

Beacon Park Yard Regional Framework Plan

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plan



Coalition Partners - Workshop #2

Wednesday, December 13, 2023

5:00 - 6:30 PM

Virtual

About the Project

The City of Boston (City) and the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) are partnering with the regional community to create long-term development scenarios for Beacon Park Yard (BPY). BPY is an approximately 100 acre potential future development site owned by Harvard University along the Charles River that would be unlocked as part of the MassDOT Allston Multimodal Project. The BPY Plan will establish a regional, community vision for dense urban development that provides the City capacity, landowner value, and community benefits to realize this transformational infrastructure project. These two projects together would complete a vision established as part of the Big Dig, but never implemented.

A complete description is available on the project website: bit.ly/B-P-Y.

Contact

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Boston Planning & Development Agency

Agenda

- 5:00 - 5:05 Welcome!
- 5:05 - 5:30 Study Area Analysis Presentation
- 5:30 - 6:15 Social Climate Analysis Break Out Group Activity
- 6:15 - 6:25 Resource Identification Close Out Activity
- 6:25 - 7:00 Next Steps

City of Boston and BPDA Staff Attendees

Ben Zunkeler, Senior Planner II
Christine Brandao, Community Engagement Manager
Joe Blankenship, Senior Transportation Planner II
Lamei Zhang, Planner II
Yarisamar Cortez, Planner I
Yingu Pan, Urban Designer I
Wenzheng Wang, Transportation Planner, Boston Department of Transportation

Coalition Partners Attendees

Amira Madison, City of Boston (CoB) Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics
Breeze Outlaw, BPDA Boston Design Vision
Chris Osgood, Mayor's Office
Elizabeth Leary, Boston University
Jarred Johnson, TransitMatters
Jonathan Lee, Allston-Brighton Health Collaborative
Melissa S. Stopa, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Marika Reuling, Harvard University
Mark Handley, Harvard University
Patricia Cahill, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
Ashley Stolba, Governor's Cabinet Executive Office of Economic Development
Susan Harrington, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
Laura Gilmore, Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA)
Jay Maddox, Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA)
Traci Laichter, Community Advocate
Vineet Gupta, Boston Transportation Department (BTD)
Hannah Wagner (on behalf of Dr. Alison Brizius), CoB Environment Department
Andrea Patton, Boston Disabilities Commission
Max Rome (on behalf of Emily Norton), Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA)

Unable to attend:

Cindy Marchando, Harvard Allston Task Force
Jess Robertson, Community Advocate
Glen Berkowitz, A Better City
Iram Farooq, City of Cambridge
Kate England, City of Boston (CoB) Green Infrastructure Department
Karina Oliver-Milchman, Mayor's Office of Housing
George Proakis, City of Watertown

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Meeting Goals

1. Present emerging themes: infrastructure, natural systems, and new models for opportunity, identified in the first Coalition Partners Workshop and the Community Event on December 3rd, 2023.
2. The Coalition Partners were tasked with identifying existing community organizations, assets, conflicts, connections, and potential resources based on the three identified themes.

Impact

The outcome of this discussion was confirmation of the Theory of Action narrative approach and a preliminary social climate analysis of the Study Area, including key cultural and advocacy features that influence future development to be further explored through community engagement.

Meeting Summary

The framework for the Coalition Workshop #2 was informed by the first Coalition Partners Meeting, intercept engagement, and the community event (originally a site walk, moved indoors due to the weather). From these different points of engagement three prominent themes emerged: 1) Experience of Infrastructure, 2) Partnership with Natural Systems, and 3) New Models for Opportunity. These themes are further defined as,

Experience of Infrastructure

We must understand and describe the current experience of residents adjacent to the site and commuters using infrastructure.

Partnership with Natural Systems

We must partner with natural systems for stewardship of the land.

New Models for Opportunity

We must create new models of opportunity meaning, programming to be inclusive, elevate small businesses, arts and cultural spaces, and affordable housing sites as opportunities for wealth building.

To view the full framework please refer to the presentation found on the project website:

bit.ly/B-P-Y.

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In the breakout room activity, Coalition Partners were asked to identify current assets, relationships, and connections in the Study Area around these three themes. Coalition partners were separated into 5 groups of 3 to 6 members all tasked with discussing the three themes. This is what we heard.

