

Materials: Agenda (1-2-19); Draft Design Guidelines (Alan Christ, 12-21-18); Preliminary Comments from Chestnut Hill Realty on Draft Design Guidelines (1-2-19)

Alan Christ started the meeting by introducing his draft Design Guidelines. He started with the Design Guidelines from River Road, but took out language regarding the massing setbacks that were applicable to the hotel on River Road. He also added language in Section 2 with regards to having an active streetscape. Throughout the document, he added in language that addressed concerns noted by the Committee as well as residents.

Linda Olson Pehlke asked Linda Hamlin to review how Design Guidelines worked for the Planning Board, especially with the recent River Road permitting for the hotel at 700 Brookline Avenue. Linda Hamlin noted that after the zoning and design guidelines were passed, the actual special permit application included several proposed design changes that were not contemplated before zoning was passed: further design refinement of access to the above-ground parking garage; less proposed parking; balancing the community desire for more transparent windows with the need for providing adequate "back of house" operations such as deliveries, mechanicals; further design for accessibility entrances related to exterior grading, which affected programming for outdoor space.

Sergio Modigliani noted that the tradition of design guidelines in Brookline goes back a long time. He felt that was some language that was more boilerplate of good practices, such as Section 6, and then other parts of the guidelines that were more site-specific, and might be more important to review.

Paul Saner added that the design guidelines for River Road became a very important tool as a number of residents, including him, invoked those guidelines to push the applicant for more public uses on the ground floor facing River Road. If the Committee had not

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documented their discussions and goals for that site through the design guidelines, it would have been more difficult to advocate for such changes at the time of the Special Permit review.

Kara Brewton then reviewed the Guidelines with the Committee; the discussion below is organized by topic.

General Comments & Organization

1. Ken Lewis suggested that the guidelines include by reference a site plan.
2. Need consistent use of “step”, “step down”, and “setback”.
3. It may be helpful to include images of existing development in the Design Guidelines of what the Committee had a preference for (or not). Committee members will email Kara examples.
4. Need a separate section on the public use programming (indoor and outdoor).
5. Need to combine thoughts into a separate section for Sidewalk & Landscape Plantings.
6. Need to add a section regarding Energy Conservation & Design.

Residential Building Setbacks

1. Elton Elperin suggested the rooftop should be setback such that the perception of the top floor of the residential building from the sidewalk should be minimized.
2. Regarding Section 1, maybe an introductory sentence was needed, along the lines of “The façade of this residential building should address the scale and character of the adjacent block.”

Hotel Massing & Facades

1. Alan Christ noted that his draft intended to push Chestnut Hill Realty further into considering a smaller hotel of 7 and 9 stories rather than the proposed 8 and 10 story building. The Committee agreed that the important piece to capture in the design guidelines was to design the hotel as a transition of the proposed residential building massing and the existing 1- and 2-story massing at the corner of Beacon and Harvard Streets.
2. Elton Elperin suggested the rooftop should be setback such that the perception of the top floor of the residential building from the sidewalk should be minimized.
3. Language in Section 2.a needs to be edited so that it is clear that the hotel façade facing Beacon/Harvard Streets are as carefully designed as the façade facing Waldo Street, but not necessarily at this point stating that it should be designed as a “front” façade.

Streetscape

1. Alan noted that in Section 3.a., he was trying to reflect the current site plan, which should read 50' from building face to building face across Waldo Street, not 65' as drafted.
2. Section 5.d – regarding screening parking, Chestnut Hill Realty noted that there would be some at-grade parking in the existing alley behind the proposed hotel, which might

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be visible from Waldo Street. Alan noted that the intent of the draft guidelines was to make sure that any structured parking was fully below ground.

3. Section 3 – the term “Woonerf” needs to be better defined – the intent is to not include curbs where possible, and to blur the area between vehicles and pedestrians.

Building Program/ Uses

The Committee had a strong preference for a retail or similarly public use (and entryway) be placed on the ground floor of the residential building facing Pleasant Street.

Hotel Connections

Alan’s draft included language to encourage connections from the hotel through to Harvard Street, even though this was not currently part of the proposed development. The Committee noted that this would mean that the zoning bylaw may very likely need to accommodate additional height for the adjacent block in order to permit a feasible building connection.

Architectural Scaling Elements

Section 6 – may need to simplify with a statement along the lines of “Strive for an articulation that reduces the verticality rather than emphasizing the verticality of the building.”

Sergio wrapped up the meeting by noting the difficulty in drafting guidelines in a Committee setting. He suggested that the Architects meet to further refine the guidelines and then come back to the Committee as a whole with a revised draft. There was some discussion about whether the Subcommittee should include other Committee members or not. For purposes of Subcommittee organization, scheduling and setting a quorum, the Committee agreed that the Architecture Subcommittee should now just include the architects (Elton Elperin, Sergio Modigliani, Alan Christ, Linda Hamlin), but that all Committee members that are interested should send comments to Kara and/or come and participate in the Subcommittee meeting.

Kara will schedule the next Architecture Subcommittee meeting by doodle poll, and reminded the Committee that the next full meeting was February 6th (the first Wednesday of every month).

Meeting Adjourned