

April 25, 2015

Edward M. McGuire III
Project Assistant
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Ave
Ninth Floor
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Ed

The past months of review and discussion regarding the proposal for 3200 Washington Street have prompted much reflection on the value of this neighborhood and the changes it has experienced during my 28 year residency. When I moved here I was expecting improvements as the old elevated orange line was demolished, but what sold me on the neighborhood were the neighbors working together to clear the snow from the street. Chilcott Place and Eggleston Square felt like a community.

In the following years I have participated in this neighborhood, more than some, less than others, and in doing so I have gained an appreciation for and love of the diversity of my neighbors, people of all ages, races, nationalities, education and economic levels. Knowing these people have burst many misconceptions and stereotypes about race and economic level and brought a better understanding of the richness that these people bring to the community and to my own life. I have mourned the loss of long time neighbors who have left because rents were raised and they could no longer live here. The issues of displacement are very personal to this community, and cannot be reduced to abstract concepts.

At the same time, I am an Architect with 35 years of experience in large scale development with Goody Clancy, a pioneer of mixed income projects such as West Broadway, Tent City and Harbor Point, a member of the Boston Landmarks Commission who has weighed the community input on hundreds of projects, and a student and practitioner of Sustainable design. I believe strongly in the principles of Smart Growth, higher density, public transit, and in the value of mixed income communities.

So I am at a loss at why the discussion is framed as a tradeoff between affordable housing and appropriate urban design. History has shown that we need both. For the last several months, the response to any questions about the appropriateness of the proposed project's height and density has been (1) "well it is not as high as the brewery", (2) "there are four other projects of similar FAR", (3) "but look at all the amenities" and most importantly, (4) "but look at what we will lose" in affordable housing units. There has been little discussion about whether the height and density are appropriate, on its impact on the larger neighborhood, and, as a result, little real discussion about whether these four responses are sufficient justification for inappropriate height and density.

All participants agree that they want to maintain the diversity of the neighborhood and improve the affordability of housing and commercial space for people and small businesses with a range of economic resources. Disagreement comes with the best way to achieve that goal.

It is my hope that the BRA and BCDC with their experience and understanding of the complex issues, will consider not just the mix of affordable units and the number of floors, but will consider how the proposal will impact the underlying goal of the neighborhood to support, not replace, its existing community.

The Impact of Height and Density

The proposed density of 3.09 FAR and height of 80 feet, combined with the overall size of the project, is excessive for the proposed location, and sets a dangerous precedent for future development.

In their recent assessment of Washington Street, the ULI Rose Foundation suggested that increased height and density are more appropriate to the Forest Hill end of Washington Street, and that development at the Egleston Square end should be of smaller, infill scale.

Height

Although the development team has attended many meetings in the neighborhood, the only adjustment to height has been minor (but important) setback on the north building. This reduced the height of the street face at Iffley and Montebello to five stories, but leaves the majority of the building at 6 stories plus a “mezzanine”. The “mezzanine” penthouse adds an additional 10 feet, plus mechanical units.

The proposed height (80 feet) is twice the width of the street (40 feet curb to curb). The majority of the building is more than twice the 35 foot height allowed by current zoning and twice the height of the predominately 3 story existing buildings on Washington Street from Forest Hills to Egleston Square. The single exception in height and size is the nearby Economy Storage (Franklin Brewery) building, which is a historic anomaly. No other existing building exceeds 4 stories. The only approved project with more than 5 stories is adjacent to Forest Hills.

The Egleston to Dudley extent of Washington has already seen extensive development, with housing that does not exceed 4 to 5 stories. The Jackson Square Project has greater height and density but is not a fair comparison, given that the distance from existing low rise residential areas and the larger width of Columbus Avenue, that section of Center Street, and the Southwest corridor park and transit lines. Both Jackson Square and Dudley Square have been part of comprehensive planning processes. This project is proceeding in the absence of the comprehensive plan for the Washington St. Corridor from Forest Hills to Egleston Square.

Removal of a single floor – 15 units – would reduce the scale to 4 stories along the street edge, with an additional floor plus mezzanine set back. This would respond to the existing scale while allowing greater density, if that is required to support affordability.

Density

The proposed project creates 73 units with a single entrance. In contrast, there are 41 units on 18 parcels on all of Chilcott Place, and 66 units on 26 parcels on Iffley. Increased density within the city is a commendable goal, but this project puts excessive density adjacent to already dense neighborhoods of triple deckers. Density is typically desired to provide more housing in the city, and to provide a critical mass of people to support local businesses and create community. This area is already dense, and the project does little to integrate its residents into the community.

