

ROSLINDALE NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIC • PLAN

Advisory Group Meeting
Wednesday, November 15, 2006
6:30PM – 8:30pm
Longfellow House

Present:

10 Advisory Group Members
Marie Mercurio, BRA
Sue Kim, BRA
Lee Blasi, Director of Constituent Services
Dave McNulty, Office of Neighborhood Services
Carole Schlessinger, CSS
Chris Riale, CSS
Adel Foz, Vollmer Associates
Paul Bakis, Vollmer Associates

Number of attendees: 18

I. Opening Remarks

At the opening of the meeting, Wayne Beitler mentioned that the December Advisory Group Meeting needs to be scheduled.

II. Draft Outline of the Plan – Carole Schlessinger

Carole reviewed the Plan outline with the Advisory Group.

During the discussion of the Plan outline, Advisory Group members asked what will be presented at the public meeting on November 30.

Carole responded by saying that there will be “no surprises” and that the presentation will include work already seen by the advisory group.

One member asked “What is the vision for Roslindale?” and “What vision will be presented?” at the public meeting. Carole responded by saying the vision for Roslindale was discussed at previous Advisory Meetings and presented at the last Open House meeting. The public did not provide a significant amount of feedback regarding the Roslindale vision; however, the feedback that was received was generally positive.

One member asked how the redevelopment alternative site plans will be presented at the public meeting. In response, Carole said a market analysis will be presented first to provide background/supporting information. Then it is important to describe the intentions of the redevelopment alternative site plan analysis and to make clear that the exercise is not an “urban renewal plan” for Roslindale. The exercise is to anticipate the future and ensure proper zoning is in place to implement appropriately scaled plans for the sites.

One member suggested speaking with adjacent property owners before the meeting to make clear the plans’ intent (particularly at the Square site).

Carole said that CSS will produce 3D simulations of the how the Square site would look with the development of one of the presented alternatives.

A member suggested that the redevelopment site plans be presented as “what could happen,” and not “what will happen”. The plans should represent what’s “predictable and permissible”.

Another member suggested the plans be realistic.

A member asked what will be presented at the public meeting. Carole responded by saying that the discussion will generally focus on what has been done up to this point and what will be done.

Several members asked if the Plan is on schedule. Carole responded by saying that we are moving along at a good pace and are meeting set goals in a timely fashion.

One member said that the Zoning Board of Appeals won’t necessarily stop granting variances after Roslindale is rezoned. One member commented that in order for the Zoning Board of Appeals to “get the message,” Roslindale should ensure the new zoning is conservative.

A member commented that there needs to be further discussion regarding residential development and residential density since most of the redevelopment site plans thus far have been centered on commercial development. He suggested that these points be brought up at the next public meeting as well as at the next advisory group meeting.

Carole responded by suggesting a breakout session during the latter half of the public meeting be held to address residential development and density concerns. The dimensional characteristics of each of the residential zoning districts, including lot size, setback requirements, building height, among others, could be discussed.

One member commented that it is important that the public has the opportunity to provide the group with thoughtful impressions of the project’s progress instead of just initial

reactions. He suggested that we make a list of public comments and provide them in the planning document.

Sue Kim reiterated that the rezoning is a separate document written by BRA staff and will not be a physical piece of the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan. However, the Plan will serve as a guide for the rezoning.

III. Transportation – Existing Conditions – Adel Foz

Adel announced that parking, pedestrian, and traffic/turning movement counts were conducted in the Roslindale Square study area.

Pedestrian counts were taken between 7 – 9am and 4 – 6pm on Wednesday 11/8/06 at the following locations:

- South Street
- Washington St. at Corinth St.
- Washington St. at Cummins Hwy
- Washington St. at Basile St.
- Robert St. at Corinth St.
- Birch St. at Corinth St.

Traffic counts were taken using a 24-hour Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) on Wednesday 11/08/06:

- Belgrade Ave south of Corinth St.
- Washington St. north of Murray Hill Rd.

