

Boylston Street Corridor Planning Study

Public Open House Summary

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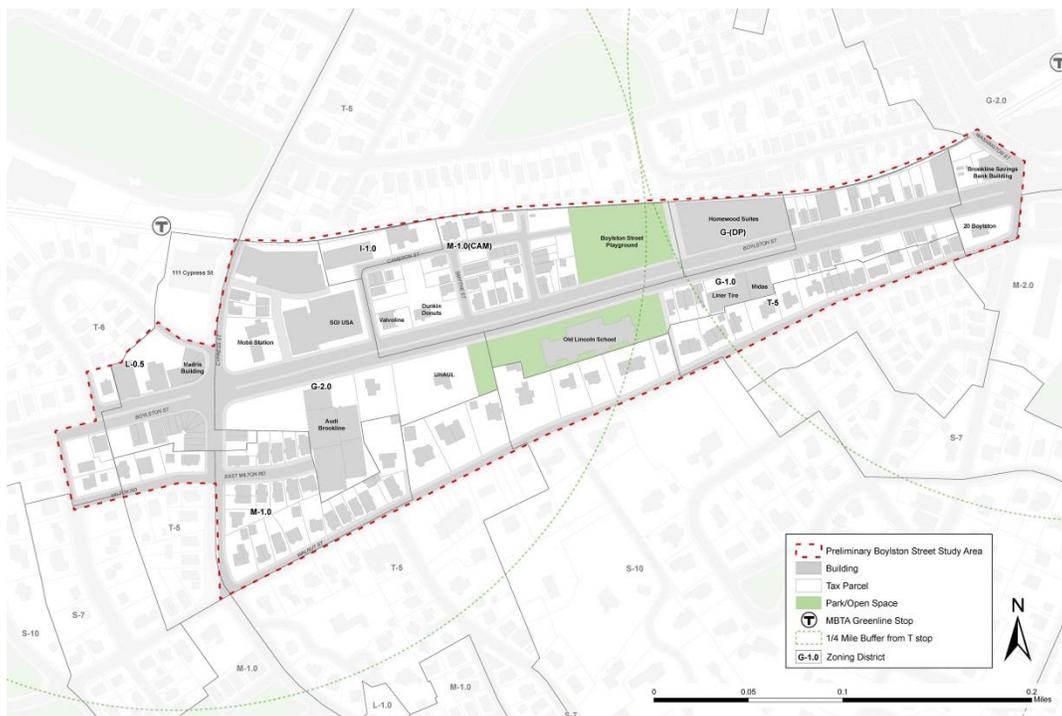
Introduction

On January 16th, 2019, from 7- 9 pm, members of the Brookline community gathered at Town Hall to learn about and provide input on the Boylston Street Corridor Planning Study. This report summarizes the structure of the event and the feedback received from participants.

Project Background

The Boylston Street Corridor Planning Study is a community-driven, Town-supported project to encourage the long-term growth, sustainability, and vibrancy of the Boylston Street Corridor. The initiative will accomplish this by evaluating existing conditions, reviewing and updating previous plans, and discussing community priorities for near-term implementation through zoning changes and infrastructure improvements.

The Boylston Street Corridor study area, shown below, extends along Boylston Street from its intersection with Milton and Brington Roads eastward to the intersection with Washington and High Streets. The study area focuses on the mix of land uses (commercial, residential, institutional, and public facilities) that line the state-owned roadway, but also includes several residential areas that are either interspersed among the existing commercial and institutional uses or directly abut those uses, such as along Walnut Street south of Boylston Street.



Boylston Street Corridor Study Area

Open House Summary

Building on the work of the [Boylston Visioning Group](#), the open house was organized as a “drop-in” activity-based event for all community members. The primary goals were to inform attendees about the project and elicit input through a series of facilitated activity stations. The event had no set agenda, although local leaders and staff delivered a brief set of remarks during the beginning of the event. The open house was attended by over 70 individuals, representing a cross-section of property owners, residents, and businesses located within the study area, as well as Town Meeting members and other residents from across the Brookline community.



