

VII. SUSTAINABILITY

The terms “sustainability” and “smart growth” encompass many topics, including the density, scale and location of development; building and landscaping design and materials; design of sidewalks and other infrastructure; and the availability of multiple transportation options. Many sustainable and smart growth ideas are aimed at recreating the kind of walkable, compact, mixed-use communities that were developed before the prevalence of the automobile and sprawl development.

Roslindale is, in many ways, just the kind of community that those Sustainable and Smart Growth principles describe. And, as outlined in Goals and Objectives, it is exactly those characteristics that community residents want to maintain or enhance.

A number of organizations, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Local Government Commission have developed principles or guidelines for sustainability and smart growth. While not every set of guidelines or principles is all inclusive, there

are a number of ideas that are consistently included. Key concepts, and a description of how they have been incorporated into this plan, are summarized below.

1. **Mixed use:** Commercial clusters are scattered throughout this predominately residential neighborhood. All of the recommended commercial zones allow mixed commercial and residential use, and in Roslindale Square, and at the American Legion Highway shopping center and Army Reserve Center, density bonuses are provided for mixed-use projects.
2. **Concentrated development around transit:** The plan recommends relatively higher densities and lower parking ratios in Roslindale Square around the Roslindale Village commuter rail station; this location is also served

by numerous Washington Street bus lines.

3. **Diversity of housing types, sizes, income levels:** Residential zoning districts are designed to accommodate a variety of building types and sizes, with 1, 2, 3-family and multi-family districts. The plan encourages development of housing affordable to “middle income” residents (defined as those households earning 80% to 120% of the Boston Metropolitan Area Median Income). Recommended residential zoning regulations will allow developers to create new housing units at prices affordable to this middle income bracket. New residential development also will be required to comply with the Mayor’s Executive Order of 2000 (and as it is modified through new policies) that requires the creation of affordable housing units for new residential

housing projects of ten units or more. These affordable units are targeted to middle income residents.

4. ***A focus on the center, creating a sense of place:*** Roslindale Square encompasses both commercial and community services, with Adams Park in the middle and Healy Field and the Arnold Arboretum nearby. Zoning and urban design recommendations are developed to encourage mixed-use, and enhance the existing “sense of place” through signage, streetscape improvements and design guidelines.
5. ***A variety of open space types:*** Open space zoning recommendations are developed to protect the existing open spaces, which vary from large, natural environments on the periphery of the neighborhood to ballfields, playgrounds and plazas within the heart of the community.
6. ***Neighborhood activity over many hours of the day and night:*** Commercial uses in the Square are encouraged to stay open later to help

enliven the Square in the evenings. The introduction of new residential development in and around the Square will also help to generate evening activity.

7. ***A variety of transportation choices with fully connected pedestrian and bicycle routes:*** The plan includes recommendations for sidewalk and streetscape improvements to encourage pedestrian activity, and recommendations for improved bicycle routes. Existing commuter rail and bus stops provide transit connections within a five minute walk of every portion of the neighborhood.
8. ***Preservation of natural terrain and vegetation:*** Roslindale is well-served by an existing system of large open spaces. Recommended open space and conservation protection subdistricts, as well as an expansion of the Greenbelt Protection Overlay District, are designed to protect natural resources. Expansion of the

GPOD will require coordination with the Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury neighborhoods. The recommended design guidelines include provisions for siting buildings to respect significant landscape features on the site, such as rock outcroppings, drainage areas and mature trees. The City will also explore ways to encourage the preservation of existing landscaping on parcels, including trees, prior to redevelopment.

9. ***Maintenance of natural drainage:*** The recommended zoning includes provisions for maximum allowable site coverage and minimum required usable open space per unit on residential lots. The recommended design guidelines also include provisions for using pervious materials on driveways.
10. ***Predictable, fair, cost-effective development decisions:*** The intent of the recommended zoning and design guidelines is to clarify the land uses, character, density and

scale of development desired by the community so that potential developers know what is expected of them.

11. **Citizen and stakeholder participation:** Through the Advisory Group, project website, and a series of public meetings, residents and other stakeholders actively participated in the development of this plan. The plan recommends a standardized notification process so that residents and stakeholders can continue to participate in the decision making process as new developments are proposed. Residents are interested in instituting a more comprehensive notification process to reach a broader population. It is also recommended that the community request that the local papers run a weekly calendar of upcoming cases going before the Zoning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.

Public Health

A sustainable neighborhood is also one which promotes the health of its residents. There are many opportunities to use the built environment in order to create a healthier environment for community residents. This healthier environment includes a community with more trees, cleaner air, better protected natural resources, and encouragement/support of more physical activity. A healthier environment can reduce the incidence of obesity and diabetes, as well as respiratory illnesses such as asthma. Recommendations contained in this report which support a healthier environment include:

- Improvements to the pedestrian and bicycling environment including designated bike routes and bicycle racks, new sidewalks where none exist, preservation and planting of additional street trees, repainting of crosswalks and consolidation of auto-oriented uses that would improve pedestrian safety and accessibility.

- Continued investment in the Square to offer a range of goods and services which inspire residents to come to the Square by bike or on foot, rather than getting in the car to go to the next town over.
- Zoning changes to protect public and privately-owned open space and important natural features, to limit the amount of impermeable surface on a lot.
- Transportation measures to reduce automobile congestion, including both signalization changes and increases in transit service.

Green Buildings

The City of Boston recently adopted Article 37, Green Buildings as part of the Zoning Code. The purposes of this article are “to ensure that major building projects are planned, designed, constructed and managed to minimize adverse environmental impacts; to conserve natural resources; to promote sustainable development; and to enhance the quality of

life in Boston.” Because Article 37 is applicable only to projects over 50,000 square feet in size, it will apply to very few, if any, projects in Roslindale. Projects meeting this threshold will be required to comply with Article 37, as the requirements are modified through new policies.

This Plan also encourages the incorporation of “green building” concepts into all projects in Roslindale to the extent feasible, with developers aspiring to meet the Department of Neighborhood Development Residential Design Standards which promote cost effective, energy efficient, environmentally responsible design. Several examples of green building concepts in the DND residential design standards include the use of low or no VOC paint for the building’s exterior and interiors, limited use of linoleum flooring, the use of carpets with recycled and recyclable content fiber, and lighting that meets the Energy Star requirements.

The City’s Green Building Task Force (Task Force) has been working with all of the City departments and agencies to continually revise and update building guidelines and

public health policies with green building standards, eventually including buildings smaller than 50,000 square feet. The Task Force is striving to establish green building guidelines that would be appropriate for one to four-unit residential buildings.

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