

Minutes

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee

July 19, 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	Y
Deborah Brown	Y	Wendy Machmuller	Y	Mark Zarrillo	Y

Staff & consultants present: Kara Brewton

Meeting materials included: agenda; PowerPoint by K. Brewton (7/19/21)

Guests included: Jennifer Gilbert, Paul Saner, Carla Benka, two anonymous callers

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.

Discussion of Boylston Street Concepts

The purpose of tonight's meeting is to continue reviewing proposals that could be the focus of those presented to Town Meeting. Kara Brewton gave a presentation focused at how draft zoning could be applied in different areas of the Boylston Street Corridor. She also reported back to the group on a site visit the previous Saturday to the White Place area. An outline of potential draft zoning was presented.

Presentation highlights below:

- **7/16 Site Walk Main Takeaways:** future development should match height of Brookline Bank, reuse existing building when possible, and provide landscaping (flexibility could be built in on whether this in the front or rear of the building)
- **Proposed Zoning for Eastern Part of Corridor:** implement special overlay allowing Floor Area ratio (FAR) to be exceeded under certain conditions (i.e. public benefits), allow flexibility of rear setback, require buildings to accommodate small café space on ground floor, reduced parking requirements by use types, keep allowed height of 40' per G-1.0 district
- **Madris Site:** change zoning to G-2.0, increase building maximums (similar to Madris Building), allow 2-2.5 FAR with shadow impact considerations, require 20% landscaped space in residential G-2.0, parking relief by special permit if all affordable units on-site
- **Boylston Place Site:** provide parking relief (already G-2.0), other needs addressed in design guidelines

- **Valvoline/Dunkin' Donuts Site:** change multi-family district from 1.0 FAR to G-2.0 zoning (which would allow a 4-5 story building), consider adding “no build zones”/required open space in exchange for additional FAR/height
- It was noted that Town Meeting is moving towards reducing parking requirements throughout the Town, and therefore a parking relief incentive along Boylston Street may only be unique to the study area for a short period (i.e. not a significant enough incentive)

Conversation with the Committee Included:

- Overall Zoning Feedback:
 - General consensus that this draft is moving in the right direction
 - Remove some current ambiguities in zoning language. Example: be more explicit about the requirement for ground floor commercial use to ensure that created storefronts are viable (and not too small)
 - Agreement on changes to parking requirements, strong interest in keeping requirements for loading
 - Further discussion wanted regarding building articulation in the western study area (best rooted in design guidelines)
 - Brief discussion of changes to the south side of Boylston Street. Concern that given current timeline, lack of input/interest to date, and lack of interest from current property owners in changing existing uses, this is not the highest use of remaining time.
 - Regarding affordability requirements: Discussion of how the current bylaws require inclusionary zoning (i.e. range of affordability) town-wide. The proposed changes in this corridor would incentivize that affordability to be built on-site (instead of met via cash-in-lieu system)
- Landscaping/Open Space
 - Need to make sure that what’s built creates street activation. Concern expressed over landscaping requirements given desire for street trees and their ability to mitigate the urban heat island effect and create a pleasant pedestrian experience. Need to further discuss how commercial uses provide open space in particular.
 - Consistent landscaping will unify the streetscape, giving it a distinct feel and brand.
- FAR & Max Built Out
 - General consensus that there is a need for modeling that shows the difference between current maximum build, and proposed maximum build. This modeling should include: setbacks, height (using incentives, and not using), FAR, shadow impacts
 - Further information needed on how shadow impacts are assessed and how other municipalities assess this.
 - Discussed how dimensional requirements interface with special permits. Noted that there are two distinct conditions that the Committee is considering with this proposed zoning: the eastern part of the corridor could permit additional development without special permits and the western part of the corridor could permit more significant increases in allowable FAR, by special permits.

- Consider increasing FAR for the UHaul and Audi dealership site, especially if they were combined for redevelopment, which could help the streetscape experience
- Likelihood of Development
 - Committee members would like to consult with the developer community on how they would respond to these provisions, and their likelihood of using various incentives
 - Consider carving out parking relief by special permit for the whole corridor; this could provide incentive to currently auto-oriented businesses to become less car-oriented without committing to additional height
 - Lack of consensus on if these incentives are substantial enough to create desired change; parking relief is a big lever but outstanding question on longevity of unique incentive

Closing

Kara confirmed a quorum for a meeting on 7.26.21. Agenda still being confirmed, but will include continuation of tonight's discussion with added modeling and further refinement of draft zoning, as well as any additional information gathered on how the proposed G-2.0 zoning will impact future development. Kara will send an electronic meeting invitation and share the presentation and materials from tonight in the next few days.

**Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:18 pm.