The Economy Storage/Brewery has a higher FAR, but has a low occupancy that does not add congestion to the street. The only existing residential buildings on Washington Street of comparable FAR are 3 or 4 stories high with no parking and no open space. They have smaller footprints and are distributed throughout the neighborhood, not concentrated in one location. Future infill projects should also distribute density through the area, not concentrate it in one location without mitigating public open space.

Precedents

It is incongruous for the developers to indicate that 3200 Washington will not set a precedent for height and density of future projects because the size and amenities of the project cannot be replicated. They have argued that it will be one of a kind, and that other 7 story projects will not follow.

This begs the question: Why is 7 stories appropriate here?

The developer has argued that the location is uniquely suited for the proposed height and density, based on the size of the lot, proximity to the Extra Storage/Brewery building, and the 5 way intersection at Montebello, Forest Hills and Washington Street.

In fact, other developers are acquiring large sites and consolidating small commercial and residential properties nearby, and will look to the outcome of this project to support future development proposals. With regard to height, the proposed building has no relationship to the Brewery other than being of comparable height. The arbitrary designation of the Forest Hills/Montebello intersection as a “gateway to Egleston Square” does not justify height at this location.

A corridor of mid-rise buildings would put an excessive burden on this neighborhood, inflating property values and encouraging demolition of existing one to 3 story residential and commercial buildings, and further displacing existing businesses and homes. This is not a question of better use of underutilized property, it is about inflating the costs of viable businesses and homes.

3200 Washington Street should set a precedent: one with affordability, height, density and parking that is appropriate to this neighborhood, and that enhances the community. It should not be an exception.

Parking

Parking is a less important issue than density, height and affordability, but does affect quality of life, and should be considered in context of existing conditions. Most of the residences on the abutting roads of Iffley and Montebello are triple-deckers with limited off-street parking and insufficient on-street parking. Lack of parking should not become an unsuccessful effort at human engineering, to force residents to live without cars. The transit incentives are commendable, and may encourage tenants to use cars less often, but are unlikely to discourage car ownership. In fact, the cost of acquiring the limited spaces will encourage use of on-street parking. While it may be true that low income people have fewer cars, many people of various income levels need cars to access jobs not accessible by transit or during transit hours.

The proposal includes 40 parking spaces for 76 units, a ratio of 0.52 spaces per unit. By comparison, parking at other Washington Street projects under BRA review, projects that are closer to transit, are provided at rates from 0.67 to 0.78 per unit, which is still well below the Boston requirement of 1.5 per unit¹. I do not propose adding parking, or cars, to the project. However it is one more reason to decrease the overall size of the project, which would also reduce the competition for parking spaces.

Affordable Housing

The JPNC and Egleston Square Main Streets are requesting 25% affordable housing, with a range of AMI levels. Depending on how the numbers are calculated, the proposal approaches this number if it includes 52 Montebello.

I support the inclusion of 52 Montebello as a creative solution with many benefits. However, I believe that approval of 3200 Washington Street should be contingent on its successful acquisition, or on a comparable back up plan to provide additional affordable units or increased affordability in the main building.

Removal of the 7th floor mezzanine is not acceptable mitigation for the loss of the 6 units in 52 Montebello. The remaining 2 units over the required minimum does not begin to provide mitigation for a 5 story building, let alone a 6 story building.

¹ Boston Zoning Code Article 55 – Jamaica Plain Neighborhood District – Table J

In conclusion, I encourage the BRA to first look at the range of scale – height and density – that is appropriate in this location and in this neighborhood. I suggest that it should be at most 4 stories at the street elevation, with a 5th floor and mezzanine set back, which would provide a total of 61 units in lieu of 76. Understanding that there are economies of scale, it may be that a project of this size is not economically feasible. In that case, it may be that a smaller scale project – a 4 story residential project – would be more feasible and more in keeping with the neighborhood character.

Even with reduced scale, this project is likely to increase the property values in the neighborhood. While this may be good news for property owners, it will increase rents and increase competition for underutilized properties. This impact, combined with the impact on neighborhood views, shadows and congestion, should be mitigated by requiring a minimum of 20 to 25% affordability.

Thank you for your consideration.

