



Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee Meeting  
Monday, March 06 , 2023  
6:00 PM to 7:45 PM  
Zoom Virtual Meeting

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## **Attendees**

*RSMPOC Members:* Norm Stembridge, Charlotte Nelson, Lorraine Payne Wheeler, Nefertiti Lawrence, Sue Sullivan, Valeda Britton

*BPDA Staff:* Rebecca Hansen, Jamarhl Crawford, Yarisamar Cortez, Adriana Lasso-Harrier

## **Link to PowerPoint:**

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

## **Opening**

On March 06, 2023, Co-Chair Norm Stembridge of the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee (RSMPOC) called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Yarisamar (Yari) Cortez, BPDA Planner I, welcomed all and made initial announcements of meeting recording and zoom and interpretation channel instructions. The Spanish interpreter gave their introduction and initial instructions followed by the Haitian Creole interpreter and Cape Verdean Creole interpreter. Yari continued with zoom etiquette instructions and an overview of the meeting agenda. 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.

Before the developer projects began, the BPDA Director of Real Estate, Rebecca Hansen, encouraged community members to attend the upcoming Boston Water Sewer Commission (BWSC) Lots Visioning Public Meeting scheduled for March 14 starting at 6. QR code and website registration link were projected on the screen for attendees to register.

## **Presentation Notes - Topic: PLAN:Nubian Square Developer Updates Part III**

*Yari (BPDA) instructed the public and presenters that each Project Team will have 10m to present followed by a Q&A session.*

### 135 Dudley Street

Presenter: Daniel Cruz Jr, Senior Vice President at Cruz Development Corporation

- In 2019, this developer received tentative designation to develop this parcel which was the former home to the B2 Boston Police Station.
- The program consists of 170 units. 110 of these units will be condominiums. 60 will be affordable rental units. The program also consists of commercial/office space which combined is approximately 9,500 s/f. The office space will be given to the NAACP at no cost for 10 years. The cultural space, would like to provide a space where artists can hang their work. The program also consists of public parking

of 136 spaces. The current total development costs is currently 149,365,904 this has been a challenging conversation due to the post-covid rising construction and material costs.

- We have a rental building which is a 5-story structure with 60 units of varying unit sizes including 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom, and 3-bedroom across different AMI levels. 9 of rental units are set-aside for 30% or less of AMI, 42 of rental units are between 30-50% AMI, and 18 are between 60-80% AMI levels.
- The homeownership building will be a 10-story building with 110 units – 27 units are for 100% AMI and 83 units will be at market rate.
- One of the things we like to focus on is providing economic opportunities for those living in the area. We are estimating 35 permanent jobs and 150 construction jobs. At a minimum we are aiming to have 60% of jobs to be contracted by MWBEs that equates to 20 permanent jobs and 90 construction jobs. 60% is the floor not the ceiling.
- Some milestones – we received article 80 approval in August 2021 and Boston Civic Design Commission Approval and zoning approval in October 2021.
- Timelines – received city of Boston funding for the rental building, state funding is on hold. We will also be filling a MassWorks application on June of 2023. We have interest from the Commonwealth Builders program if successful.
- Working hard to finish drawings for both buildings 145 and 125 Dudley St. projected to April 15 2023 and have an application ready for both building permits.
- If we are successful with the MassWorks piece, we can start the closing process and start construction in spring 2024 with an estimated construction finish fall 2024
- There are two buildings, rental and homeownership. The rental building has 5 stories, ground floor is commercial and the rest of the 4 floors are residential. The condominium building is 10 stories.
- The design atmosphere of this project is to create a building that everyone can be proud of.

*Comments / Questions / Answers:*

RSMPOC Member: How much was the funding received for rental buildings? The commonwealth buildings letter of intent, what does that mean because a letter of intent is not a guarantee? What do you need to have happened to get the funding for the condominium building?

- Dan Cruz Response: Rental we had 3 asks for the city – a rental, infrastructure, and condominium. The rental ask fluctuates as cost but it is about 5.3 million. The city has committed to doing. The infrastructure ask and condominium ask we are still negotiating with the city. It depends on the other funding becoming available. The MassWorks grant is 4.95 – we’ve had conversations with them. MassWorks mentioned that 4.9 m is not an unreasonable ask but there are some areas that the project needs to tidy up – which we are working on. As far as the Letter of Intent (LOI) is concerned – MassHousing and DHCD see applications see both applications. MassHousing 150,000 funding per unit (27 units totals) has been set aside for this project.

