



Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee Meeting  
Monday, July 10, 2023  
6:00 PM to 7:30 PM  
Zoom Virtual Meeting

---

## **Attendees**

*RSMPOC Members:* Steven Godfrey, Norm Stembridge, Frank Williams, Dorothea Jones, Lorraine Payne Wheeler, Valeda Britton, Nefertiti Lawrence, Sue Sullivan

*BPDA Staff:* Jonathan Short, Jamarhl Crawford, Yari Cortez, Angel Guzman

## **Link to PowerPoint:**

<https://www.bostonplans.org/planning/planning-initiatives/roxbury-strategic-master-plan#past-meetings>

## **Opening**

On July 10, 2023, Co-Chair Norm Stembridge of the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee (RSMPOC) called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Yari Cortez, BPDA Planner I, welcomed all and made initial announcements of the meeting recording and provided instructions for Zoom and interpretation services. The Spanish interpreter gave their introduction and initial instructions followed by the Haitian Creole interpreter and Cape Verdean Creole interpreter. Yari continued with the zoom etiquette instructions. Before starting with the meeting's agenda, Yari provided a brief overview of informational slides on an outline of Mayor Wu's Vision for the BPDA. Afterwards, Yari provided the meeting's agenda and explained that each developer would have ten minutes to present followed by 10m for questions and answers. Further, Yari requested for comments and questions to be directed at information presented as some projects had already gone through community feedback through their Article80 processes.

Norm then continued with greetings and reviewed the calendar of upcoming RSMPOC meetings over the year, gave a brief overview of the RSMPOC and its responsibilities and encouraged people to get involved and remain engaged.

## **Presentation Notes - Topic: PLAN:Nubian Project Updates**

Yari introduced Dan Cruz, Senior Vice President of Cruz Development Corporation.

*135 Dudley Street*

*Presenter: Dan Cruz, Senior Vice President of Cruz Development Corporation.*

- Dan Cruz explained that they applied to the Request for Proposal for the site in 2018 and were selected in June 2019 and in July 2019 they were confirmed by the Public Facilities Commission.
- Dan Cruz, explained that the site is currently vacant but it was the former home to the B-2 Police Station.

- Dan Cruz reviewed some key milestones that they have accomplished like, the approval of the Article 80 approval in August of 2021, prior to that and since then they have put together a financing structure of plans and specifications. Dan Cruz explained that they submitted a building permit on June 30, 2023. Dan Cruz explained that they have been working with the City and State to confirm the financing with the intent to get the project under construction in the spring of 2024.
- Dan provided a brief overview of the project. The parcel is under 70,000 square feet and a residential gross floor area of 211,541 square feet, the project also includes commercial space, 132 parking spaces. Therefore, the overall gross floor area is approximately 289,000 square feet.
- Dan explained that the project has two phases. The project includes 60 units of rental housing and 110 units of condominiums and two separate structures. 27 of the condominium units will be affordable to families and individuals making up to 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) and up to 100% of Area Median Income (AMI).
- Dan Cruz explained that one of the community benefits that the project includes is relocating the NAACP from Washington Mall to Nubian Square. Dan Cruz Development is committing to providing free office space to the NAACP for ten years.
- Dan Cruz reviewed additional milestones and timelines, from designation in 2019 to initiation of Article 80 Project to estimated date of stabilization. Dan explained that they have been working with the City for request for financing and they have applied for MassWorks Funding which will pay for the infrastructure. Additionally, they applied for additional funding from the State in the former department known as Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) now known as The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) to make the rental units affordable. In total they have approximately 8-9 sources of financing.
- Dan Cruz explained that the project would be broken down in 2 phases. The rental building would be constructed first and the condominium building would be approximately 6 months behind the rental. All of the infrastructure would be built at the same time. Overall, the development team is projecting a construction project completion of fall of 2027.
- Dan Cruz reviewed the affordability matrix for rental and homeownership units.
- Dan Cruz explained that 75 % of jobs from this project are estimated to go to Women and minorities.
- Dan Cruz concluded the presentation.

Yari opened the floor for questions and answers for Dan Cruz on the 135 Dudley Street Project.

While people thought of questions and or comments, Yari read a comment in the chat regarding the location of the NAACP.

*Community Member:* The question was directed towards the Mayor's Office of Housing [MOH], community member requested MOH's to speak to the idea of equity and how it relates to funding, in particular funding a Black firm in the City of Boston.