Susan Pranger
IAG Member
23 Chilcott Place
Boston, MA 02130

FROM: Ron Hafer, 6 Park Lane, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 617 524 8247 haferron@gmail.com

TO: Ed McGuire, Impact Advisory Group Advisor, 3200 Washington Street, Jamaica Plain

Boston Redevelopment Agency

4/7/15

Dear Ed:

First of all, thank you for the opportunity to be on the Impact Advisory Group for the proposed development at 3200 Washington Street, Jamaica Plain. From my perspective, this is appropriate because I have spent many years involved in Egleston community affairs and during this time. I was first a renter, in a brick apartment building on Iffley Road, (only to be burned out on the coldest night of the year in 1967), then moved, as a renter, to the second floor of a three decker on Montebello (a half block up from Washington). My wife and I lived there until a young neighborhood couple (both raised in Egleston) persuaded my wife and I to buy a house for sale the next street over (Park Lane, the home we raised our family in, and still live in). In other words, the perspective I bring to this committee is mostly from that of a long term nearby resident. I do wish the BRA would loosen the time lines.

Second, I have refrained from writing to you, up to now, because I wanted to hear more from other resident people, including wanting to hear what would happen at the Egleston Square Neighborhood Association General Meeting last week. The meeting was focused on people's reaction to a report from ESNA's Housing Committee on this Development. While there was no formal vote at that meeting, it was clear that there was a strong concern about the high height of most of the cluster of buildings, as well as the low number and placement of low and moderate income units in the proposed cluster. Also raised were side issues such as how this would "impact" the area of surrounding homes [which are now all three stories or under], homes which now includes a diversity of people (racially, ethnically, and economically). This, I thought was the key purpose of an "impact" committee.

Third, some of my personal comments are as follows:

1. The height of one Historic Building should not be the basis of zoning change, especially when it was built long before zoning. (Also, I have wanted to ask if the developers are going to rely on that one building to justify a new acceptable building height for the surrounding area, why just not also consider the uniquely attractive historic features of the outside of that building in their current plans.)

2. I know the Development Team has taken care to meet minimum guidelines for modest income people, but has said little about the other units and how they will be priced and how all residents will be selected. Although they seem to have gathered a team of competent consultants to study the usual issues in designing a multi-unit residential development, I have heard nothing about finding even one consultant whose expertise is in blending a new development into an existing urban neighborhood.

I hope that there will still be a next meeting and that these questions and issues can receive attention.

Sincerely,

Ron Hafer

FROM: Ron Hafer, 6 Park Lane, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 617 524 8247
haferon@gmail.com

TO: Bryan Golden, Director, Boston Redevelopment Authority

CC: Ed McGuire, Impact Advisory Group Advisor, 3200 Washington Street,
Jamaica Plain

RE: IAG and "Comment extension" for 3200 Washington Street, Jamaica Plain

4/12/15

Dear Mr. Golden:

First of all, thank you for the opportunity to be on the Impact Advisory Group for this proposed development at 3200 Washington Street, Jamaica Plain.

From my perspective, this is appropriate because I have spent close to fifty years involved in Egleston community affairs, living and raising a family within a block or two of the place I used to go to buy "plumbing supplies" for my house.

I believe that the ING has not addressed the key question, that is "How will this development "impact" my neighborhood?" Some neighbors, on and off the IAG, do not articulate it that way, but it lays behind all the meetings. I'm not sure that the new BRA staff "advisor" understands this, plus some other issues, such as the need for longer and more IAG meetings and the awareness that residents who do not speak English have been left out of the discussion.

This is why I urge you to extend the "comment period."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Hafer", written in a cursive style.

Ron Hafer

28 Olmstead Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
May 1, 2015

Edward M. McGuire III, Project Assistant
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Ave Ninth Floor
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Ed,

Initially, I was reluctant to accept the appointment to the Impact Advisory Group (IAG). My overall IAG experience was useful and informative and I am pleased that I accepted the nomination.

There were however, periods during the IAG process that were frustrating for me. I will relay my concerns about the process to the BRA in a separate correspondence.

I am disappointed that my IAG was not able to form a consensus of opinion regarding 3200 Washington Street proposed development. IAG members did not always have all the information it needed to make informed decisions. It seems that when one believes strongly about and is committed a perspective or point of view, it is equally challenging to move to a different position.

Background

I have a fairly long history of participation in efforts to improve the quality of life in the Egleston Square neighborhood. Starting in the early 80's I began collaborating with local social service agencies,

development corporations and Saint Mary of the Angel Parish. Much of that efforts were devoted to combating illegal drug trade, reduce the incidence of drug related crimes in the neighborhood, work to reduce influence of gangs like the X-Men and was part of a

Part of that history included work with residents to gain political skills and knowledge to enable them to have a voice in the political, economic and civic decisions that impact their lives as residents of Egleston Square. Those efforts were exemplified in my participation as member of boards of director and by work on committee with JPNDC, Urban Edge, Egleston Square Neighborhood Association, Brookside Community Health Center, Egleston Square Healthy Boston Coalition and Saint Mary of the Angels Parish.

