



## Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative Working Advisory Group Meeting #3

Wednesday, October 24, 2012

Location: Kroc Center, Dorchester

### **WAG Attendees:**

Aldelina Alves, Judy Beckler, Courtney Curran, David Davenport, Andrew Foster, Christopher Jones, Andrea Kaiser, Max MacCarthy, Paul Meehan, Joan E. Tighe

*WAG Members Not in Attendance:* Lisa Alberghini, Yaz Mohammad, Alex Dosouto, George Papadopoulos, Dahria Williams-Fernandes

**City of Boston Attendees:** Inés Palmarin (BRA), Jeremy Rosenberger (BRA), Kenya Thompson (BRA), Zachary Wassmouth (DPW)

### **Other Agency Attendees:**

Joe Cosgrove, MBTA

### **Consulting Team Attendees:**

Josh Fiala, The Cecil Group

### **Members of the Public:**

Ina Anderson, Nancy Conrad, Jeanne DuBois, Jeremy Levine, David Kelley

### Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, October 14, 2012, the Upham's Corner Working Advisory Group for the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative held its third meeting at The Salvation Army Community Center of Dorchester, Boston. Inés Palmarin (BRA) called the meeting to order at approximately 6:40 P.M.

Inés introduced herself, as did city staff, the consulting team, and WAG members. Two representatives from the Department of Public Works joined the meeting in addition to BRA staff members. Inés announced that Max MacCarthy and Christopher Jones would serve as co-chairs of the WAG group, serving to coordinate meetings and facilitate the agenda.

Max brought up the issue of absenteeism from WAG meetings, introducing the idea of setting a limit for the number of meetings missed by WAG members. Members who exceeded their number of absences would be asked to leave the group or suggest a replacement. He asked the WAG members in attendance to follow up with him via email with their thoughts on this issue.

Jeremy Rosenberger (BRA) ran through the agenda for the evening. He mentioned the upcoming community forum on November 17<sup>th</sup> and the first Upham's Corner Community meeting, with a date still to be determined.

Josh Fiala (Cecil Group) reviewed the last meeting, highlighting the key issues of how the corridor-wide plan will play out at the neighborhood scale and the themes to be discussed at the community forum. He then presented an overview of existing conditions at Upham's Corner, emphasizing the area's 3.9% open space versus 15.7% in Boston as a whole. The Cecil Group identified additional open space opportunities on private property that were not reflected in the GIS data. He also mentioned the need to target active or recreational open space opportunities throughout the community, rather than more passive spaces such as community gardens or cemeteries. Josh then explained the concept of the "greenway," which would connect a series of open spaces in the area through complete streets along the corridor.

Andrew Forster raised the issue of bike access along the greenway, indicating that it wouldn't necessarily improve with the proposed plan. Josh responded that the greenway was conceived as an overall strategy to connect existing open spaces, but that more specific access issues would be addressed separately. Parts of the greenway would likely serve as dedicated lanes while others would accommodate multiple modes of transportation.

Josh went on to discuss the issue of housing affordability in the area. The data showed that significant portions of the corridor currently have a median rent rate below the Boston median rent of \$1199. Courtney Curran requested that data on the number of bedrooms be included in the analysis of affordable housing data.

Josh presented information on the community assets and general demographics of the neighborhood. Andrew Forster asked that the Salvation Army chapel be included as a place of worship on the maps. Regarding the racial demographics breakdown, several group members expressed concern with the category of "Other," since it was possible that many communities in the area could be considered part of this group. More specific categories would be needed to categorize the different ethnic and racial groups in the neighborhood.

Zachary Wassmouth, Project Manager at the Department of Public Works, spoke about the upcoming infrastructure improvements in the Upham's Corner area. He mentioned that the RFP was out, and that DPW would make a selection by next month. He said that DPW wanted to set up a subcommittee and reach out to neighborhood groups to encourage further discussion about the infrastructure improvements. DPW was also planning to be present at the community meeting in December. Jeremy announced that \$3 million would be allocated for infrastructure improvements, as well as the possibility of creating a sub-committee from the WAG to specifically address this issue.

Adalina asked about the possibility of a role for youth councils, and whether meetings would be held within the community? Ines responded that they would, but that the WAG would provide the primary members of the subcommittee.

Chris asked what the purpose of the subcommittee meeting would be. Zach said they would announce the project, present ideas and challenges, and be open to comments and suggestions. Max then asked whether the meeting could be tied into the January visioning, mentioning that it would be a good opportunity to get community members involved around a tangible project. Adalina commented that churches should be included in any further announcements.

Ina Anderson of the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance then introduced the placemaking workshops held with the Project for Public Spaces (visit [http://www.ma-smartgrowth.org/images/pdfs/fairmountcorridor\\_lqc\\_report.pdf](http://www.ma-smartgrowth.org/images/pdfs/fairmountcorridor_lqc_report.pdf) for the report). They worked with the Fairmount CDC Collaborative to think about future public realm improvements for the Upham's Corner area, creating a list of action items and recommendations for the neighborhood. These included creating a stronger connection between the station and the business district and incentivizing property owners to improve their properties. David Davenport commented that food trucks with tables and chairs outside of the Kroc Center would be a positive public realm improvement for the area. Andrew spoke about the light posts with banners by the Kroc Center and how they could be used to connect to the business district.

Josh Fiala then reviewed the recent walking tour intended to observe and gain a sense of existing neighborhood conditions. Among the general observations were that Columbia Road and Dudley Street held together as a Main Streets or commercial corridor for the neighborhood. Chris mentioned that a youth group could be commissioned to take the same tour and document their observations with photos. Ines said that a group of students from Harvard could be brought on board to facilitate that process.

Jeremy spoke about the community forum and the importance for WAG members to represent stakeholders at the meetings. He also mentioned that it would be an opportunity to involve community residents who can't usually attend the public meetings. He asked WAG members to spread the word about the forum. Max questioned how the group would be able to sustain enthusiasm for the initiative. Ines mentioned that follow-up focus group meetings could provide this opportunity. The forum would also be a place to get contact information from community residents. Adalina said she would contact Cape Verdean and Haitian radio stations, as well as local churches and the Vietnamese community to publicize the event. Courtney mentioned that the "1 in 3" Bostonians initiative (targeted to the 1 in 3 Boston residents aged 18-34) could also be involved. She mentioned there were 20,000 "1 in 3" residents along the Fairmount Corridor.

Jeremy then spoke about the Upham's Corner community meeting scheduled to take place in early January. He wanted to gather thoughts on the tentative agenda for the meeting. Chris said that the agenda would be shaped by the outcome of the November community forum. He also suggested that the community discussion happen earlier in the agenda rather than later. Josh mentioned that the January meeting would be more specific to certain sites and specific areas, whereas the November meeting was more for visioning.

Jeremy stated that promotional strategies for the January community meeting would be discussed at the next WAG meeting. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30pm.