

Forest Hills Improvement Initiative
First Community Meeting – October 23, 2006
Meeting Notes

SMALL GROUP NOTES

The following notes were compiled during the small group breakout session:

Group 1

Vision

- Wider roadway
- Underneath Casey overpass area could be shopping and housing along Washington
- Better retail mix in Forest Hills Square – no Walmarts
- Address high school kids who use Forest Hills as a place to hang out
- Safe
- Late evening shops
- No traffic congestion
- Pick-up area at T
- More vibrant retail, but not pushing out needed businesses
- Less dominated by cars driving through
- Community food stores – Trader Joe's
- Bicycle path to Forest Hills on Hyde Park Avenue side
- Pedestrian safety
- Connection between T and businesses
- Eliminate parking at Forest Hills to reduce traffic
- Not to be transit hub – extend Orange Line to Roslindale/Hyde Park/Dedham
- No new stores without thinking of traffic
- Reduce speeds on streets (more police)
- More walkable and pedestrian safe
- Keep green space along Hyde Park Avenue – more maintenance, dog park, open pedestrian bridge from Hyde Park to Washington
- Extend Southwest Corridor and integrate with green space

Assets

- Arboretum
- Path from Forest Hills to Arboretum
- Forest Hills Cemetery
- Dogwood, Java Joe's, Jonathan's Hair
- The T
- South Street / Hyde Park Avenue – streets and character
- Southwest Corridor

Challenges

- Hyde Park Avenue traffic, speed and safety
- Gangs and drugs
- No connection to Forest Hills and Southwest Corridor

- No store character on Washington Street
- Shattuck Hospital
- Increased courthouse traffic
- Commuters parking, cutting through traffic, and passenger drop-offs
- Traffic under overpass
- Path from Forest Hills to Arboretum needs to be safer and cleaner
- More than half of business space near Forest Hills is underused
- Washington Street is underused (on both sides of Casey Overpass)
- Commercial/residential mix of Arborway Yard
- “Temp” bus facility
- Pedestrian bridge from Hyde to Washington is broken and closed
- Grates on businesses
- The T
- Youth needs are not appreciated
- Not enough police at Forest Hills
- Improve traffic all over area

T Parcels

Hyde Park Avenue Parcel

- Community garden, more organized, housing

Washington Street Parcel (small)

- Housing that keeps people here

Washington Street Parcel (large)

- Grocery store
- Other store
- Community youth center

Group 2

- Clean up current Storefronts /remove grates / beautification
- Hyde Park Ave / residential entrance dirty
- Trash clean up –T needs to take responsibility
- Charlie Card receipt issue
- ▪ Parcel U Hyde Park Ave – leave green
- Washington St. waste land – sidewalks broken, trash
- ▪ Parcel W – develop park / pathways, make it look not neglected
- ▪ No green space unification link from T out
- No room for pedestrians / bikes
- ▪ Extend corridor park system down Hyde Park Ave. and Washington street
- Landscape, do not develop
- ▪ Markets for riders / residents by potential development
- ▪ Smaller business not huge box
- Traffic impact
- Affordable housing

- No link from Washington to Stony Brook to T
- Waste land – develop commercial & business
- ▪ Green space need to identify agency & \$ to maintain
- ▪ Roslindale tie into Forest Hills, Hub
- Linkage. Green Asset / Holistic
- Mixed income housing, no high rise / no high density
- Green space / play ground
- ▪ Youth / Senior center / Community center
- Senior housing
- ▪ Casey overpass – develop underneath – for market, business, Or beautify structures
- ▪ Pedestrian solution to intersected Forest Hills areas
- ▪ Office space potential in Forest Hills
- Development without increasing traffic
- Homelessness & public drinking enforcement / control
- ▪ Housing considerations – affordable / senior / co-housing / artist studio / home ownership / not rental
- Signage – vehicle directional of whole area - as transit hub, it's horrible
- Kiss & stop area / safe T area
- Traffic impacts need study prior to development
- ▪ Green space development – incorporate JP arts
- Current T – no area for youth drop off
- Encourage existing business to be involved in this process
- ▪ Develop green space to be usable by business, residents, organizations activity
- Beautify the oil tanks – murals reflecting Forest Hills
- BHA parcel – abutters against org. – Idea, maybe 1st time home buyers
- ▪ No box development – encourage small business / retail development -1st floor retail
- ▪ Encourage commercials to come here – more restaurants

