

## Minutes

### Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee

July 13, 2021 7:00PM  
Held remotely via Zoom

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

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

*Staff & consultants present:* Kara Brewton

*Meeting materials included:* agenda; PowerPoint by K. Brewton (7/13/21)

*Guests included:* Alan Christ, Alan Cohen, Amie Lindenboim, Anthony Flint, Arran French, Bernard Greene, Bill Reyelt, Cynthia Drake, David Kroop, Deane Coady, Emily Jacobsen, Faith Michaels, Frances Shedd-Fisher, Heather Hamilton, Hugh Mattison, Kathryn Kirshner, Kim Smith, Lisa Cunningham, Malcolm Doldron, Mariah Nobrega, Martha Farlow, Martin Hegen, Nadine Gerdts, Natalia Linos, Nate Tucker, Neil Wishinsky, Olivia Fischer Fox, Peter Frumkin, Phyllis O'Leary, Rita Shonbaker, Ruthann Sneider, Sarah Axelrod, Scott Englander, Stephen Lacker, Virginia Smith, Wendy MacMillan

John VanScoyoc 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, and Kara announced that the meeting was being recorded. This meeting was being held with special focus for Town Meeting Members of Precincts 4, 5, and 6.

### **Discussion of Boylston Street Concepts**

Kara Brewton began the meeting by giving an overview, specific to a couple portions of the Boylston Street Corridor, of areas that could be the focus of proposals to Town Meeting.

Presentation highlights below:

- Study area: Properties north and south of Boylston Street, from Barrington Road in the west to Juniper Street in the east
- Existing conditions: varying land uses (from various residential to park, school, auto, and small retail), past studies reviewed
- Goal: Address infrastructure needs on Boylston Street, work with consultant (Toole Design Group) to create design concepts (three concepts currently developed) potentially incorporating form-based zoning, mixed-uses, support for small businesses, parking management, climate consideration, reduced traffic speeds, and bike and pedestrian safety

- The Committee conducted an initial survey that was reviewed in detail during the June 2<sup>nd</sup> public forum; the survey received 424 responses and respondent demographics skewed to older homeowners
- Kara reviewed the results of the survey, including main outcomes, differences of opinion, and constraints and opportunities
- Potential recommendations are divided into three categories (no votes to date): preserve, enhance, transform
- Five key sites offered as opportunities to add significant housing or commercial development (see screenshot below)
  1. 10 Brookline Place: Detailed process available on Committee website
  2. Brookline Housing Authority: Detailed process available on Committee website
  3. Madris Site to Smythe Street: Kara reviewed 3D modeling and discussed opportunities to increase setbacks, augment view corridors, expand open space, set maximum heights, and keep/change curb cuts
  4. Boylston Place: Kara reviewed development potential on site, including opportunity for 2-6 stories providing up to 59 residential units and 20,000 square feet of ground floor commercial use (FAR ~3.0)
  5. Cameron-Smythe: Kara discussed current ownership of gas station and owner interest in extending or changing use, as well as opportunities to leverage small open space behind Dunkin Donuts into larger green space



**Conversation with the Committee Included:**

- Public engagement:
  - Concern about underrepresented groups in survey
  - Engagement included mailings to residents and business owners in the core Wilson Street area that included physical copies of the survey and links to digital survey; site visits to attract different interest groups, and a community clean up behind Dunkin Donuts to visually and physically engage with stakeholders; and specific outreach to 22 High Street, High Street Vets, upcoming meeting with town’s new Community Engagement Coordinator

- Transportation Impacts:
  - Conversation about the impacts of losing a gas station
  - General consensus that study should focus on Boylston Street corridor as a merging of two neighborhoods, not a transportation corridor
  - General consensus that a traffic study is needed to understand how narrowing the street will impact traffic, speed, and alternate routes
  - General consensus that the area needs a road diet: one lane in each direction is more attractive than current layout, especially given proximity to Old Lincoln School and corresponding emissions, but some participants suggested considering a third lane that changed direction with corresponding rush hour traffic
  - Idea that the light at Cypress Street is an opportunity for traffic calming (consider how nearby one-way streets will be impacted by any traffic calming/road diet)
  - Conversation included general need to understand if traffic is or is not originating/terminating in Brookline, and impacts of potential bus lane on this road (could be an opportunity to try some temporary changes); also consider commute to LMA and associated shuttle as major sources of congestion and opportunities to convert commuters to other modes of transit
- Multi-Modal Corridor:
  - Transportation interventions should prioritize pedestrian safety and bike accessibility, as these are opportunities to remove more cars from a narrowing road, and will encourage more people to feel safe when walking on the street
  - Conversation about tradeoff between parking and wider/safer sidewalks: anecdote shared about parked cars being totaled by drivers passing and speeding in already too busy and too narrow lanes
  - Interest in increasing access to public transportation along Boylston Street
- Public Realm/Open Space:
  - Need wider sidewalks, potentially a green median, and lots of street trees to provide shade and combat urban heat island effect
  - Need uses that activate streetscape, pocket parks, fewer parking lots, fewer blank facades, etc.; also need additional crossings
  - Noise on the sidewalk is immense given high volume and lack of street trees (see Harvard St. near Coolidge Corner as an example of what Boylston St. could be)
- Community & Business Transformation:
  - Interest in a study on viability of retail/commercial expansion
  - Need clear goals on future development to help small businesses plan for the future
  - Discussion on Boylston Street as the site of two neighborhoods joining, an opportunity to think about community feel and branding (define this street of street as different from others in Brookline)

## **Closing**

Kara noted that there is an upcoming site walk at White Place on Friday at 11am to look at some existing building relationships. Group will meet at the corner of Washington St. & White Place.

\*\*Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:55 pm.