- and on Wednesday 11/29/06 at the following location:

- Washington St. south of Corinth St.

Turning Movement counts were taken between 7 – 9am and 4 – 6pm on Wednesday 11/8/06 at the following locations

- Washington St. at Corinth St.
- Washington St. at Cummins Hwy
- Washington St. at Basile St.
- Robert St. at Corinth St.
- Birch St. at Corinth St.

Parking counts were taken between 7 – 9:30am and 4 - 6:30pm on Thursday 11/8/06 at the following locations:

- MBTA lower lot
- Corinth between Belgrade Ave. & Washington St.
- Bank of America Lot
- Taft Hill Top Lot
- Taft Court Lot
- Taft Hill Terrace

- Washington Street
- South Street

- and between 7 – 9:30am and 4 - 6:30pm on Wednesday 11/29/06 at the following location:

- MBTA Upper Lot

The following information outlines the study’s general findings. For more detailed information, please view the “Transportation Studies for Roslindale IPOD: Existing Conditions” presentation – available under “study products” on the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan website:

<http://www.cssboston.com/projects/roslindale/index.htm>.

Pedestrian Flow Analysis

After analyzing pedestrian counts in the study area, Adel confirmed there was no discernible pedestrian pattern at Corinth and Washington Street, for example, and that pedestrians continuously push the signal button provided at crosswalks. This has a negative effect on vehicular traffic flows through the Square.

A series of tables that indicated pedestrian volumes in the study area were presented.

Adel explored the potential of adding bus stops to encourage transit use in Roslindale. After finding that all residences within the Roslindale IPOD are located within a 5 – 10 minute walk of a bus stop, Adel concluded that the MBTA would most likely not consider adding bus stops.

Potential alternatives:

- Increase bus frequency
- Relocating bus stops

Vehicular Traffic Analysis

Adel presented an AM and PM level of service analysis for intersections within the square. Each intersection was assigned a letter grade indicating its level of service (Grade A – F).

It was found that the Square’s traffic conditions in the PM peak period are slightly worse than in the AM peak period. The following intersections within the Square received the worst ratings:

- Washington St., Corinth St., and Popular St.
- Robert St., Corinth St., South St., and Belgrade Ave.
- South St. and Washington St. west to Belgrade Ave.

Adel suggested that traffic improvements be considered for streets operating at level of service (L.O.S.) E and F. L.O.S. D is considered acceptable in urban areas.

Public Parking Lot Turnover Analysis

The purpose of the turnover study was to analyze the length of time vehicles stay parked in Roslindale Square's public parking lots. It was found that cars spend the most time in the MBTA lower lot (Lower "T" Lot). Cars spend the least time in the Square's other public parking lots (many cars stay less than 30 minutes). In addition, the maximum occupancy rate of all studied parking locations in the Square was about 60 percent.

Advisory Group Comments:

One member commented that he would be willing to tolerate more traffic if "we had a more vibrant downtown".

Another member asked Adel why the parking lot north of the MBTA commuter rail tracks (upper "T" lot) was not studied. Adel said the upper T lot will be studied and the results will be presented at the next meeting. Carole added that one of the reasons the lower "T" lot was studied over the upper lot was because of its apparent under use.

One member asks what the parking analysis shows. Adel responded by saying "numerically, the Square has room for more parkers".

Carole asked the entire group how many of them circle the Square in their vehicles looking for the most convenient parking space. Many of them said they do.

After a brief comment period, Adel presented an electronic traffic simulation using SimTraffic. The simulation illustrated traffic flows in the Square.

The simulation showed heavy queues on northbound Washington Street and on Robert and Corinth Streets. According to the Advisory Group, the software generated traffic patterns that were seemingly accurate.

One member suggested simulating Washington Street as a two way road and then analyzing the queues using the traffic simulation software.

Carole will send the Advisory Group an outline of how the breakout sessions at the Community Meeting will be run.