

# Dorchester Avenue Zoning Update

Advisory Group Meeting #7--Questions  
October 19, 2011

(Questions and comments from Advisory Group members and community members are listed in **bold italics**, followed by replies.)

***-What will happen if businesses that make an arrangement with their neighbor to lease off-site parking spots and then, a couple months down the line, the price of the spots goes up or the site is developed and the parking disappears?***

The businesses would have to comply with minimum off-street parking ratios (if such a ratio is applicable) regardless of the status of their arrangements. Businesses would need to apply for zoning relief from the Zoning Board of Appeals to supply a lower number of spaces than is required by the zoning code.

***-What might the unintended consequences of this be? For example, what happens if a restaurant or a coffee shop with less parking than what is currently required by the zoning code becomes popular and people begin double-parking to pick up their take out?***

Double-parking is illegal. Problems with enforcement of this regulation should be brought to the attention of the Boston Transportation Department (BTD).

***-I think of street parking on Dot Ave as a real commodity. Can we get parking meters installed?*** Parking meters are regulated by BTD. Therefore, the issue should be coordinated with their department. We will coordinate the questions from this Advisory Group meeting with BTD.

***-Double-parking happens no matter regardless of the number of off-street parking spaces you have. Regardless of the zoning rules, it will happen. It's an enforcement issue. I live near a popular restaurant and there are often people who double park even when there is an on-street space nearby. The best deterrent is strong enforcement. I don't double-park in Cambridge because I know I would get a ticket right away.***

***-I have a concern with the mix of residential and business. I'm fighting with residents all the time. They park their cars on Dot Ave all day long even though they don't need to and take away the spots that should be there for my customers. There should be 2-hour parking restrictions like I've seen in other parts of the city.*** Two-hour parking is regulated by BTD. Therefore, the issue should be coordinated with their department. We will coordinate the questions from this Advisory Group meeting with BTD.

***-Can the zoning code regulate where parking is located on a parcel? For example, behind the building versus in front?*** Zoning code does regulate where parking is located on a parcel. For instance, parking is not allowed in the "front yard" area of a property. Any proposal for parking in the front yard would be cited as a

violation and would need to go to the Zoning Board of Appeals process for relief. Furthermore, there are other regulations recommending parking be located out-of-sight or behind buildings.

***-Are there any restrictions on drive-through establishments like Burger King? That drive-through makes walking very dangerous and detracts from the walkability and appearance of a neighborhood. Drive-through restaurants should be made a forbidden use.*** Drive-throughs are typically not an allowed use and therefore would be required to go through the Zoning Board of Appeals process for zoning relief.

***-I think you should bring the minimum to zero. It will shift the burden onto the businesses and let the market decide, but traffic enforcement is still the city's responsibility and we need more of it.***

***-Will bringing the minimum parking ratio to zero make it more difficult to zone out particular uses along the Avenue?*** While a proposed business may currently wind up before the Zoning Board of Appeals because they do not meet the minimum off-street parking ratio, that appeal for zoning relief would be for parking violations, not for use violations. The way to regulate uses through zoning is not through parking regulations, but more directly through the use tables, which specify which uses are allowed, conditional or forbidden in a given sub-district. We will review and discuss the use tables at the next Advisory Group meeting.

***-Can we utilize T-stop spaces for parking? Maybe there could be fewer bus stops, or bus stops could be used for on-street parking overnight when the busses aren't running.***

***-If a commercial use came into a residential area, would the proposed new parking restrictions, for a minimum ratio of 0 or a maximum ratio, apply?*** The new parking restrictions would not apply because the parking ratio for residential sub-districts is proposed to not change. Additionally, a proposal for a commercial use in a residential area will typically not be an allowed use and therefore would be required to go through the Zoning Board of Appeals process for relief. Through the Zoning Board of Appeals process, which incorporates community input, the parking impacts of a proposal would be part of the discussion.

***-I'm worried if parking lots started making deals on parking, it could bring a lot of noise to quiet areas.*** Parking lots or accessory parking lots are typically not an allowed use in residential area and therefore would be required to go through the Zoning Board of Appeals process for relief. Through the Zoning Board of Appeals process, which incorporates community input, the impacts on neighbors of a parking lot proposal would be part of the discussion.

***-What if several businesses want to expand their buildings (or build new ones), taking up their existing off-street parking spaces?***

***-Is there a maximum allowable distance for shared parking? Is that something we should change?***

**-What about handicap requirements?** Handicap requirements are regulated through the City's Building Code.

**-Should minimum off-street parking ratios for certain businesses, such as a doctor's office, be higher?**

**I think BTD should be at the community-wide public meeting when we talk about this.** We will make sure BTD can attend the next public meeting.