



## River Road Study Committee February 3, 2016

### MEETING NOTES

#### **Committee Members**

Select Chair Ben Franco  
Dick Benka  
Alan Christ  
Chris Dempsey  
Steve Heikin  
Brian Hochleutner  
Yvette Johnson  
Ken Lewis  
Wendy Machmuller  
Hugh Mattison  
Tom Nally  
Marilyn Newman  
Mariah Nobrega  
Charles Osborne  
Linda Pehlke  
Bill Reyelt  
Daniel Weingart

*Committee Members Present:* Ben Franco, Dick Benka, Alan Christ, Chris Dempsey, Steve Heikin, Brian Hochleutner, Yvette Johnson, Ken Lewis, Wendy Machmuller, Hugh Mattison, Tom Nally, Marilyn Newman, Mariah Nobrega, Charles Osborne, Linda Olson Pehlke, Bill Reyelt,  
*Committee member participating remotely:* Daniel Weingart

*Staff:* Andy Martineau

*Guests:* Bobby Allen, Joe Geller, Elias Patoucheas, Rob Festa, Betsy Dewitt, Denis Dewitt, Fred Perry

*Materials:* Background package, Claremont Powerpoint

*Committee members met from 7:00 to 9:15 pm*

#### **1. Committee Introductions**

- Andy Martineau opened the meeting by thanking everyone for volunteering their time and also gave a brief introduction to the Claremont Development team.

#### **2. Presentation of 25 Washington Street Proposal by Claremont Company Development Team**

- Claremont President, Elias Patoucheas introduced his firm and his development team consisting of Bobby Allen, Joe Geller and Rob Festa.
- Elias stated that his firm recently closed on the 25 Washington St. property.
- Project Planner, Joe Geller and Project Architect, Rob Festa gave an overview of Claremont's proposal to construct a 168 +/- room hotel with approximately 66 above grade parking spaces, a height of 110' plus an additional 10-15 for mechanical penthouse. The presentation included 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.
- Joe stated that the hotel is designed to maximize street level activity on the first floor which includes a multi-story lobby, restaurant, pool, and gym area in addition to some outdoor seating.

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#### *Questions/Comments:*

- What is the FAR?
- The gross FAR is 8.8
- How tall is the mechanical penthouse
- We are showing 15', but would like to get down closer to 10'
- What is programmed for the shallow basement area?
- We have some back of the house operations and some of the mechanical located in the basement. The goal is to have as little of the hotel operations, less essential mechanical out of view.
- The renderings show glazing on the outside of the parking levels. Will there actually be windows or will it be open?
- The goal is to make the parking levels look like the rest of the building façade
- During your presentation to EDAB, it was mentioned that the Residence Inn by the Fenway has a ratio of .25 and that the lot is only full on game days. What is your parking ratio based on? Does Hilton have specific requirements based on location?
- The hotel at 111 Boylston St has a .5 parking ratio, which we feel is just what we need for that location. For the 25 Washington St. proposal, we are showing a .4 ratio, which is what both we and Hilton feel is appropriate.
- Would Hilton be open to a shared parking situation with a neighboring parking garage?
- We prefer not to pursue a shared parking agreement at the moment. Children's Hospital is not able to commit to anything long term right now, but we are in discussions about overflow parking options, in the event it is needed.
- The Children's Hospital redevelopment will be subject to a Transportation Demand Management Plan, this project will likely have similar requirements.
- The town has a draft Transportation Demand Policy that will likely have criteria for different size/types of projects. The policy will likely apply to the Claremont proposal, but the exact requirements will not be finalized until the policy is finalized.
- A developer is building the "Mosaic Condos," which have no parking just down the street in Jamaica Plain.
- Will the hotel have a true restaurant or will the lobby/restaurant be more of an open seating area?
- The lobby and hotel will be an open concept with different types of seating available. There will be a paid breakfast buffet open to the public and a grab and go food option. Many hotels are moving towards a tapas style menu offering.
- Will there be a green roof and will it be publicly accessible?
- A green roof is something that we could look into. Typically, you need a room key to access the upper floors of the hotel, so we would have to think about how the logistics might work.

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- I am glad to see some proposed bike/ped/park enhancements. If there were additional green space created, is that something Claremont would agree to maintain?
- Yes
- The Army Corps of Engineers was in the process of closing the exit to the Riverway, but phase 2 of the project has been halted. It is unknown where those changes currently stand.
- River Road could be reduced to a single lane, which would reduce pavement coverage and if a portion of it were sold by the town it could provide more flexibility for potential developers.
- If River Road were reduced to one lane, it would provide an additional 15-16 feet of buildable space. We considered that possibility and it does not really help that much with improving the floor plates. However, it could be great as additional green space.
- It also opens options for land assembly and potential development agreements.
- How will the lobby/mezzanine area function?
- The lobby and meeting rooms will be an amenity for guests. The rooms are very small and not the type you would want for a wedding or other function.
- What is the depth of the parcels as you go from the widest part of the district to the narrowest.
- It is approximately 80' at the widest point, 70' in the middle and 60' towards the narrowest point.
- The MIT study indicated that flooding should be a consideration in this area with respect to future building design. Does the hotel design account for that.
- The site is in the 100 year flood inundation zone, but outside the FEMA A zone so there are no specific design requirements.
- This site and district is a unique opportunity. There are no immediate abutters and it is a gateway to the town. I wonder if we should be thinking about allowing more height.
- We would certainly entertain building taller if that is something the town would allow. Are you thinking of building taller, but reducing the foot print?
- The Committee should recognize the opportunity to do something different here.
- A taller building will likely be required for anything to be feasible in the rest of the district; how would that impact the rooms on the side of the hotel facing the LMA?
- It would not impact the first 5 floors because of the lobby/parking uses, but the rooms on the upper floors could be impacted. Some of the windows shown would likely have to be removed or you would be looking out onto a blank wall.
- Some of those rooms facing the LMA will probably look out over some people's backyards; the Committee should be mindful of that.

