



**Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative
Upham's Corner Working Advisory Group Meeting #5
Wednesday, January 23, 2013
Location: The Salvation Army Kroc Community Center,
Dorchester**

WAG Attendees: Lisa Alberghini, Courtney Curran, David Davenport, Max McCarthy, Paul Meehan, Joan Tighe, Andrea Kaiser, Alex DoSouto, Andrew Forster

WAG Members Not in Attendance: Aldelina Alves, Judy Beckler, Christopher Jones, Daryl Wright (CAG), Glen Knowles (CAG), Michelle Waldon (CAG)

City of Boston Attendees: Ines Soto-Palmarin, BRA; Jeremy Rosenberger, BRA; Chris Coughlin, PWD; Mary Murphy, BRA; Kenya Thompson, BRA; Nene Igietseme, BRA

Consulting Team Attendees: Steve Cecil, The Cecil Group; Josh Fiala, The Cecil Group; Pam McKinney, The Cecil Group team

Members of the Public: Bob Haas, Upham's Corner Westside Neighborhood Association/Upham's Corner Main Streets; Camilo Pichordo Meidez, Upham's Corner Main Streets; Abrioris Fernandez, Brothers Supermarket; Jeremy Levine, Harvard; Jeanne DuBois, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation; Allentza Michel, Metropolitan Area Planning Council; Nancy Conrad, Upham's Corner Improvement Association

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, January 23, 2013, The Upham's Corner Working Advisory Group (WAG) of the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative had its fifth meeting at The Salvation Army Kroc Center in Dorchester. Max MacCarthy, co-chair of the WAG, welcomed the group at approximately 6:40pm. He noted his fellow co-chair Chris Jones was out due to the demands of his newborn and briefly went over the agenda. Present WAG Members and other meeting attendees introduced themselves.

Max notified the WAG that three members had been asked to step down due to lack of attendance at the meetings: Yaz Mohammad, George Papdopoulos, and Dahria Williams-Fernandes. He passed around nomination forms so WAG members could nominate new people to join. Two business owners present at the meeting: Camilo Pichordo Meidez and Ambrioris Fernandez are already planning to self-nominate.

Chris Coughlin, PWD gave a brief update on the \$3 million project to reconstruct parts of Columbia Road. The PWD had a public meeting in December to gather input on the public realm improvements. They are planning another community meeting for early February to present two or three concepts back to the community. Nancy Conrad, UCIA, thanked Zack Wassmouth of the PWD for coming to a UCIA meeting and listening to their feedback.

Jeremy Rosenberger gave an update about a similar public realm improvement process starting for the Quincy Corridor. The scope includes revitalizing sidewalks, streets, intersections, etc. From now until about April, there will be a public process to come up with preliminary design concepts. A lot of work developing ideas and concepts for the street has already been done by the community. Implementation of the final ideas will ideally start in late 2014, 2015. The first community meeting will be in March and if members of the WAG could spread the word to people who might be interested, that would be helpful.

Josh Fiala, The Cecil Group, then gave an update on the corridor wide process. A major adjustment is using 'transit-equity' to frame all of the topics the study seeks to address. Successful economic development, public realm improvements, etc., depends on equitable fares and service. He also presented the further distillation of corridor-wide themes into station typographies. They found that corridor wide-themes in each of the areas of inquiry have particular applications in Upham's Corner. For example, along the corridor, within economic development, there is opportunity to develop cultural institutions. For Upham's Corner specifically that means focusing on the Strand Theater. They clarified that the ideas presented about Upham's Corner specifically would be impacted by the feedback from the Upham's Corner community forum.

Josh Fiala encouraged the WAG members to look at the presentation they gave to the CAG on the relationship between the corridor wide identity, which they gathered from the community forum in November and their own research, and the individual station areas. The presentation is on the website. The consultant team recommended the Four Corners and Blue Hill Avenue station areas to be the next station areas to form WAGs and undergo significant analysis similar to Upham's Corner. This decision is still in process within the CAG.

Joan Tighe, WAG, added the state came out with a transportation report that called for the Fairmount line to be a pilot of a clean energy train. There are still fare and service issues, but she thought it was encouraging.

Josh Fiala led the WAG in an in depth discussion of the Community Forum agenda. At 9:30, people will start arriving and fill out the word cloud for a comparison to the Upham's Corner word cloud generated at the corridor wide forum. At 10 am, there will be a presentation led by the co-chairs, featuring a virtual tour and an interactive question and answer session. There will be two breakout sessions split by lunch for participants to map issues and opportunities as well as future visions and priorities. Finally the forum will conclude with a presentation of the word cloud and next steps.

The WAG members volunteered themselves and other community residents for the virtual tour. David Davenport agreed to speak about Jones Hill; Camile Pichordo Meidez volunteered for Upham's Corner Center. Bob Haas asked to speak on Upham's Corner Westside. After Andrea Kaiser raised the importance of the knowledge of the youth from Bird Street Community Center on that area, it was suggested that perhaps Bob Haas be paired with a youth from Bird Street. Similarly, Jeanne DuBois volunteered youth from DBEDC's Youth Force to pair with an adult from Dudley Street – Roselyn Johnson or Tracy. Harry Smith from DSNi thought a youth from DSNi, Isaiah Wilkerson, could talk about the Dudley land trust and history.

