

ROSLINDALE NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIC • PLAN

Community Meeting

Wednesday, June 20, 2007

6:30PM– 8:30PM

Knights of Columbus

Present:

11 Advisory Group Members

Councilor Rob Consalvo

Sue Kim, BRA

Marie Mercurio, BRA

Lee Blasi, Director of Constituent Services, Councilor Consalvo's Office

Frank Johnson, BTD

Dave McNulty, Office of Neighborhood Services

Susan Rice, Inspectional Services Department (ISD)

Liz Llenas, DND

Reay Pannesi, DND

Chris Riale, CSS

Presenter:

Carole Schlessinger, CSS

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 61

Following a brief meeting welcome and introduction by Advisory Group Chairman Wayne Beitler, Carole Schlessinger presented the final draft of the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan.

The presentation will be made available as a .pdf file on the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan website: <http://www.cssboston.com/projects/roslindale/index.htm>

At the conclusion of the presentation, Carole Schlessinger presented a list of frequently asked questions regarding the Roslindale neighborhood strategic planning and rezoning process. Following this portion of the presentation, cards with comments and/or questions were collected from members of the public, were organized by topic, and read aloud to the group. Following the reading of each question/comment, the BRA, ISD, BTD, Councilor Consalvo, Office of Neighborhood Services, and/or the consultants responded.

The following is a record of comments and questions from members of the public and responses.

Questions/Comments & Answers

Question: What is the point of “as-of-right” development if it will no longer exist under the proposed zoning (why not eliminate it altogether)?

Response: Sue Kim said that there will still be “as-of-right” projects in Roslindale.

Question: How do porch additions, garage, or in-law apartments violate the new zoning code and why do these uses trigger issues or zoning intervention?

Response: Susan Rice said that they will trigger zoning intervention if they increase the number of units in a building, or encroach in a setback, or increase the FAR or percent of lot coverage above that which is allowed.

Question: What are the three zoning subdistrict that are recommended to have density bonuses?

Response: Carole said that the three subdistricts were the outer ring of the Roslindale Square commercial subdistrict, the commercial subdistrict along American Legion Highway, and the Stony Brook Plaza commercial subdistrict.

Question/Comment: Roslindale Square is our commercial district. Will signs reflect “Square” or “Village” and why?

Response: The signage program proposed by Roslindale Village Main Streets uses “Village”. The community uses both terms.

Comment: Last meeting I raised questions regarding the Washington Street traffic study from Forest Hills south to Adams Park. I was told my comments would be looked into by tonight’s meeting.

Question: Did the traffic study include the Healy Field area?

Response (to question): Carole Schlessinger said that the traffic consultants studied intersections within the Square. No new traffic counts were conducted after the last meeting, but the streets around Healy Field are included in the area for further study and would be included in the recommended study of Washington Street.

Comment: Please explain how participation in homeownership and home improvement programs sponsored by DND will work.

Question: How can one participate (in home improvement program)?

Response: Reay Pannesi responded that the forms are available online at www.cityofboston.gov/dnd or anyone can call the Home Program at DND. The programs and contact information will be included in a report appendix.

Question: When construction starts, how do builders and the construction company address wild life and rats in the immediate area?

Response: Susan Rice explained that any new construction requires a permit issued by the ISD. Part of the submission required for that permit is a mitigation plan for rodent control.

Question: What is different in this plan than what exists already?

Comment: The zoning should clearly identify what is allowed to be built – there should be little need to seek a variance.

Response: For the most part, the plan seeks to reinforce the existing character of the neighborhood and recommends specific zoning changes and urban design improvements to reinforce that character.

Comment: Automobiles have a worse impact on the Square than do auto-related uses.

Question: Can the existing public lighting be replaced by anti-light pollution fixtures?

Response: Sue Kim explained that the City (Public Works Department) needs to verify which street lamp type are scheduled to replace the existing, older street lamps in Roslindale.

Comment: Crosswalks are needed on Washington Street outside of the Square as well.

Response: Carole Schlessinger explained that the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan recommends examining crosswalks as part of the recommended Roslindale Square traffic study. Crosswalks would be included in other recommended traffic studies as well.

Question: Are there any plans to regulate the conversion of two and three family homes into condominiums?

Comment: While condominium conversion does not affect density, owner-occupied two and three family homes provide income, making home-ownership possible for first-time buyers.

Response (to question): Susan Rice said that zoning does not address the conversion of two and three family homes to condominiums. She first explained that the term “condominium” is a legal term that indicates type of ownership. She said that conversion

to condominiums is something the private property owner decides to do and is not a zoning issue.

Question: Why does the Bank of America in the Square have a 6 inch high speed bump in their access road? Can its size be reduced?

Response: The speed bump is on a private way (owned by Bank of America) and therefore not affected by this plan. It was recommended that the resident calls be made to the Bank of America to discuss the issue.