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- What will happen to the bus stop that is currently near where the proposed hotel entrance will be?
- What is the sidewalk width by the garage entrance?
- It is approximately 8' wide.
- Are there other constraints that could prevent you from building taller like parking or market potential?
- We would have to explore those different scenarios further.
- There could be an opportunity to increase height and have the top of the building step back. This often diminishes the impact of the building and can make it feel less imposing.
- How does the parking for the Fenway Residence relate to this site?
- The Fenway Residence likely has more people arriving via public transportation, taxi, Uber and shuttle buses.
- Would your hotel have a shuttle service?
- Yes
- There are already a number of area shuttles to the LMA; this project should be about strengthening ped connections to the LMA and the rest of Brookline Village.
- We will need to carefully consider the impact of traffic patterns that may change as a result of the hotel. This includes looking more closely at the exit ramp and drop off area in light of heavy local pedestrian traffic.
- In the future, the renderings should reflect some of the new buildings that are going to be built in the next few years. We should also have a better understanding of how pedestrians actually navigate the area.

### **3. Review and Discuss Recommendations from the Route 9 East Visioning Study and Shared Goals for the Study Area**

- Ben Franco stated that concerns about Route 9 have long been the topic of discussion in town and now that there are several projects moving forward in the Route 9 east area. The industrial district and the hotel proposal are a real opportunities to capitalize on the momentum generated by those projects as well as conversations that emerged out of the MIT study and the Planning for a Changing Brookline workshops sponsored by EDAB. The goal here is to be proactive about development, generate more tax revenue and to not displace businesses.
- Andy Martineau reaffirmed Ben's statement that this is a real opportunity to create a gateway district to the town and to integrate the area with the rest of Brookline Village. The town continues to point to the form based approach that was taken by the Davis Path Committee as the model for establishing criteria for a successful project that is financially feasible and that yields positive outcomes for the Town. Andy encouraged the Committee to take a similar approach and to decide what massing could be acceptable on the site and to then determine what uses are desirable and whether or not they are

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financially feasible. Andy also stated that the Committee will need to be mindful of the potential impacts on the Emerald Necklace and the Muddy River and that proposed development and other changes need to enhance those community assets.

- The Committee should pay careful consideration to the existing uses and businesses some of which are valued by the community. If a business will be displaced because the property owner sells, Town Meeting may have a hard time voting for that.
- Are there opportunities for the existing businesses to be relocated to another part of town?
- The Hotel at 111 Boylston is not setback far enough from the street. This Committee should be careful not to make the same mistake.
- The Committee should be in control of modeling/testing different massing in the area. If Stantec is willing to provide the baseline model, the Committee could then test different scenarios.
- While the site may not be in a FEMA A Zone, those maps are in flux because of climate change. The Committee should not ignore flooding as a consideration.
- The City of Boston recently hosted a charrette called “Living with Water,” the Committee should see if the meeting materials are available.
- Flooding should not be the primary concern in this area. Connectivity with the surrounding neighborhoods including S. Huntington Ave is also important. This area is also a great opportunity to connect and enhance a forgotten part of the Emerald Necklace.

#### *Preliminary List of Shared Goals for the Site:*

- Flood resilient design
- Public Realm Complete streets elements
- Life safety and mechanical creatively located off the ground
- The overlay zoning should incentivize land assembly and appropriate density
- Connectivity with Huntington Avenue and the E branch of Green Line, Brookline Place and D branch of Green Line, and Village Way
- Minimized traffic impacts
- Minimized shadow impacts on open space
- Do not want to create an “urban canyon” with tall buildings across the entire district with no break in massing
- Improved bike/ped crossing across River Road; activate River Road as part of Emerald Necklace that draws people into the park
- Incentives for environmentally friendly design and ground floor uses that benefit the neighborhood like a grocery store.
- The Committee should consider an appropriate type of affordable housing like micro units or age restricted housing in addition to mixed uses
- The Committee will need to be careful about any discussion of housing that might add to the school population.

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- The committee should try to obtain some form a tax revenue protection via developer or tax certainty agreements
- 4. Review Committee Charge, Establish Subcommittees, Review Work timelines and Basic Commitments.**
- Andy Martineau stated that the committee will need to begin discussing specific uses in the near term.
  - Andy Martineau stated that similar committees typically breakout into subcommittees to more effectively manage tasks. Andy suggested forming subcommittees to look at zoning, public realm improvements, architecture and financial feasibility.
  - The Committee generally agreed with the suggested subcommittees and committee members then volunteered for specific committees
  - Andy Martineau stated that several committee members need to attend the next available open meeting law training and that everyone needs to be official sworn in
  - Ben Franco stated that he will talk to the Clerk's office about swearing in the entire committee at the next meeting