Participants gathered at the Open House



The open house was structured primarily around an activity that asked participants to respond to a set of prompts for three subareas along the corridor.

- What works well and should be preserved?
- What does not work well and should be changed?
- What is missing and should be added?

The prompts were accompanied by photos of existing conditions and proposed responses taken from the Visioning Group process. Open house participants were asked to vote, using green and red dots, for whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposed responses. There was also an option to add new comments and suggestions. The goal of this inventory and analysis was to help group members articulate a list of current issues and opportunities and begin to set some priorities for the future.

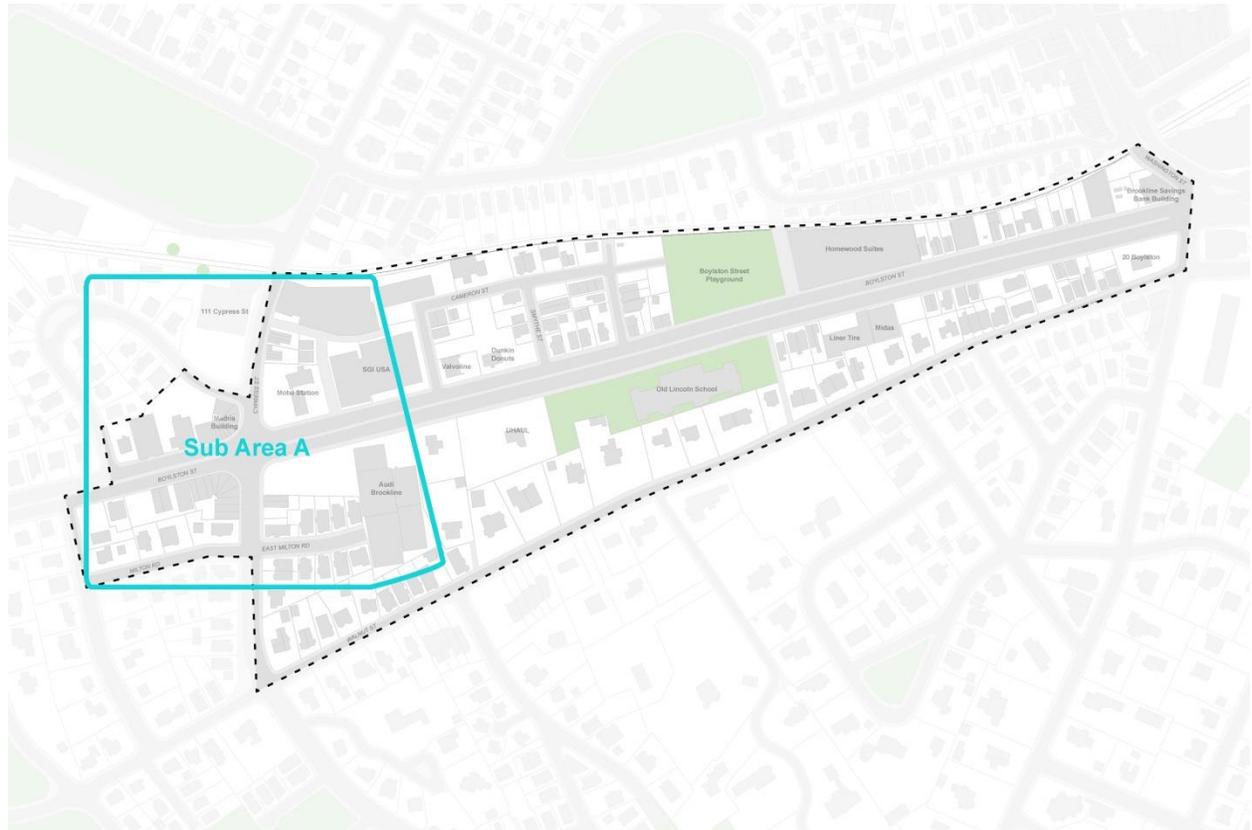
Participant Input

Overall Feedback

Participants in the open house indicated support for the following goals that can be applied across the corridor or that do not relate exclusively to any single sub-area.