In addition to my work with Egleston Square Neighborhood Association (ESNA), I am a Friend of Egleston Square Y, where we help provide educational, recreational and safety opportunities for young people. I have a particular interest in trying to end the spate violence and killing among young men of color in the community.

All of these endeavors were aim at helping to build a neighborhood where people of all races, ethnicities, linguistic and cultural mix could afford to live together to help build and sustain viable life.

Comments Re: 3200 Washington Street proposed Development

My/concern with the 3200 Washington Street proposed Development is that it may undo many of the gains the community made over the years. In conversations with neighbors and residents of the area, they express wide spread desire to see improved living

conditions: cleaner streets, improved streetscape that encourages walkability, and more meaningful employment opportunities for our youth for example. Residents also express the desire to be able to remain living in a neighborhood that is mixed racially and economically. They want to continue to build their lives in the community, not lose their hopes to live and raise their families here.

Residents support the City's call to build more housing, but they also strongly support the call and need for a greater mix of affordable housing among this construction boom. Residents too voiced the sentiment that it is reasonable that the people who lived here through the more troubled times should be able to remain here in more prosperous time.

I believe that the developers do want to provide a social benefit to the community. The developers did offer some adjustments along the way: color scheme changes, modify the "bulky design features on the northwest top floor of building, and made incremental affordability offers.

However, some IAG members and many community residents seek substantially more consideration from the proposed project. Specifically, there is a strong desire to have a building that is not more than 4 or 5 stories high. There is a call for 25% of affordable units within the new structure.

There are many other issues associated with the project that lack clarity and specificity: density, parking, traffic congestion (during and post construction), environmental and hazardous mitigations and agreements of maintain safe and healthy surroundings during construction.

I am aware of many of the complexities associated with issues surrounding affordability, e.g. how to provide meaningful affordable housing and have low height and density at the same time.

I believe that the IAG process did not offer opportunities to fully explore many such issues; the process also lacked an atmosphere for useful give and take discussions, especially with the developers.

The public comment process did not adequately allow for communication with residents whose first language is other than English. The BRA and developers must be mindful of the racial inequities that Egleston Square and its resident have faced and endured over the years.

The BRA must mitigate these issues.

Various numbers and percentages were proposed in an attempt to identify a desirable level of affordability that would make the proposed development workable. But in order to be able to really make decisions about reasonable numbers, we need additional information from the developers.

For example, what are the developers operating costs and expenses over time? What is the estimated cost of the development? What are the estimated or proposed rents for the respective units and what are the estimated sale prices for the townhouses?

As IAG members, we needed to know what is the bottom line for the developers, i.e. what is the minimum number of floor needed to give (25%) maximum.

I ask the BRA to have the developers revisit their design and come back with a plan that shows how the development can add additional 2 and 3 bedroom affordable units. They might reduce the number of studio apartments, for example.

In addition, I strongly recommend that the developers do not count the 52 Montebello Rd property in its affordable quotient. They do not currently own that property nor is there any guarantee that they will obtain the rights to rehab that property. Furthermore, the developers have not offered a viable alternative or back up plan if they do not obtain the property. Regardless who rehabs 52 the Montebello Road property, under current City designation, those units will be affordable for at least 50 years.

A number of new and proposed housing developments are underway along the Washington Street corridor between Forests Hill Station and Egleston Square. The Commons at Forest Hills Station is a 283-unit development that is under construction; there is a residential 21 unit building that is in the planning stages near Green Street and there is a proposal for a 132 residential unit located next door to The English High School.

These new projects are identified as market and/or mid market rate housing, with rents being proposed at about \$2600 a month for a 2 bedroom apartment.

Realtors are purchasing vacant lots adjacent to older buildings around the area; Jackson Glass property is under agreement and there is a large parcel of vacant land across the street from 3200 that could go on the market at any time.

Meanwhile, small developers are proposing and building single and multi-family units on nearby vacant lots: 3 such projects are on Peter Parley Road alone. These units, a combination of market, near market and mid-market rate rentals are quietly but rapidly escalating the cost of rents in the community. We all know that \$2600 is not a rent that the average resident of Egleston Square can afford.

This lack of balance is highlighted the absence of a unified plan for the surrounding Egleston/Roxbury/Jamaica Plain neighborhood.

