

Minutes

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee – Urban Design & Massing Subcommittee
4/12/21, 1 pm

Subcommittee members present (Y/N):

Tom Nally	Y
Wendy Friedman	N
Carlos Ridreujo	Y
Joe Gaudino	N
Deborah Brown	N
Mark Zarrillo	N
John VanScoyoc	Y

Staff: Kara Brewton

Other meeting attendees included: Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, Matt Hyatt, Bill Reyelt, Mark Lewis, Joanna Gallimore

Meeting materials: Agenda; “suggestion for BSCS overlay zoning” diagram (M. Zarrillo, 4-7-21); “Boylston Urban Massing” (K. Brewton, 4-12-21); 3-D and street views utilizing Google maps for Cypress & Boylston intersection; “361 to 375 Boylston Street Madris Site” (T. Nally, 4-12-21).

The meeting began at 1:00PM Via Zoom. Kara Brewton welcomed everyone and notified everyone that we would be recording this meeting.

Concept Massing Discussion

Kara Brewton shared the diagram that Mark Zarrillo had prepared; he had a last minute change in his schedule and wasn't able to attend the Subcommittee meeting. Discussion on this diagram included:

- Desire to return to this slide at a future Subcommittee meeting with Mark's narration, especially with regards to 12-story height for commercial and the three cross-sections
- Difficult to imagine the feasibility of property conglomeration at the southwest corner of Cypress & Boylston Streets given the high value of so many individual residential properties on Milton
- Existing homes on Milton provide a good transition from the commercial zone to the rest of the residential neighborhood
- Could imagine a 12-story building at 10 Brookline Place, but couldn't imagine more than 8 for areas west of High Street
- Agreement with the proposal of 3-6 stories for the “smart growth” area, hopefully closer to 6 stories on the south side of Boylston, if not too close to existing residential properties on Walnut Street
- Could see 4 stories as height for the “mixed housing type” area
- Agreed that “mixed housing type” area should be predominantly residential, but should allow for commercial on the ground floor for those parcels directly on Boylston Street – especially if Davis Path becomes more activated with the rebuilding of the pedestrian bridge

- Likes the idea of reusing all or portions of the Old Lincoln School for other uses, but would like to keep options open beyond affordable housing by the Brookline Housing Authority – swing space, community uses, etc.
- Agreement that the Madris building should be preserved

Bill Reyelt commented in the chat box during this discussion that the Old Lincoln School wall was a visual barrier along Boylston Street, and an opportunity for other uses or adjusted massing on the street side of the Old Lincoln School.

Tom Nally then shared his conceptual work regarding 361 to 375 Boylston Street. His concept was to preserve Cypress as a predominant pedestrian zone, with little or no vehicular access from Brington Road. He is proposing to preserve the Madris building. His concept utilizes the existing curb cut on Boylston Street and lane alignment defined by the significant stormwater infrastructure easement from Boylston to Brington Road as vehicular access to the site. Tom shared two main concepts, both with buildings very close to Boylston Street rather than Brington Road: (i) 60' deep buildings as a 4-story building on the western edge of the site and a 4-6 story building closer to Madras building; (ii) a deeper 6-story building. These scenarios are a range of 1.5 to 2.75 FAR. He was especially interested in getting feedback about appropriate parking ratios for residential and non-medical office at this location.

Discussion included:

- Agreement that the topography change from Brington to Boylston and along Boylston Street provided helpful cues of how new massing could blend well with the existing neighborhood. For example, the building adjacent to Madras could probably be one story lower, and then the building cornice line could probably continue horizontally, with the grade of Boylston Street changing to force less stories as the proposed massing approaches the residential properties to the west.
- It would be interesting to further develop opportunities for open space on the Brington Road side, even perhaps parking under an open space that is at the level of Brington Road sidewalk.
- Discussion that the access to the MBTA stop was likely exit-only towards Brington Road, but the parking ratio could still be fairly low. On the other hand, the location of this site and access directly to Boylston Street would make it more attractive to those households that may need regular auto commuting patterns to the west.
- With regards to Tom's question about parking ratios, Kara Brewton noted that the property owner very much wants to maintain the existing parking for their commercial tenants, but in addition to those spaces, one could probably go quite low with the parking ratio, down to 0.3 to 0.5 spaces/unit – the existing residential units at the Madris building had no dedicated parking.
- Tom noted that existing parking was 30 spaces, very inefficiently laid out. He also suggested that for commercial uses, he could look at what the parking ratio was for the back office space previously located at 111 Cypress Street. Kara noted that 1.2 spaces per thousand square feet might be a good starting point for this location, for non-medical office.
- Stackers could also be utilized to increase parking supply, if needed.
- Interest in studying a concept scenario that moves the parking garage/deck to the west of the easement, to hopefully then keep more of an open courtyard facing Brington Road and the new school building at 111 Cypress.

