

Forest Hills Improvement Initiative

Third Community Meeting – March 31, 2007

DRAFT - Meeting Notes

FULL GROUP SUMMARY NOTES

The following notes are from the small group discussions and reporting at the end of the Third Community Meeting on March 31st and are intended to be a summary of the full meeting:

EMERGING PRINCIPLES

- Make vision stronger and more explicit; i.e. change “should” to “will”.
- Add provisions for elders including services.
- Plan for 17 hr / day activity centers and uses (areas active for 17 hrs a day).
- Clarify affordable rental housing – make language stronger and more explicit
- Clarify rental / ownership ratios.
- Add improved North / South links and better connection to Centre / South Main Streets.
- Add a separate sentence for youth space and needs.
- (Emphasize importance of) local retail / commercial first.
- Better define ratio of uses and types.
- Make Forest Hills a model for sustainable / green development
- Include planning for (better) air quality / (less) pollution.
- Improve relationship of area to T station

DISTRICT CONCEPT PLAN

Connections

- Improve connections for people; make entire area more walkable and bicycle friendly.
- Improve pedestrian connections across the intersection of Washington Street, Hyde Park Avenue, and the Arborway; activate area under the Arborway (Case Overpass).
- Emphasize greening and landscaping of streetscape.
- Investigate reopening or relocating Tollgate foot bridge.

Open Space

- Provide for more green spaces including small passive use spaces.
- Take a more comprehensive approach to improving the Casey Overpass area.
- (Improve) the green buffer at the street edge in front of Hyde Park Ave bus area.

Land Use

- (Promote a more) mixed use community.
- Consider Fremont development in Seattle as model for retail.
- (Provide for more) Civic / Youth uses.
- Activate T Station area (increase active uses in and around the Station) and include means improved maintenance and care.

DEVELOPMENT STUDY SITES

Overall

- Green and Sustainable – Make Forest Hills a leader in green neighborhood development including alternative energy.
- Economics and Density – consider overall development impacts and improve community understanding of the economics of density and building height.
- Local (independent) businesses are a priority but some chains may be considered.
- Specify affordable housing including percentages of ownership and rental.
- Provide minimum sufficient parking; minimize parking requirements to discourage driving and encourage alternative transportation.
- MBTA office uses could function as an anchor company.

Arborway Yard Parcel

- Recommendations outlined in meeting materials for this site are generally good.
- Youth recreation, ice rink uses are very important, include a play ground too.
- Add office space.

Private Parking Lot (Fitzgerald Lot)

- Recommendations outlined in meeting materials for this site are sound.
- Consider youth / recreation uses at lower floors.
- Very important to consider and maintain existing views corridors. Also consider views over Casey Overpass.
- Buildings should not be higher than adjacent hill (3 to 5 stories were recommended).
- Blend into topography and landscape.

MBTA Commuter Parking Lot

- Recommendations outlined in meeting materials for this site are generally appropriate.
- Street level retail very important.
- Provide access through this parcel to Arboretum entrance.
- Determine if more commuter parking needed?
- Wrap retail along ground floor and extend retail all the way to station entrance.
- Consider housing as a possible use.

MBTA Parcel U with ROW 3 and 4 [Hyde Park Ave.]

- Recommendations for this site outlined in meeting materials are appropriate.
- Provide for building gaps for through views to Arboretum.
- Ensure symmetry in height in both sides of Hyde Park Ave.
- Relate new retail to existing - good fit.

MBTA Parcel V [Washington Street – small triangular site next to tracks]

- Overall recommendations outlined in meetings materials for this site are appropriate.
- Unclear if youth / recreation uses fit.

MBTA Parcel W with ROW 5 [Washington Street – large triangular site]

- Consider two schemes: three story low rise residential and alternately one or two story residential / retail / commercial uses.
- If housing, address noise issues of Orange Line Yard and Commuter Rail. Note that feasibility of roofing or capping adjacent rail area is linked to amount of new uses.

SMALL GROUP NOTES

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

GROUP 1

EMERGING PRINCIPLES

- Strengthen language overall. Replace “would” and “should” with “will”. Eliminate the expression, “Ideal improvements”.
- Add language to improve Forest Hills neighborhood’s relationship with the T Station.
- In second paragraph, delete reference to promoting use primarily by neighborhood residents.
- In the paragraph concerning Green/Sustainable Development, add “LEED” certification and call for minimal environmental impacts.

DISTRICT CONCEPT PLAN

Connections

- Add/strengthen pedestrian connections through and across the intersection of Washington Street, Hyde Park Avenue, and the Arborway.
- Create a pedestrian connection with commercial uses through Forest Hills Station (from Hyde Park Avenue to Washington Street). In other words, activate the T station as part of the plan.
- What does the Emerald Necklace reconnection refer to?
- Can Tollgate Bridge be re-utilized?
- Move crosswalk at Forest Hills Liquors [??] so it connects to sidewalks and paths.

Open Space

- Emerald Necklace/open space connections look good.
- Create high quality paths & bikeways.
- Activate space under Casey Overpass.
- Bring bike/recreational path over to Arboretum side of Parcel W.
- Improve access to Arboretum through the MBTA station, through the new development on Parcel U, and along Ukraine Way.