It is essential that the BRA work with the Egleston Square Community to create a balanced development plan for the area. Fear that wholesale displacement and major gentrification will result from this lack of proper planning for the area. It is important that the BRA acknowledge and address these potential economic and social impact factors that new developments such as 3200 Washington Street and other high rent developments will have on the lives of residents.

Finally, I ask the BRA to delay/put on hold approval the 3200 Washington Street proposed development. This request based the absence of a thoughtful, analytical community involved planning process for the Egleston Square area. The temporary financial setback the developers will face during this period of delay is substantially less than the social, economic and psychological costs imposed on the residents who have lived here for most of their lives.

Without a unified plan, the area will continue to experience unchecked free for all, high priced housing construction that will have long term negative impact. You, the BRA are aware of the recommended planning approach offered by The Rose Center for Public Leadership, the Nation League of Cities and the Urban Land Institute

I am appreciative for the opportunity to serve on the Impact Advisory Group.

Thank you

Alvin Shiggs

28 Olmstead Street

Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

April 30, 2015

Edward M. McGuire III, Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Plaza, 9th FL.
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Ed,

As an IAG member who has participated in meetings regarding the 3200 Washington St. project for the past year, a property owner of the property directly across the street from the proposed project, and a Dominican business owner who's business thrives off of the diversity that's the beauty of Egleston Square, I fully support the development proposal put forth by Dan Mangiacotti and Justin Iantosca for the Economy Plumbing site. My support for the project stems from the reasons outlined below:

The Process:

After attending several meetings, I found the developer to be receptive to community feedback and reasonable with meeting our requests. The developer attended every meeting and was willing to continue the conversation offline when need be. For what has been an extensive, almost 12 month process, I am satisfied with the outcome of the proposal as it stands today. We were able to get one more affordable unit, bringing the total to 12 units, as well as get the commitment from the developer to bid for the 52 Montebello problem property, creating 6 more affordable units. Furthermore, I appreciate the efforts from the developer's team on community outreach, knocking on doors, speaking to residents of Egleston and having translation available at the BRA community meeting. In my years as a property owner in Egleston, I have not seen a developer go to such extents.

Affordability:

The diversity of Egleston is one that I am personally invested in. My business is a lounge which relies on a diverse, mostly Latino clientele, and the fabric of that community is one which I've been a part of for over 15 years. Therefore, I commend the developers for going above and beyond the city's requirement for affordability, in reaching 24%. It is this level of commitment to the community that is needed from other developers seeking to build housing in Egleston, as I believe it will be the only way to keep the diversity of this neighborhood.

Design:

I am impressed with the design of the building and the level of investment being put into the property. The design of the building is innovative and will be an attraction on Washington St. Despite concerns regarding the height of the building, I accept the height in exchange for the number of affordable units that will be brought to Egleston through this project. The design of the proposed buildings for this site shows a real investment in the community and will bring much-needed development to Egleston Square.

It is my hope that this development moves forward as proposed, and that we can begin to have a constructive conversation on how to hold other developers to this standard of affordability and investment in Egleston Square. As the demand for housing continues to rise, it is projects such as the one proposed at 3200 Washington St, that will keep the diversity of our communities while at the same time filling a critical need.

Sincerely,

Jose de la Rosa



Edward McGuire <edward.mcguire@boston.gov>

IAG update

Girma Belay <girma.belay@verizon.net>

Fri, May 1, 2015 at 12:09 PM

To: Edward McGuire <edward.mcguire@boston.gov>

Hi Edward McGuire:

I would like to thank you for your effort with regard to IAG work as it relates to the proposed 3200 Washington Street development. As an IAG member and 30 year resident and board member of JPND, I support the recently changed building design as long as the developer is committed to provide 25 percent of affordable housing (as defined by DND) out of the currently proposed total housing units, including 52 Montebello Road. The developer has promised to our community to completely renovate 52 Montebello at his own expense and donate the finished housing product to a local CDC. I also want to advise you that the developer must be committed to sign a memorandum of agreement with ESNA to make the project site environmentally clean and safe for the surrounding community. The enforceable agreement should also include construction management (noise, site cleaning, traffic and employee parking management) before and after construction is completed. I also want to encourage you to advise the BRA Executive Director to begin the master planning process from Forest Hills to Egleston Square to Jackson Square, which will allow for comprehensive planning, instead of forcing the community to consider each project proposal one at a time. It is really a shame to wait until the city wide planning is done. By then all would be mismatched projects and the Washington corridor will have been constructed and completed. As you have seen in the various community meetings, a group of very energetic, skilled and committed residents are more than ready to working with the BRA and the City to make our neighborhood the most livable,affordable and diverse as possible.

