

ROSLINDALE NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIC • PLAN

Advisory Group Meeting

Thursday, June 29

6:30PM

Longfellow House

Present:

Advisory Group Members

Sue Kim, BRA

Kristy Daniels, BRA

Carole Schlessinger, CSS

Chris Riale, CSS

Following introductions, Carole Schlessinger discussed the community visioning process and the role it will play in drafting the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan.

The basic structure of the visioning session:

1. Discussion of general neighborhood issues and vision
2. Discussion of focus areas/corridors

Before leading the discussion, Carole noted that changing zoning does not mean that existing uses will disappear. An existing use can remain until a property owner decides to redevelop the property. After zoning is changed, the rezoned land may be more valuable for another use. Rezoning is a starting point for attracting more desirable uses, and may act as a catalyst for redevelopment.

Carole asked the Advisory Committee to think about what they want their neighborhood to be (character, land uses, types of commercial uses, density, housing types, economic diversity, etc.).

The following is the response from Advisory Committee members:

The committee wants the Square to serve a broader trade area. It should continue to serve Roslindale residents, but should also attract people from outside the neighborhood.

Open spaces/natural areas are a very important resource in Roslindale. Economic development should be balanced with the appreciation of the natural environment. Open spaces should be connected to residential neighborhoods.

The plan should capitalize on historical resources, while allowing for new development. Ensure the old and new in Roslindale complement rather than conflict with one another.

The neighborhood has a limited “sense of arrival” at its numerous gateways. In addition, the neighborhood lacks wayfinding signage and effective marketing. This limits the extent to which patrons/tourists are aware of the goings-on in the Village. There was a long discussion regarding ways to make people more aware of Roslindale’s attractive commercial and open space resources.

Issues concerning vehicular circulation and traffic signalization were discussed as a major problem in the Square. The committee envisions a more accessible Adam’s Park

Carole noted that traffic improvements should follow land use planning.

The committee briefly discussed the location of existing/future auto uses in Roslindale and agreed that auto uses should not be “scattered”. They should be more consolidated on an appropriately scaled arterial roadway such as the American Legion Highway.

Committee members discussed the desire to have a development review process for the neighborhood.

At the conclusion of the general neighborhood vision discussion, Carole led a discussion regarding each of the focus areas/corridors having the potential for greatest change:

- Roslindale Square
- Belgrade Avenue
- Washington Street
- American Legion Highway
- Hyde Park Avenue

Roslindale Square

Carole commented that Roslindale Square has a diverse mix of retail stores. It is very walkable, but not very pedestrian friendly for a number of reasons (e.g. one can walk the entire Square; however, crossing the street near Adam’s Park is a challenge).

Carole then asked for the committee’s vision of Roslindale Square.

The following is the response from Advisory Committee members:

Vacant parcels within the square should be redeveloped.

One member stated a desire to see more residential density; mixing uses and increasing building heights would reinvigorate the Square.

Another member stated that residential uses should not be concentrated in the Square, but rather office/retail uses. Residential uses should be allowed only if it does not displace commercial uses. In addition, he stated that increasing the building height will create a “wall”, blocking nice views of historical and prominent buildings visible from the Square.

Most members shared the perception that spillover parking (retail patrons parking in adjacent neighborhoods) is a major issue for residential areas. It was also stated that parking supply could be increased (a desire for an additional municipal lot as well as more parking for the library was expressed).

Some members perceived there to be ample parking in the Square, some thought there to be too little. One person suggested moving significant traffic generators (Post Office, RMV) out of the Square to free up on-street and off-street parking spaces. There was a discussion regarding the location of the RMV and the Post Office on Cummins Highway and whether patrons of those facilities shopped in the square: a desire to relocate the facilities to another part of Roslindale where circulation and parking are better suited to handle high traffic volume was discussed. There was also a suggestion to move the facilities into a more central location within the Square to increase foot traffic/patronage.

It was agreed that having essential community services in the Square is important.

The Square needs better signage directing people to parking areas.

Key development parcels in the Square include: gas station property, MBTA substation and Ashmont parcel. There was agreement that redevelopment of key parcels should include a mix of commercial and residential use.

Washington Street

Carole commented that when discussing the vision for Washington Street, the entry into Roslindale should be discussed.

The following is the response from Advisory Committee members:

Some members thought that Roslindale needs a more comprehensive design review process for the main corridors; – others thought that a design review board may cause unwanted burden on developers.

Most members agreed that auto uses should be discouraged and more pedestrian friendly uses should be incorporated. Also, specific improvements to Lower Washington Street were discussed and included planting more trees and improving sidewalks.

A general vision for Washington Street was to mix uses along the corridor, but to ensure commercial uses are concentrated in the Square.

There was interest in seeing Brooks Plaza eventually redeveloped as mixed use.

Belgrade Avenue

Carole commented that the Belgrade Avenue corridor is made up of nice residential streets and clusters of local businesses.

The following is the response from Advisory Committee members:

Members agreed that consolidating the small commercial areas at a few intersections on Belgrade would benefit local businesses.

It was agreed that transit friendly uses should be developed at intersections near the Bellevue T stop (i.e. Walworth and Belgrade). Ground floor retail with 2 – 3 stories of residential units above was agreed on as the ideal development pattern for major intersection on Belgrade – particularly near transit.

It was noted that the current auto uses on Belgrade are not appropriate and should be relocated to more appropriate arterials in Roslindale such as American Legion Highway.

Hyde Park Avenue & American Legion Highway

The following is the response from Advisory Committee members:

After a brief introduction, the full discussion of these two areas was postponed until the following meeting.

There was a request that more information about the large residential development on American Legion Highway, north of Roslindale.

Open House

The Advisory Group discussed the pros and cons of holding a community open house to allow people to review the draft vision. Although attendance may be low because of the timing (some people are not around during the summer), it was agreed that it would be better to provide time for community input now, rather than waiting until September.