Group 3

Community Vision

- Pedestrians, active streets, bicycle friendly
- Supermarket, broad retail services, farmer's market, small local businesses
- More affordable housing
- Services (daycare, etc.)
- Playground, recreational space
- Better connection between Forest Hills and rest of Jamaica Plain
- Safety
- Gateway to parks, common identity
- Hang-out spots (coffee shops)
- Longer store operating hours
- Coordination with Shattuck
- Keeping long-time residents
- More open space, maintaining existing open space
- Less traffic
- No more surface parking
- Create center of town

- Create new jobs
- Community gatherings
- Non-franchise businesses
- Identity-common
- Walking connection to rest of JP/lack of a center
- Community-centered places (like coffee shop)
- Community-friendly
- Public drinking/shelter rules abuse discussion with Shattuck – SAFETY
- Businesses which serve commuters outside Forest Hills
- Spend money in own community
- Be sensitive to historical neighborhood spots/long-time residents
- More block-level organizing
- No more surface parking
- JP Licks type centre/socialization

Assets

- Retail on South Street – Dogwood Café, Martial Arts, Java Joe’s (Fireside is ok, but needs upgrading/clean-up)
- Nail salon/cleaners
- English High School
- Southwest Corridor
- Development potential
- Franklin Park
- Arboretum
- Courthouse and potential customers
- Church, Meridian High School
- Access to cabs
- Leland Street Community Garden
- D.B.S. Lumbar
- Forest Hills Cemetery
- July 4th Bussey Overpass
- Rock-Patton/Wachusett
- Young Achiever’s School
- Bus yard
- Need better physical connection to businesses on South/Washington to Roslindale

Challenges

- Storefronts
- Liquor stores (no nips needed)
- Waste of space
- Trolley tracks
- 39 Bus
- Traffic
- Pedestrian connections (Bussey Overpass)
- Cab stands
- Arborway Yard

- Train Storage area noisy
- Traffic under underpass (maneuverability)
- Train tracks under underpass
- Casey Overpass
- Traffic makes it hard to bike/walk/drive
- Design of Ukraine/Washington – traffic and walking
- Parking issues
- Bus yard
- Chinese restaurant needs upgrade
- Noise level – where Orange Line stores trains

Focus Areas and Study Sites

- Parking Garage (ROW 1)
- Community square
- School site (Parcel W, day care, early education)
- Opening Tolgate Way/bridge
- Minimum retail with open space – all parcels
- Get rid of 2 parking lots, make third a garage
- More on-street parking
- Affordable housing
- Youth programs
- Pedestrian bridge at Patton

3 Specific Parcels

- Long strip (U) mixed businesses
- More crossing allowance such as Ukraine
- Parking garage and open space
- Free up land for “community square”
- Parcel W = school/playground/maybe Meridian/child care/early ed.
- Does garage encourage driving vs biking, public transit?
- Walk Hill Street crosses through parcels as a connector?
- Minimum retail with open space
- Create 2 separate levels of parking: resident needs and commuter needs
- Garage with upper level decking to cross-over
- Sell Fitzgerald parking for better use
- Garage payment system needs to work – against southern suburbs parking all-day
- Don't discourage commuters: end of line, good for local businesses
- Reduce parking areas to just one? (history: neighbors opposed to multi-level parking)
- Affordable housing

Group 4

Community Vision

We are not a transit hub, we are a neighborhood

Summary

- Balance smart growth with neighborhood scale
- No/less crime
- Master Plan with slow inclusive development
- Designed and celebrated entrances and routes to Arboretum, Franklin Park, etc.
- Shuttle JP Center, Forest Hills
- Better traffic flow
- Better markets
- Connectivity to Arboretum, Franklin Park, Forest Hills
- No visible parking lots
- Mixed-use multi-story (3-4 stories)
- NY style Jewish deli
- ATM/bank
- General store
- Place for homeless during day
- Programs and classes for kids
- Windmills
- Pedestrian walkway
- Clean and safe subway
- Diverse housing
- Dog run
- Indoor venues for community events
- Better perceived safety

