

# DRAFT

## ROSLINDALE NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIC • PLAN

### **Advisory Group Meeting**

Thursday, March 22, 2007

6:30PM – 8:30pm

Longfellow House

### **Present:**

9 Advisory Group Members

Sue Kim, BRA

Amanda Stout, BRA

Lee Blasi, Director of Constituent Services, Councilor Consalvo

Dave McNulty, Office of Neighborhood Services

Liz Llenas, DND

Carole Schlessinger, CSS

Number of attendees: 16

### **I. Opening Remarks**

Beth Beighlie announced that Wayne Beitler will not be attending the meeting.

Sue Kim handed out a new schedule and explained that it looks like the Public Meeting will actually be in May. Sue also encouraged AG members to send in any comments on the draft sections received to date so that the comments can be addressed in the next draft. The next draft will be a complete with all of the text and graphics included.

### **II. DRAFT Urban Design Recommendations, Carole Schlessinger**

Carole recommended that a Neighborhood Design Overlay District be designated for Roslindale Square. Projects within the overlay district must go through design review by the Boston Landmarks Commission. This recommendation is consistent with the recommendation in the BLC's 1989 Roslindale/West Roxbury Project Completion Report.

In response to a question from the previous AG meeting, Carole explained that Design Guidelines are more general, and provide a framework for design review, while Design Requirements are much more specific. A sample of both Design Guidelines and Requirements was included in the Draft Urban Design section distributed to the AG for

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review. The sample was intended to give AG members a sense of the level of detail that the final design guidelines/requirements would have.

Sue Kim distributed copies of “A Pattern Book of Boston Houses” that was referenced in the text. The BRA uses this book when doing design review. The book defines different housing styles and the appropriate components of each (e.g., doors, windows, dormers, porches, etc.). Sue explained that the BRA requires photos of the other buildings on the street to be submitted as part of a design review package, so that the reviewers understand the context of a proposed building.

Carole passed around a copy of the *Boston Main Streets Commercial District Design Guidelines, 1999* which is also referenced in the Urban Design recommendations.

Carole then presented a drawing illustrating urban design recommendations for Roslindale Square (see Study Products 3.1.07 Presentation). These include:

- Hanging baskets on the existing lightpoles
- New wall-mounted lights and climbing plants along the walls bordering the pedestrian path to the Taft Hill parking lot. These improvements would have to be coordinated with the adjacent property owners.
- Removal of the chain link fence at the Bank of America parking lot along Washington Street. The fence should be replaced with a decorative iron picket fence and/or improved landscaping. AG members said that the lot is never locked, so there is no need for the fence anymore. The lot is adjacent to a new outdoor dining patio.
- Implementation of the signage program developed by Roslindale Village Main Streets. RVMS is looking for funding for implementation.
- New decorative lighting and banners on Cummins Highway, Belgrade Avenue and Washington Street. The lighting would be the pendant style used on Hyde Park Avenue.
- Improvements to the underpass at the MBTA station

Carole showed typical street sections that were developed to determine where street trees could be added. It appears that trees could be added in most locations along Belgrade Ave. and Washington Street, but not on Cummins Highway where the sidewalks are too narrow. Sidewalk widths vary on residential streets. Sidewalks must be a minimum of seven and a half feet to accommodate accessibility requirements and tree pits.

On those streets where the sidewalk is too narrow to accommodate street trees, Boston Parks and Recreation Department will plant trees on private property if desired by the property owner. The property owner is required to maintain the tree after the first year. Lee Blasi commented that on some streets, property owners have organized to get trees planted. When sidewalks are redone, property owners may request that a tree not be planted on the sidewalk in front of their property. Some property owners are concerned that trees will make on-street parking more difficult because they preclude opening of car doors.

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An AG member commented that Adams Park is an underutilized space that should be improved. Other AG members responded that the Park is Roslindale's main event space and that it is used for music performances, rallies, the market, an Easter egg hunt, etc. There are also a number of elements in the park such as donated trees, memorials, etc. that cannot be touched. Some people do eat lunch or sit in the park. This type of use should increase as the MBTA substation and gas station are redeveloped and the Square becomes more active.

An AG member questioned the usefulness of the Neighborhood Design Overlay District (NDOD). Sue explained that it provides an extra layer of design review, because it requires design review by the Boston Landmarks Commission. AG members are concerned that the NDOD and the GPOD (Greenbelt Protection Overlay District) are not effective in controlling development. Lee Blasi asked if parts of the GPOD could be designated as Conservation Preservation Subdistricts (CPS). Carole and Sue explained that the CPS districts are designed to protect specific important natural features on specific parcels, while the GPOD creates a continuous buffer zone around parkways – most of the land within the GPOD would not meet the requirements to be a CPS.

An AG member asked if the boundaries of the NDOD could be expanded. Carole explained that the boundaries are set by the Boston Landmarks Commission based on the location of historic properties. She then reminded the AG that there is already a recommendation to have design review on all projects within the IPOD that are over a certain size. An AG member asked if the BLC design review slowed down the review process. Sue said she would look to see the specifics of an NDOD.

An AG member asked when the historic inventory had been done and why the recommendations had not been implemented earlier. Carole responded that the inventory was conducted in 1989 and that the NDOD had not yet been established because the Roslindale zoning is only now being updated. Lee Blasi added that there was no development activity in Roslindale Square in 1989, so there didn't seem to be an immediate need for the NDOD.

