



Copley Place Expansion Project
CAC Meeting #17
Wednesday, October 19, 2011
Location: Copley Place – 4th Floor Office Level

CAC Attendees:

David Berarducci, Resident of the South End
John Connolly, Back Bay Association
Dan d'Heilly, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association
Anthony Gordon, Ellis South End Neighborhood Association
Eugene Kelly, Resident of the Back Bay
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Ted Pietras, South End Business Alliance (SEBA)
Judith Wright, Pilot Block Neighborhood Association

Ex-Officio Attendees:

David Blaisdell, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Marty Walz
Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing

City of Boston Attendees:

Heather Campisano, BRA
David Carlson, BRA
Andrew Grace, BRA
Vineet Gupta, BTG
Mary Knasas, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA

State of Massachusetts Attendees:

Robin Blatt, MassDOT
Peter O'Connor, MassDOT
Martin Polera, MassDOT
Bill Tuttle, MassDOT

Simon Property Group Attendees:

Guy Busa, Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates
Donna Camiolo, R.F. Walsh Collaborative Partners
John Copley, Copley-Wolff Design Group
Kristi Dowd, R.F. Walsh Collaborative Partners
Rob Halter, Elkus-Manfredi Architects
Jack Hobbs, R.F. Walsh Collaborative Partners
Jane Howard, Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates
Bill Kenney, Simon Property Group
Lynn Wolff, Copley-Wolff Design Group

Members of the Public:

Cathy Angelini, Related Companies
Kathy Bianchi, Residences at Copley Place

Neil Conley, Ironworkers Local 7
George Cramer, Cramer's Hair Salon
Ashlee Fairey, Boston Courant
Ann Hershfang, WalkBoston
Janet Hunkel, Southwest Corridor Park Parkland Management Advisory Board (PMAC)
Felicia Jacques, Maloney Properties/Tent City Apartments
Ken Kruckemeyer
Shirley Kressel, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Shelia Randolph, Resident of Tent City
Sheila Pelosi, Tent City Resident Alliance
Marvin Wool, NABB
Jackie Yessian, NABB

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, October 19th, 2011, the seventeenth working session of the Copley Place Expansion Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 8:00 a.m. at Copley Place by Judith Wright, Pilot Block Neighborhood Association and CAC Chairperson.

She then turned the meeting over to Jack Hobbs, R.F. Walsh Project Management, who indicated that the project team is prepared to present the updated design schemes for the Southwest Corridor Park, followed by a brief review of the views of the building from Copley Square, and then finally, a discussion of the possible pedestrian options reviewed for the Turnpike Exit 22 Ramp on Stuart Street.

Jack then introduced Lynn Wolff, Copley-Wolff Design Group, the proponent's landscape architect for the project. Using a series of presentation boards (available on the BRA's project website:

<http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/Planning/PlanningInitsIndividual.asp?action=ViewInit&InitID=132>) Lynn provided an overview of the design process thus far for the Southwest Corridor Park from Dartmouth Street to Harcourt Street. She explained that a review of the Corridor's existing conditions showed that a great deal of repairs will be needed. In recent weeks, the project team has taken a closer look at how the space will be used, noting that programming uses could include a multi-purpose space, a café, a gathering space, an entry point, and garden space, to name a few. The area just beyond the neighborhood shops would represent the beginning of the entire Corridor, and should be marked as such. In conclusion, Lynn noted that these designs are still evolving, and there will be further opportunities for input from the CAC.

The following questions were raised by the CAC following Lynn's presentation:

- Ted Pietras, SEBA, acknowledged that several of the trees in the area are full-grown, and asked if they would be replaced. Lynn replied that most of them will be pruned, but that some of them may need to be replaced; they will bring an arborist in to determine this.
- In response to a question from Dan d'Heilly, SBNA, Lynn responded that they have yet to locate where they will install interpretive signage, but that they plan to.
- In a follow-up comment, Anthony Gordon, Ellis South End Neighborhood Association, stated that the entry signage should be visible from a distance, since people often complain that

the Corridor is not visible enough from Dartmouth Street. He added that this will be a good opportunity to reinforce the desire line from Back Bay Station.