Norm, Co-chair of the RSMPOC, welcomed Michelle Senteyo from State Senator Liz Miranda’s office.

RSMPOC Member: This is an ask or suggestion, because of the density of the other buildings coming up in the area. 136 parking spaces for 170 units. Think about the parking situation a little bit more. Good that you have more condos than rentals. For affordable housing – have you figured out that pricing for the units? Are they going to be deed restricted. How is this going to benefit folks generationally?

- Dan Cruz Response: Let’s start with the affordable homeownership condos. Prices are subject to change as incomes go up, currently, 1-bedrooms for 80% AMI at \$186,400.00, at 100% AMI for a

2-bedroom it is priced at \$ 248,600.00. That means you have to make for a single individual about \$66,000.00 or \$32.00/hour. So if you took a couple (2-person household) that each person makes roughly around \$16/hour they could still afford a 1-bedroom. The living wage now is at \$17.00/hour. As the bedroom sizes increase so does the price. As far the deed restriction – we’ve had numerous conversations with the city for people to be able to pull their equity out of their real estate. The deal has not been consummated so cannot say that the units are deeds.

Yari from the BPDA announced that there was a small agenda change. Nubian Square Ascends would be the second presenter followed by Art @ the Nawn Factory.

### Nubian Square Ascends

Presenter: Richard Taylor

- Richard Taylor thanks the RSMPOC for the labor they put in reviewing these projects. Richard asked to turn to the scheduling slide.
- Richard quotes Mayor’s communication at Logan Airport that is signaled for visitors, “ when you come to Boston, I want you to shop in Nubian Square and Newbury Street” We have a strong opportunity to turn over the square in the next three years.
- To review some milestones for this project, we have Article80 approval, Landmarks approval, Zoning approval, BCDC approval. We are coming to the BPDA Board March 16 for final designation.
- Putting funding together for a variety of packages is very complicated but we are working on it. Our funds are in place for artists housing.
- Here is the current construction schedule – October 2023 artists housing followed by the parking garage in early 2024. We know parking is a need in the community. The parking garage, at night, can be freed for residents in the square. We hope this will provide some relief to the community.
- A month later construction would start for the Lab Training office building (February 2024). We are beginning to pick up steam on tenating the lab/office building. Roxbury Community College, Northeastern University, and MassBio will be applying to Mass Life Sciences for over 2million dollars in lab equipment on the second floor of lab training. Ben Franklin has already received their lab equipment for 750,000 to go on the second floor.
- In fall of 2024, the cultural hall is expected to start construction. We are very lucky to have Tenisha here with us. She is raising the funds to build the cultural hall.

### *Question / Comment / Answers:*

RSMPOC Member: Is there any type of agreement with the community to make that space really available for years to come? I’m sure you will be charging for people to use this space, can there be a set-aside? Have you considered that to make this space available to the community?

- Richard Taylor Response: Frankly, it is all for the community. What we hope to have is a couple of resident groups. Also, we hope to have the Roxbury Film Festival in Roxbury.

RSMPOC Member: Richard, has the economy slowed down for lab space? And if so what might be the alternative.

- Richard Taylor Response: Let me correct – we are doing Lab Training. Lab production market has slowed down but there remains a significant demand for jobs. What we want to have is a certificate

program to begin to fill those jobs that are still in demand. We are not doing labs we are doing lab training.

Community Member: When will artist housing lottery begin? Reclaim Roxbury, part of what we are doing this year is trying to help people apply for lottery? We are connected to Artists in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan.

- Richard Taylor Response: We want artists to own in the square. While we cannot specifically set-aside units, we are happy to work with Reclaim Roxbury.

Community Member Chat Question: Does the cultural hall have a particular mission?

- Richard Taylor Response: Currently, in Nubian Square, we don't have night and weekend activities that support businesses. We need an ecosystem of businesses that support one another. Also, we want a cultural hall that supports Roxbury artistic events and artists in Roxbury. We want those activities in the square.

Community Member Chat Question: Will any of the jobs include urban farming, stem cell research, data scientist, software engineers, stem cell researchers, etc.?

- Richard Taylor Response: I'm going to have to get back to you. I don't have the full list of those uses readily available right now. Some of those sound right but others that you mentioned might not apply.