What We Heard

Below, is a summary of takeaways from all of the break out rooms organized by the three themes: Experience of Infrastructure, Partnership with natural systems, and new models for opportunity. These themes are the beginnings of the project frameworks which will be used to organize narratives and ideas, however, all elements are interconnected and require nuanced discussion and further development both as part of this planning initiative and other efforts.

Experience of Infrastructure

- ***Key Assets:***
 - Bridges across the Charles River and Pike
 - Boston Landing (transit connections and complete streets with wide sidewalks)
 - Busses/MBTA (route 66 is a huge asset)
 - Bike routes (and partnering with natural systems)
- ***Narrative Context:***
 - *Built infrastructure at a human-scale* - The design and function of built infrastructure should add to people's lived experience – built infrastructure should be accessible, safe, and, in the appropriate context, add to the art and cultural fabric of the neighborhood.
 - *Infrastructure should support connectivity* - Infrastructure in and around the Plan Area should support connectivity to the rest of Allston-Brighton, other Boston neighborhoods, centers in neighboring municipalities, the river, and across the river. Current negative impacts of infrastructure with SFR as a barrier to the river, Pike as a barrier between neighborhoods, and the large scale of transit infrastructure creating a sense of isolation.
 - *Natural environments and systems are infrastructure* - In addition, new built infrastructure should respond to climate change and protect natural environments and systems and people. Some examples of this are

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prioritizing storm water management, green infrastructure, and building design.

- **Further Exploration:**

- New infrastructure should complement and uplift existing infrastructure cared for by the community.
- Interim conditions should be included in infrastructure discussion.

Partnerships with natural systems

- **Key Assets:**

- Paul Dudley White path
- Charles River
- Charles River Watershed Association
- Charles River Dam Operations
- Collaboration between Harvard University and Boston University (for connections through the site and research opportunities for climate resilience)
- Herter Park (looping walks)
- Smith Field
- District-scale stormwater and former wetland environment (salt and smelt creeks)

- **Narrative Context:**

- Leverage and connect to the existing green network and assets - The green network includes parks, green spaces, open spaces that are public and privately owned inside and outside city boundaries. The Paul Dudley White path was referenced several times.
- Partnership with advocates of these natural systems is key - Community leaders and advocates of these natural systems are deeply knowledgeable and connected to these natural systems and people, and continue to include this knowledge and perspective throughout the work.
- The Charles River is a key natural system in this area - Incorporate the existing conditions and health of the Charles River.
- Natural systems and future transportation infrastructure - should complement each other. The new street grid and transportation infrastructure should be multimodal to decrease single vehicular dependency and have robust green infrastructure.

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- **Further Exploration:**

- Natural systems and affordable housing - Are there regulatory opportunities to advance affordable housing and protect natural resources?
- Natural systems and education and workforce opportunities - The built and natural infrastructure systems can serve as an educational opportunity for all nearby educational institutions. Additionally, unlock workforce opportunities in the 'green' infrastructure area.
- Regulatory solutions for the protection of natural resources - How can regulatory policies be implemented to ensure the protection of natural systems? Check EPA data sources concerning the Charles River.
- Natural systems improve the overall health and wellbeing of people - The health of natural systems are intrinsically connected to people's health and well being.

New models for Opportunity

- **Key Assets:**

- Boston Landing
- Roadrunner (concert venue in Brighton)
- Charlesview Residences (created by local religious institutions)
- Ariana Restaurant (Afghan restaurant at Charlesview)
- Super 88
- Bus priority for route 57
- Packards Corner
- Arts/MOAC (existing assets, practice spaces, DIY space, nightlife)
- Regional connections/Eastie

- **Narrative Context:**

- Collaboratively learn from the past (both local and large scale projects like Seaport) - Some past attempts (such as density bonuses for Continuum) are viewed as failures of development to create new models for opportunity. Focus on numbers for affordable housing instead of negotiation.

- **Further Exploration:**

- Proactively explore and embed policy or regulatory measures to ensure implementation - This includes protecting small businesses from displacement. What formal connections can link businesses to new spaces or support them through development? This is linked to the preservation

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and creation of affordable housing. What regulatory solutions can be put in place to achieve this?

- Integrate existing public transit network in the Plan Area - Develop transit links to the future West Station and existing Boston Landing. There is a fear that this will become a bedroom community for people to stay and have easy access to the highway.

[END OF MEETING NOTES]