

Sullivan Square Disposition Study

Public Meeting: 6-25-13

Meeting Notes

- Public comment: Thank you for leaving hard copies of the presentations at the Charlestown Library, please continue to do so.
- Public comment: Is the MBTA station being redesigned as a part of this process?
 - **Consultant Response:** We are looking at all potential development within the study boundary.
- Public comment: The green space being represented in some of the slides is not actually existing open space.
 - **Consultant Response:** Tonight's discussion is for talking about where to accommodate open space.
- Public comment: There is a parcel that falls entirely within the area zoned for open space and one third of another parcel does as well. Our understanding was that there would be a net increase in open space if we went with the surface option. We should accept nothing less than the amount of currently zoned open space.
 - **BTD Response:** You're correct but the surface option configuration adds more open space to Ryan Playground while reconfiguring some adjacent to roadways.
- Public comment: Put back previous amount of open space in Sullivan Square.
- Public comment: What about the roadways north of the study area?
 - **Consultant Response:** Those are not within the scope of this study.
- Public comment: Please add more green space.
- Public comment: Please add proposed parcel configuration to the presentation images for reference and context.
- Public comment: Isn't there a State law about taking away open space?
 - **BRA Response:** There is a State Law that requires a 2/3 vote of the legislature to take existing open space away but here it is not existing, but zoned for it.
- Public comment: It would be easier to understand the sizes of the parcels if there were examples of existing open spaces to use as a comparison.
 - **BRA Response:** That will be shown in later slides.
- Public comment: Consultants' example of Edwards Park is also known as Eden Street Park.
- Public comment: Who will specify the design of the buildings? The BRA, City of Boston?
 - **BRA Response:** That will be discussed at future meetings in this process that will be dedicated to talking about urban design guidelines. Additionally, there will be a public review process for each future building, at the time that each of these buildings is proposed in the future (per Article 80 of the zoning code).
- Public comment: You mentioned that the buildings on these images are 65 feet. Is that how it's zoned?
 - **BRA Response:** The translucent blue square in the 3D computer model is an example of where a building face adjacent to open space might be located. It is not intended to show building height, dimensions or design. Those topics will be discussed in a future meeting in this process.
- Public comment: How tall are the buildings in City Square? 40 feet? They were based off of the height of the courthouse.
- Public comment: Are there any slides on traffic or parking?

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- **Consultant Response:** We will have separate meetings to discuss that but we do have the volume estimates from the BTB study.
 - **BTB Response:** There is on-street parking planned so the streets won't be quite as wide as they seem in the conceptual plans.
- Public comment: What is the traffic volume expected to be compared to Chelsea Street?
 - **BTB Response:** Expect Chelsea Street to be a smaller version of Rutherford Ave.
- Public comment: All three streets surrounding the Parcel 7 park option will be fairly highly trafficked.
- Public comment: Are there other park configurations on that site?
 - **Consultant Response:** Yes, we will be looking at all kinds of parks and designs.
- Public comment: A pro to having a park on Parcel 7 is its vicinity to the Schrafft's building, and the ability to create views of the Schrafft's building.
- Public comment: There's a conflict between maximizing the open space or the development, they are contradictory.
- Public comment: With the Parcel 4 option, accessibility to the T seems hindered as well as public access to the park itself.
 - **Consultant Response:** Open spaces succeed or fail at their edges (e.g. City Hall Plaza), this option would maximize building frontage on park edges.
- Public comment: Placement of Parcel 4 park is too hidden and tucked behind buildings. Parcel 7, although smaller, seems more accessible and visible.
 - **Consultant Response:** Parcel 4 is the focus of a new district, Parcel 7 is a gateway.
- Public comment: The corner near the church really needs more open/green space. How do you get from that corner to the T safely with the Parcel 4 option?
 - **Consultant Response:** The new road configuration offers improved visibility and multiple possibilities for pedestrian connections.
- Public comment: It would be helpful to see comparable 3-D views of park and corridor views from different angles.
 - **Consultant Response:** We can include that in upcoming presentations.
- Public comment: Is the Zakim Bridge visible from these park options?
 - **Consultant Response:** We can look into that and get back to you.
- Public comment: Why do we have to choose only one parcel for open space? Why can't we get more than one? City needs to prove that we need this much development and not assume that we do because we need as much green space as possible.
- Public comment: Having you as consultants, we need some direction as to how much open space is appropriate and have the community react to the amount proposed.
 - **Consultant Response:** At the moment we are trying to decide on the type of open space rather than the exact amount.
- Public comment: How much flexibility is there actually in these different configurations?
 - **BTB Response:** There is some dimensional flexibility but the general roadway layout/configuration is set.
- Public comment: We should come up with a vision and decide on what activities we want in the open space/park before choosing exactly where it goes, we need to understand what is possible.

