

meeting notes

Date: 8-May-09

Project: Harrison Albany Corridor/South End Strategic Plan

Prepared By: T. Maistros (Stull & Lee) and Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)

Subject: Second Working Session w/ 27-Member Advisory Group

Attendees: BRA: Randi Lathrop, Carlos Montañez, Marie Mercurio
Stull & Lee Team: M. David Lee, Tom Maistros, Larry Bluestone, Pam McKinney, Mike Hall
Advisory Groups members *per sign-in sheet*

- This was the second meeting of 8 scheduled meeting for the Harrison Albany Strategic Plan Advisory Group. BRA staff made initiated voting process for co-chairs including one business representative (Bob Walsh) and one resident representative (Marc LaCasse). Group agreed that meetings would alternate between morning and evening with morning meetings starting at 8:15am and evenings at 6:15pm. All meetings would be held at Franklin House in the South End.
- Next meeting tentatively set for ~~May 20 at 8:15am~~. *Has been rescheduled to June 3 at 6:15pm.*
- David Lee gave presentation highlighting project area, preliminary goals and objectives from last session and BRA interviews, sites determined on a preliminary basis to be in targeted for discussion and preliminary massing diagrams for some of the site purely to reflect an order of magnitude of build-out and for discussion only. Pam McKinney and Mike Hall also presented existing conditions information on market forces and traffic conditions. The Power Point presentation is loaded on the BRA project site - a few diagrams were distributed as FYI to members. DL noted that the presentation diagrams were just being put forward for discussion and that the main objective was get input on the goals and objectives.
- On traffic it was noted that traffic problems existed on the Mass Ave corridor and on East Berkeley and that these two corridors and Melnea Cass carried the heaviest daily volumes.
- On the RE Market, it was assumed that absorption for new construction would not shift up until 2012. Market for residential rental remained strong. On policy front important to address where life sciences growth could occur in the city. This use significantly affected by proximity to institutions and BL3 lab. New office would be drawn most to financial District suggest this use for New York Streets area. Important to note draw of the Back Streets and the coolness factor. Also that new office could not be built in Back Street.
- On Retail - retail follows, does not lead and it takes a lot of commercial or residential development to support retail. Order of magnitude numbers - each residential unit = 50sf retail - 1,000 sf commercial office = 15 sf retail.
- Representatives from Chinatown indicated need to address ongoing planning efforts in that community particularly areas common to the H/A study area. Flower Market rep noted that there was no current plan for relocation of the market regardless of what presentation massing studies showed.
- Initial reaction was that the massing concepts had no foundation - that there needed to be an integration of public realm concerns and discussion needed to focus on the ground plan.
- The discussion generally focused on the special qualities of the district related to existing uses and scale - that these should be preserved even if created nuisances.
- A comment was made about not addressing opportunity to link district to Chinatown and South Boston - could the Pike be decked - might be a way to provide open space. Could also provide incentive to developers for more density if decked over pike. New objective would be added to have study to address air-rights opportunities as a way to improve connection to adjacent districts.

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- RE density - a objective would be added that density should not negatively impact the quality of the public realm. That it was important not to create non-places - spaces without "South End" character – the soul of the Area (believe to be related to scale, use and other human qualities and the coolness created by mix of uses).
- Another Objective is to create "Identifiable Places" - (integrate this objective with the public realm goals and objectives)
- Another important goals was to address entrances and gateways. Noted that E. Berkeley was signed as a route to Back Bay not SE and that the first impression is of a gas station - there is no recognition of the district as a place until one gets off E. Berkeley.
- Another objective is the vibrancy created by the incompatible uses - object may be to build on the compatibility of traditionally incompatible uses. Suggests that the future land use controls be flexible to allow/encourage a variety of uses.
- The future controls should not exclude opportunities - to allow organic nature of the district to continue.
- The goal of improving access to mass transit was mentioned. This was referenced in multiple ways - to improve mass transit such as accommodating/encouraging Urban Ring development and also improving access to existing facilities like signage/identification of proximity to Red and Orange line light rail stations.
- It was generally believed that there was too much information transmitted - that the next session might be better to discussion focused on goals and objectives particularly on the aspects that can be attributed to quality of place. Consultants and BRA would confer with Co-Chairs and refine agenda and possible allow for more time in between meetings. Also pledged to prerelease presentation so more time could be devoted to discussion.