

ROSLINDALE NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIC • PLAN

Advisory Group Meeting
Wednesday, May 10, 2006
6:30PM
Roslindale Community Center

Present:

Advisory Group Members
Sue Kim, BRA
Kristy Daniels, BRA
Rick Shaklik, BRA, Deputy Director for Zoning
Susan Rice, Inspectional Services Department,
Assistant Commissioner for Planning & Zoning
Carole Schlessinger, CSS
Chris Riale, CSS

Zoning Discussion

Rick Shaklik discussed current rezoning efforts in Boston and how this strategic planning process will support rezoning. Rezoning, however, is only one piece of the strategic plan.

Potential zoning subdistricts to consider for Roslindale:

- Local convenience districts
- Neighborhood shopping districts
- Community commercial districts
- Open space districts
- Conservation Protection subdistrict
- Institutional subdistrict
- Residential/neighborhood districts
- One, two, and three family districts
- Row house districts

The broad goal is to preserve as much of the neighborhood character as possible while allowing for economic growth.

CPS (Conservation Protection Subdistrict) was the subject of several comments, and was thought to be potentially appropriate for areas of Roslindale. A CPS is a tool that allows

lower development densities and is used to protect/conservate unique natural features on public or private land. Most CPS designations are institutional property.

GPOD (Greenbelt Planning Overlay District) – developed to protect parkways and green boulevards in Boston. The area around West Roxbury Parkway and American Legion Highway in Roslindale are designated as GPODs.

Zoning Enforcement Discussion

Susan Rice discussed the enforcement arm of the Inspectional Services Department and its inspection/enforcement role in the community

Some members of the advisory group commented that too many zoning variances are granted and ultimately lead to the degradation of Roslindale’s neighborhood character. Susan Rice explained that variances are granted often to provide relief to applicants from the outdated zoning code.

Another problem brought up was that the zoning language “rewards bad behavior” by giving zoning violators a chance to legitimize illegal building modifications (ex. adding a third unit to a two family zoned building without proper permitting - and later on providing the necessary upgrades to legalize the change). Also, monitoring these types of changes is difficult – ISD does not patrol for illegal activity.

There has been a reduction in the number of variances issued largely due to the Interim Planning Overlay District process in Roslindale. There is more active public participation at hearings.

The BRA does not have any program or system in place that monitors the success of the rezoning initiatives in the City, with respect to the number of variances granted following rezoning.

Update on the Planning & Rezoning Process

Wayne Beitler, Co-Chair of the Advisory Group, discussed several goals to be addressed during the planning process:

- How to effectively preserve privately owned greenspace
- How to use zoning to ensure that the middle class locate in Roslindale
- How to provide incentives for developers to provide, for example, more open space with residential and commercial projects
- Explore opportunities to downzone as a way to provide a safe zoning base that would preclude additional out-of-character residential density. (Rick Shaklik responded that downzoning for this purpose would not be a good idea. It would make most of the existing buildings be nonconforming, requiring variances for any minor modification that the owner wants to make.)

Carole Schlessinger, CSS, discussed recommended focus areas in Roslindale that require detailed attention, including:

Commercial Areas:

- Roslindale Square – particularly parcels on Washington Street, but also upgrade of Poplar, side streets, use of parking area
- Belgrade at Walworth, Iona (by T stop), scattered sites
- Washington Street at Beech (including Pleasant Café Parking Lot) and north end
- American Legion Highway: Save A Lot Shopping Plaza, nurseries, auto uses
- Scattered sites on American Legion and Washington
- Cummins at Sycamore Street
- Hyde Park Avenue: auto uses

Analysis:

- Market analysis: retail mix
- Reuse potential
- Mixed-use potential
- Layouts for large parcels (e.g., MBTA, gas station, Ashmont, Save A Lot, Pleasant Café Parking lot)
- Potential for parcel consolidation
- Zoning requirements:
 - Allowable Uses
 - Parking
 - Height
 - Setbacks
- Design guidelines

Residential Development

- Blakemore parcel
- Infill parcels, including DND parcels
- Parcels on Washington, American Legion
- Change from commercial or mix with commercial (e.g., on Belgrade)

Analysis

- Market analysis: size & price mix
- Large Parcel Layouts (e.g., MBTA, gas station, Ashmont, Save A Lot Parcels, Pleasant Café Parking lot, Blakemore)
- Zoning Requirements:
 - Density/parcel size
 - Parking ratios
 - Height
 - Setbacks
- Design Guidelines

Open Space:

- Connections (to Arboretum, Stony Brook, cemeteries)
- Condemned homes on Schubert Street
- DND parcels
- Near Albano & Atherton

Analysis

- What is the status of existing open spaces?
- What are options for ensuring preservation of open space (e.g., zoning, conservation easements)?
- Are there potential opportunities for additional open space (e.g., DND parcels, acquisition of key vacant parcels)?

Streetscape

- Washington Street north and south of Square
- Belgrade
- Roslindale Square (e.g., parking lots)

Analysis:

- Existing character/identity
- Desired character/identity
- Available right of way for planting/sidewalks
- Design Guidelines
- Recommended public improvements

Traffic:

- Roslindale Square
- Cummins/Canterbury/American Legion (including new T station) –traffic remediation as part of American Legion improvements
- Cornell at Walworth
- Washington Street
- Centre Street Traffic Circle

Exact locations dependent on development recommendations

Analysis:

- Existing problems
- Potential traffic generation from proposed new development/use changes
- Potential/recommended mitigation
- Parking ratios

Institutional

- Coordination with BRA efforts on Harvard and other institutions

Analysis:

- Impacts/benefits of proposed plans on neighborhood
- Comments/recommendations for changes

The committee requested that Hyde Park Avenue be added to the list of priority areas.

The Advisory Group will begin to develop the vision for Roslindale at the next meeting, (to be held in June).