Sincerely,

Girma Belay
617 522-5417
43 Peter Parley Road
Jamaica Plain, Ma 02130

Sent from my iPad

[Quoted text hidden]

April 30, 2015

Edward M. McGuire III
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Plaza, Ninth Floor
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your help in facilitating a conversation in our community regarding the development at 3200 Washington Street. This is an important project for so many reasons and it is important to note that the neighborhood is excited for the property to be re-activated. That said, there remain concerns that we hope, as a neighborhood, the BRA will guide through to a resolution acceptable to all.

I am in favor of the project overall and applaud the efforts of the community and developers to address concerns around affordable housing, density, TOD, and a number of other topics. That said, I think that most of the IAG process ignored concerns about the impact of height at the street front of this building.

In meetings with the developers dating back to August of 2014 (and likely before), feedback was given that the building was too tall for the neighborhood surrounding it. This was an items that HAS NOT been addressed from the first open meetings to now (except for a small increase in the setback of the uppermost level).

The proposed height of 80 feet at the sidewalk is excessive in scale and sets a dangerous precedent for future development in our neighborhood. 80 feet is nearly triple the height of the current buildings on the site. And the Franklin Brewery just across and up the street becomes more of an eyesore day by day. It should not be used as an example of what is appropriate for Egleston Square. The building continues to antagonize the neighborhood with countless cell repeaters, security lights shining down at night from 95 feet in the air, and most recently multiple unpermitted 15 foot banners installed on the building.

The new project currently pushes its mass to the edges while creating 'open space' on the interior. The City of Boston does not count my front yard in their open space calculations, and should not recognize a private courtyard as such in meeting requirements for open space in a project of this size.

I wish to echo ALL that has been submitted to you by my neighbors, Susan Pranger, Scott Shear, and H. Steven Colburn (among many others, I'm sure). They are much more detailed and eloquent while driving through the points that I and many in our community hope will be heard.

Until there is a formal plan from the City of Boston for the Washington Street Corridor, this project is just too big.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Iceland".

Michael Iceland
IAG Member
Trustee, 3-5 Chilcott Place Condominium Trust
3 Chilcott Place
Boston, MA 02130



Edward McGuire <edward.mcguire@boston.gov>

Comments for 3200 Washington Street

1 message

Luis Edgardo Cotto <luis.cotto@gmail.com>
To: Edward McGuire <edward.mcguire@boston.gov>

Fri, May 1, 2015 at 4:16 PM

May 1, 2015

Edward McGuire
Project Assistant
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Avenue, 9th floor
Boston, MA 02201

Hello Ed,

I wanted to submit to you my comments on the proposed development at 3200 Washington Street in my capacity as a member of the appointed Impact Advisory Group. As Executive Director of Egleston Square Main Street I stand by the boards recent comments as submitted to the BRA as well as the process taken to get to that end. What I will offer are my own, independent thoughts on the project.

While I am in agreement with what the majority of people who are in favor of this development moving forward, I don't think that my place as an IAG member is to opine on how I feel about the project but, as the BRA website states, to help "determine appropriate strategies to mitigate the social and environmental impacts of the project."

There is no doubt that the added cars to this already congested node will be a significant impact. I think Montebello Street will be the most adversely impacted in part due to the streets own evolution as almost 50% of the housing stock (mostly 3+ units) do not have off street parking for their tenants. This is exacerbated at the bottom of the street as both 52, 51 and 49 Montebello (15 units) do not have off street parking making the common space at the foot of the hill prime parking real estate.* While the proponents have gone a long way to create a project that will be attractive to people who do not own or want to own vehicles, my hope is that the **proponents go a little further with their incentive program (Hubway Memberships, T Card passes and on site Zip Cars).**

The proponents have also taken steps to alleviate the parking demand on the commons from any destination eatery location such as the one proposed at Montebello and Washington. **My recommendation is for talks to continue in order to solidify a commitment to off street parking to be used by customers of the first floor retail tenants.**

If approved, the "campus" as designed will house an exclusive open space for residents representing a quality of life perk unseen in the district. Residents will also potentially have access to the open space technically at 50 Montebello. **The allowance of such exclusivity should be leveled with a monetary donation to be used exclusively for events held at the other Egleston Square green spaces (Flaherty Park, The Egleston Peace Garden, Granada Park, Dixwell Park, Franklin Park, and the green space behind the library.)** This amount of this donation should come from the IAG and administered by the BRA as stated in your policies.