Land Use

- Parking is OK but generally needs retail buffer on sidewalk edges
- Add exit on either side. [NOT SURE WHAT THIS REFERS TO]
- Possible garage on Fitzgerald property.

Other

DEVELOPMENT STUDY SITES

Arborway Yard Parcel

- Add more stories and office uses at portion of site Arborway site near Casey Overpass
- Need programmed recreational uses for youth.
- Need to focus on weekend/evening uses for families
- Can you build over the light rail tracks?

- If you add height and density on both sides of Casey Overpass, you'll activate the area under the overpass.
- Need buffer from trolley tracks.

Private Parking Lot (Fitzgerald Lot)

- Some disagreement about building heights. Some concern about 5-7 stories here. Some would prefer lower height—3-4 stories. Height could disrupt views. Heights should not exceed top of hills behind property.
- Should be office, not residential, with ground floor retail. Site too noisy for residential.
- Prefer to locate Trader Joe's-type use at Arborway Yard
- Roof of Fitzgerald lot should be open space.

MBTA Commuter Parking Lot

- Establish strong connection through this site to entrance to Arboretum.
- Wrap retail along ground floor and extend retail all the way to station entrance.

MBTA Parcel U with ROW 3 and 4 [Hyde Park Ave.]

- Preserve views toward Arboretum.
- Aim for symmetry in height and scale between buildings on both sides on Hyde Park Avenue.

MBTA Parcel V [Washington Street – small triangular site next to tracks]

- Camouflage view of bus terminal with green buffer.

MBTA Parcel W with ROW 5 [Washington Street – large triangular site]

- Find ways to blur the boundary between the Station and other uses, especially Parcel W.

GROUP 2

EMERGING PRINCIPLES

- Balance between principles (e.g. mixed use vs. community)
- Insert civic / culture uses and youth activities and amenities.
- Green / Sustainable Development and broader green building strategies. Including: indoor and outdoor air quality (reduce bus, car, and cab idling), how water is handled, low maintenance landscaping.
- Second Principle – change to “vibrant economically sustainable mixed use district”.
- Improve Station (landscaping, etc.).

DISTRICT CONCEPT PLAN

Connections

- Provide landscaping recommendations and strategies at bike / pedestrian connections.
- Add the SW Corridor bike path at New Washington St. and the South St. / Washington St. (by State Lab building) as important intersections.

- Improve Pedestrian Experience – check solutions and how they intersect with other improvement efforts (e.g. DCR Arborway Study and the Shea Circle / rotary at the cemetery).
- Add arrows showing existing pedestrian crossways.

Open Space

Land Use

Other

- Retail use needs parking (metered), bike parking (on street) and wider sidewalk widths to promote activity and green boarder to buffer street adjacency.

DEVELOPMENT STUDY SITES

- For all sites: how does community programming happen; where does the funding come from? What about a Community Benefits Trust?

Arborway Yard Parcel

- Set building(s) back to create green edge.
- Uses should be more civic.
- Set greater building heights to support economics
- Start now to explore partnerships with area youth organizations including JP Community Center, YMCA, etc.
- Include arts and cultural uses such as movie theater, performance space, etc.

Private Parking Lot (Fitzgerald Lot)

- Yes on pharmacy and food store; perhaps this would be a better location for a movie theater (see Arborway Yard comment).
- Use roof top for community space including green roof with views and uses such as a café.

MBTA Commuter Parking Lot

- No specific comments.

MBTA Parcel U with ROW 3 and 4 [Hyde Park Ave.]

- 3 stories rather than 5 stories.
- Connect new businesses with current merchants at Walk Hill and Hyde Park Ave.

MBTA Parcel V [Washington Street – small triangular site next to tracks]

- No specific comments.

MBTA Parcel W with ROW 5 [Washington Street – large triangular site]

- Value green space and keep views to Arboretum.
- Cap Orange Line Train Yard to add to Park adjacent feel.
- Low-rise or no development; 1 or 2 stories, not 3, keep transparent.
- Define civic / private and indoor / outdoor uses.

GROUP 3

EMERGING PRINCIPLES

- With respect to Improved Traffic Patterns, emphasize that parking should be minimized to discourage driving and to encourage walking, transit use, and other alternatives to the automobile. For example, revised language to read, “Developments should promote pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit use, with the *minimum* parking sufficient to allow retail stores *and residential uses* to flourish”.
- Emphasize shared, time regulated, non permit parking.
- Strengthen existing residential; new residential destination.
- Expedite traffic light plan for the area.
- To the language on “Community Orientation”, add “programs for youth” and stress affordable housing.
- Concerning “Green/Sustainable Development”, make Forest Hills a model of urban green development.

DISTRICT CONCEPT PLAN

Connections

- Incorporate more green space near connections
- Make entire area bicycle friendly, especially the stretch of Hyde Park Avenue from Ukraine Way to Casey Overpass.
- Expand size of green connections around T station and Arborway.
- Add bike paths to Emerald Necklace connector.
- Emphasize streetscape greening.
- Use signage to identify landmarks.
- Provide improved access through MBTA parcel U from Hyde Park to S. Washington.
- Provide pedestrian connection through Fitzgerald site to neighborhood behind.
- Include LRV in plan.
- Add way-finding signage along Southwest Corridor bike path to show riders where parks are

Open Space

- “Green up” along Washington Street by Arborway Yard.

