

Comment	Source	Date Received
<p>Support Leon of JUDA congregation</p>	<p>"Share Your Thoughts" Tool on website</p>	<p>06/18/2023</p>
<p>Hello Mr. Short,  I write in regards to the BWSC parking lot disposition. I have been a resident of Lower Roxbury for 13+ years as a BHA resident and now homeowner; I have previously worked and also worship in Lower Roxbury; and I am raising a child, now a teen, here. This is my home.  I have lived here long enough to understand some recent history of the area, sandwiched between increasing gentrification, addiction, and homelessness. In the past few years, a sober home on Newcomb was turned into luxury condos; I applied with every possible preference (first time homeowner, Boston resident, etc.) and still ended 500+ on the waitlist - closed out. Even if I were to have won, that property has little green or community space for a neighborhood feel. These new residents have little meaningful or positive interaction with the surrounding community; the significant income disparity and site design no doubt contribute to the divide.  Current urban planning trends tend toward high density, low or no parking, under-utilized ground floor retail, and lack of in-kind space for non-for-profit organizations that sustain the fabric of the neighborhood. Not taking into account these core institutions is to overlook their historical, continuing, and essential place in the surrounding community.  I therefore urge that the planning process consider the following in whatever development strategy proposed:  * Retain at least 1-2 sites for public parking, including BFIT, CLJ, Goodwill/Morgan Memorial, Grant AME, local residents etc.  * Set aside one lot for an outdoor workout area / public art / picnic table area for community meetups / outdoor fitness classes / green space  * For the remaining lots, preference for townhomes (homeownership) vs. elevator buildings / family friendly (2-3 bedrooms) at majority 80% AMI - set aside some units for BHA first home / first-gen programs?  * NO luxury (1 bedroom, 100%+ AMI)/big box housing and limit rental housing  * NO ground floor retail other than IN KIND space for community-based organizations/social ministries (preference for community organizations displaced or impacted by gentrification)  * Consider community land trust model  * Make design work FOR community, not for-profit  Thank you for your consideration.</p>	<p>Email</p>	<p>05/31/2023</p>

Outreach: We continue to receive complaints that notices of meeting on April 25th were not received by all churches, institutions and residents (some of them tenants) within 1000' feet of the sites. Will there be another public meeting and how can you ensure that notices will go to all (including tenants) within 1000' feet? A property owner living outside the neighborhood or especially out-of-state will have a financial interest in development, but it is the tenants of near-by buildings who will have to live with, or suffer, the impacts of whatever is built on these sites. Notices posted on bulletin boards are not sufficient. Fairness requires that every effort be made to include tenants in these discussions and to respect their contributions.

General:

- Develop sites (except Open Space site) as a community with unifying design characteristics, materials, consistent with neighboring townhouses.
- Sites should be developed by local contractors, preferably minority, who have demonstrated community values and a longstanding record of community cooperation. Minority hiring requirements must be met and monitored closely.
- Zoning requirements appropriate for residential should be honored, including open space and set-backs sufficient to permit significant landscaping and walkability, for each site irrespective of open space/park space on separate site.
- Strong buffer (trees, other?) between sites and Melnea Cass.

Housing:

- Affordable homeownership with range of AMI from 30 – 100%, or mixed income
- Majority family-size units
- Height: 3 – 5 stories.
- Possible set aside housing for clients transitioning from Rosie's Place

Parking:

- Minimum of .8 parking space per unit + minimum of 20 spaces for commercial and churches Parking space allotted to deliveries, trash pick-up, drop-offs, etc.
- Underground parking preferable

Open/Green Space:

- A minimum of one complete site should be open space
- Park preferred – with trees, shrubs, benches – shade to counter Melnea Cass “heat island” and trees to counter pollution from Melnea Cass traffic.

