

Minutes

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee

July 6, 2021 12:00PM
Held remotely via Zoom

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

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

Staff & consultants present: Kara Brewton, Amrita Acharya (intern)

Meeting materials included: agenda; photo of inside garage at Old Lincoln School (7-1-21); video of basement of Old Lincoln School (leaving garage towards building equipment rooms), 7-1-21; SketchUp model of Boylston corridor (7-6-21)

Guests included: Charles Osborne, Paul Saner, Joshua Currier, Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, Carla Benka

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.

Minutes

May 25th Urban Design Subcommittee minutes were approved (in favor: TN, WF, MZ, DB, JG, JVS). May 27th full Committee minutes were approved (in favor: RB, WM, TN, WM, JVS, WF, MZ, RB, DB; abstained: JG). June 2nd Committee minutes were approved (in favor: MZ, TN, WF, JVS, JG, WM; abstained: DB). June 9th Committee minutes were approved (in favor: WM, RB, TN, WF, JVS, WM, JG, DB).

Discussion and review of proposed zoning concepts along Boylston Street from Brington Road to High Street

Kara Brewton introduced Amrita Acharya, intern with the Regulatory Division, and assisting with some of the Boylston Corridor design work.

Kara reported that John VanScoyoc, Tom Nally, Mark Zarillo and she went on a site visit with staff from the Public Schools of Brookline and School Capital Subcommittee Chair Helen Charlupski to better understand what the garage space looked like behind the "blank wall" of the Old Lincoln School. Mark Zarrillo noted that there are two garages on the far left side of the wall, below the large play space, where there is the most opportunity. This space is currently being used for storage. It could be used to get vertical circulation up to the top, and it might be able to be opened up along Walnut Path as well as Boylston Street.

Kara also reported that John VanScoyoc presented briefly at the Housing Advisory Board. The Board had very positive feedback generally. Steve Heikin wondered whether we wanted to tie additional Floor Area Ratio with higher affordability percentages; Kara Brewton noted that we had not completed enough analysis to see if that would be financially feasible.

Kara Brewton shared her screen to show the SketchUp model for the corridor including proposed ideas for the three sites where the Committee has spent most of their time discussing infill options: the Madris site, Boylston Place site, and the Valvoline/ Dunkin Donuts site.

Conversation with the Committee included:

- Madris Site (northwest corner of Cypress & Boylston Street)
 - Concern that limiting site access to and from Boylston Street would likely make additional commercial space not feasible from a site circulation perspective as well as access to multiple levels of partially or fully vented parking levels.
 - Keeping the existing commercial building (former Wine Gallery/ Brigham & Women's back office space) at the very western end of the site was likely the best strategy to limit visual and shadow impacts to the residents to the northwest while providing significant commercial space to remain on the site.
 - The allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for would be somewhere around 2.5
 - The test mix of uses is about 1/3 commercial, 2/3 residential
 - Discussion of better site lines for the Boylston Street driveway than current conditions
 - Discussion of potentially keeping the easement area as a no build zone, either in zoning or design guidelines
 - Existing property owners are not looking to change anything on their property any time soon, but interested in what the Committee, neighborhood would want to see there in the future
 - General consensus that the massing being shown was an appropriate outcome, independent of use or site access at this point
 - Idea to perhaps limit the traffic on Brington Road to/from this site to no more than it is under current conditions
- Boylston Place (northeast corner of Cypress & Boylston Street)
 - Showing shadow impacts, mid-September, between 3 and 5 pm, you can see how having a break in the massing would provide some relief in shadow impacts to the existing Boylston condos
 - Possibility of including building materials (not all glass) in the design guidelines
 - Possibility of having standards about breaking up the façade to multiple planes in the design guidelines
 - Note that the previous visioning process did not want to see all four corners of the intersection built up, which this would not do as no zoning proposals are being offered for the southwest corner of the site
 - Desire to see multiple entry points for non-residential space on the ground floor
- Valvoline/ Dunkin Donuts Site (between Cameron & Smythe Streets)
 - Recommended that after looking at the modeling, 6 stories is just too tall; maybe 5 stories with the top story setback all around
 - Open space requirements are needed for this site but also generally for the entire area
- Idea that for the whole corridor, any required affordable units should be provided on-site

- Should the building materials or scale bookend the corridor, here at the intersection of Cypress & Boylston with 10 Brookline Place?
- The intersection of Cypress & Boylston now is a psychological barrier that encourages people to not walk across Boylston Street
- Looking at the tire/muffler site on the south side of Route 9, Kara showed a quick massing diagram, noting that even a building the scale as shown in the MIT visioning report would likely need to be further sculpted, massing setback from the existing abutting residents

Kara flagged for the Committee that she wasn't sure how much more building massing could be accommodated on the eastern end of the Corridor without breaking the height and scale of, say the existing NETA building.

After further discussion by the Committee about incentivizing various levels and percentages of affordable housing, John VanScoyoc stated that he would try and get some clarity on what some incentivizing options are that would be feasible.

The next Committee meeting will be Monday the 12th at noon.

** Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:55 pm.