Courtney Curran agreed to speak as someone whose primary interaction with the neighborhood is solely with the commuter rail train and station. Joan Tighe offered to reach out to someone from Edward Everett Square, as well as someone from Newmarket and McCormack, since talk about the potential expansion of South Bay is starting. Joan Tighe also volunteered Maria Perz from Groom/Humphreys and Eastman Elder Street since the area is largely Cape Verdean and she thinks that voice needs to be represented. Steve Cecil, The Cecil Group, stressed that not every area needs to be talked about in depth, but there needs to be diversity across the entire station area. There is 15 minutes for the virtual tour.

Ines Soto-Palmarin, BRA, added Adelina Alves as potentially bringing a health and Cape Verdean perspective. She also encouraged the youth participants to be creative and fun.

The WAG moved on to the Interactive Question and Answer portion of the Forum agenda. The consultants and the BRA emphasized how fun, interactive, and best of all informative this section would be. Each attendee will be given a keypad to record answers to predetermined questions. The group results of the survey will instantly be shown to all after a 25 second response period. The types of questions include 1) ice break questions (i.e., who do you support to win the Super Bowl), 2) demographic question (to show who's in the room and compare who is in the station area to who showed up to the meeting), and 3) Upham's Corner specific questions (i.e., how often to you come to Upham's Corner and why?).

WAG members and members of the public gave specific feedback on a number of questions. One major discussion point sprang from how to list the different areas in Upham's Corner without leaving any area out. The WAG decided to leave the question off the interactive and have people put on a physical map where they live as well as where they work. WAG members were worried that 17 questions were too many and people would get bored or it would go over time. After assurances that 1) people found using the keypad fun, 2) there would be simultaneous translation and paper copies for non-English speakers, 3) the questions would go much quicker in real time, and 4) the data was worth the potential of going over time the WAG voted not to cut the number of questions down to ten. People also thought it should be clear to participants that the activity was anonymous and nothing could be linked back to them.

Finally, the WAG discussed the break out groups. In Breakout #1, the participants will use physical maps (two of different scales) to mark locations that exemplified an issue or opportunity in one of the topic areas of focus (prosperity, homes, parks and public space, place, getting around, arts and culture). In Breakout #2, after lunch, the participants will use the same base maps and tape down game pieces to create a shared vision of development in particular areas. The game pieces will be things like a street, a plaza, a parking lot, a house, etc. Participants can also write down notes around the game piece to further explain their ideas. The game pieces will make interpreting the results of the joint planning easier. The last step will be to prioritize on a separate map 3-5 areas that need to be focused on.

Andrew Forrester, The Kroc Center, suggested that participants be allowed to vote on the areas they would prioritize using small dot stickers. There is just not enough time to build consensus about priorities. Max suggested that it be made clear that business development and growth are included under the "prosperity" topic area. Jeremy Rosenberger, BRA, asked WAG members to let him know whether they were not going to be in attendance. Otherwise, they would be assigned to a break out group to facilitate and lead.

Nene Igietseme, BRA, gave an update on outreach efforts. She has given flyers to most of the Upham's Corner Main Streets and is working with the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and the Upham's Corner Health Center to flyer residential areas this week and next week. The announcement has also gone out over Cape Verdean and Haitian radio stations and an ad was placed in local newspapers. The Upham's Corner Health Center is also reaching out to the churches in the areas and residents on their mailing list.

Jeanne DuBois noted there are 700 families in the DBEDC catchment area so Nene should get her some flyers. Andrea added youth at Bird Street did some flyering already. Alex DoSouto stated there should be flyers on businesses, noting that his business did not have one. Max highlighted outreach as a key contribution of WAG members and Jeanne stressed the importance of WAG member reaching out to the areas they represent and trying to get at least 10 people there.

Finally, Pam McKinney, part of the Cecil Group's consulting team gave the WAG a real estate presentation of the market opportunities in Upham's Corner and New Market. Pam highlighted the important of matching the development potential in housing, commercial, retail, etc., to the demand sources in the area. She was worried about the tension between the affordability of the area and the feasibility of funding new housing at such low price points. Similarly, the skill requirements of potential employers would need to match the skills of residents in the area. Related to that, the nature of the building stock would need to match the land and building requirements of potential employers. Importantly, Upham's Corner has the Kroc Center and the Strand Theater to attract visitors. Pam stressed that retail development follows from matching new development to the labor force, employment, visitation, and residential housing requirements of the people in the area.

The presentation concluded that the potential for housing development in Upham's Corner is high, especially if homeownership and density are focused on. There is increasing willingness to fund mixed income and mixed tenure type developments. There is also some potential for retail, since many large chain retail stores are now looking for space in urban markets. Pam noted there is not a lot of potential for office building space due to the high cost of revamping the buildings and lack of space for parking. Newmarket could serve as a base for industrial development.

The next steps for the real estate market analysis is to do feasibility testing of different ideas and write a report for the WAG. Lisa Alberghini, WAG, wondered when the WAG would be able to dig into the details of the real estate analysis. The community forum is the venue where ideas about development should be offered and the consultants will work through the ideas, link them to their analysis and then do feasibility testing to present back to the WAG.

Pam added transportation, particularly cross city transportation, is the underpinning of development; without it, none of this is possible. Furthermore, the transportation infrastructure issues extend beyond the Indigo line. The development through the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative, however, contributes to the competitive advantage of the area.

To wrap up, Max MacCarthy gave a final reminder of the Forum: Saturday, February 2nd, 2013; at the Kroc Center from 9:30-1pm. The next WAG meeting will be on Feb 27th and the following WAG meeting dates are on the google group on website. Meeting notes will be posted by Friday. Jeremy Rosenberger will send out an email about speakers in the virtual tour and a list of facilitator roles.

The meeting concluded at approximately 8:40pm.