- Sustainability and climate action goals should be incorporated in any future development and in any infrastructure planning
- The existing character along the corridor, both as it relates to the form and architectural variety of building forms and to the unique mix of businesses and residents, should be acknowledged and respected
- Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and connectivity (both new and improved) should be incorporated into any future redesign of Boylston Street.
- Ground floor design of new buildings should create a more inviting and active public realm
- With respect to any redevelopment plans, regulations should incentivize the aggregation of smaller parcels to encourage more rational development
- Shared parking facilities for residents, employees, and business owners should be considered as part of any redevelopment plans
- Additional green and open space is necessary, in accordance with any new development

Sub-Area A Feedback

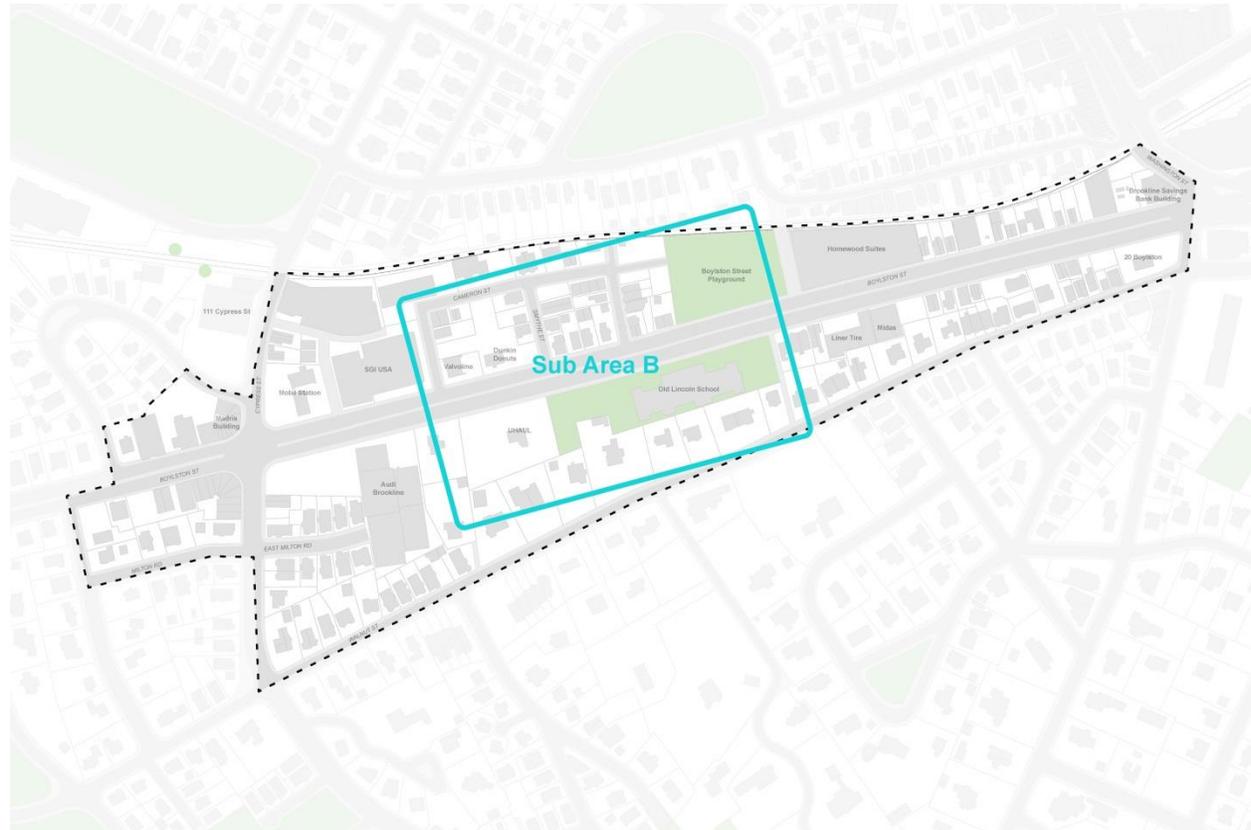


Sub-Area A centers around the mix of uses located at the intersection of Boylston and Cypress Streets. Major landmarks at this location include the Madris Building, Audi dealership, and the Mobil station, as well as the planned Brookline High School expansion at 111 Cypress Street. The Brookline Hills Greenline MBTA station is located nearby on Tappan Street.