Commercial or other uses might include:

- Pharmacy (needed to replace lost CVS on Harrison and lost Walgreens in Nubian Square).
- coffee-shop, day-care, bookstore/café, restaurant – all locally-owned if possible.
- Professional/office space
- Multi-purpose community room

Email

05/27/2023

Dear Mr Short, Thank you for the progress of three visioning sessions. After hearing from my neighbors, and from others who bring their passion to this place, I'm moved to share more thoughts about the past and future for the Boston Water & Sewer parking lots (adding to my previous 4/26/23 letter). Some are adamant that parking should be a priority. For those who can afford the high cost of owning and maintaining a car in Boston, this has obvious appeal. Searching for parking is often a challenge; and more parking would seem to be the remedy. But as I walked toward home, and stopped to watch a few vehicles leaving the parking lot, I recalled the meeting's dismissive remarks about bicycle lanes and a declaration that "People need cars". True, I thought. Everyone needs a car some of the time; but no one needs a car all of the time. And actually, parking is for the times when you don't need your car. If cars could be in motion more of the time, perhaps we would need fewer cars and less parking. My household does not own a car. Our lot cannot accommodate off-street parking and the 20-foot street frontage for our 3-unit building can park one vehicle. In this neighborhood, there is not parking for everyone. Clearly, many of our neighbors do not own vehicles. Typically walking, cycling, bus and train support our routines well. And when we need or prefer a car, we find it convenient to use Hertz, Zipcar and Lyft. I would like to see this space developed in a way that supports a car-light lifestyle. Safe, comfortable and convenient walking, cycling, transit, livery and deliveries are essential here. Housing should adopt best practices for sharing parking, sharing cars, and sharing rides. Ground level activation should provide services and community space that encourage walking, cycling and transit. Public spaces should include greenspace and provide parity among road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and those needing drop-off / pick-up and delivery access, as well as motor vehicle drivers. I hope the request for proposals makes people and their health the priority. After fifty years of enduring the heat and pollution associated with these parking lots and highways that surround us, we who live in Lower Roxbury deserve a development that offers healthful opportunities for new and current residents.