Land Use

- Use Fremont in Seattle as model.
- Consider “Anchor tenant” (Seattle model) with smaller retail uses surrounding.

Other

- More MBTA parking needed. Add additional level of parking.

DEVELOPMENT STUDY SITES

Arborway Yard Parcel

- Consider more stories on lot(s) by overpass—6 to 7.

- LRV parcel: Change to include in the planning process development around the probability that trolleys don't come back on Centre Street.
- Add uses for youth in Arborway yard

Private Parking Lot (Fitzgerald Lot)

- Consider greater height/more stories.

MBTA Commuter Parking Lot

- More MBTA parking on MBTA lot.
- Minimize parking requirements as a way of encouraging transit use.
- OK to allow height but building should be broken up to avoid feeling of a wall.
- Provide improved access through this parcel from Hyde Park to S. Washington.

MBTA Parcel U with ROW 3 and 4 (Hyde Park Ave.)

- Minimize parking in station except where it serves on-site retail.

MBTA Parcel V [Washington Street – small triangular site next to tracks]

- Parcel V – keep as open space.
- Don't cap height just yet...no agreement on this. Are 3 stories too low to buffer noise?

MBTA Parcel W with ROW 5 [Washington Street – large triangular site]

- If possible, developer establishes overall vision.

GROUP 4

EMERGING PRINCIPLES

- Need to park for retail versus not encouraging more people to drive.
- Better balance of different modes of transportation (autos, pedestrians, etc.) to reflect the number of people using these modes.
- Principles should be worded more strongly: “Ideal improvements MUST result...”
- Needs to be vibrant 17 hours a day.
- Think more explicitly about youth services and affordable rental housing [different points of view]

DISTRICT CONCEPT PLAN

- Changes will make Forest Hills a destination for all surrounding communities—need to take this into account.

Connections

- Missing north-south connections from Washington Street to South Street/Centre Street.
- Overall pedestrian walkways need improvement.

Open Space

Land Use

- Group happy with mix of residential/business uses.
- No youth facility has been designated and there is concern about that. Such a use should be designated. Recommend community meeting to discuss uses/facilities for youth.

Other

DEVELOPMENT STUDY SITES

Arborway Yard Parcel

- Are there environmental issues of concern for this site?

Private Parking Lot (Fitzgerald Lot)

- Lower levels of building will have bad views.
- Site development should be stepped.

MBTA Commuter Parking Lot

- Need improved pedestrian path to the T Station. People shouldn't have to walk through crowds waiting for bus. Overall pedestrian walkways need improvement.
- Station/parking lot is a very important development area. Street level retail important.

MBTA Parcel U with ROW 3 and 4 (Hyde Park Ave.)

- Design process for Parcel U should take into account attractiveness from all points of view (such as walking down Walk Hill Street).

MBTA Parcel V [Washington Street – small triangular site next to tracks]

MBTA Parcel W with ROW 5 [Washington Street – large triangular site]

GROUP 5

EMERGING PRINCIPLES

- Currently too vague; make more explicit.
- Second Principle: Change text in to characterize “transit hub” as secondary and “local retail and community usage” as primary.
- Third Principle: Include youth uses specifically and reflect youth input and needs as its own sentence. Add “rental and affordable” to list of items exemplifying diversity.
- Forth Principle: Add “focus on alternative energy”.

DISTRICT CONCEPT PLAN

Connections

- Strengthen “greenway” connection of Southwest Corridor across New Washington St and onto bike path extension along Washington St.
- Is a street connection possible at the base of Walk Hill to Washington St.
- Revive Tollgate Foot path and bridge.
- Make business use connections at South St. and Washington to Hyde Park Ave.

Open Space

- Green spaces along Washington St. should not supersede development of sites.

Land Use

- Strengthen business uses / connections at South St. / New Washington St. and at Washington St. / Hyde Park Ave.
- Undecided about mix of commercial to residential or target number of units.

Other

DEVELOPMENT STUDY SITES

- More specific focus on parking.
- More focus on affordable housing.
- Remove site specific rental and home ownership notations; mix it across the map.

Arborway Yard Parcel

- Needs environmental remediation to remove contaminated soil or else there can not be open space near housing.
- Need more information on site and process to expand recommendations.
- Add youth recreation uses.

Private Parking Lot (Fitzgerald Lot)

- Youth Center for this site.
- De-emphasize residential uses and parking component.
- Parking is important overall.

MBTA Commuter Parking Lot

- Do not exclude housing.

MBTA Parcel U with ROW 3 and 4 [Hyde Park Ave.]

- Include rental housing.

MBTA Parcel V [Washington Street – small triangular site next to tracks]

- No to youth / recreational services.

MBTA Parcel W with ROW 5 [Washington Street – large triangular site]

- Consider noise factor relative to housing uses.