

## Minutes

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee

February 1, 2023 5:30PM

Held remotely via Zoom

Committee members in attendance (noted by Y/N):

|                       |   |                    |   |                  |   |                |   |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------|---|------------------|---|----------------|---|
| John VanScoyoc, Chair | Y | Rachna Balakrishna | Y | Wendy Friedman   | Y | Deborah Brown  | Y |
| Carlos Ridruejo       | Y | Mark Zarrillo      | Y | Wendy Machmuller | Y | Matthew Oudens | Y |
| Tom Nally             | Y |                    |   |                  |   |                |   |

*\*Arrived late or left early*

Staff & consultants present: Kara Brewton, Victor Panak

Attendees included: Chris Dempsey, Cindy Elias de Koster, Dianne Mueller, Jennifer Meus Tulipani, Joan Lancourt, John Dempsey, Kevin England, Mary Sullivan, Narcissa Campion, Pamela Bracken, Paul Warren, Parry Grossman, Peter Taxidis, Robert Daves, Kim Smith, Charles Osborne, Delanson Hopkins, Frances Shedd-Fisher, Hugh Mattison, James Smith, Anne Meyers, Cynthia Drake, Susan Rothstein, Terry Teague, Will Dorfman

Meeting Materials:

- Meeting agenda 2/1/23
- Staff powerpoint presentation 2/1/23

Meeting Recording:

[https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/play/dzGE0EhW9b-7doN-3-ntlIBXBNZgf6IMR48MkquWwc5db\\_jx9BQ5izn3YfKYWWjZVCbLUT6-Jt209EohH.HVaxOxmswAiCb3fk?continueMode=true](https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/play/dzGE0EhW9b-7doN-3-ntlIBXBNZgf6IMR48MkquWwc5db_jx9BQ5izn3YfKYWWjZVCbLUT6-Jt209EohH.HVaxOxmswAiCb3fk?continueMode=true)

### Committee Chair and Staff Updates

Ms. Brewton opened the meeting.

**Discussion of financial feasibility model and building envelope options for sites in the corridor, which may include:**

**Madris Site: 131 Cypress St & 361 Boylston St**

**Audi Site: 308 Boylston St**

**Boylston Place: 345 Boylston St, 14 Boylston Pl, 116 & 120 Cypress St**

**Dunkin' Donuts & Valvoline: 265 & 275 Boylston St**

**Ace Ticket: 358-374 Boylston St**

**U-Haul Site: 270 Boylston St**

Kara Brewton continued the presentation and discussion from the previous meeting, focusing on a financial analysis of different redevelopment options on the subject sites.

The Committee started by discussing the Audi Site (308 Boylston Street). The Committee examined various options for the Audi Site (308 Boylston Street), including medical office or lab uses, residential uses, varying FARs ranging from 2.0 to 3.0, and possible parking requirements and layouts.

Ms. Brewton recommended against rezoning the parcel for more FAR since the existing zoning already allows an FAR up to 2.5, which is sufficient for a redevelopment to achieve a desirable equity multiple.

Ms. Balakrishnan highlighted the possibility of difficult soil conditions and parcel shape as factors that could hamper a developer's ability to locate parking underground.

Ms. Brown was skeptical that leaving the zoning unchanged would lead to the most benefit for the Town as a whole. She encouraged the Committee to push beyond "good enough".

Mr. Ridruejo emphasized that the Committee should focus on growing the Town's commercial tax base, but noted that this site will not be redeveloped for a long time. He therefore suggested that the Committee ignore whether medical labs or offices are in demand today and instead rezone the property to allow for whatever the Committee feels appropriate, including medical labs. Ms. Brewton asked if that meant a rezoning to allow FARs up to 3.1 or 3.2. Mr. Ridruejo indicated he would support additional allowances as needed to accommodate a medical lab building based on modeling done in 2022.

Mr. VanScoyoc highlighted the point that the property is already occupied by a viable business. There may be no need to rezone the property if the goal is to incentivize commercial development.

Ms. Brown said that she doesn't believe a car dealership is the highest and best use for the site. She suggested that the Committee draft zoning that allows an FAR of ~3.25 but only after 10-15 years have passed or some other trigger has been satisfied.

Mr. Zarrillo felt that if the Committee feels the highest and best use of the site is lab space, then the Committee should propose rezoning the site accordingly – a new district with higher FAR and does not allow residential uses. He also noted his agreement with Ms. Brown about the long-term prospects for the property.

Ms. Balakrishna agreed with Mr. Zarrillo and Mr. Ridruejo.

Mr. Nally said that the Town should wait and see what is appropriate for the site in 5-10 years once the property is more ripe for redevelopment. He also felt that the Committee should not expend the effort to propose rezonings that would not pass muster with the neighborhood or be likely to pass Town Meeting.

Mr. VanScoyoc said that the Committee should keep in mind the 845 Boylston Street (40B) development as an example of what could be built in this corridor if the Town falls below the 10% affordable housing threshold. He thinks it is a good example that represents what a developer would aim to build in this corridor.

Ms. Machmuller suggested that, because of the uncertainty about the site, the Committee postpone rezoning this site and revisit it in a future year as a separate rezoning effort.

Ms. Brewton asked Ms. Friedman and Mr. Oudens for their opinions. Ms. Friedman said that her initial reaction is that residential uses should be located on the site given the property's location in the context

of the full corridor. Mr. Oudens said that he hasn't fully formulated an opinion on the site but is slightly uncomfortable with rezoning the property too soon.

#### Public Comments

Martin Rosenthal asked whether this Boylston Street corridor could be combined with the Harvard Street corridor in analyzing a potential solution for meeting the Town's MBTA Communities requirements.

Chris Dempsey said that it would be a huge shame if the Audi dealership site is still a car dealership in 20-30 years. He also emphasized that the Committee needs to make sure to propose something that will be palatable to Town Meeting since he is eager for something to be passed to improve the corridor.

Narcissa Campion expressed opposition to the idea of fitting a tall building on the Audi dealership property, which is two blocks deep and stretches into the residential blocks behind it.

Ms. Brown emphasized that she believes doing nothing would be the worst outcome of the Committee's works. Ms. Friedman agreed and noted that very few people like the corridor as it is now.

#### Other Business

The Committee briefly discussed next steps and outstanding work.

**The meeting was adjourned.**