

Minutes

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee

May 10, 2021 12:00PM

Held remotely via Zoom

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

John VanScoyoc, Chair	N	Wendy Friedman	YY	Tom Nally	Y Y
Rachna Balakrishna	YY	Joe Gaudino		Carlos Ridruejo	Y Y
Deborah Brown	Y	Wendy Machmuller	YY	Mark Zarrillo	Y Y

Staff present: Kara Brewton, Alison Steinfeld, Erin Gallentine, Joe Viola, Virginia Bullock, Alexandra Vecchio

Meeting materials included: 5/10/21 agenda; presentation by Brookline Housing Authority regarding High St. property (5/10/21)

Guests included: Representatives of Brookline Housing Authority (Michael Alperin, Mike Jacobs, Cliff Boehmer, Jennifer Gilbert, Maria Maffei); Antonia Bellalta, Charles Osborne, Fred Perry, Tad Champion, and an anonymous call-in guest

Kara Brewton opened the meeting, noting that it was being held remotely on the Zoom platform due to COVID, and after checking that all participants' audio/video were working well, announced that the meeting was being recorded. She also announced that John VanScoyoc had a last-minute family conflict and would not be able to join this meeting.

Presentation from Brookline Housing Authority

Following introductions of the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) team, the group noted the following in their presentation about the potential of adding housing at their property between Juniper & High Streets:

- Existing senior living is in a 2-story walk-up, with exterior steel risers
- 76 families in the building facing High Street, with a mix of 1-3 bedrooms
- The RAD program and Section 18 program could be used to recapitalize and redevelop federal public housing, including this property; this would allow a 15-year guaranteed income stream from the feds, and then the BHA would go to a state agency – either MassHousing or Mass Development with a tax-exempt mortgage.
- They don't know yet how many units and what the program would be for this property between Walnut & High Streets
- They are excited to work with the Committee now, although their timeline is to not start construction at this site until 2024 or 2025.

- They could work with the existing zoning, possibly needing to seek a variance for a couple dimensional requirements, or they could pursue a 40B. Alternatively they could work with the Committee to adjust any zoning they might need moving forward
- The site might hold 207-220 units in the future; all existing residents would be offered relocation as well as a guarantee to locate back on site in the new units once construction is complete.

Two potential concepts were shared:

- 1) High St. building renovated, adding 2-story townhomes between the High St. building and High Street, with an L-shaped building along Walnut Street that is a 7-story (5 stories above 2 story parking podium). This would be approximately 214,500 square feet in total, with 72 parking spaces and 220 units, and a FAR of approximately 2.07.
- 2) Demolish all existing buildings, replacing with 3 buildings, the shortest being a 4-5 story building along High Street. This concept would be approximately 182,100 square feet, 101 parking spaces, 207 units, and a FAR of 1.76.

Zoning relief needed may include parking and/or height relief. The BHA didn't think they needed 1.5 spaces per unit, given the nearby access to the green line and the bus routes. In both concepts, parking would be partially above ground. They believe that 0.25 spaces per unit or less would work well here.

Although early in conceptual design, they believe there will be room for BEEP or Steps to Success in the new family building in the common areas.

Some Committee members noted concern about a secondary vehicular access off High Street.

BHA noted that 7 stories is the maximum building height due to the structure of financing and cost per building unit for building construction that goes beyond 7 stories.

Wendy Friedman asked how the concept plan could integrate more with the surrounding neighborhoods than the current conditions – e.g., having a gym, pool, or grocery store on site that is open to the entire community. Mike Alperin noted that if senior services are offered, they would be open to all seniors.

In response to a question, Mike Alperin explained that as families' children age out of the homes, those households move to smaller units.

Erin Gallentine commented that perhaps the existing playground should be moved to a more prominent location, indicating the potential for a land swap. She thought the plan should accommodate a generous sidewalk zone for street trees along High and Walnut Streets. The plan should incorporate sustainability practices, especially heat island mitigation such as green roofs. Finally, she noted that community gardens might be a helpful way to blend neighborhoods.

The BHA still needs to conduct additional research regarding any easements that may be on the property.

Following Town Meeting, BHA would be glad to host a site walk. Kara Brewton also asked for a zoning chart so that the Committee could understand exactly what would need to change in the zoning to accommodate either concept plan.

Mixed income development is not off the table, but not BHA's top goals.

Charles Osborne wondered whether a loop road might work well and liked the idea of a mixed income development. In response to a question from Charles, Mike Alperin clarified that they would not be able to have a parking lot that was open to the general public. Charles felt that the relationship of the proposed bar-shaped buildings could create uncomfortable spaces, for example when an end of a building butts into a long façade of a building; this could be mitigated by distance between the buildings or reconfiguration of the building footprint to avoid non-productive interstitial space. Finally, he thought a variation of heights could help break up the massing.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30 pm.