Western Avenue Corridor Study and Rezoning
Community Meeting
May 25, 2021
Agenda

1. Housekeeping
2. Goals for Tonight’s Meeting
3. Financial Feasibility, Benefits, and Trade-offs
   • Income-restricted Housing
4. Proposed Urban Design and Zoning Revisions
   • Height and Density
   • Public Realm and Open Space
5. Discussion and Q&A
Housekeeping
Team

Gerald Autler
Project Manager

Rosa Herrero
Downtown & Neighborhood Planning

Matt Martin
Urban Design

Tad Read
Transportation & Infrastructure Planning

Additional BPDA staff include: Joe Blankenship, Te-Ming Chang, Meera Deean, Jim Fitzgerald, Jack Halverson, Jeong-Jun Ju, Prataap Patrose

Other departments include: BPDA GIS, Graphics, Research; BTD, Parks.
Project Website

bit.ly/westerncorridor

- Presentations (including tonight’s!)
- Recordings from virtual meetings
- Additional material as produced
  - E.g. Transportation analysis technical memo
Zoom Tips

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

● During the presentation you can ask questions through the chat feature. Depending on the question, we will answer it in writing in the chat box, verbally, or wait until the Q&A period.

● During 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 Gerald Autler, Gerald.Autler@boston.gov.
Meeting Recording

- The BPDA will be recording this meeting and posting it on its website at 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.
Timeline

**Visioning**
- Fall 2019/Winter 2020: Review of existing planning materials
- Spring 2020: Defining key planning principles

**Hiatus in public process due to Covid-19**

**Developing a Framework**
- Summer 2020: Planning framework
- Real estate economics and community benefits

**Deep Dives**
- Fall 2020/Winter 2021: Sustainability/resilience
- Arts + culture

**Draft Recommendations**
- Spring/Summer 2021: Refined planning framework and draft recommendations - revised based on community feedback
- Multimodal improvements (short- and long-term)
- Report and Rezoning
Goals for Tonight’s Meeting
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Respond to feedback from 3/30 and 4/13 meetings:

- Concern about height and density, especially in certain locations
- Questions about public realm and open space creation
Goals for Tonight’s Meeting

Respond to feedback from 3/30 and 4/13 meetings:

○ Concern about height and density, especially in certain locations
○ Questions about public realm and open space creation

For discussion at future meetings:

○ Desire for bolder transportation vision
○ Questions about implications of zoning for current uses and users
Goals for Tonight’s Meeting

Respond to feedback:

○ Review planning analysis:
  ▪ Financial feasibility and benefits
  ▪ Open space and public realm

○ Propose urban design revisions:
  ▪ Lower maximum building heights along Western Avenue
  ▪ More separation between existing residential subdistricts and taller buildings

○ Discuss affordable housing targets
3

Financial Feasibility, Benefits, and Trade-offs
The draft recommendations are grounded in:

**Community Priorities**
How can we deliver the benefits articulated by the community?

**Financial Analysis**
What densities are necessary to make redevelopment work and generate those benefits?

**Citywide Policies**
Housing A Changing City (2014, updated 2018)
Imagine Boston 2030 (2017)
Community Priorities

Concept Diagram

- Western Avenue Corridor
- Barry's Corner Node
- Lincoln Street TOD Node
- New Neighborhood
- Western Avenue Study Area
- Active/Retail Edge
- Primarily Residential Character
- Barry's Corner Node
- Lincoln Street TOD Node

Locations:
- Harvard University
- Charles River
- I-90
- Soldiers Field Road
- Holton St.
- Everett St.
- Waverly St.
- Leo M. Birmingham Pkwy.
- N. Harvard St.
- Lincoln St.
- Boston Landing

Legend:
- Western Avenue Study Area
- Active/Retail Edge
- Primarily Residential Character
- Barry’s Corner Node
- Lincoln Street TOD Node

Image credit: Harvard University

Map credit: Western Avenue Study Area
Working with neighborhood residents, Allston Brighton CDC, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, and Charlesview distributed a survey to nearly 4,000 households north of I-90.

Survey respondents - both renters and homeowners - prioritized a greater percentage of affordable units in new construction as a high and medium priority.
Working with neighborhood residents, Allston Brighton CDC, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, and Charlesview distributed a survey to nearly 4,000 households north of I-90.

**Community Priorities - Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Realm</th>
<th>Mobility</th>
<th>Workforce Development</th>
<th>Climate Resiliency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>81%</strong></td>
<td><strong>75%</strong></td>
<td><strong>60%</strong></td>
<td><strong>74%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**High Priority:** Developing and/or increasing green pathways and safe crossings from N. Allston/N. Brighton to the Charles River.

**Mobility:**

- High Priority: Improve public transit frequency/connections and provide safer streets and sidewalks (speed limits, lighting, wider sidewalks).

**Workforce Development:**

- High Priority: Living wages for construction jobs, contractors, and workers employed in new development.

**Climate Resiliency:**

- High Priority: Green infrastructure” (use of vegetation and landscaping) to manage stormwater, improve water quality, and lower ambient temperatures.
Financial Feasibility

Minimum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

Zoning is the rules that say what height and density new buildings can be

Base Density

Base Costs

Value

Cost
Financial Feasibility & Community Priorities

Minimum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

- Added Density
- Base Density

Value

Cost

This priority is important.