- *Joe Backer [MOH] Response:* In response to the Community Member's question, MOH explained that they are working with the entire Cruz team to finalize the budget for both phases of the project for the City support. MOH credits the Cruz team for their diligent work on continuously working with the City to finalize the budget. Joe Backer explained that this is a complex project, several units that are rental

and homeownership, MOH is doing the same due diligence as other projects of this scale to finalize the budget.

*RSMPOC Member:* RSMPOC Member is pleased that a Black developer is developing Roxbury. RSMPOC Member also expressed that they are content with the Cruz Development's team track record for hiring people of color.

*Community Member:* Community Member expressed that they like the development project. Community Member also inquired about the community benefits package of the project?

- *Dan Cruz Response:* Dan Cruz clarified that they had in depth conversations with NAACP in regards to this relocation. NAACP has been excited about this prospect of relocating to a visible location in Nubian Square . Dan Cruz reiterated that as part of the community benefits of the project, the NAACP will have office space for ten years for free. Dan Cruz added that there is a 5,000 dollar annual scholarship for the NAACP for ten years. The development team will be working with Youth Build Boston to train youth in the construction field. The development team plans on hiring at least one apprentice for every trade that will make up the project. Cruz explained that the apprentice will also receive \$5,000 in scholarship. Cruz added that if there is a community need that is out there, the community should feel free to contact them that could be addressed through other branches of Cruz Companies such as the scholarship fund Cruz Cares. Cruz explained that the company as a whole wants to give back to the community.

*RSMPOC Co-Chair:* RSMPOC Co-Chair recognized this project's community benefits project as an example and an ideal model for development in Roxbury. RSMPOC Co-Chair also asked for the reasoning behind separating the project into two phases, rental and homeownership?

Before the developer responded, Yari [BPDA], signaled that would be the last question for 135 Dudley's Q&A period. Yari [BPDA], recognized the people that had their virtual hands raised and requested for them to type it in the chat and for Cruz to answer in the chat afterwards or respond to them at the end of the meeting if time allowed.

- *Dan Cruz Response:* Cruz explained that they wanted to include both rental and homeownership. Cruz explained that they considered the visibility of the police station in the design scheme of this project; the current proposed project showcases rental and homeownership opportunities that includes an affordable component and pleasant design features for future users and occupants.

Yari [BPDA] concluded the Q&A portion for 135 Dudley and transitioned over to the next project, Nubian Square Ascends. Yari introduced Richard Taylor from Nubian Square Ascends.

*Nubian Square Ascends*  
*Presenter: Richard Taylor*

- Richard Taylor began his presentation by thanking members of the RSMPOC and Project Review Committee for their time in reviewing the project.

- Richard Taylor reviewed the project site plan and overview of the program of the project. Richard Taylor explained that there will be an artists lab in the corner of Eustis and Harrison. The artists units will be homeownership units, a lab training building, Nubian Gallery, and a performance hall. Richard Taylor included that part of the lab training will include Ben Franklin which they have secured \$750,000 for lab equipment.
- Richard Taylor reviewed the homeownership units that will be designated up to 80% AMI and up to 100% AMI for a total of 15 units.
- Richard Taylor reiterated that the project will include 334 parking spaces, approximately 50,000 square feet of cultural and commercial space, and 25% of the site will be open space.
- On Women and Minority Businesses (E/W MBEs), Richard Taylor reviewed their projected goals for workforce hiring, especially goals for hiring women and minorities. Richard Taylor included that they expect to have a local minority contract in the first phase of the project which will increase the women and minority workforce numbers for the project.
- On timeline and milestones, Richard Taylor explained that they expect to break ground in October of 2023. Richard Taylor reviewed a bar chart of milestones and phasing of the different components of the project. Richard Taylor explained they are currently reviewing permits and will be filling for permit submission. Richard Taylor added that they have to do a significant amount of utility relocation. Richard Taylor added that in the next three months they will be preparing a site construction plan to ensure safety and not block parking for the community.

Richard Taylor wrapped up the presentation portion. Yari [BPDA] opened the floor for questions and answers.

#### *Questions & Answers for Nubian Square Ascends*

*RSMPOC Member:* Further clarification on deed restrictions?

- *Richard Taylor Response:* In response to the question, Richard Taylor provided a personal anecdote of personal homeownership in Boston.
- *Joe Backer [MOH] Response:* In response to community's question and Richard Taylor's response, Joe spoke to some recent changes of the homeownership deed policy from MOH, one of them being that the appreciation increased from 3% annually to 5% annually which can compound. Joe Backer then provided a numerical example. Additionally, there's been a change of how ownership can be transferred. Under the old policy you could transfer ownership to an immediate family member if they met income eligibility requirements. Under this new policy income eligibility requirements are no longer in place for immediate family members.