Email

05/22/2023

<p>The Sanborn insurance maps in the Boston Atlas indicate land use on these parcels at dates like 1917 and 1938. One interesting observation is that the entire block between Newcomb, East Lenox, Harrison and Thorndike Streets (plus some other lots) was Boston Cooperative Building Company property. This semi-philanthropic organization, was founded in 1871 "to hold and improve real estate as homes for working people at moderate cost." I think it would be appropriate to develop at least some of the area in the same spirit - to provide moderate cost housing for Boston's working people.</p>	<p>"Share Your Thoughts" Tool on website</p>	<p>05/22/2023</p>
<p>While we applaud the City of Boston's commitment to housing equity and community development, as the BPDA considers plans for the redevelopment of the Boston Water &amp; Sewer Commission's South End parking lots, we urge you to provide for a comparable parking alternative – for the sake of South End residents, for the Commission, and for all who have benefitted from the Commission's generous partnership. For over 20 years, for instance, the Commission has allowed the Congregation Lion of Judah's visitors to park in those lots on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is no exaggeration that this arrangement has made Lion of Judah – a church with a transformative influence on this community, and an average weekly attendance of 800 souls – possible. To lose access to them – without a comparable alternative - would be catastrophic. Not just for Lion of Judah. But that entire neighborhood. There is simply not enough street parking - especially mid-week - to absorb this traffic (an estimated 400 vehicles per week). And for many of our low to middle-income families, public transit is not a viable alternative. These are people (former homeless, former addicts, former a lot of broken things) whose lives have been transformed by contact with this one congregation - thanks to the generosity of the Commission and the City of Boston, via this beautiful partnership. And as a consequence, over the last two decades, this community has been transformed. Permitting use of these lots represents the Boston's investment in Lion of Judah and other churches. For 20 years, Boston has received a return on that investment counted in transformed lives and a transformed community. In addressing historic inequities, or meeting critical community needs, we caution you not to create new inequities, undermining this good work. <i>[This message has been received 470 times verbatim as of 6/09/2023]</i></p>	<p>Email</p>	<p>05/18/2023</p>
<p>Dear Jonathan, As a resident and member in many spaces throughout the greater Roxbury community, we write to express our deep concern of the continuous historic disregard and exclusion of community residents, and the ongoing disparity that continues to exist contrary to the mission and interpretation of the BPDA. We appreciate the recent opportunity to dialogue with you and your team, but we still feel that our voices are not being heard and that those who are most impacted by negative systemic practices are not being included in the decision-making process. The BPDA's mission is to partner with the community to plan the future while respecting the past. However, we must ask how the city is guiding economic changes for the residents in communities most disadvantaged by the financial prosperity taking place in Boston? How can the BPDA plan to "Shape a more prosperous, resilient and vibrant city for all" when those most impacted are not at the table and your policies and practices remain the same? It is disheartening to see that BPDA believes that it can sit in an office on the ninth floor of City Hall, listening to a small group of Black residents, some of whom do not even live in Roxbury, nor in income-restricted units, and who are physically and emotionally removed from the daily lived experience of those whom they try to speak for. This is not the way to address the needs and concerns of our community. We have shared numerous accounts of the lived experiences of those with real estate under the guise of "Homeownership," as well as renters living in income-restricted units. These individuals are forced to weigh the financial woes of accepting a promotion or a 50-cent raise, which precipitates almost immediate drastic reductions in government benefits that are not equal to the increase of the raise. These reports are not unique and demonstrate the harsh reality of the systemic inequities faced by the residents of the City of Boston. You rebutted the lived experience of the residents shared stories stating that "Homeowners" can access equity for tuition, and renters can accept employment raised and promotions. We ask that you share the countered information with supported citations, so that we can begin to educate and help bring relief to the residents who believe the system forces them to remain poor continue to endure the struggles to avoid homelessness, food insecurity, losing childcare voucher eligibility, and MassHealth, among other eligibility and services. Additionally, there are other intersections to the disbursement of parcels and developments. You were asked for copies of Articles 50 &amp; 80. Article 80 as written before the revisions and after the revisions. This is a friendly reminder to also include that information in your response to this correspondence. We urge you to act with urgency. We look forward to receiving the written documentation and or links to the information requested no later than May 15, to allow ample time for follow-up and follow-through before the upcoming public meeting on May 18th. By working collaboratively, we can break the shackles of inequities that have prevented African Americans and other groups within the Black Diaspora from achieving and maintaining financial independence, an opportunity afforded to our counterparts. Let us seize this moment to create a brighter and more equitable future for all.</p>	<p>Email</p>	<p>05/08/2023</p>