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- **Consultant Response:** We are hoping to get a sense of the parcels first (and where open space fits among them) and then test different scenarios for feasibility.
- Public comment: Can we please get through the entire presentation and then react at the end?
- Public comment: Can we hear about the advantages/disadvantages to the linked squares option?
- Public comment: Does any of this preclude a developer from having open space on their parcels?
 - **Consultant Response:** No.
- Public comment: Can we see where the sun will be on the open spaces proposed?
 - **Consultant Response:** We should talk about buildings before having that discussion and base it on certain assumptions.
- Public comment: There is a need to incorporate and think about historic elements when planning the open space. Look at opportunities to link it to areas with historical significance (e.g. Middlesex Canal).
- Public comment: Need to resolve the pedestrian flow around the T station first. Historically, Olmstead did create an open space network in Charlestown, small gems have been created in Boston. Helping flow for pedestrians makes it more of a walking neighborhood than a destination which also makes more sense for future developers too.
- Public comment: What about having a combination of the options presented? A larger park and some linked squares together?
 - **Consultant Response:** Yes, that is a possibility.
- Public comment: Want an identifiable space known as “Sullivan Square”.
- Public comment: Would these parks be owned by the City of Boston Parks Department? What would they be able to offer?
 - **BRA Response:** Yes, we have spoken to the Parks Department and this is an opportunity to look at examples of other city parks as well as think about the public benefits that the developers could contribute to the open space. City Square park is a little bit different because it is a state built park.
- Public comment: Ongoing maintenance is a continuing issue. For example there is a lot of inconsistency in the maintenance of HarborWalk.
- Public comment: We should discuss the uses of the park because it might impact the cost of maintenance. Families need open recreation space and playing fields.
- Public comment: Put in the RFP guidelines how the parks can be designed and maintained.
- Public comment: The parks department needs to realize the value of new development.
- Public comment: What happens if the casino is built in Everett?
 - **BRA Response:** This is a blank slate and a rare opportunity to create guidelines for what kind of development we want to see here, especially during the future discussions we have on land use. We have the opportunity to define the neighborhood and create guidelines for the uses that we don’t want to have.
- Public comment: What are the MBTA’s thoughts on what happens here? What about the current T station, is it included in changes? Could the parking lot be rethought?
 - **BRA Response:** We will be exploring that question through this process. The MBTA owns a large portion of the land we are planning for, and is on board for this process.

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- **MBTA Response:** Yes we are open to exploring different possibilities. If it's a vision for a new entrance, head house and lobby we could look into building it with help from developers.
- Public comment: What about bus circulation in and around the T station?
 - **BRA Response:** BTD analyzed the bus circulation so that development can happen and not negatively impact bus operations.
 - **MBTA Response:** The operations team is happy about the new roadway configuration because it envisions a safe and signalized plan.
- Public comment: It is important to understand the MBTA's willingness and flexibility to build a new station as it affects the discussion on open space.
- Public comment: Can we see a map showing what is existing and what is expected to change with the new plan? It would be helpful to better understand the how the new parcels overlay.
- Public comment: Everett has not been a good neighbor to Charlestown with the past tankers issues. It does not contribute to the community being pedestrian friendly.
- Public comment: Make an expensive toll bridge to discourage potential casino traffic.
- Public comment: There is recreational space available in Somerville that could be made more accessible to Charlestown.
- Public comment: Discussion about linkage of open space is appreciated but it's important to understand the residential and commercial/office users that will come. It would be helpful to revisit this discussion towards the end of the study.
- Public comment: Next time it would be helpful to start with a discussion regarding the overall vision in order to frame future discussions.
- Public comment: Please provide maps that demonstrate MBTA ownership.
- Public comment: Please provide context for other publicly owned parcels.