This priority’s requirements were reduced.

This priority is less important than others.

Benefits

Base Costs
Financial Analysis: Key Takeaways*

**Construction costs are high**

**Residential is challenging**
Increasing the number of affordable units is hard.
FAR = ~2.5 - 4.0

**Lab / R&D are more viable**
FAR = ~2.5 - 3.5

* Please see full presentation and video from August 12, 2020 meeting at bit.ly/westerncorridor
All projects accessing the increased FAR provide at least 15% income-restricted housing.

In the Barry’s Corner mixed-use area, a tiered approach to density and income-restricted housing could create greater affordable housing. FAR 3.5 = 15% FAR 4.0 = 17% FAR 4.25 = 20%

*Floor area ratio (FAR) is the ratio of a building's total floor area (gross floor area) to the size of the parcel upon which it is built.*
Density and Affordability: Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total housing units, est.*</th>
<th>% Income restricted housing</th>
<th>Income-restricted units, est.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>With 17% * in Barry's Corner at FAR 4.00</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>With 20% * in Barry's Corner at FAR 4.25</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This is an estimate of the number of units that could be produced through the plan recommendations long-term (20-30 years) at full build-out. For residential development, this assumes 80% net-to-gross ratio and 900 SF units on average. This estimate assumes that development sites with current non-residential proposals remain non-residential.

Land Use recommendation:
- 75% residential / retail
- 25% commercial / lab / retail

See March 30, 2021 presentation for more information.

This represents the draft recommendations for illustrative purposes only. It is not meant to reflect current development proposals in the study area.
Limit lot coverage to ensure that streets and open spaces can be built through new developments.

Allow greater lot coverage near Barry’s Corner, where parcels are smaller and greater intensity of activity is desired.

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Hypothetical Site and Zoning
Site Area: 1 Acre
FAR: 3.5
Max. Lot Coverage: 70%
Max. Height: 90’
The above site and zoning would result in GFA of 152,460 SF.
Trade-Offs
FAR, Height, Lot Coverage

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Trade-Offs
Open Space and Density

* Locations of planning proposed open spaces are for illustrative purposes. Locations and scales will be determined through community processes.
Trade-Offs
Open Space and Density

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Trade-Offs
Open Space and Density

Site Area: 6.85 Acre
FAR: 2.75
Lot Coverage: 46%
Max. Height: 125’
GFA: 818,968 SF
Trade-Offs
Open Space and Density

Site Area: 6.85 Acre
FAR: 2.75
Lot Coverage: 55%
Max. Height: 85’
GFA: 818,968 SF
Proposed Urban Design and Zoning Revisions
Proposed Urban Design & Zoning Revisions

- **Lower maximum building heights** along Western Avenue and create a transition zone near Lincoln Street node
- **More separation** between residential subdistricts and highest building elements
- More **specific affordability targets** based on density bonus
Heights, Previous

Community feedback
Concern about **height and density**, especially in certain locations

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Community feedback
Concern about height and density, especially in certain locations.

Revision
Lower Heights along Western Avenue. Create a transition zone near Lincoln Street node.
Heights, Revised

Revised, May 2021
Western Ave., Looking East

65’ zone along Western Ave*

*Presented at March 2021 public meeting
Western Ave., Looking East - near term

65' zone along Western Ave
Western Ave., Looking East - **long term**

**65’ zone along Western Ave.**

Charles River Community Health
Western Ave.,
Looking East - long term

65' zone along Western Ave

Charles River Community Health
Western Ave., Looking West

90’ zone along Western Ave*

*Presented at March 2021 public meeting
Western Ave., Looking West - near term

75' zone along Western Ave
Western Ave., Looking West - long term

75' zone along Western Ave.
Western Ave., Looking West - long term

75' zone along Western Ave
Heights

Community feedback:
Concern about height and density

Revision:
Lower heights along Western Avenue

Boylston Street, Back Bay
Width : height ratio = 0.9 : 1.0
Heights

Community feedback:
Concern about height and density

Revision:
Lower heights along Western Avenue

Boylston Street, Back Bay
Width : height ratio = 0.9 : 1.0

Western Avenue, revised heights (in red)
Width : height ratio = 1.1 : 1.0
More Separation

Community feedback:
Concern about **height and density**, especially as it abuts existing residential

Revision:
**More separation** between residential subdistricts and highest building elements
Open Space & Public Realm

*Locations of planning proposed open spaces are for illustrative purposes. Locations and scales will be determined through community processes.*
What are the mechanisms for adding new open space and public realm?

Limit **lot coverage** to ensure that streets and open spaces can be built through new developments.

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Lot Coverage, Per Plan Recommendations

New public realm: 18.3 acres Total

- New Open Space: 9.7 acres
- New streets/Sidewalks: 8.6 acres

No-build area (private green space, plazas, driveway, parking etc.): 13.9 acres

*Smith Field, not included in this calculation = 14 acres
Proposed Urban Design & Zoning Revisions

- **Lower maximum building heights** along Western Avenue and create a transition zone near Lincoln Street node
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Discussion and Q&A