Participants in the Open House indicated overall support for a range of goals specific to Sub-Area A. These include:

- New buildings that front directly on the street, similar in form and scale to the existing Madris building on the northwest corner of Boylston and Cypress Streets. This includes promoting the location of parking facilities – to the extent they are deemed necessary – either below ground or in the rear of the structure. Thus, parking would not be located between buildings and the sidewalk.
- New buildings that include a mix of uses and that respect the scale and character of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Additional neighborhood-scale retail to support a growing and vital community character. An important consideration related to this is support for existing businesses located in this sub-area, and throughout the corridor, especially the hub of artisans and makers who have flocked here to take advantage of affordable rents.
- A more pedestrian friendly environment, including ground floor uses and streetscapes that activate and engage the pedestrian realm. This could include pedestrian scale lighting, street trees, wider sidewalks, and improved landscaping and green space.

Sub-Area B Feedback

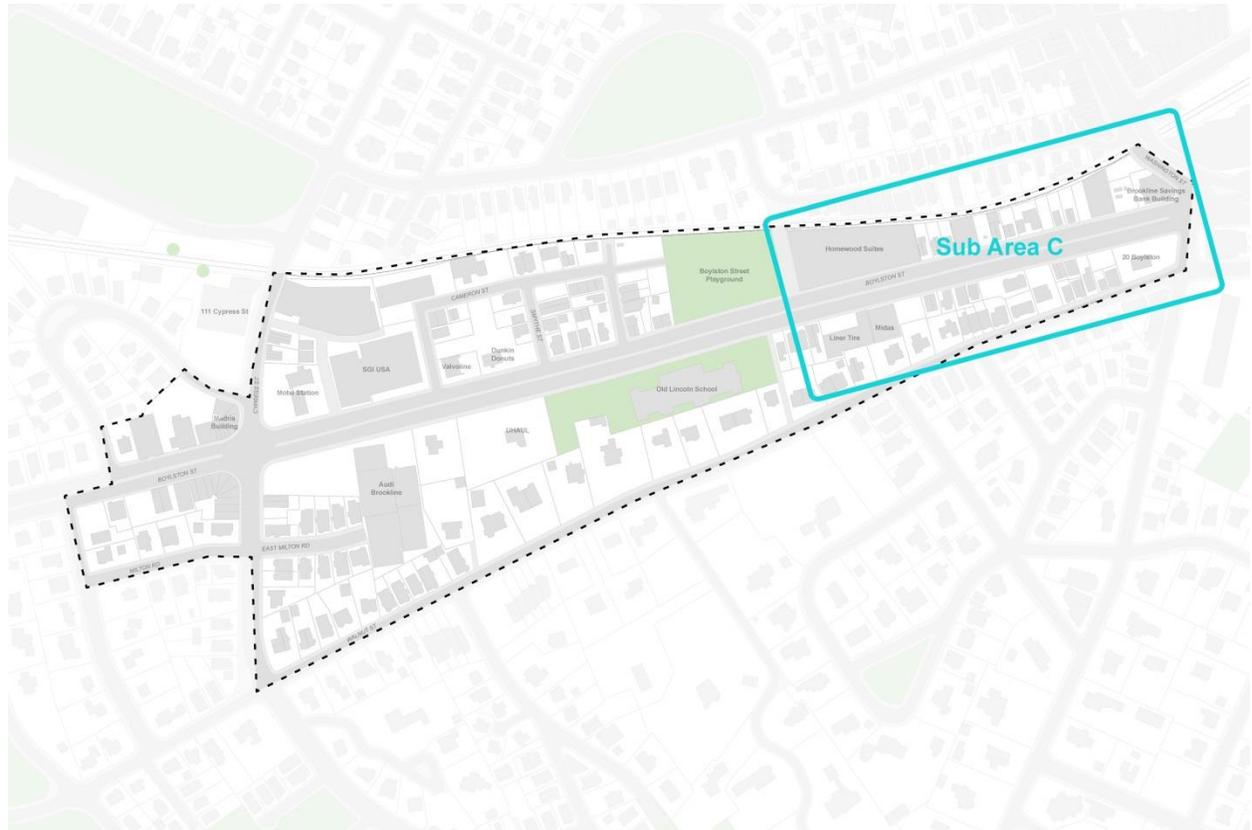


Sub-Area B extends from roughly the point where Cameron Street meets the westbound lane of Boylston Street to the eastern side of the Boylston Street Playground. The sub-area currently includes a mix of low-density auto-centric uses, the residential Cameron Street neighborhood, and the Old Lincoln School and Boylston Street Playground. The area abuts the Pill Hill Local Historic District.

Participants in the Open House indicated overall support for a range of goals specific to Sub-Area B. These include:

- Preservation of and investment in the housing stock in the Cameron Street neighborhood.
- Redevelopment of several auto-centric, low value buildings and site configurations –including on the sites occupied by Valvoline, Dunkin Donuts, and Uhaul –into more attractive, higher value buildings that might provide a broader range of goods, services, and opportunities to the community. There were also comments in support of maintaining the convenience of some of the existing services in these locations.
- Changes to zoning to allow for new buildings of greater density and to promote a mix of uses, including housing. The design of any new buildings should be sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood context.
