



**Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC) Parking
Lots Disposition - Visioning Session | Roxbury
In-person Public Meeting
Tuesday, April 25, 2023, 6:00 - 7:45 p.m.
Location: Boston Water and Sewer Commission
980 Harrison Ave., Boston, MA 02119**

Contact

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For more information on this project, and to submit comments, visit: <https://bit.ly/BWSCParkingLots>

To sign up for neighborhood email updates, visit: <https://www.bostonplans.org/about-us/get-involved>

Proposed Agenda

6:20 - 6:35 pm BWSC Parking Lots Introduction
6:35 - 6:45 pm Questions & Answers
6:45 - 7:25 pm Visioning Exercise
7:25 - 7:30 pm Next Steps

City of Boston Staff Attendees

Jonathan Short, BPDA Senior Real Estate Development Officer
Rebecca Hansen, BPDA Director of Real Estate
Patricia Cafferky, BPDA Senior Planner I
Jeon-Jun Ju, BPDA Urban Designer II
Yarisamar Cortez, BPDA Planner I
Joe Backer, MOH Senior Development Officer
Stephanie Silva, MOH

Ex-Officio Attendees

Tania Fernandes Anderson, District 7 City Councilor

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Meeting Summary

On Tuesday, April 25, 2023, the second public meeting for the disposition process of the Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC) Parking Lots was held in-person in the BWSC Building at 980 Harrison Ave., Boston, MA 02119. The focus of this meeting was to host an interactive visioning session as a follow-up of the first visioning session held virtually on March 14, 2023, at the request of Councilor Anderson. There were approximately 64 attendees not including City of Boston staff and Ex-Officio members. Translation and interpretation services were provided in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole.

At approximately 6:05 p.m., Jonathan Short, BPDA Senior Real Estate Development Officer, welcomed members of the public, introduced City of Boston Staff and Councilor Anderson, at which time, Councilor Anderson provided brief opening remarks.

Jonathan Short initiated the presentation by providing interpretation and translation instructions, in-person etiquette guidelines, provided a link to the BWSC Parking Lots Disposition website, and concluded with the proposed agenda for the evening. Jonathan explained that the purpose of the meeting was to provide a presentation of the BWSC Parking Lots and the disposition process of these lots, but the focus of the meeting was to gain community input of what they envision these lots to be for the community through an interactive visioning exercise. Jonathan then provided a high-level overview of the BWSC Parking Lots like the current use, care, conditions, history of the parcels, and the Article 25 A Coastal Flood Resilience Overlay District. To view the full presentation, please visit, <https://bit.ly/BWSCParkingLots>.

Jonathan turned the presentation over to Rebecca Hansen, BPDA Director of Real Estate. Rebecca explained the BWSC Parcels were part of the inventory captured in the [Citywide Land Audit](#) completed in June 2022. Further, Rebecca explained that Mayor Wu dedicated funds through the American Rescue Plan Act Funding (ARPA) to build affordable housing in mixed-income communities on key properties identified through the [Citywide Land Audit](#). Rebecca explained that the ARPA funding source must be awarded by 2024 and therefore the reason why BPDA with MOH has started the disposition process for the BWSC Parking Lots starting with community public meetings. Further, Rebecca provided planning background in Roxbury such as the [Roxbury Strategic Master Plan \(2004\)](#) and the [PLAN: Nubian Square \(2019\)](#), but emphasized to the community that these were to serve as launching off points and a reference as community provides feedback for the vision of the BWSC Parking Lots. Rebecca went through the Request for Proposal (RFP) Process and showcased a timeline of the disposition process for the BWSC Parking Lots. To view the full presentation, please visit, <https://bit.ly/BWSCParkingLots>.

At approximately 6:18 p.m. Rebecca wrapped up the presentation portion of the meeting and opened the floor for questions and answers.