With density, and allowances for affordable units, standing out as the most discussed impact item, **the proponents should add at least one more affordable unit as prescribed in the Egleston Square Main Street comment document. The proponents should continue the conversations with local CDCs and make every possible attempt to purchase / rehab the 52 Montebello site. The proposed three story building on Iffley Road should remain an affordable home ownership option.**

As indicated in the proponents traffic studies, **any** proposed project on the Washington Street site will adversely impact the current traffic pattern. That being said, **the proponents should work with Boston Transportation Department to create an impact study of the Montebello, Forest Hill & Washington Street intersection** to see what mitigating strategies the two can arrive at. Maybe the proponents can pay for the painting of a "Do Not Block The Box" grid at the intersection as a temporary measure.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank you and the BRA for allowing me the opportunity to sit on this body. My understanding is that the IAG still plays a role in responding to any further design changes. If so, I stand ready to add to that discussion. Good luck with the rest of this process.

Peace,

Luis

* 52 Montebello is not inhabited but the RFP requires the development of all 6 units and states that there will be no off street parking for the units.

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Luis E. Cotto | <http://about.me/luisotto>

~ "Pray for the dead, and fight like hell for the living." -- Mother Jones

Edward M. McGuire III, Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Plaza, 9th FL.
Boston, MA 02201

Greetings Ed,

I am writing in support of the proposed development for 3200 Washington Street in Egleston Square. I found that in my involvement with the process that the project team was very receptive to concerns and comments raised by the community to create a project that will meet a wide variety of expressed needs while also remaining realistic to the city's vision and scope abilities. Egleston Square needs new housing opportunities and I hope that this project sets a precedent with the administration of the types of high-density housing that would be created in close proximity to transit. Additional comments regarding the project are below.

- The proposed height at 6 stories and a mezzanine along with the acquisition of the DND parcel on Montebello Road allows the building to be constructed with 24% affordability. They should fight to get this project and the City should work to be more accommodating in the sale with the developer. They are rehabing housing that they will then turn over to an affordable housing organization and they can do it at a rate with the DND property faster than the city could.
- More work needs to be done on the part of the city to manage the demand put onto on-street parking supplies. At the moment this is not at all managed in the neighborhood apart from ticketing for street sweeping. While I am glad to see that the parking ratio for the building is low and that the development is unbundling parking from the cost of renting, it is not the jurisdiction of the building to manage parking or the unrealistic expectations of the public regarding managing parking. If the city continues to not manage it, they create a situation in which like now, neighbors are squabbling amongst one another. What I see happening is that people are more concerned with free, unregulated parking in front of their building instead of ensuring their neighbors don't get priced out of the rental market because of speculative landlords who are working within a limited housing market and therefore raising the cost of housing at alarming rates. This should not be what the argument is about.
- The height of the building is necessary to have affordability. The infill development on formerly single-family parcels in the Stony Brook, Parkside and Egleston neighborhood are turning over into higher end of the market units. These smaller parcels do not have the spatial capacity to accommodate larger developments where affordability can take place. The formerly industrial/ light industrial corridor along Washington that runs parallel to transit accommodations is the perfect place to locate new housing opportunities. Egleston Square needs more affordable units and the team should not compromise on the height.
- In terms of affordability, the building should have one more affordable unit to meet the neighborhood's newly adopted standards. Compared to other upcoming projects in the pipeline, this building surpasses the affordability index in what is being scheduled for development. In addition, this project is adding housing where there currently was none.

Good luck with the rest of the process and please let me know if there is anything additional I can assist with.

Dorothy
Iffley Resident, IAG member

Edward M. McGuire III
Project Assistant
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Proposed mixed used development at 3200 Washington Street

5/1/2015

Dear Ed,

I am happy to offer conditional support for the proposed mixed used project at 3200 Washington Street. I have enjoyed better understanding the perspectives of my fellow IAG and community members during the review process. There is no doubt that this proposal touches on a number of critical social equity, economic development, sustainability, and urban planning issues that are playing out in cities across the Commonwealth, and across the country, and have been the subject of intensive community deliberation for decades in Jamaica Plain.

In an effort to achieve a range of widely supported community goals including affordable and mixed income housing, transit oriented development, thoughtful, durable, and appropriate building design, superior building energy performance, and quality commercial space, this developer has proposed an ambitious project that, on balance, sets a positive precedent for mixed used development along the Washington Street corridor.