Question 1: Will there still be a process where you can apply for a variance?

Question 2: As I age, I see a need to add a driveway to my lot because my house is at the top of a hill and it becomes more and more difficult to walk up the stairs.

Question 3: Will it be possible to get variances for a necessary improvement like this?

Response (to question 1): There will still be a variance process. Hardships and individual situations are taken into account.

Comment: Please do not move the bus stop on Washington Street. The bus stop is safe and convenient for children and the elderly.

Comment: Cars parked illegally in bus stops negatively impacts traffic flow.

Question: Who is responsible for parking enforcement and how can they be encouraged to enforce parking rules more effectively?

Response (to question): Dave McNulty responded that the Boston Transportation Department and the Boston Police Department enforce parking regulations.

Question: If the bus stop on Washington Street is moved, where will it be relocated?

Comment: The Roslindale Square commuter rail station needs to be improved.

Response (to question): Carole Schlessinger said that the bus stop would probably be eliminated (not relocated). She added that this is potentially justifiable because the stops above and below the existing Roslindale Square bus stop are within reasonable walking distance of each other.

Response (to comment): Regarding the Roslindale commuter rail station, Carole Schlessinger said that improvements to the MBTA underpasses were recommended in the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan. She added Roslindale residents should contact the MBTA to discuss station improvements.

Question 1: Could buses have some kind of electronic communication with stop lights that would allow the signals to turn green as buses approach? See Bolivia and Brazil for successful examples of this.

Question 2: Can we enforce buses to stop in designated areas for passenger pick up?

Response (to question 1): Boston Transportation Department enforces traffic regulations.

Response (to question 2): Councilor Rob Consalvo said that the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan cannot address this issue. He added that the question should be directed to state elected officials.

Question: Are there recommendations in the plan regarding the installation of “green roofs”?

Response: Sue Kim responded that the plan recommends encouragement of green standards for smaller projects currently being developed by the City’s multi-agency “green team”.

Comment 1: I am not sure who benefits from residential development in the Square. I do not think I would benefit.

Comment 2: Installing parking meters in the Square would not benefit Roslindale residents.

Comment 3: Limit the addition of new traffic signals. Traffic signals need better coordination.

Response (to comment 1): Carole Schlessinger responded that having more residential uses in the Square would economically benefit the Square, increase daytime and nighttime pedestrian activity, and increase the perceived level of safety by providing more “eyes on the street.”. Providing housing opportunities in the Square would benefit all residents, shoppers, and visitors.

Response (to comment 2): Carole said that some residents believe they would benefit from parking meters in the Square and some think parking meters would have a negative impact.

Response (to comment 3): Carole said that the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan recommends that the City fund a more in-depth study of existing traffic signalization.

Question: How are privately-owned streets affected by the plan’s recommendations?

Response: Councilor Rob Consalvo said that privately owned streets are regulated under state law, (not city law) and so the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan will not affect privately owned roadways. Although the City provides plowing and towing services on privately owned roadways, privately owned roads are maintained by the private property owner. He added that to turn a privately owned roadway into a public street, the owner(s) must petition the Public Improvement Commission. The cost of the conversion (which includes bringing the roadway up to city standards) is shared (50 percent public/50 percent private).

Comment: Please require bicycle parking as a fraction of total parking for all multifamily and commercial development (the existing bicycle racks in the Square are a good start). Please see <http://www.massbike.org/bikelaw/parking.htm> for requirements in other cities.

Question: Can the City reduce the speed limit to 25 mph on one-way and narrow two way residential streets in Roslindale? What about speed bumps?

Response (to question): Frank Johnson said that on-street parking as well as bump outs/bulb outs help to calm traffic. Regarding the use of speed bumps to reduce vehicle speeds on residential streets, Frank Johnson said that they are not recommended due in part to certain limitations on city services. Councilor Rob Consalvo added that speed bumps cause delays in emergency response time and are almost impossible to plow. The 35 mph speed limit on residential streets is a state regulation.

Question: What is the truth behind the use of physical speed deterrents (i.e. speed humps/bumps)?

Response: Councilor Consalvo and Frank Johnson replied that the City of Boston does not use speed bumps because of their impact on emergency vehicles and snow plows.

Question: What does the future of Roslindale look like?

Comment 1: The plan has little vision and innovation for the future.

Comment 2: Issues that are not adequately covered are:

- 1.) sustainable neighborhood development
- 2.) Mixed use in and outside of the Square (shops, businesses and homes)
- 3.) Traffic

Response (to question & comment 1): Carole Schlessinger said that the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan addresses existing neighborhood issues and is a document that helps guide future land use patterns, development, and other issues that affect the physical appearance of the neighborhood. During the planning process it became clear that the residents' 15-20 year vision for Roslindale is not drastically different from how the neighborhood appears today. Residents want to maintain the existing character of the neighborhood.

