Western Avenue Corridor Study and Rezoning
Closeout Meeting
Sept 29, 2022

bit.ly/westerncorridor
@bostonplans
Agenda

1. Introductions & Housekeeping
2. Overview of Planning Process
3. Plan Adjustments Made After Draft Release
4. Proposed Zoning Changes
5. Next Steps
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Introductions & Housekeeping
Staff Introductions

Joe Blankenship: BPDA Transportation  - joseph.blankenship@boston.gov
Kathleen Onufer: BPDA Downtown & Neighborhood Planning - kathleen.onufer@boston.gov
Adam Johnson & Matt Martin: BPDA Urban Design
Mark McGonagle & Patrick Horan: BPDA Community Engagement
Project Website

bit.ly/westerncorridor

- Presentations (including tonight’s!)
- Recordings from virtual meetings
- Project documents
- Draft report, draft zoning text, draft zoning maps
Zoom Tips

Your controls should be available at the bottom of the screen. Clicking on these symbols activates different features:
Virtual Meeting Protocols

- Following the presentation there will be time for verbal Q&A. Please be respectful of each other’s time so that all may participate in the discussion.

- You can always set up a conversation with the project team through **Joe Blankenship**, [joseph.blankenship@boston.gov](mailto:joseph.blankenship@boston.gov).
The BPDA will be recording this meeting and posting it on its [website at bit.ly/WesternCorridor](https://bit.ly/WesternCorridor). The recording will include the presentation, Q&A, and public comments afterwards.

- Also, it is possible that participants may be recording the meeting with their phone cameras or other devices.
- If you do not wish to be recorded during the meeting, please turn off your microphone and camera.
Overview of Planning Process
Why Plan

- Planning has occurred over the past two decades
- However, current zoning does not support community vision of:
  - More housing & jobs
  - Community retail
  - Active sidewalks & open space
  - Improved transportation
- Demand for new development
  - Over 3M SF recently approved or under current review
Planning Process

- Began in Sept 2019
- In person meetings
- Zoom meetings
- Walk & bike tours
- Parking data collection
- Conversations with local businesses, local institutions, Watertown & Cambridge staff
- Interdisciplinary interagency working group
- Regular coordination & collaboration with partner agencies such as DCR & MBTA
- In person & virtual office hours
Planning Process

- **Fall 2019 / Winter 2020**
  - Open Houses
  - Walking & Biking Tours
  - Building blocks for framework

- **Spring 2020**
  - Visioning

- **Summer 2020**
  - Developing a Framework
    - Prelim Urban Design Framework
    - Real Estate Analysis
    - Land Use Scenarios

- **Fall 2020**
  - “Deep Dives”
    - Affordable Housing
    - Sustainability & Arts and Culture Policy Review

- **Spring 2021 - Winter 2022**
  - Refining Recommendations
    - Zoning
    - Urban Design & Housing
    - Transportation - Transitway

- **Spring 2020**
  - Refining Recommendations

- **Spring 2020**
  - Final Plan, Adoption, & Zoning Work

*Red Bars indicate public engagement touchpoints: Public Meetings, Chat with a Planner, Deep Dives, Walk/Bike Tour*

**Hiatus in public process due to Covid-19**
Live, Work, & Create

- Mixed-use at higher densities concentrated in Barry’s Corner and Boston Landing TOD Node
- Residential development and cultural uses allowed everywhere
- Western Avenue as retail & multimodal corridor
Breathe & Adapt

The planning framework envisions Western Avenue a key multimodal corridor and seeks to improve connections to the Charles River & existing open space.
Connect & Move

The planning framework envisions Western Avenue as an active, multimodal corridor.

- New street network and connections
- Strong Transportation Demand Management in Redevelopment
- New low-stress bikeway and Transitway on Western Ave
Connect & Move

- Short-term low-stress bikeway
- Transitway
- Parking Ratios
- Parking & curbside use strategies
- Transportation Demand Management measures

Short-Term Protected Bikeway

Long-term Transitway
Connect & Move

- Long-term multimodal goal
- Funding secured to further evaluate transitway through Harvard Phase A ERC mitigation
- Elements to evaluate include:
  - Expanded extent: Leo Birmingham Parkway to Soldiers Field Road
  - Impacts from DCR’s proposed SFR Road Diet
  - Neighborhood roadway circulation and vehicle access
  - Coordination with DCR, MBTA, Watertown, & Cambridge
  - Design process
Implementation

Implementing this Plan will occur via three key areas over time.