Assets

- (traffic) economic growth
- Shattuck Hospital
- Buses/ MBTA
- Institutions providing jobs

Challenges

- No centers (recreational/outdoor)
- Traffic
- Too many drunks and liquor stores
- Markets
- Path/sidewalks
- Institution connections
- Diversity in retail
- Shattuck Hospital
- Infrequent buses/ MBTA
- Institution/patients

Other

- More indoor venues for community events
- Daycare
- Local tourist family destinations
- Zoo shuttle

- Connectivity to Arboretum, Franklin Park and Forest Hills
- Healthcare
- Better perceived safety for outside visitors
- Eliminate Fitzgerald parking
- Parking for business district
- No visible parking lots – parking shouldn't dominate area
- Parking behind business district with signage
- Parking enforcement
- Farmer's Market
- Hardware
- General Store
- Bookstore
- Florist
- Small post office
- ATM/Bank
- NY Deli – Jewish Deli
- Schwarma King
- Sushi
- Trash cans people use
- MBTA – maintain property – weeds, garbage, rats
- Outdoor café
- No big box retail
- Mixed-use multi-story (3-4 stories)
- Balance smart growth with neighborhood scale
- Denser well-designed housing
- Parking lot
- Less congestion
- Less cut-through
- No/less crime and drugs
- Slow inclusive development
- Master Plan
- Public elementary school
- Forest Hills festival/cultural events – like Davis Square
- Security gates closed all day
- Trashy and dirty business district
- Slumlords and irresponsible landlords
- Rats on open land
- Perceived danger and trashy station
- Homeless people
- Courthouse to MBTA land is filthy
- Trucks double-parked and deliver on Hyde Park Ave during rush hour
- Casey Overpass is impossible to go under for cars, people and bikes
- Cars parking under overpass
- Graffiti
- Washington Street Arboretum is neglected and unsafe
- Arboretum, Franklin Park and Forest Hills Cemetery

- Drug activity
- Access to green space
- Attractive
- Bank
- Art (sculpture)
- Cleanliness
- Attractive infrastructure
- Easier walking/car/bike to JP and other transit
- Diverse housing
- Better police
- Safe/open space – need better lighting
- Dog run/park
- Crossing guards
- Double parking
- Too many cars in drop-off area
- No drop-off for commuters on inbound Hyde Park Avenue
- Loud cars – stereos, modified tailpipes
- Parkman Playground crime at night – graffiti, drugs
- No snow removal by MBTA
- Congestion
- Evening commute – Washington-Ukraine-Hyde Park lights need retiming
- Commuters park in residential areas
- Gardens
- Better traffic flow
- Businesses for pedestrians and residents
- Pedestrian walkway
- Clean and safe subway
- Better markets – veggies, food
- Mini Russells – market
- Don't need to drive for services
- Retail design shops
- Galleries
- Movie theater – small
- Community
- Preserve trees
- Public bathroom
- Hangout for Shattuck during day
- Designed and celebrated entrances and routes to Arboretum and Franklin Park
- Overpass on New Washington Street for pedestrians
- Unite two parts of Jamaica Plain
- Shuttle, Jamaica Plain center, Forest Hills, Roslindale Village
- Anchor store in Fitz Inn
- Programs and classes for kids
- Yoga studio
- Windmills
- Better lighting on walk routes