Bill Reyelt commented in the chat box during this discussion wondering whether the conditions of the stormwater easement would allow (and whether desirable) to see building constructed

well above and over the easement. He also added that he hoped parking ratios for this corridor would be maximums, not minimums.

Kara Brewton then shared her conceptual work regarding the Mobil gas station and adjacent parcels on the northeast corner of Cypress & Boylston Streets, bounded by the private right-of-way of Boylston Place. She noted her concerns about adding significant massing too close to the existing condos, especially the windows facing west and directly adjacent to Boylston Place. She shared 3D views from Google maps of the area, noting balconies of the existing condo building facing the southwest. The existing two condo buildings are approximately 45' apart from each other, and she used this as a starting point to separate existing and new buildings. She showed development concepts with and without the Mobil gas station site in the mix, noting that the massing would likely be very similar either way. Parking could be accessed from the northern edge of the site, separated from the movement of cars in and out of the existing condo garage and partially naturally vented due to the change of existing topography. The concept proposes a 4-story building along Cypress and a 3-story building where the Mobil gas station is, with a 25' setback from the edge of the curb. The uses are presumed to be residential, with smaller commercial spaces on the edge facing Cypress & Boylston Street. Parking ratios are in the 0.6 – 0.7 space/unit range, not including any additional parking for the ground floor incidental commercial spaces. The FAR would be 1.6 for the entire site, but 2.6 for the portion not including the gas station site. Discussion included:

- Desire to see a concept that went up to 5 stories at the Mobil gas station site, perhaps with an additional penthouse level set back.
- Agreement that a break of massing would be a helpful view corridor for those condo owners adjacent to Boylston Place, but felt that the two buildings could still be connected on the first two stories.
- Agreement that a chamfer on the southwest corner of the site would provide pedestrian refuge for those waiting to cross. This is especially true since the Madris building is likely to remain in place on the west side of Cypress.
- An intermediate phasing plan might be interesting to diagram, showing the gas canopy open to the sky but additional massing above the existing gas station/service bay building.

Kara Brewton then shared a very rough sketch as a starting point for the Valvoline & Dunkin Donuts sites (265-275 Boylston). The concept here preserves the northern leg of the property towards Cameron Street as open space, and sets back a multifamily building to the same set back as the adjacent Buddhist Center at 303 Boylston. She suggested that perhaps access to parking could be behind the building façade accessed from Cameron Street. Finally, she noted that it might make sense to add a single or two-family style home on the corner of Leverett & Boylston Streets. Kara noted that even a 3-story multifamily building would bring the FAR to 1.25, beyond the existing CAM-1.0 zoning allowance. Discussion included:

- Agreement that at this site FAR should be above 1
- That the open space facing Cameron Street should be visually connected all the way through to Boylston Street, so that it is clear that this is a public open space, and to provide a helpful visual break.

Subcommittee members then discussed other areas of the site to be studied in more detail. Kara offered to further diagram conceptual options of the Tire/Midas site at 120-128 proposed by the MIT study.

Subcommittee members would like to return to the U-Haul site including housing and the existing operation. They would also like to briefly return to the Audi dealership site on the southeast corner of Cypress & Boylston, indicating what massing could look like 20 years from now – for example, following the recent evolution along Commonwealth Avenue from one-story auto-only uses to more dense and mixed uses. Carlos Ridruejo offered to extend his conceptual diagrams to the eastern portion of Boylston Street – especially the northern side east of Homewood Suites (111 Boylston Street).

The Subcommittee agreed to meet next week around 1pm, day to be determined based on other Subcommittee members' availability.

Meeting ended at 2:50 PM