Response (to comment 2):

- 1.) *Sustainable neighborhood development:* Carole said that the Plan recommends ways to improve bikeability, walkability, and the vitality of the Square and discourages the siting of new auto-related uses in certain key commercial districts. These recommendations will work to promote non-motorized forms of transportation and discourage auto-dependence.

- 2.) *Mixed use in and outside of the Square*: Carole said that mixed use development was not looked at for all locations in Roslindale, only in certain existing commercial clusters.
- 3.) *Traffic*: The budget and scope of the project did not allow for a detailed traffic study, but rather for identification of key issues and the collection of background information.

Comment: The City recently decided to begin towing illegally parked automobiles during street cleaning; however, the City has not developed a plan to improve enforcement of speed limits.

Response: Dave McNulty said that speed limit enforcement is a police issue and cannot be addressed by the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan. Dave told members of the public to inform the Office of Neighborhood Services about where there are speeding issues. This information can be passed down to police, who can then set up speed traps.

Question: Is the parking moratorium going to be lifted when the plan is finished?

Comment 1: I live within walking distance of the Square and I own one car. I heard there is a moratorium on resident parking signs and permits.

Comment 2: Parking permits should be limited to a certain number per household.

Response (to comment 2): Dave McNulty said that the number of parking permits issued cannot be limited to a certain number per household.

Comment: I disagree with the parking ratio of 1.5 parking spaces per residential unit in the commercial district. It should be 2 parking spaces per residential unit.

Comment: We have enough difficulty with large extended families living together. They have more children who use the school system, and many cars per residential unit. Why would we encourage housing with 3+ bedrooms?

Comment: I couldn't tell exactly what locations were identified as needing further traffic study. Please make sure these two locations are included if they are not already:

- 1.) Corner of Bussey St. and Walter St. and;
- 2.) Intersection of Walter St. and Centre St.

Response: Carole Schlessinger said that these intersections were included in the list of streets and intersections of concern that were recorded during the traffic study.

Comment: Small businesses are curtailing hours because of lack of patrons. A possible cause of this lack of patrons is there is rarely parking available close to the individual shops.

Comment: Roslindale has many artisans who produce small products assembled and shipped from the home. Examples – jewelry, art, knitted goods. Few of these operate as in-home shops and most assemble and ship only (i.e. web businesses).

Question: Will the new zoning negatively impact such cottage businesses?

Response (to comment and question): Susan Rice responded that in-home businesses (i.e. web businesses) are generally allowed within residential districts if they do not require frequent pick ups and deliveries.

Question: Is the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan recommending that Roslindale be divided into two neighborhoods?

Response: No.

Comment/Question: In the draft plan there is a change in the dimensional regulations for institutional uses (i.e. 6 stories and 65 foot height limit). Why are the height limits so high?

Response: Sue Kim responded that the height limits are consistent with the existing buildings and with other institutional subdistricts in the City. The allowable height steps down on the portions of the site abutting residential and open space subdistricts.

Question: Has anyone considered a 3-story parking garage at the Taft Hill or MBTA site?

Comment 1: A wide range of housing options does not mean that every unit needs two parking spaces.

Comment 2: 40 percent lot coverage is unreasonable for sites around the Square. The lot coverages should approach 100 percent.

Response (to question): Dave McNulty said that a parking garage at Taft Hill is currently not a capital project, and is not considered a funding priority.

Response (to comment 1): Sue Kim said that the recommended parking ratio is only 1.5 parking spaces per residential unit in Community Commercial Subdistricts. Developers could seek a variance if they feel that 2 parking spaces per residential unit is not needed.

Response (to comment 2): Carole Schlessinger said that the recommended 40 percent lot coverage maximum is recommended for lots within residential zoning subdistricts, not within commercial subdistricts. She said that if an owner of a residential lot would like a higher lot coverage maximum, they can seek a variance. Carole added that the 40 percent maximum is based on an existing lot coverage analysis and that it is partly designed to ensure the preservation of private open space in residential zoning subdistricts.

Comment: A couple of years ago the City removed flower basket hardware from street lamps. The reason for this was that the City would not water the flowers/plants.

Response: Sue Kim replied that she would check with the Parks & Recreation Department on this, and that residents should encourage the department to replace and maintain the baskets.

Question: Can the City stop private property from being sold to churches for institutional (tax exempt) use?

Response: Susan Rice said that churches are a use allowed in almost every subdistrict.

Comment: The yield sign at Washington Street and Poplar Street is facing the wrong way.

Response: Frank Johnson said that Boston Transportation Department will look into it.

Comment: There is a short cut route motorists use on South and Bussey Streets.

Response: Carole Schlessinger said that those streets have been included on the list of streets and intersections of concern, indicated in the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan.

At the conclusion of the comment/question and answer period, Sue Kim talked briefly about the next steps and mentioned that additional comments will be collected until next Friday (June 29, 2007). Once all of the comments are collected, they will be synthesized and incorporated into the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan.