

TO: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND
PETER MEADE, DIRECTOR

FROM: KAIROS SHEN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING
TED SCHWARTZBERG, PLANNER II

SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF SULLIVAN SQUARE STUDY

SUMMARY: This Memorandum requests the adoption of the Sullivan Square Disposition Study as the framework for the Boston Redevelopment Authority (“BRA”) and the community to guide future public land disposal and land use in Sullivan Square, Charlestown.

BACKGROUND

The City of Boston Transportation Department (BTD) recently completed a two-year transportation planning process to develop a conceptual plan for reconfiguring Rutherford Avenue and Sullivan Square in Charlestown. This conceptual plan seeks to transform the roadway into an urban boulevard and create walkable, gridded city blocks adjacent to the Sullivan Square MBTA Station. As a follow-up to the BTD planning process, the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council conducted this public process in eight public meetings held over seven months to develop a land use vision for the future parcels, and help prepare for their eventual disposition. The Study Area is comprised of the blocks and parcels adjacent to Sullivan Square Station that will be created by the new roadway configuration.

The Study Area for the parcel level development plan focuses primarily on the publicly-owned parcels clustered between the Sullivan Square MBTA Station and the rotary where the proposed reconfigured grid of streets and development blocks is located. Currently it is predominantly underutilized and industrially-zoned properties. The goal is to form urban design and land use guidelines that create a mixed-use Transit Oriented Development (TOD) neighborhood with a pedestrian-friendly streetscape and public realm, inclusive of open space and active ground-floor uses that have strong connections to the rest of the Charlestown, and neighboring Somerville.

The Project Area is not only a portal for the Orange Line rideshed to Sullivan Square and the Charlestown neighborhood, but with frequent bus service, it is also a portal to the growing mixed-use employment centers of surrounding neighborhoods. Most

importantly, this land use planning exercise is an opportunity to reorient the Sullivan Square Station to the Charlestown neighborhood, to improve the transit riders' experience, to create new open spaces, and to incentivize the development of a new transit-anchored, mixed-use corner of Charlestown.

STUDY PURPOSE

This study documents the efforts to address two very different goals:

- The first goal is a visioning exercise: based on the expertise of the consulting team and the preferences of process participants, we have described a comprehensive vision for a future Sullivan Square neighborhood. This vision is not a mandated build-out scenario, but rather a possible future for Sullivan Square that emerged from this community process, incorporating both the challenges and the opportunities for each disposition parcel.
- The second part focuses on an analysis of economics. Whereas the first goal addresses challenges to neighborhood-creation arising in the physical realm, the second portion is intended to help understand challenges and opportunities in the fiscal realm. Because the entire disposition process is predicated on reconstruction of area roadways, the economic analysis must project out to the indefinite point in the future when these infrastructure projects will be undertaken. For this reason, the economic analysis is intended to color or supplement our understanding of the visioning exercise, but not limit it.

Because economic conditions will evolve between now and the time of land disposal, the project team saw value in including this iteration of the physical model, as a way of documenting community preferences expressed in public meetings. It will be the task of future public review processes to refine the neighborhood model, as new roadways are created and the disposition parcels are constructed. It is hoped that this study expresses a clear stakeholder vision for the future of Sullivan Square, and sheds light on the economic opportunities and challenges that will be encountered in implementing this vision.

STUDY FINDINGS

The disposition study builds upon BTD's reconfigured plan for Sullivan Square by taking advantage of proposed new frontages and city grid blocks in order to spur new development. An overarching goal is to enhance the Sullivan Square public realm through pedestrian-friendly streetscape and new open spaces. The Study focuses on parcel level planning, urban design guidelines and a financial analysis in order to position the newly created parcels for successful development that achieves the community's goals and vision.

The intent is to leverage existing public land ownership as a catalyst for encouraging the development of adjacent privately-owned parcels; to engage community stakeholders/ property owners' planning in the creation of the development guidelines; and ultimately to dispose of the public land through a subsequent RFP process that will result in mixed-use TOD development that will complement the existing residential neighborhood by connecting it to the transit station and beyond.

This Study defines the public realm framework that will provide the armature for future development, and documents community aspirations for public realm improvements, land use and the scale of development, as well as the character and design of new buildings.

An appropriate vote follows:

VOTED: That the Boston Redevelopment Authority hereby adopts the Sullivan Square Disposition Study as the framework for the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the community to guide future public land disposal and land use in Sullivan Square, Charlestown.