*RSMPOC Co-Chair:* RSMPOC Co-Chair requested clarification on when one could access those benefits?

- *Joe Backer [MOH] Response:* In response, Joe Backer explained that they would need to look at the exact language written in the policy, but to their knowledge, this could be accessed immediately. Joe Backer explained that with homeownership the appreciation of equity tends to play out over a longer period of time. Joe Backer explained that the lifetime of the restriction is separate from the language of how much a unit can be resold for.

*RSMPOC Member:* RSMPOC Member requested further clarification on deed restrictions.

- *Joe Backer [MOH] Response:* Joe Backer explained that under the old policy the deed restriction would last at least 30 years with an option held by the city to extend it to 20 years. The new policy still has a 30 years to 20 year option, if the original buyer lives in the unit all 30 years then it will eliminate the 20 year extension.

*Community Member:* Community Member expressed that the conversations around deed restrictions and community benefits was a common theme throughout the past RSMPOC public meetings. The community member expressed the need for more understanding of the community benefits process from the City.

Yari [BPDA] concluded the questions and answer portion for Nubian Square Ascends and directed people that still had a question to put it in the chat. Yari handed the presentation over to Jonathan Smalls developer for Art at the Nawn Factory.

#### *Art the Nawn Factory*

*Presenter: Jonathan Smalls*

- Jonathan Smalls provided an overview of the site's location relative to the PLAN:Nubian Square Study Area.
- Jonathan Smalls provided an overview of the proposed project's program which would include approximately 7,500 square feet of open space and 10,000 square feet of indoor arts performance space including rehearsal studios, physical arts, performance arts.
- Jonathan Smalls reviewed the landscape design for the parcel. Jonathan Smalls described the objective to be to maximize open space for people to sit and rest and enjoy while enjoying a performance.
- Jonathan Smalls went over building elevations of the proposed structure. Jonathan Small explained that they are going to restore the existing structure and the addition is meant to be build out to the building's original building footprint.
- Jonathan Smalls also explained that they would like to pay homage to a previous building occupant, Owen Nawn who was one of the contractors that constructed the elevated orange line, through the design of the external staircase to be modeled after the old elevated orange line.
- Jonathan Smalls also explained that they would like to include some building murals around the staircase to bring color to the neighborhood and bring attention to the building.
- Jonathan Smalls reviewed the proposed floor plans for the building, 2 levels above ground and the basement which will include 10 rehearsal studios ranging from 350 square feet each and restrooms at every level.
- On regulatory milestones, Jonathan Smalls explained that they received their tentative designation in September 2022 and they are currently working on the predevelopment period.
- On workforce numbers, Jonathan Smalls projects that there will be 15 permanent jobs that will include program directors and administrative staff.

Jonathan Smalls concluded the presentation. Yari [BPDA] opened the floor for questions and answers.

#### *Questions and Answers for Art at the Nawn Factory*

*RSMPOC Member:* RSMPOC Member expressed a need for rehearsal space and dance space in the Dorchester and Roxbury communities. Will the project hold dance rehearsal space?

- *Jonathan Smalls Response:* In response to the RSMPOC member's question, Jonathan Smalls responded that the programming will be dedicated towards rehearsal space. Jonathan Smalls described the artist's process to include three areas: personal space, production space, and presentation space. Jonathan Smalls describes that there is no shortage of presentation space but of that production space.

Yari [BPDA] made another call for questions and answers, given that there were no other questions directed to Art at the Nawn Factory, the questions and answers period closed for Art at the Nawn Factory. Yari turned the presentation over to RSMPOC Co-Chair Norm Stembridge. Norm Stembridge instructed to go back to a Community Member's question for 135 Dudley given the additional time left over in the meeting.

*Community Member:* Community Member asked their question in relation to the 135 Dudley Project, the first one was on the contaminated materials and whether there was any resolution or support to provide additional parking if possible and the second question was can more assistance be requested from the State to fund this project?

A call was made for Dan Cruz developer for 135 Dudley St, however, Dan Cruz did not respond on the call. Joe Backer from MOH, provided some additional context to the question on contamination and explained that there were contaminated soils on the ground so the determination was made to place the parking above grade. The remaining costs to remediate the soil as part of the construction is included in the budget from infrastructure and homeownership.

**Meeting Adjourned:**

Yari handed it over to RSMPOC Co-Chair Norm Stembridge for closing remarks. Norm called a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was seconded.