Zoning Recommendations

Urban Design Guidelines

Mobility Recommendations
All of these regulations work in concert. These are all written into the plan, and implemented through zoning.
Recap of Feedback Received & Plan Adjustments Made After Draft Release
Feedback Received

Since Draft Plan Release:

- July 27 public meeting to release draft plan
- 4 listening sessions
  - 2 in-person
  - 2 virtual
- 1 informational zoning meeting
- Numerous emails and submitted letters
- September 7 public meeting & zoning hearing
Feedback Received

People were encouraged by:

- Desire for the creation of a vibrant corridor
- Focus on housing
- Creative approaches to transportation
- Movement toward swift zoning
- Supporters of height and bike lanes
Feedback Received

Types of feedback we heard included:

- Topics the WACRZ plan can address
- Citywide or neighborhood-wide planning issues
- Projects that require collaboration with other City or State agencies
- Project / development specific issues
Feedback Received

These topics were of primary points of discussion:

- Issues the WACRZ Plan can directly address:
  - Height & density at Barry’s corner
  - Affordability approach - expand and clarify - not solely a plan question - both citywide and project-specific
  - Noting illustrative future aspirations vs. known planned improvements
Feedback Received

These topics were of primary points of discussion:

- Issues that are important, but can not be addressed solely through the WACRZ Plan:
  - Open space and parks at a neighborhood scale
  - Transportation impacts from development
  - Loss of parking on Western Ave to advance multimodal transportation on Western Ave
  - Desire for more clarity on the Transitway
  - Construction management at a district scale
Plan Revisions

Based on feedback, changes were made to the following topics:

- Lot coverage
- Density
- Building Height
- Affordability Incentive
- Details on affordable & fair housing priorities
- Details on priorities for community benefits

Image: August 2022 office hours
Zoning

The plan includes zoning limits on:

- Land Use
- Setbacks
- Lot Coverage
- Density
- Building Height
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Updated: 70% Lot Coverage south of Spurr/Bertram St
Zoning

The plan includes zoning limits on:

- Land Use
- Setbacks
- Lot Coverage
- Density
- Building Height

Updated: Residential affordability incentive applied to all areas
The plan includes zoning limits on:

- Land Use
- Setbacks
- Lot Coverage
- Density
- Building Height

Updated: Reduced height south of Spurr/Bertram St, incentive height to north

Plan notes that 5’ of additional height may be appropriate for Art 80 projects accommodate higher floor-to-floors of restaurants and other uses in retail spaces.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Floor Area Ratio</th>
<th>On-site Affordability Requirement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential Affordability Incentive</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Everett / Telford Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Affordability Incentive 2.5 - 3.0</strong></td>
<td>Max. 2.5</td>
<td>Non-residential projects are limited to FAR 2.5. No fewer than 15% total residential square footage provided in IDP units - affordable to households averaging 60% AMI.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within the residential incentive zone, all projects approved through a Planned Development Area with an FAR between 2.5 and 3.0.</td>
<td>No fewer than 17% total residential square footage provided in IDP units - affordable to households averaging 60% AMI.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affordability Incentive 3.0 - 3.25</strong></td>
<td>Max 3.5</td>
<td>Non-residential projects are limited to FAR 3.5. No fewer than 15% total residential square footage provided in IDP units - affordable to households averaging 60% AMI.*</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Within the residential incentive zone, all projects approved through a Planned Development Area with an FAR between 3.0 and 3.25.</td>
<td>No fewer than 19% total residential square footage provided in IDP units - affordable to households averaging 60% AMI.*</td>
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<td><strong>Affordability Incentive 3.25 - 3.5</strong></td>
<td>Max 3.5</td>
<td>Non-residential projects are limited to FAR 3.5. No fewer than 15% total residential square footage provided in IDP units - affordable to households averaging 60% AMI.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within the residential incentive zone, all projects approved through a Planned Development Area with an FAR between 3.25 and 3.5.</td>
<td>No fewer than 20% total residential square footage provided in IDP units - affordable to households averaging 60% AMI.*</td>
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<td><strong>Barry’s Cordner Node and Boston Landing Node</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Affordability Incentive 3.5 - 4.0</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Affordability Incentive 4.0 - 4.25</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Updated: Applies to all areas**

**All inclusionary development recommendations are subject to update with the forthcoming Mayor’s Office of Housing Inclusionary Development Study, expected fall 2022**
Additional Narrative Added

- Further detail on affordable and fair housing priorities (pg 32 of plan)
  - Greater affordability for a mix of housing sizes and incomes
  - Innovative models, including all-affordable projects
- Further detail on priorities for community benefits (pg 32 of plan)
  - Greater affordability for mix of housing sizes and incomes
  - Cultural uses
  - Locally-owned, minority, and small businesses
Implementation Update: Western Ave low-stress bikeway

- On Sept 6 the Mayor and BTD announced priorities for low-stress bikeway implementation
- Western Avenue is on that list & will build on the work this effort brought forth
- Design & engagement to occur into 2023

Image: Screenshot of BTD website
Website: Access Storymap here
Implementation: Western Ave Transitway

- $500,000 to further evaluate & design the Transitway from the Harvard ERC Phase A project mitigation
- Drafting Transitway RFP underway
- Goal to release RFP in the coming months

Image: Columbus Ave, Boston
Source: MBTA
Proposed Zoning Changes
Current Zoning

- Limited Coastal Flood Resiliency Overlay District (unchanged)
- Greenbelt Protection Overlay District along Soldiers Field Road (unchanged)
- Neighborhood Design Overlay District (unchanged)
Current Zoning

- Most of study area is in PDA-eligible Western Ave/SFR CC-1 or CC-4 (Community Commercial)
- Institutional Subdistrict (in Harvard IMP)
- LI-1 (Local Industrial) near Boston Landing node
Base Zoning Changes

- Antwerp St houses: Rezone from LI to 3F-4000
Base Zoning Changes

- Antwerp St houses: Rezone from LI to 3F-4000
Western Ave parking lots: Rezone from 3F-4000 to CC-1, make PDA-eligible
Base Zoning Changes

- Western Ave parking lots: Rezone from 3F-4000 to CC-1, make PDA-eligible
Base Zoning Changes

- Rezone Local Industrial to CC-1
- Add to areas that are PDA-eligible
- Create three PDA-eligible zones with density limits that match the plan
PDA Eligibility

Break into 3 new districts with limits from plan:

- Barry's Corner CC District
- Boston Landing CC District
- Everett/Telford CC District
PDA Limits

- Includes FAR limits by use and affordability in plan

Updated: Residential affordability incentive applied to all areas
Why is the zoning changing in two stages?

- Criteria for PDA eligibility - including density limits - are essential and urgent
- Potential for neighborhood-wide or citywide approach (defining cultural uses, defining lab uses, limiting rooftop mechanicals)
- Avoid sub-parcel mini-spot zoning for height and other features
Why is the zoning changing in two stages?

- Addressing base community commercial zoning at later stage - want to carefully consider, study, and avoid any negative impacts on existing uses and small businesses
  - **One exception and update:** added multi-family dwelling as an allowed use to Article 51, Table B: Community Commercial Subdistricts Second Story & Above Residential Uses (currently a conditional use)
Included in plan to provide guidance for PDAs and Art 80, including variances

- Lot coverage maximums
- Setbacks and future right-of-way connections
- Height, including height guidance across a site/parcel
- More specific use guidance for cultural uses and balance of residential, including labs limited to nodes
- Parking maximums
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Next Steps
Next steps

- BPDA Board consideration of Plan and Zoning - October 13
- Zoning Commission vote - November 9
Draft for Adoption Report and Zoning

Draft for adoption posted on website at
https://www.bostonplans.org/planning/planning-initiatives/western-avenue-corridor-study-and-rezoning
Thank you