Questions and comments made in response to the presentation included:

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- In response to the question from a community member, Rebecca replied that a BWSC Garage would be built in the adjacent parcel between Harrison Avenue and E. Lenox St. (colloquially referred to as the Pole Yard Area) to meet the parking needs of BWSC employees. Additionally, the built out of this garage would be separate from this RFP process. Consequently, this RFP can incorporate parking parameters to meet the needs of the community on the BWSC Parking Lot Parcels outlined in the presentation.
- A community member expressed concern about adequate parking for the neighboring congregation, Congregación León de Judá, and requested a comparable parking alternative to what they have access today. The community member stated service attendance across the week: approximately 800 individuals attend on a Sunday service, approximately 100-250 of which are children. The community member stated that on Sunday mornings there is not enough street parking and public transit is not a viable transportation option for congregation members traveling outside the City of Boston.
- A community member stated that the parcels in question were historically owned by Black and brown people. The community expressed concern about trusting the City and the BPDA to develop these large vacant parcels due to urban renewal and recent past harm.
- In response to the community member, Rebecca acknowledged the harmful history of Urban Renewal especially in the community of Roxbury. Rebecca reiterated that the City is seeking as much community involvement and input as early on in the disposition process of these parcels for it to be a community driven process.
- A community member requested to look and discuss the history of the area, to investigate who were the victims and families displaced in this area to restore and ensure benefits are going to Roxburyians.
- Councilor Anderson acknowledged that a foundation must be established by the community that captures and prioritizes the needs of Roxbury first and foremost to undo the harm in the community. Councilor Anderson used housing as an example by explaining that housing should not be large boxes but rather that housing should be accompanied by amenities like open space, trees, and adequate transportation and mobility needs. Councilor Anderson called on community leaders such as Reclaim Roxbury to help establish what affordable housing means in the neighborhood.
- In response to Councilor Anderson's statement, Reclaim Roxbury responded that part of their work has been to advocate for affordable rental housing and access to affordable homeownership opportunities. Reclaim Roxbury called for a need to balance affordable rental and affordable homeownership. Reclaim Roxbury shared that they are exponentially getting more involved with

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city-wide efforts through joining various committees in the City. Reclaim Roxbury encouraged the public to visit their website or offered to talk one-on-one after the meeting to learn more about their work.

- A community member presented a map of the site from 1971 and explained that houses were located in these parcels. The community member expressed concern that the same agency, the BPDA then BRA, that caused that harm is now leading the development process of these parcels. The community member suggested to start this process from this historical understanding and acknowledgement. The community member requested for the remedy to be real.
- Rebecca reiterated acknowledgement of the harmful history of Urban Renewal especially in the community of Roxbury. Rebecca stressed the importance of community involvement and feedback as early in the disposition process of these parcels and throughout. Rebecca emphasized the need for the disposition process of the BWSC parcels to be community driven.
- Councilor Anderson stressed the importance of prioritizing low-income families and individuals when thinking about housing and affordability.
- A community member asked if there was an opportunity for a local company to build the parking garage or build equity in the creation of the parking garage?
- In response to the community member's questions, Rebecca clarified that the parking garage designated to BWSC would not be part of this BWSC Parking Lots RFP but that there will be additional parking onsite.
- A community member expressed the need to have a unified consensus that it is time for reparations. The community member asked if it was possible for the housing to go directly to people that have been displaced or incarcerated?
- In response to the community member's question, Rebecca responded that due to restrictions placed by HUD the housing units cannot directly go to specific individuals, but a way to work around these restrictions is through marketing efforts to target Roxbury residents.
- A community member asked if the disposition of the lots in question could be put in a community land trust, so the land is returned to the community? The community member expressed concerns about other cities in the country implementing "land back" policies, but the City of Boston has not been able to implement similar steps. The community member emphasized the need to close the racial equity gap.
- In response to the community member's question and concern, Jonathan noted that reparations involve a lengthy legal process and for transparency it would not be feasible for these parcels to

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solve the issue of reparations. Jonathan acknowledged the importance of having those conversations with community members and welcomed it. Jonathan emphasized the need and desire to work with the community for this project to respond to the needs of the community.