- In response to a follow-up question from Anthony Gordon, Rob Halter, Elkus-Manfredi Architects, stated that the Hubway bicycle station and the MBTA bus shelter are located on either side of the existing crosswalk on Dartmouth Street, and so moving the pedestrian crosswalk would not be possible. Vineet Gupta, Director of Planning for the Boston Transportation Department (BTD), added that in order to move the crosswalk, the City would also have to relocate the traffic light, and create a break in the median. Moreover, the Hubway station and the bus shelter are critically located, and so to move them would also be problematic.
- Anthony Gordon stated that the maintenance of the Southwest Corridor Park has not been effective, and asked that the proponent create an effective maintenance plan to be followed in the future. Jack Hobbs confirmed that the proponent will take care of this.
- David Berarducci, Resident of the South End, stated that he likes the progress made by the design team since the last presentation. The addition of nodes is good, and the large open space presents the opportunity to install a large, monumental sculpture. He noted that he is somewhat concerned about the removal of some of the trees by the entryway. Lynn replied that this was done in response to concerns expressed to make the community retail vendors more visible from Dartmouth Street.
- In a follow-up comment, David Berarducci added that it could be beneficial to include some of the history of the area (specifically, the rail yards) at the building's main entry at Stuart and Dartmouth Streets. He added that he would also like to see some outdoor seating installed in that location.
- In response to a question from Anthony Gordon about paving materials, Lynn replied that they had not yet determined what they will use, although it is unlikely that they would use bricks because of accessibility issues. She noted that they would likely explore using precast concrete pavers instead. Vineet Gupta added that the City's new Commissioner of the Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Kristen McCosh, has indicated that bricks are undesirable, and that there should be clear pathways that are accessible for all users throughout the site. It should be emphasized that the rules and regulations set forth by the Commission for Persons with Disabilities will be applied here.
- Ted Pietras noted that all exterior seating should have slats so that snow and rain can permeate through them.
- Dan d'Heilly stated that because this project will likely result in an increase in the number of dogs in the area, the green grass space shown in the new plan will need to be maintained, or else otherwise expanded in size. Rob Halter noted that this argument can go both ways, with some users not wanting too much grass in this location. Lynn stated that the project team will add dog stations to the schematics.
- In a follow-up comment, Dan d'Heilly stated that he is concerned that the proponent is only going to cover the part of the Corridor up to Harcourt Street, and that other blocks will be impacted.

Rob Halter then gave a PowerPoint presentation (available on the BRA's project website) showing the views of the building from Copley Square, as well as some examples of other glazing precedents. He also showed an updated view of the base of the building, which was made in response to some of the comments from the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) and the BRA's senior design staff. The changes will result in increased sunlight in the Winter Garden.

Next, Guy Busa, Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, summarized the options presented by the CAC for the pedestrian conditions at the Turnpike Exit 22 Ramp to Stuart Street (these options are also available on the BRA's project website and should be referred to when reading these notes). He explained that there are four key metrics used when reviewing traffic operations: Level of Service (LOS), the volume to capacity ratio for each approach (1.0 is considered appropriate), queue lengths (typically, these should not be longer than one City block), and stopping sight distance (for the off ramp, but also for pedestrians).

The three options analyzed by Guy included A2, B2, and C1. Option A2 results in very long queues up to Exeter Street, to the Prudential split. Option B2 also results in problematic queue lengths, however, they are 200' shorter than those predicted for Option A2. Guy noted that if a stop control is placed at the end of the ramp, the ramp must be reduced to one lane, per the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), which establishes the federal guidelines for traffic and transportation. As for Option C1, it is not possible to add lanes without encroaching into the plaza space. Moreover, the LOS would drop to 'F' and the volume to capacity ratio would result in a failure if this option were to be pursued. The queues would become very long, and would result in backups to the mainline Turnpike below. This option would also result in impacts to the pedestrian movements across Stuart Street, in that another signal phase would be added to the intersection.