### Art @ the Nawn Factory

Presenter: Jonathan Smalls

- Planning for arts and culture rehearsal studios. The goal of this programming is to bridge the gap between artists' personal space to performance space by providing production space. In a production space artists can get together with their photographers, dancers writing, etc. to work-on refine their work.
- This project does not include housing. This project will be strictly rehearsal studios for artists. We are estimating this space will have between 9 and 11 rehearsal studios across 11,000 sf. This building will have three levels. The project will be retaining the existing 2 level structure and then expanding it to its original building footprint and making use of the existing basement of the building.
- Job creation associated with the project. Currently, we are focusing on the permanent jobs associated with the project. This includes on site staff that will support users of the space. We are anticipating approximately 15 permanent jobs that include directors to help desk staff. In this slide we are not including, sub contractors or temporary jobs such as a cleaning company or construction jobs because we are still working through getting the finalized bid from a general contractor.
- At this point the project is at its predevelopment period. That means we are drawing our architectural designs, seeing what the soil composition is, and moving towards a final permitting.
- We estimate a construction schedule starting in late 2025/early 2026.
- In the near term we are working with MassWorks development grant to finalize pre construction financing to be able to move through the permitting process and begin site preparations. to bring in foundation work and exterior work and work towards finalizing architectural drawings.
- Finalizing architectural drawings will be key when going to the zoning board approval.

### *Questions & Answers*

Community Member: Do we have any graphics or elevations, floor plans, plot plans, to show relationship to the rest of the community?

- Jonathan Smalls Response: Yes, but were not included in this presentation, but I can include them in the next project update presentation. Also, feel free to reach out to me directly as well. They are publicly available.

RSMPOC Member: Can you explain further funding sources for this project?

- Jonathan Smalls Response: The whole project has an approximate total cost of \$5 million dollars. We are estimating that about \$800,000 comes from the MassWorks Development Grant. We are applying for the MassAve Historical Society Restoration Fund which should be about \$250,000 dollars and a few other grants that we are applying for. We are planning to finance the rest with small business financing. Through the SBA, they have commercial redevelopment loan packages specifically for projects like this. We are estimating that around 80% of the project cost will come through private financing.

Community Member: What connections are being made with this project and other art spaces in the pipeline for Nubian Square like Nubian Square Ascends.

- Jonathan Smalls Response: Yes, but there could always be more collaboration. In conversation with other developments in the area about how to create an open space plan so Nubian Square feels akin to Downtown Crossing and not totally distinct properties. But there is always more room for conversation about cross collaboration.

Community Member: How will artists be chosen? Who qualifies and how? Who makes the final decision on artists to be included? And will your relationship be with the high schools?

- Jonathan Smalls Response: Everyone is welcomed. The idea is that we want this space to be a place where an artist can approach us with an idea and then the Nawn Factory will be able to deliver the space and resources to bring this idea to life. We hope to attract as many people as possible and for them to come back to use the space. We want this to be an inclusive space. Artists across the city in particular from Roxbury can use this space. One of the programs that we plan on offering, once we have trained artists occupy the space, the next step is to create a relationship with surrounding public schools so students can learn the arts from professionals.

Community Member: Is the Nawn Factory a nonprofit?

- Jonathan Smalls Response: The Nawn Factory project is not a nonprofit. It is an LLC. It has a non profit arm to fund certain programs like the youth program. If the community is motivated to donate funds to support programs such as educational opportunities to connect youth to the arts - then we will have the nonprofit arm for the community to support such programs.

Community Member: Are existing artists programs like AAMARP (African American Artists and Residents Program) engaged in shaping space? Will there be displays and show space or options for open house or presentations? Will the building accommodate surrounding artists or metal fabricators? The AAMARP is part of the Northeastern Program.

- Jonathan Smalls Response: No, have not had contact with the AAMARP but thank you for sharing. It is always great to get more input. We'll refer to the ceramics and metal artists as "makers" - people that make physical things. The Nawn Factory is not programmed for makerspaces; this project is geared towards more visual and performing arts. For instance, photography, theater, dance, could be a music

rehearsal space. For public events, we want to make sure that this community of artists are not confined to the building. We want to create opportunities for artists to engage outside through open air events like dance in the park or Shakespeare in the park.

