

Minutes

Urban Design & Massing Subcommittee

May 5, 2021 10:00 AM

Held remotely via Zoom

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

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

Staff present: Kara Brewton

Guests: Paul Saner, Matt Hyatt, Jennifer Gilbert

Meeting materials included: Agenda for 5/5//21 meeting; Presentation from Mark Zarrillo (5/5/21) including MIT Study on Boylston Street

Kara Brewton opened the meeting remotely via Zoom, noting that the meeting was being held remotely due to COVID and was being recorded.

Mark Zarrillo presented several slides, proposing the center portion of the corridor (Sections 3-6) include street trees or landscape strip in the center of the right-of-way, perhaps as narrow as 4'. In this portion, there may only be parking on one side, and he is proposing the travel lanes be 10' without any shoulder. In response to a question about whether the center landscape strip would be wide enough, Mark noted that as long as the soil was raised up, and each tree had access to 600 cubic feet of soil, he thinks it would work well. He mentioned a design by Hildebrand at MIT which has a narrow area of honey locusts as an example. Mark Zarrillo also noted that the street trees' root zone could be accommodated under the bike lanes.

Mark stressed the idea of a double or "twin" traffic signal at Old Lincoln School that would create a wide pedestrian crossing zone.

Deborah Brown asked whether this would be enough space for street trees. Wendy Friedman offered that perhaps the parking lane could be intermittent, with some spaces replaced. With street trees.

Wendy Friedman noted that the pedestrian crossing desire line between the Old Lincoln School and Cypress Street also needed to be considered. One idea mentioned was perhaps a pedestrian crossing could align with a U-turn for vehicles traveling westbound that need to return to the U-Haul site and points east. There is also the need for a crosswalk west of Cypress Street, noting the new Lincoln School and the bus stop location for the Longwood Medical Area near Clark Road.

Tom Nally then presented his analysis of the Madris site, including:

- The grade change across the site is useful in that parking structure could be partial open air, not viewable from Boylston Street
- Doesn't think that the sidewalk needs to go wider along Boylston Street
- Building height even a little taller than the existing Madris building could be accommodated here
- Possibly changing the allowable Floor Area Ratio from 0.5 to somewhere between 2.0 and 3.0 with design guidelines, could be attainable and appropriate with the surrounding neighborhood
- Site limitations would be governed by the ability to provide parking
- Does not think parking should access Brington Road, either in or out of the site

Tom reviewed the existing design guidelines for this area, noting that perhaps we just need to add that there be a step down in height from east to west, where the site is closer to the existing residential buildings.

Wendy Friedman noted an art building in Waltham as a precedent, and wondered whether this building could be a cultural or art-based building or one with start-ups, perhaps with reduced rent. Deborah Brown noted that existing buildings like the instrument repair building is quaint, and reminds people how old this portion of the Corridor is.

Jennifer Gilbert noted that the developer of 14 Green Street is proposing reduced commercial rent as a counterbalancing amenity, which could be copied here with any new zoning.

John VanScoyoc lamented that if Boylston Street remains two lanes in each direction, it limits everything else that can be done to provide a pedestrian scale. The discussion included what the impact on Walnut Street might be if Boylston were reduced to one lane; others wondered whether the parking lane could be a commuter lane during rush hour. Wendy Friedman noted the fairly recent redesign of Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn as a potential precedent.

Jennifer Gilbert wondered whether some curbside parking could be replaced with a new parking garage, such as at 10 Brookline Place.

The Subcommittee agreed to meet again on the 20th at noon.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:20 pm.