Community and IAG concern has largely centered on two issues: affordability and building massing/height. Discussion of both issues is complicated by the fact that the Boston Redevelopment Authority has not yet completed a planning study for the area in which the project is proposed. That said, we are faced with this opportunity now. The only credible third party institutional guidance thus far – a topical planning exercise organized by the Urban Land Institute – recommended more mixed use and commercial development along Washington Street, and referred to “infill opportunities within existing context.” My interpretation of that recommendation would not rule out a project of this type or scale.

There is no doubt that reducing the scale of this project will negatively impact the number of affordable units the developer can, or is willing to provide. The developer has made some changes to the building massing, including a reduction of the mezzanine in response to IAG member feedback. And I would support further alterations to address massing concerns, *if* those concerns are widely held across the community and do not substantially impact the number of affordable units in the building. In the absence of a neighborhood planning study, or available public funding for affordable housing, the developer’s proposal to include 25% affordable units (when the anticipated 6 affordable units in the Montebello property are included) is respectable. That commitment should remain firm. If the project does not go forward, at least 18 units of affordable housing will not be built in the near term with real measureable impacts on families and individuals.

I am simply not concerned with the building height or massing of this project. With regard to the impact of the scale of the proposed project and affordability in the surrounding community, I struggle to understand how more units – affordable and market rate, in this neighborhood or across the City - will negatively impact affordability. With regard to design, I have seen dozens of mixed use corridors in cities around the country, including low and middle income, that have benefited from well-designed, mid-rise, mixed used and mixed income developments. These development corridors have created ownership and rental opportunities for new and existing residents, improved walkable shopping and dining opportunities for residents, improved sidewalk conditions, while creating new public spaces for community engagement and interaction. And many of these mixed used corridors are surrounded by tree-lined streets populated by 1-4 unit dwellings. I see no reason why an engaged community, working closely with the City's planning authority, cannot achieve this same outcome along the Washington Street corridor. The corridor has benefited from a handful of business owners and entrepreneurs who have been willing to invest in their business and their community, keeping resident spending dollars local while creating jobs. While this proposed project cannot solve the City's affordable housing challenge, it should be commended for creating viable, attractive commercial development space.

With regard to building energy performance, the developer should continue to explore the best options to reduce building occupant energy costs, which substantially impact affordability in Boston. Designing and constructing a building with exemplary energy performance incurs a relatively modest upfront cost – a 6% premium is a widely cited ceiling for new construction – but can dramatically reduce utility costs for building occupants over the life of the project. Putting climate and environmental impacts aside, the City should anticipate warmer average temperatures, extreme heat events, and higher energy costs and support building practices that mitigate those challenges.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Galen Nelson

IAG member

Egleston Square

By now you should have received the comments for the BRA's Article 80 process for 3200 Washington Street from the Egleston Square Neighborhood Association (ESNA). I am writing now as an IAG member, Egleston resident, and member of ESNA. The issue I wish to focus on here is that of affordability for area residents. There are many long-term residents who have been renters for years. Many have families, are hard workers, and are productive members of the community. They want to, and deserve to, stay in the community they have worked to build and where they have raised or are raising their children. Their children, many now young educated professional adults, aspire to live in their communities, where their histories are grounded, but can ill afford rents here, much less the skyrocketing housing prices. Any developer coming into this community who purports to genuinely and passionately, as has been repeatedly conveyed in the IAG and the community meetings, want to do right by this community and its local "ecosystem" should see as its public duty to create a development that is as much for its long-term neighbors as it will be for newcomers to the area. For this reason, I again strongly urge the developers of this project to meet or exceed the 25% minimum affordability standard established by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (which engaged in a thorough process years ago in settling on that number and which is now arguably outdated given the ongoing gentrification in the area). Anything short of such an effort fails to hold true to the stated intentions of the developers of their commitment to the needs of local residents and the spirit of the neighborhood. All residents want improvements in the area, but they also wish to be able to afford to be around to reap those benefits. Moreover, for reasons already raised, although it is commendable that the developers are making efforts to take over the property at 52 Montebello Rd. (which I support and encourage), the 25% affordability must be in the existing structure. The developers have the capacity to do this and will benefit more from the community support they will receive as a result to such a gesture than they any loss they will potentially suffer. I urge the BRA to push for such an effort and urge the developers, financiers, and architects of this project to push themselves to meet what is a reasonable and realistic demand from the community that has worked to make Egleston their home.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth D. Matos, resident

11 Weld Ave. Boston, MA 02119