<p>Dear Mr Short, Thank you for hosting Tuesday's visioning session for Boston Water and Sewer Commission parking lots. It is so important that we who neighbor this site have an opportunity to share our experience and to understand the possibilities. Together with the prior online visioning session, I learned a lot and I'm moved to help, if I can. So, I have heard the following perspectives, each relevant and important: 1. Housing (affordable, wealth-building), 2. Money &amp; timing (ARPA funds to be allocated by end of 2024), 3. Heat (heat island, tree equity), 4. Legacy (people dispersed, wealth lost, persistent harms of institutional racism), 5. Water (BWSC roles, flooding), 6. Open space (nature, recreation, climate resilience), 7. Mobility (convenient, comfortable, affordable, healthful &amp; safe transportation), 8. Ground-level vitality (active businesses &amp; institutions). In response to the need for more housing, I am grateful that ARPA money is available to invest in our neighborhood, particularly for this sea of asphalt in Lower Roxbury's heat island. I wish there were more time for this visioning process, because we can really benefit from hearing each other, particularly on the history of this land, and focusing our concerns to shape them into action. But I understand the clock is running on federal funds available to amplify the City's resources; and I hope we can focus quickly to scope out a great project. In addition to housing, for this land that was cleared for the benefit of the community, and then, for 50 years, used to store cars from elsewhere, I'd like to see generous open space – open to all, healing, and building community. Open space can also help with flood control and support trees to mitigate the extremes of heat and pollution we endure each summer. Studying tree equity in Boston, my friends at Speak for the Trees have shown that historically red-lined neighborhoods lack the canopy that absorbs pollution, and cools, in other neighborhoods. Roxbury, and Lower Roxbury in particular, lack tree equity. The Tree Equity Score Project has mapped demographic data together with tree canopy to show where more trees are most needed to respond to inequities. For the area that includes the BWSC site (census block group 250250804011, I believe), the message is clear: Concerning tree equity, this area is among the poorest, ranking 537th out of 550 census block groups in Boston. (See attached screenshot). David Meshoulam, of Speak for the Trees, tells me they are available to partner with us to understand the elements of tree equity and to work creatively toward an ambitious tree goal along with other goals for this project. Concerning mobility, I believe we can do much more to support a wide variety of transportation choices. As a longtime neighbor (25 years at this address and 47 years in the area), in a car-light household, I struggle with dangerous walking and cycling conditions, slow buses, and lack of access to on-street parking for those of us who need it only occasionally. I'm delighted each time I experience a new bike lane or bus lane, or a wide sidewalk with tree cover! I even dare to dream of a local shop offering sales, rentals, repairs, training, and group support for every variety of mobility – Charlie Cards, scooters &amp; bicycles, strollers &amp; shopping carts, hand trucks &amp; bike trailers. Next door, I'd like to see a coffee/ice cream/bakery/sandwich shop with community space. I'm sorry Tuesday's meeting didn't allow for this kind of visioning and I hope I can help connect you with more neighbors to dream big.</p>	Email	04/27/2023
<p>This site has potential for a large amount of mixed income housing which should include affordable home ownership and some rentals at various levels of affordability. Retail uses should complement what is already available rather than compete with Nubian Square, Tropical Foods, P-3 parcel. Since this is near Boston Medical Center there is some potential for bio-medical research and lab space. Being close to the new BFIT/ Benjamin Cummings Tech campus (and perhaps Wentworth) there could be partnerships for business &amp; entrepreneurship with education. Developments planned for Nubian Square suggest this development could add to the potential for this area to become even more of an arts and culture destination for the region (near highways, etc.) perhaps adding performance venues. I agree that a pedestrian overpass to Nubian Square could help connect the two areas and enhance both. Perhaps a signature greenspace with large fountain and sculatural pieces at the corner would be great. A five or six stroy parking garage on the lots away from Melnea Cass and Harrison could replace all five parking lots (as Northeastern Univ. did ) Also, explore collaboration with Morgan Memorial, Nuba , and Madison Park Development Corp. You could allow a couple of taller buildings in exchange for some more greenspace. Perhaps an interior food court with culturally diverse foods would be attractive with a design like that in the old Sears Buidling in Fenway and outside dining as well.</p>	"Share Your Thoughts" Tool on website	04/26/2023