Guy explained that the project team had also explored another option, Option D. This option would eliminate the right turn off of Stuart Street (diverting traffic to Clarendon Street) and also the left turn off of the off ramp, which would divert traffic to Berkeley Street; this is already a congested thoroughfare.

The following questions and comments were raised by the CAC in response to Guy's presentation:

- Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, noted that the ramp to the Prudential is straight in comparison to the Copley one, which allows drivers to see the cars in front of them, and also explains why there is a stop sign at the top of the ramp.
- Eugene Kelly, Resident of the Back Bay, stated that all of this would result in an inconvenience for drivers. The associated traffic impacts do not seem worth it, when you consider the small amount of people that require this pedestrian access.
- Dan d'Heilly stated that the only option that seems remotely viable is Option D.
- Anthony Gordon asked if turn restrictions could be put in place for rush hour only. Guy responded that he is unaware of any location in Boston where the phasing would be changed that drastically over the course of a day.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen commented that these options do not make sense, especially when you consider the fact that there is already pedestrian access in this immediate area on the north side of Stuart Street. Moreover, the impacts to the wider community would be substantial.
- Eugene Kelly added that the most important improvements will already be seen, with the changes being made to the pedestrian crossing at Stuart and Dartmouth Streets, and also before the Exit Ramp in front of the Marriott Hotel and adjacent to the Westin Hotel.
- Vineet Gupta stated that if the CAC wishes to pursue Option D any further, the wider Back Bay and South End communities will have to be engaged, because this will also impact them substantially.

- David Berarducci asked about the emergency fire access to the building. Guy replied that this would be provided through a mountable curb on Stuart Street, since the Fire Department does not want to have to knock down a fence whenever there is an emergency. This would result in a break in the fence in this location, and would also mean that any pedestrians walking along this area would not be protected by the fence.
- Eugene Kelly also pointed out that the new building's valet operations would be impacted if Option D were to be pursued, as the trips to the Dartmouth Street Garage would be diverted.
- Anthony Gordon asked that further study of the dual phasing be performed. Guy responded that since the restrictions would be during the peak hour, there would not be a change in the results, since all traffic studies are performed for peak hour performance.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen stated that it seems that the Westin Hotel should be brought into the discussion, at least to see if they can restructure their loading operations to be more efficient and impede less on the pedestrian and vehicular traffic. She offered to speak with the hotel's general manager and report back at the next CAC meeting. Vineet Gupta added that the City can meet with the Westin Hotel as well and also figure out a better enforcement mechanism for this condition.
- Eugene Kelly asked if the fence along the Exit Ramp on Stuart Street can be designed so as to discourage anyone from walking alongside it. Meg Mainzer-Cohen added that bright paint and signage could be introduced to help make pedestrians aware of the condition.
- David Berarducci asked if a mid-block crosswalk on Stuart Street could be installed by the Westin Hotel loading dock, with a Yield sign to alert drivers. Guy replied that the project team would look at this option and report back at the next CAC meeting.
- Anthony Gordon stated that they should be most concerned about those who are not familiar with the intersection.

The following questions were raised by members of the public:

- Ann Hershfang, WalkBoston, stated that the north side of Stuart Street should be made as attractive as possible. She also asked that the public have a continued opportunity to provide comments on the Southwest Corridor Park improvements. Jack Hobbs responded in the affirmative, noting that there will be more opportunities in the future to discuss the changes to the Corridor.
- Janet Hunkel, PMAC, asked about a bicycle connection through the Southwest Corridor Park to Dartmouth Street, and also asked if a bike lane was being considered for Dartmouth Street. Lauren Shurtleff, BRA Planner, responded that she will look into this.
- Jackie Yessian, NABB, stated that she would like to see the CAC engage with the accessibility community. Lynn Wolff reiterated that the Commission for Persons with Disabilities will be engaged. Jack Hobbs added that the design will be subject to further review, and that the schemes presented today merely set the parameters of what to expect to find in the final design.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:00 a.m.