An AG member raised the issue of an expanded ZBA review notification process, particularly for projects on major streets, because projects on those streets impact everyone in the neighborhood not just the immediate abutters. Another member suggested that more weight should be given to comments from immediate abutters. Sue responded that a better process was needed for getting the information out in a coordinated way. She mentioned that other neighborhood papers list public hearings, and that Roslindale residents should encourage the Transcript to provide this information. Lee Blasi said that Roslindale was doing a better job with notifications lately, and that notifications were getting out to a wider audience through community groups.

An AG member commented that the City neglects transparency throughout the development process and that over the next 2 to 3 years there should be a website that has coordinated up-to-date information from all city departments, including ISD, DND, ZBA, BRA to make it user friendly.

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### III. DRAFT Sustainability Recommendations, Carole Schlessinger

Carole explained that the City's new Article 37 which requires that buildings over 50,000 square feet be LEED certifiable will apply to Roslindale, but that the opportunities for buildings of that scale are very limited. She went on to say that many of the typical sustainability principles are already being met in Roslindale. These include:

- Higher density around transit stations
- Mixed use
- Variety of housing types, sizes
- Walkable community
- Transportation options including transit, biking, pedestrian paths
- Small lot sizes

An AG member asked if the recommended density bonus for mixed-use would apply to the Ashmont parcel. Carole said that it would. Another AG member asked if there could be incentives for sustainability measures for smaller buildings that do not meet the Article 37 threshold, for example a higher allowable FAR. Sue responded that this has been considered by the City's interdepartmental team that is looking at sustainability and green building issues, and that the group is still studying ways that this idea could work. Carole said that the Plan will say that the community is supportive of incentives for green buildings. An AG member asked why the DND green building regulations can not be made a city requirement. Sue explained that the DND requirements can be very stringent because DND is contributing land or funding to the projects, but that general zoning requirements cannot be so stringent. Lee Blasi pointed out that the developer of 10 Brooks Street objected to the City's detailed requirements and won in court. An AG member responded that incentives were more effective.

An AG member asked about bike lanes and Carole responded that they would be discussed in the Transportation section which will be distributed soon.

### IV. DRAFT Implementation Recommendations, Carole Schlessinger

Carole said that the implementation section deals with non-zoning issues and provides a timeline and list of responsible parties for each of the recommendations in the report.

An AG member asked how the zoning transition will work. Sue explained that the new zoning (once it has been written and adopted) will go into effect as of a certain specified day. The Zoning Code is very specific about where a proposed project has to be in the review process to be subject to the old zoning rather than the new zoning.

### V. Follow Up from Previous Discussions

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Sue reported that the new residential parking ratio recommendations will include a recommendation for 2 spaces per unit except in the Square where the recommendation is for 1.5 spaces per unit. Recommended commercial ratios are 1 to 2 spaces per 1000 square feet of development and recommended industrial ratios are .5 spaces per 1000 square feet of development but would look into the industrial ratio at the request of an AG member. The AG agreed that they are happy with these recommendations.

Carole mentioned that Wayne had raised the issue of rezoning the industrial land at the northern end of Washington Street to allow residential development in anticipation of more residential development to the north as a result of the Forest Hills study. These are the last two industrial zones in Roslindale and are very small. Part of the zones is already in residential use.

Some AG members were in favor of this change and mentioned that because of the proximity of the Forest Hills station, the area could support higher density residential. The AG decided to table this discussion until the next meeting, after people have a chance to see what uses are actually located in the zone, and to find out more about the Forest Hills study.

In response to a request at the previous AG meeting, Carole showed a map of all auto-related uses. She said that under existing zoning, most auto-related uses are conditional uses in the Business zone around the Square and at the western end of Belgrade Avenue. Allowable auto-related uses are more limited in the local business zones. One of the reasons for limiting auto-related uses is that those uses frequently have wider driveways and frequent curb-cuts and tend to detract from the pedestrian environment. It was requested that the discussion of these issues and design guidelines to prevent them be expanded to include other uses with similar issues.

Sue mentioned that the AG had expressed interest in planning the next community meeting and that a subcommittee had met once to begin discussing the meeting. The next public meeting will probably be in May, after the draft report has been made available to people. Lee Blasi said that she likes to distribute the drafts to the local community groups.

An AG member said that at the first subcommittee meeting, they had discussed the following possible topics for the community meeting:

- Planning process
- Discussion of what zoning can and cannot address
- Definition of open space
- Explanation of the IPOD
- Discussion of projects that have gone through IPOD/ZBA review

Sue mentioned that it was important to have enough time at the meeting to actually discuss the recommendations in the plan.

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An AG member suggesting identifying the “hot-button” issues that are certain to come up and having handouts prepared to address those issues (Frequently Asked Questions).

Everyone agreed that the presentation needs to be concise with bullet points about the key issues and that there needs to be a method for eliciting people’s comments and concerns.

Sue and Carole suggested that one potential format would be an open house format with stations organized by topic, so that people can concentrate on their own areas of interest.

Other suggestions included having break out groups after the presentation and having comment cards to be handed in. It was suggested that the report be downloadable by chapter.

The AG asked for information on what techniques had worked in other communities.

The next AG meeting will be late April.