- Councilor Anderson requested to not rule out the idea of a community land trust.
- A community member expressed concern that the people that would economically benefit most from the project would not be Roxburyians. The community member asked if this is an opportunity zone? and how does the funding work?
- In response to the community member's question and concern, Jonathan answered that this project will be made possible by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds. Jonathan noted that we would get back on the opportunity zone question.
- In response to a community member's comments about community land trust, Reclaim Roxbury responded that establishing a community land trust is possible, but it requires substantial community organization. Reclaim Roxbury explained that they have led a process before of establishing a community land trust to respond to some of the RFPs from PLAN: Nubian Square, but the community land trust was not established due to lack of funding.
- A community member expressed concern that the BPDA, previously BRA, has historically been harmful to the community through urban renewal leading to disinvestment. The community member explained that from a sustainability perspective, this has impacted Roxbury as experiencing high levels of the urban heat island effect. The community member stated that the amount of trees lost along Melnea Cass is unacceptable. The community member requested to develop these parcels in a sustainable manner by prioritizing integration of trees, sustainable building design, and meeting the Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO). The community member expressed the need to have clean energy systems, zero emission buildings, open space, and affordable commercial space for small business owners.
- A community member asked why reparations are not possible? The community member used an example of a recently completed development that targeted housing seniors in the LGBTQ community. The community member asked, why can't Black people have the same as well? The community member requested affordable housing for the masses of Roxbury.
- In response to community members' questions and concerns, Rebecca explained that this project is a partnership between the BPDA, BWSC, and MOH as this project is publicly owned land and requests such as diversity of affordable housing can be included in the RFP. Rebecca explained that some requests to the level of detail that the community has expressed cannot always be replicated in private developments.

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- At approximately 7:05 p.m., Jonathan starts wrapping up the Q&A portion of the meeting. Jonathan explains that there are four tables set-up around the room with a subject area: housing, mobility, open space, and ground floor activation that people can disperse to and leave their thoughts and comments. Jonathan also provides further instructions for those using interpretation services.
- A community member requested to continue the Q&A portion of the meeting as they felt it was necessary for the process and that the topics presented were not thorough. The community member noted that equity was not a subject included in the visioning exercise.
- In response to community members' concerns, Jonathan continued the Q&A session and retired the visioning exercise from the agenda. Jonathan clarified that the RFP has a 25% diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) requirement. Jonathan also clarified that the reason why equity was not included as a separate topic in the visioning exercise was due to equity's applicability to all topics presented. Jonathan asked the community to please share any other topics that they would like to discuss in future meetings.
- A community member requested to have another meeting to talk about specific topics.
- A community member suggested using surveys to capture the community's needs.
- A community member asked what the timeline of the project is?
- In response to the community member's question, Rebecca, responded that the BPDA is planning on having two more community meetings which would include presenting draft scenarios for the community to review as one public meeting, and the second public meeting would focus on presenting the community a draft RFP for community Review. Rebecca explained that the goal would be to release the RFP in July and the reason for it is to meet the ARPA funding deadlines which expires in 2024. Rebecca explained that the ARPA funding is what can fund this project.
- A community member expressed concerns about the timeline imposing pressure on the community to respond when the community wants to have a conversation about foundational issues.
- A community member asked when Mayor Wu made available the ARPA funding?
- In response to the community member's question, Rebecca responded that the ARPA funding was released in fall of 2022. Rebecca explained that at the time of the ARPA funding release, the City could reach out to the community to initiate this process because it was not confirmed that BWSC would allow for the development of the parcels since they are owned by BWSC.
- A community member asked how big is the budget?

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- In response to the community member's question, Rebecca responded that there a 30 million dollars available through the ARPA Funds to distribute across three sites across the City which include Charlestown, Roxbury, and Chinatown.
- A community member expressed concerns about the timeline and project schedule not being able to meet the ARPA funding deadline. The community member expressed concerns about Roxbury not receiving anything at all at the end of the process. The community member expressed concerns about the community not being informed earlier on when the funds were released.
- In response to community members' questions and concerns, Councilor Anderson responded with some closing remarks. Councilor Anderson commented that she would partner with the BPDA and MOH to schedule another public meeting. Councilor Anderson then proceeded to clarify questions around ARPA funding, timeline, and the disposition process. Councilor Anderson explained that negotiations had to happen first with BWSC so BWSC would release the land for development because of this the public was not approached sooner. Councilor Anderson acknowledged and recognized the need to build trust and transparency with the community and the City, and to this point she encouraged her constituents to hold her accountable. Councilor Anderson noted that currently Roxbury does not have an established community land trust to handle this type of development, therefore it would need to be completed through the disposition process with the ARPA Funding. Councilor Anderson emphasized the need to involve more community, more surveys, and get people more involved for the process to be driven by the community and for Roxburyans to reap the benefits of this development. Councilor Anderson called on the community to be involved and inform the creation of the RFP so that Roxburyans are directly benefiting from this development.

Jonathan closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their time and participation in the meeting. Jonathan shared that meeting materials could be found on the BWSC Parking Lots Website and informed members of the public to look out for an upcoming follow-up public meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7: 25 p.m.