Group 5

Community Vision

- United Village:
- Create a place to go – a destination
- Sustainable neighborhood with no need for cars
- Preserve Open space (Existing Parks)
- Create recreational environments- Indoor & Outdoor
- Extend Orange Line in all directions- especially to West Roxbury & Dedham
- Linkage:
- Arbor way to Franklin Park
- Forest Hills to Jamaica Plain
- Improve connection and access to T and Parks
- Possible Grocery Store
- Possible Movie Theater
- Possible Schools: Elementary - High
- Create Retail over parking
- Provide Mixed Use: Residential & Commercial
- Use the air rights for development
- Higher density
- Provide rental housing
- Improve parking
- Provide Underground parking
- Housing for all incomes
- Free Parking for residence
- Redevelop commercial area
- Create Parking Garage on Ukraine Way (No cars entering center HP Ave.)
- Safety
- Improve Mass Transit
- Possible Trolley System
- Provide More frequent transit
- Two way transit ?
- Create Bike Paths (traffic Issue)
- Area U: Keeps as green area or Parking Lot

Assets

- Emerald Necklace Parks (preserve & maintain)
- MBTA parking lot
- Orange Line

Challenges

- Access to the Emerald necklace Parks by car or bus or walking.
- Park & ride locations
- School bus stop locations
- Not enough affordable housing

- Appearance of burned down buildings
- Unsightly buildings facades
- No safe walks to school
- Unsupervised children
- No after school activities for children
- Public safety around station
- Parking

Focus Areas

- Recreational Center
- School building
- No Mart (Wal/K)

Group 6

Community Vision

- Less cars
- Eliminate bus stop at Morton Street
- Green building principles, independent energy sources, Porter Square Commercial (as examples), organic foods
- Stony brook/ open space: usable welcoming
- 21-th Century Plan: TOD, Environmental Impact, Proctocal Call
- Better ways to monitor cars: Green space+cars, seamless traffic
- Safer traffic system: Forest Hills rotary (Marie Circle)
- Better Pedestrian Access
- Big Vision: Forest Hills: Green like educational center for public and private sectors— local and regional model
- Growth and Improvement of Quality, not quantity
- Residential: keep in context with local area population, don't carry unreasonable burden
- Identity: Green Space
- MBTA stop serving open space
- MBTA gateway between Arboretum and Franklin Park
- Density shows people down
- FH has been Transportation Center, that is identity
- Lost people in JP because of the highway
- \$62,000 per family, tremendous gap,
- T Parcels are a tremendous opportunity
- JP population go from 35k to 50k

Assets

- Green space, commercial corridor is good, should be expanded
- Orange Line is easy and fast to get to downtown
- Commuter Rail is a hidden asset
- Opportunity for interactions, Youth Population
- People and Business (Independent Business)
- Arboretum

- Front Porches, opportunities to interact with people outside
- Emerald Necklace system

Challenges

- Lots more bike locks, safer bike paths to ride
- Station very dynamic inside
- 3 blocks outside---lost
- Need better integration
- High volume cars and high volume pedestrians
- Need to coordinate
- Business under serving, upgrading businesses
- Store fronts are in need of improvement, remove grates, etc.
- Business never recover during orange line construction
- (Area is Like a) Desert at evenings
- Planning includes merchants, businesses
- Businesses be a Destination Place, Place need density
- Trouble in the weekends—bar fights, public drinking, etc., getting better
- Green space should work together
- Integrate with Shuttuk Hospital and larger institutions
- Commercial Development Impact residential development (Rent, Taxes, ----find balance)

Focus Areas and MBTA Parcels

MBTA Parcels, Best Use/Most Responsible

- Maintained as more park area
- Should be developed, reconfigure the neighborhood
- Higher density on Washington Street
- Multi-family housing on Parcel U
- Noise Issues
- Green Roofs
- Mixed-income housing, commercial on ground floor
- Housing for all income ranges
- Geometry hard for parking for businesses----local people
- Get the right businesses
- Few services current time, dramatically change them
- Community vibrancy---huge opportunity
- Long pieces, with improvements on both sides
- Urban character
- (The area) forgot urban density for a long time, (People) became accommodated, bank closed, market closed, public \$\$ didn't help retail
- People who get off the station don't want coffee, pizzas
- Mixed-income community to support businesses
- Fitzgerald Site(Private Parcel) be mixed-use site (to provide)street life
- Air rights, very expensive to bridge over
- PARCEL U and Parcel V, Air Rights?

- Public Process be incorporated into RFPs; RFPs will not be issued until consensus is reached; (Be cautious of) planning process and change of administrations