- Improvements to the pedestrian environment in front of Old Lincoln School, specifically investments to mitigate the long, featureless wall that forms the ground floor of the School.
- Greater pedestrian connectivity across Boylston Street, including a better linkage between Walnut Path and Davis Path.
- Walnut Path itself is in need of enhancement to make it a safer, more accessible, and inviting pedestrian way

Sub-Area C Feedback



Sub-Area C extends from the Walnut and Davis Paths to the eastern extent of the study area at High and Washington Streets. Key landmarks in this area include the Homewood Suites at 111 Boylston Street, the historic Brookline Savings Bank building, and recently permitted mixed-use development at 20 Boylston Street. The area also includes a mixture of smaller-scale residential and commercial buildings fronting on Boylston Street and portions of the Pill Hill Local Historic District. The Brookline Village Green Line MBTA station is located nearby on Station Street.

Participants in the Open House indicated overall support for a range of goals specific to Sub-Area C. These include:

- Development restrictions that maintain lower building heights and a contextually-sensitive scale for any new buildings on the south side of Boylston Street. There should be efforts to maintain access to light and air, as well as the overall historic character, for abutters in the Pill Hill Local Historic District.
- Implementing certain lessons from the Homewood Suite development at 111 Boylston Street. In particular, ensure future development avoids the monolithic “boxy” massing of this building. This could be accomplished through the use a form-based zoning approach that promotes a more articulated and varied building design.
- Improvements to the overall character and streetscape design of Boylston Street, taking cues from and leveraging some of the more architecturally-interesting historic residential and commercial buildings that currently front on the Street.
- Efforts to promote non-auto-oriented uses, including shops, services, and restaurants.

- Safer and improved pedestrian crossings, especially at the High Street, Washington Street, and Boylston Street intersection.

5. Next Steps

The Open House provided a rich and varied assemblage of input from a range of stakeholders that will be used to inform future planning recommendations. In addition, and more immediately, the input will assist community leaders and the Town in shaping additional outreach steps to the key stakeholders and the community at large.

To stay updated on next steps, please be sure to check the study website at www.brooklinema.gov/1549/Boylston-Street.