RSMPOC Member: Is there a financing or billing component to this? There was a talk about “back office operations”

- Jonathan Smalls Response: Yes, there is a “back office operations” component. The technical term is physical sponsorship. One of the benefits of having a nonprofit arm as part of the Art at the Nawn Factory is that we can fiscally sponsor smaller artists that want to classify themselves as nonprofits and be able to take donations.

RSMPOC Member: Will the space be used for performances?

- Jonathan Small Response: The space can be used for small performances. But it is our belief that there is no shortage of performance spaces in Boston. Where do you go to rehearse for that band, or where do you go to rehearse that play? This project focuses on the production space and rehearsal space.

RSMPOC Member: I’m trying to envision Nubian Square and the parcels that we’ve been talking about. I’m trying to see a balance of retail, cultural, and housing in this area across these plan:nubian projects. I hope there is collaboration across city departments and some kind of reporting to the community (besides the city’s cultural center’s newsletter) about what is happening in the area.

- Rebecca Hansen (BPDA): We work really closely with the Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture (MOAC) in the creation of the RFP, Developer Selection, and post developer selection. MOAC presented on behalf before the RSMPOC Public meeting about 6 months ago. The office has different metrics on how these cultural spaces complement each other. I’d be interested to hear if there are specific metrics that you would like to see being reported out.

Community Member: Reclaim Roxbury has been trying to get funds to commission a digital rendering of what Nubian Square is going to look like once all of this development is completed. It is an expensive endeavor. Are there any funds available for community members to imagine what this would look like once this is done.

- Rebecca Hansen (BPDA) Response: Our Urban Design colleagues do some modeling to see how different massings of the building interplay with each other. We can see what is available for Nubian Square for digital renderings. We also have a physical model of the city that is at City Hall 9th Floor but this is a model of already constructed buildings. The model is not updated after the buildings are built.

Community Member: Underscore that Nubian Square and John Elliot Square are both cultural districts that are designated by the state of Massachusetts. Charlotte’s comment reminded me of how important comprehensive planning is. I want to make sure that the cultural district board of directors has some type of reach out about these cultural projects.

Community Member: Who decides who the users are? To whom do they apply?

- Jonathan Small (Response): This would be through an application process. Based on the scheduling needs we would maximize the utility of the building and ensure people aren’t excluded. Artists would apply to Art at the Nawn Factory once the building is open and ready for use but this process has not been set up. We are currently in the pre development stage of the project.

Community Member: Is there a governing body?

- Jonathan Small (Response): There is a board of directors but they would not be involved in the day-to-day operations of the building or choosing who gets to use the space.

Community Member: How does it get determined how space is programmed for different uses and who gets what access?

- Jonathan Small Response: I am a local performance artist in Boston for over 20 years. I have extensive connections with artists looking for facilities like the ones proposed in this project. The Board of Directors are not artists. They specialize in governance so that would be actually building the structure and running an organization. Myself and the director of the program are artists and well attuned of what the needs of artists in Boston are.

RSMPOC Member: It is great to hear about all the arts coming into Nubian Square. It would be great to hear about restaurants in this area and having larger restaurants in Nubian, just wanted to bring this in the conversations.

- Jonathan Small Response: Sadly, the Nawn Factory will not accommodate that as part of this project. But that is also something that I would like to see in Nubian Square.
- Yari (BPDA): This is a good platform to express to developers that restaurants is community need as they eventually get ready to fill in these commercial spaces.

Community Member: Will there be equipment in the studios?

- Jonathan Small Response: The spaces will be set-up so people can make noise whether that'd be a dance class or rehearsal space for a band. There will be sound systems built in to the studios

RSMPOC Member: I will like to get an update on the Boiling Building where it has been talked before of a jazz club a real nice restaurant. We've had these type of conversations in that building for 4-5 years.

- Rebecca Hanse (BPDA): Chief Idowu presented on this space a couple of months ago. The City of Boston owns and oversees the Bolling Building and they recently announced that they will be opening the Jazz Urbane Cafe in 2023. I don't have the exact timeline of when that is opening.

### **Meeting Adjourned:**

Yari (BPDA) starts wrapping up the meeting at 7:40 pm and invites people to leave comments in the chat for follow-up correspondence. Attendees and presenters are thanked for their time. Yari turns it over to Norm. Norm makes closing remarks and the meeting adjourns at 7:45 pm.