<p>I attended the BWSC Parking Lot meeting on Tuesday evening 4/25/23. As a brief point of background, I have lived at [address omitted] for the past 20 years (my kitchen window looks out at the parking lots) and have lived within ½ a mile of the site for the past 40 years. I first want to thank you for your time and expertise in facilitating what seemed like a challenging meeting. The 75 or so attendees seemed both passionate and informed about the Roxbury neighborhood's history of the black and brown community. Although I am not a member of that community, much of what was shared resonated with me. Below are my thoughts and observations about the project and suggestions for meetings going forward.</p> <p>1. Timeline: I think it would be helpful to expand the timeline of the project starting with when BWSC decided to release the lots to the city and ending with when construction would (potentially) be finished on the first phase. It seemed community members felt rushed about the RFP and don't fully appreciate how long a project like this really takes and how many organizations (permitting, architects, developers, construction workers, etc.) are involved. It would also allow community members to see when their input would be needed in the project.</p> <p>2. Estimates of New Housing Units / Affordability Breakdown: I think it would be helpful to see estimates of how many total units will be built on this site. Even if only 1/3 were deemed affordable (a minimum in my opinion) the total scope of new affordable housing is likely to be quite large and I think seeing that number would help the community grasp the potential positive impact to Roxbury.</p> <p>3. Affordability Breakdown / Cost and Financing of Project: The final breakdown of affordable to market rate units, and ratio of rental to ownership units is something I would leave to the experts, though I agree with the overall goals of the Roxbury Master Plan and Nubian Square Plan. What I do think would be helpful is a better understanding of how the financing of this project will work. Every development meeting I have been to ends up being a math exercise (developer buys building or land, needs to make profit, needs to build so many units at market rate to make the financially feasible, which then drives up the height of the building, etc.). What seems different with this project is both the federal funds available to subsidize this project (I think I heard about \$10 Million), and also the cost of the land itself – which was essentially given to the city. Those two factors seem to offer opportunity to build more affordable space at a reduced cost to the eventual owner / renter. Put another way, I think the community needs a high level estimate of what is realistically possible, given the financial reality of today. \$10 Million of federal funds across several hundred units doesn't seem like a lot of money, however the value of the land must be quite large.</p> <p>4. Church Parking / Parking Garage: I can attest that during the work week all 5 parking lots are utilized by BWSC employees. On Sundays, the lots are full with parishioners, so I empathize with the Pastor of the Leon de Juda church. It would be helpful to know if the BWSC will be building a garage to replace all 400+ spaces lost and if that garage will be available to church goers on a Sunday. It seems this issue is a stand-alone issue that will only get more confusing when discussions about any potential new parking for the development begins. If there is a way to separate this discussion from future discussions that can only help. Again I can't thank you enough for all of your efforts, I know it must be challenging. Thank you for your consideration with my suggestions.</p>	Email	04/26/2023
<p>Hi Jonathan, I attended the meeting last night. I was essentially an outside observer as I was there on behalf of Congregation Lion of Judah. I know that you and Rebecca as well as the Councilor did your best but I do have to agree with the one person that said you were rushing the process. You wanted to move forward but what I feel you didn't have is permission to move forward. I think the Councilor summed it up well at the end. There aren't the mechanisms really available yet to do what the community wants. Does the community want to accept what is available or do they want to wait and work towards their desire for restitution and reparations. That could be a very hard choice and I'm sorry that they are in that place. Anyway, is the BPDA willing to let the community make that choice?</p>	Email	04/26/2023
<p>Thank you Jonathan. I already attended the march meeting so I should be all set. My only feedback from the march meeting is that I was hoping the city would provide a framework of what can and cannot be built in the area. For example, I know there are high limits that need to be abided to. Also, I was hoping the city would put a clause whereby any developer that wind the rfp would need to begin construction within a certain time period. Wouldnt want a repeat of the Alexandra hotel around the corner.</p>	Email	04/25/2023
<p>It would help the neighborhood in a very positive way if the city were to allow market rate units to be developed on the site. In addition having commercial space on the ground floors with restaurants, grocery stores and cafe's/bars would help the area feel like a neighborhood. Unfortunately as of now, the area doesn't feel like a neighborhood and safe. In addition having a dog park or green space would certainly help too. I think it's crucial to transform the area in a similar way to the iNK Block area.</p>	"Share Your Thoughts" Tool on website	04/24/2023
<p>I am a member of Congregation Lion of Judah. I am writing as a concerned citizen and member of the church as I fear there may be a proposition to no longer allow our church the use of the lots which was instituted by our former Mayor Menino, may he rest in peace. Our church has enjoyed the use of the lots for over 20 years and in those 20 years, we have been respectful and gracious in the use of the parking. We are so grateful for the use of the lot and the opportunity that it affords our community on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to be able to come together to worship. The South End is an area of the city where we would otherwise not be able to find parking for what on Sundays amounts to close to one thousand attendees to the church. Moreover, given that the majority of our members are lawfully abiding, tax-paying citizens to the city of Boston, our tax dollars are instrumental in supporting the very lots which we're allowed to use. I hope to be in attendance on Tuesday the 25th but also wanted to be sure that my concerns were taken into consideration in the discussions regarding the use of the BWSC lots. Thank you,</p>	"Share Your Thoughts" Tool on website	04/24/2023