

**River Road Study Committee
Architecture Subcommittee
March 9, 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

Subcommittee Members Present: Ben Franco, Tom Nally, Alan Christ, Wendy Machmuller, Charles Osborne, Hugh Mattison

Subcommittee Members Absent: Steve Heikin

Guests: Betsy Dewitt, Arlene Mattison, Merelice, Frances Shed Fisher

Materials: Agenda, I-district zoning map, sketch paper, preliminary massing models in SketchUp

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

1. Review and Approve Minutes

- Minutes from February 25 were approved as amended.

2. Review and Discuss Preliminary Massing Scenarios

- Andy Martineau stated that the goal for tonight is to get a sense of what different massing scenarios might feel like with respect to height, shadows and neighborhood context. Andy also stated that the SketchUp models are basic shapes with no architectural features and therefore should not be viewed as specific project proposals outside of the hotel. The models are based on some of the ideas and guiding principles put forth by this subcommittee during their first meeting. Andy added that the Committee could also propose specific design guidelines for that could either be incorporated into the zoning or could be suggested to the Planning Board. The town and Planning Board already have a comprehensive review process for projects via the Planning Board and Design Advisory Team that is appointed to review major impact projects.
- Andy stated that the subcommittee also needs to decide what information they need from the other subcommittees in order to continue their work.

Guiding Principles

- Optimize unique urban (edge condition and) relationships to Emerald Necklace, LMA, Brookline Village
- Enhance Public Realm especially due to proximity to Emerald Necklace
- Active inviting streetscape and walkable / bikable district with Porosity and making connections
- Promote hybrid multi-use commercial development in transit rich location

River Road Study Committee
Architecture Subcommittee
March 9, 2016

- Promote Revenue producing uses
- Promote Scale that is respectful to the surroundings
- Facilitate Aggregation of and synergies of parcels
- Minimize environmental impacts

Massing Model A: Alan Christ provided an overview of the model noting that it is intended to mimic the skyplane zoning concept that was used at 111 Boylston Street. The massing steps down across the length of the entire district from Washington Street towards the northern end of Brookline Ave.

This model assumes:

- A wider public space by expanding the mid-block corridor currently used as parking by two of the existing businesses and where the town storm water easement is located
- Wider sidewalks because of wider setbacks on the first floor
- Taller ground floor heights
- 10' floor to floor heights for the upper floors
- Ground floor retail with office and or residential use above
- Setback for mechanical on the roof
- Setbacks along River Road
- "Portals" to allow for pedestrian access through other portions of the district

Questions/Comments:

- The building on the LMA side of the district could work well for micro units
- How small is a micro unit?
- A micro unit is typically in the 300 – 500 sf range
- Medical office sometimes requires a taller floor to floor height
- The hotel is too imposing on the corner of Washington Street
- The hotel massing gives definition to a corner that currently has no character or defining features
- There could be a loading zone on River Road or the pedestrian alleyway could be set up to accommodate late night/early morning deliveries

Massing Model B: Alan Christ provided an overview of another massing option showing the proposed hotel at 25 Washington Street, two smaller structures mid-block and a slightly taller structure on the other end of the district.

This model assumes:

- A wider public space by expanding the mid-block corridor currently used as parking and where the town storm water easement is
- Wider sidewalks because of wider setbacks on the first floor
- Taller first floor
- 10' floor to floor heights for the upper floors
- Ground floor retail with residential use above

**River Road Study Committee
Architecture Subcommittee
March 9, 2016**

- Setback for mechanical on the roof
- Setbacks along River Road
- “Portals” to allow for pedestrian access through other portions of the district

Questions Comments:

- Have taller buildings on either end creates “markers” on either side of the district
- Shadows will be much worse with a taller building on the LMA side of the district
- Option A is preferable as the scale is more appropriate and the buildings better relate to each other as they step down in height from the hotel
- Option A seems more conducive to creating a sense of place and the hotel signals your arrival

Public Comments/Questions:

- River Road should also have a front door so the district does not turn its back on the Emerald Necklace
- The height of the hotel is too tall
- Micro units could be a good idea for this area
- The hotel should relate to its surroundings including the Muddy River, Emerald Necklace and Brook House
- The Brook House does not do much to enliven the streetscape
- The hotel defines a corner that currently does not have definition
- We should not lose site of the comprehensive plan and the MIT study
- The buildings should relate to Brookline Place
- Keep in mind that we are looking at boxes intended to illustrate massing concepts so they have no architectural details etc.
- We should be bold an get rid of parking
- Claremont is the first developer that has been able to really work with the town
- Height should not be taken as a given

3. Discussion of Next Steps for Further Site Analysis

- Andy Martineau stated that the financial feasibility subcommittee will meet next week and will likely want to better understand the direction this subcommittee is heading with respect to massing concepts. In turn the architecture subcommittee needs some preliminary direction on the feasibility of the two proposed concepts.

Next Steps for Items to be Explored Further:

- Financial feasibility of two proposed massing schemes
- Impact of pedestrian portals with respect to floor plate and parking efficiency
- Feasibility of floor heights and depths generally
- Impact of additional setbacks on feasibility
- Understanding of tradeoffs between taller structures and desired uses
- Feasibility of locating even minimal parking on the site