

## meeting notes

**Date:** 17-Apr-09

**Project:** Harrison Albany Corridor/South End Strategic Plan

**Prepared By:** T. Maistros (Stull & Lee) and Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)

**Subject:** First Working Session w/ 27-Member Advisory Group

**Attendees:** **BRA:** Randi Lathrop, Carlos Montañez, Marie Mercurio  
**Stull & Lee Team:** M. David Lee, Tom Maistros, Larry Bluestone, Pam McKinney, Mike Hall  
**Advisory Group:** Adrienne Kimball, Aimee Coolidge, Ann McQueen, Bill Jacobson, Bonnie Gossels, David Flaschenriem, David Goldman, Gary Nicksa, Guy Busa, Harold Brown, Harold Dennis, James Foley, Jay Hargis, Jeffrey Gates, Joseph Cefalo, Kye Liang, Marc LaCasse, Mark Baranski, Mark Haley, Ogden Hunnewell, Reggie Wong, Robert Walsh, Sandi Silk, Sherry Clancy, Tamara Roy, Terry McDermott

### Project and Advisory Group Introduction

- This was the first meeting of 8 scheduled meetings for the Harrison Albany Strategic Plan Advisory Group. BRA staff made introductions and reviewed the objectives for the project, the role of group, project scope and schedule. Two co-Chairs to manage the Advisory Group was suggested for future meetings, and nominations should be sent to BRA staff in advance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advisory Group meeting, May 6, 2009. Meetings will alternate between morning and evening with dates possible to vary based on work progress. Main points include:
- Recognize area as an employment node for future growth
- Need to identify economic opportunities
- Plan will include recommendations for regulatory changes such as zoning but will not include zoning amendments
- BRA is looking for creative thinking from the consultant team for plan alternatives
- David Lee gave a brief presentation of the consultant team, context, existing concerns based on BRA sponsored interview process and initial observations of the team. An open discussion followed with Advisory committee members responding to the presentation and general concerns for the corridor. These comments have been organized around topic areas.

### Land Use

- What is the status of the Biolab - when to open and how many employees - institution is going through Environmental risk process. Has some occupants already but will not be in full service before 2010. 300 researchers at full occupancy. Some office space could get leased earlier than the risk assessment is completed.
- Need to consider opportunities to use area under the viaducts.
- Understanding the difficulty of relocating MBTA facility, it is hoped that this is an option to be considered.
- The plan should accommodate artists (painters and sculptures) as part of the land use discussion - important part of the creative economy (not just tech-based artists)
- Recognize importance of the Pine Street Inn but need to manage impacts including providing day time space.
- Need to be conscious of the mix of uses particularly the small business along Harrison that support/rely on the large institution - important contributor to the vitality of the Corridor and can provide keys to ground floor use/density for the balance of the corridor.

## meeting notes

- Concern about overly optimistic demand for ground floor retail - not appropriate or viable everywhere - regulations should not automatically require ground floor retail.
- Similarly recognize impacts of commercial ground floor space on public streets in the evening - lights get turned off and street become dead. Need to understand the nature of retail businesses - have to be open in the evenings and weekend so have distinct impact on adjacent residential use.
- Retail could also be strategically located to improve public safety
- Inherent with some of the current uses is the need for loading zones and docks (Back Street industries). These are part of the character of the district and necessary and must be factored in future plans.
- Area has evolved and lead to the continual loss of lodging houses. Future land use should include accommodations for the broader socio-economic residential needs of the city.
- Cathedral of the Holy Cross is the largest in New England and should be a valuable tourist attraction yet it is generally locked. Effort should be made to take greater advantage of this asset.
- Plan should address impacts of some existing uses like the Methadone clinic to see how impacts can be managed

### Public Realm

- Trees, trees and more trees
- Cathedral open space provides opportunities for Harrison Ave Public Realm. Should also have a door on Harrison.- get plans for school expansion and impact on public realm
- Central Artery project included improvements to the Fort Point Channel Basin. Access from the Study area should be addressed and this space should be linked to the Harbor Walk system.
- Harrison Avenue is poorly served by street lights and crosswalks - this was a general theme for the entire study area - more trees and lighting.
- Expanding green space in the district should be considered particularly as an opportunity to provide additional resources to Chinatown and Roxbury.
- Should improve pedestrian connections to South Boston particularly on the Broadway Bridge
- South End has a distinctive character attributed partially to the warmth of the brick buildings. Building guidelines should reinforce the use of brick as a cladding material to preserve this unique quality of the District.
- Input from Landmarks Commission is important for this planning process.
- What makes a good street? Need create guidelines that create successful streets, not like Fay Street which has building/street relationship that is uncomfortable due to narrow sidewalks and unit entrances dumping right on to the street.
- Variety of spaces recognize the nature of urban living. This is particularly true of the dog parks - area could use more community gathering spaces.
- Eye level greenery is very successful and should be considered in the district.
- "Friends" grouped should be considered as way to adopt/maintain public spaces.

### Density

- Important consideration for New York Streets - what is the appropriate density. Parcel 24 proposal, the Pike Air-rights study and Central Artery Air-rights should be reviewed to provide guidance.
- Another report that should be reviewed is the 1970's era "Lower Roxbury/South End Development plan" - may of the current success of the district can be attributed to the implementation of that plan.

### Traffic/transportation

- Must be mindful of impacts on traffic from future development - there are limits to how much additional traffic the district can absorb

## meeting notes

- Opportunities to improve access to BioSquare and relieve traffic on Mass Ave as a result of Central Artery improvements were not implemented. Making Mass Ave Connector Road more accessible is high on the tasks. Need to review original plans
- Direct access to the Bio Square Garage from Mass Ave Connector needed.
- Vehicular traffic moves too fast - environment needs to change to make streets feel more local and pedestrian friendly.
- Need to include Pike and T in process
- Business Association has prepared recommendations to improve traffic - should be reviewed as part of the planning process.
- Parking is a significant problem particularly for the underserved police Station. Recommendation for a public structured garage on an adjacent site.
- There was a question regarding the proposed Herald Loop and the Charles Street bus tunnel - these should be investigated/clarified.
- Need to have BTD, MHD & the MBTA present at future meetings

### Implementation

- Group asked where the public funding to move plan ideas forward would come from. Idea is that plan would identify opportunities and it is hoped that the business community would help implement.
- There was a question regarding contribution of the Green Roundtable - would bring ideas regarding sustainable communities to the discussion
- It was suggested that linkage payments from district-based development should be dedicated to initiatives for the district - use BID payments as part of the linkage funds.