

April 13, 2010: Hyde Park Planning & Rezoning Advisory Group Working Session

Advisory Group: Barbara Baxter, Victoria Carrara, Gene Clegg, Cuthbert Downey, Ken Fields, Barbara Hamilton, Jay Paget, Steve Roller, Nancy Savelle-Thimble, Anne Lee, Robert Vance, Rob Villegas

Consultants: Carole Schlessinger (CSS); Ralph DeNisco, Kurt Snider (McMahon Associates)

City of Boston: Ted Schwartzberg, Tyler Norod (Boston Redevelopment Authority); Bill Conroy (Boston Transportation Department); David McNulty (Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services); Para Jayshinge, Zack Wassmouth (Public Works Department)

**PLEASE READ THESE NOTES IN TANDEM WITH VIEWING THE POWER POINT PRESENTATION FROM THE APRIL 13, 2010 ADVISORY GROUP MEETING(<http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/Planning/PlanningInitsIndividual.asp?action=ViewInit&InitID=136>)

Meeting Notes

Ted Schwartzberg (BRA) introduces the BRA staff and consultant team. He recognizes Bill Conroy (BTD), David McNulty (ONS), Para Jayshinge and Zack Wassmouth (Public Works Department)

Ted (BRA) states that Marie Mercurio is currently on maternity leave and Tyler Norod (BRA) will be joining the team in her absence.

Next, Ralph DeNisco and Kurt Snider of McMahon Associates, transportation consultant to the BRA, provide a presentation on Hyde Park transportation issues. Carole Schlessinger of Crosby, Schlessinger & Smallridge is in attendance as consultant to the BRA

Below is a link to Ralph's presentation (Document 17):

<http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/Planning/PlanningInitsIndividual.asp?action=ViewInit&InitID=136>

Ralph provides an overview of last month's presentation on high level transportation ideas. Ralph examined the impacts of development in Logan and Cleary Sq in respect to transportation while looking at traffic volumes on major through corridors most of which is pass through traffic. He looked at Hyde Park Ave and River St and Hyde Park Ave and West Street for AM peak hours

Advisory Group Member (AG): Requests that we go back to slide on traffic volumes.

Ralph: Mentions that the study is relatively recent (5 years) and are just to get a bigger picture of the flow of traffic. Numbers seem to show that most of the traffic passes

through and is not destined for this area. Similar numbers between peak AM and PM traffic volumes for the intersections mentioned above.

Ralph: Displays traffic analysis for Hyde Park Ave and River St during AM and PM peak hours which show similar results. Level of service appears to show average wait during typical Boston intersections (rankings between C and D with a few E's)

Ralph: Hyde Park Ave and River St has a significant number of folks boarding bus at this location.

Ralph: Discusses sidewalk issues. Can we make them more friendly to pedestrians? Some are good as is but others need work. Presentation also highlights intersections lacking crosswalks.

Ralph: Current zoning are density based for parking ratio: typo in slideshow. Its 1 space per 300 sq ft not 300,000 sq ft.

Carole: Asked Ted to ask whether city used Boston Transportation Department (BTD) guidelines.

Ted: I believe you would need to apply for variance if you were building and did not meet minimum parking. Ted needed to double check and get back to her.

Ralph: Hyde Park has higher % of people using auto than the city wide average.

Ralph: Asks AG if they are comfortable with the validity of the data by their own assumptions and experiences living in Hyde Park.

AG: Wanted to know if the school was included in the study.

Ralph: Believes it is outside the study area.

Ralph: This is a large study area with many access routes and so it is often difficult to measure total use and modes.

Ralph: Notes the study of bus and commuter rail boarders during peak hours is higher than mode sharing analysis would suspect. Ralph believes that mode sharing analysis is off and overestimates existing trips for vehicles and commercial use is too high given ratio of sq ft.

Carole: Mentions that the future build out analysis is based on roughly 3 story zoning except for around the Fairmount line. This would be roughly over a 20 year period if zoning were to change.

Ted: Future development projects will do their own traffic analysis as part of the cities review to make sure they are relevant in the future.

AG: With an increase in residency within the squares do you take into consideration that there will be more walking trips?

Ralph: We do. More retail and less people needing to drive to other areas to get what they need or want will result in a higher pedestrian count.

Ralph: A shift in land uses may also help balance traffic uses during peak hours. A mix of residential, commercial and offices uses in one place will facilitate transportation between those uses without cars.

Carole: We assume that most 1st floor development to be commercial. If residential is built in the squares it would probably be with the intent to use the Fairmount/commuter lines to commute downtown.

Ralph: Hyde Park has one of highest auto shares in Boston. But it is possible with well designed TOD to decrease these figures.

Ralph: The City is working on a plan to improve traffic which may include synchronizing traffic lights on River St., improving cross walks, and bumping out the curve on Hyde Park Ave while moving bus stop. The Public Works Department will have their own meetings to discuss this project.

Ralph ends his presentation.

AG: Concerned that increased development with only add to further congestion. Asked if there is a tipping point to development?

Ralph: There are lots of things you can do to make the system more efficient. Ideal scenario for development: More people but smaller increase in car use. Smart zoning and traffic design/use can alleviate impacts of increased density/people. We can set goals through the master plan process that will orient development in a way that has the least noticeable impact on traffic.

AG: Would like to see improved bus loading areas to limit impact of large groups waiting for buses in front of commercial uses.

Ralph: We can improve parking and amenities at bus stops which can significantly improve traffic, aesthetics and transit use.

AG: Institute traffic solutions early before people are upset about development and rezoning because of current traffic concerns.

Ralph: We don't want congestion from people passing through. We want people to be coming specifically to Hyde Park's squares. We want to make the area attractive to

pedestrians so that people are willing to park further away or not drive as much through the area.

Ted: Wraps up the meeting and discusses a rough agenda for the next community meeting in June. He hands out a draft outline drawn up by Carole of everything covered thus far to prep for the community meeting in June.

AG: Would like a better understanding of the timeline for a finished product.

Carole: There is not a hard time line but discusses some of the next necessary steps involving community input. Specifically the next community meeting will be in June which will summarize where we are and what we have done so far. Our goal is to have a draft plan ready by the end of the summer. We will then review it in great detail and go back to the community for their input.

AG: Neighbors often want to go up a story in predominantly 2 family neighborhoods. We should take a look at this issue in greater detail.

Carole: We will be looking at these issues at a later date. Some areas zoning is different than existing use (example: residential in zoned commercial areas).

AG: Should we extend businesses towards Readville? Would it be better to extend affordable housing that way for those who may want to move in right away? Artist live/work or just work to inspire the next thing?

Carole: The master plan is not an urban renewal plan. It suggests to get the types of uses you want you should do x,y,z. The purpose is to incentivize the market to provide the desired changes when there is new development.

AG: We need to stick it out and be there ready when the time is right.

AG: Streetscape improvements make everything better. Hopefully much can be done to improve the street quality.

AG: We should make a plan that is flexible to changes that happen down the road.

Carole: These are in essence flexible plans and it will cover 10 or 20 years or more.

Ted: Thank you all for coming. We look forward to seeing you all again at our next meeting.

Meeting adjourns.