

10/19/10 Hyde Park Advisory Group Working Session #12 Meeting Notes/Comments:

This meeting was open to the public.

All but one Advisory Group member was present.

The consultant team (CSS) presented a first list of draft recommendations for the Hyde Park Neighborhood Strategic Plan. This draft list is posted on the project website.

Comments included:

- One Advisory Group member wanted to make sure that any recommended design review process that we add in the new zoning will be clear and understandable to the average resident. He wanted to know if the future design guidelines and requirements would have “teeth”. Concern where any new design review process will create conflict with the property owner. It should be a good thing and beneficial to the neighborhood, but don’t want it to slow down dramatically what the property owner is trying to do. Most projects that go through the Zoning Board of Appeal have a BRA design review requirement after approval. At this time, there is no required BRA design review component on as-of-right projects in Hyde Park. The draft recommendations suggest that this would be a good idea (see Roslindale and Roxbury zoning codes to see language of implementing this for projects over 750 of new construction or renovation facing a public street or open space. It has been beneficial in both of these neighborhoods for maintaining and preserving existing neighborhood character).
- For next meeting, the group and residents would like an explanation of siting specific uses such as churches, day care centers, schools, and group residences. The BRA/consultant team will look into this. We do know that churches cannot be regulated, and must be allowed in any zoning district as per the Dover Amendment. What the BRA can regulate are the dimensional requirements and the parking associated with a church, but not the actual use.
- There was a very active discussion about allowing residential uses in former or current industrial properties (i.e., Stop and Shop and even Readville Yards – see below). The recommendations suggested artist live/work space in the Stop and Shop warehouse, along with the continuation of light industrial uses and commercial uses. The Advisory Group seemed to be in support of this use for the site; however, concerns from the public stemmed from any artist live/work use flipping to straight residential use if the artist live/work idea doesn’t work long-term (Westinghouse Lofts on HPA).
- There was an active discussion about the Readville Yards. We do know that this site has an RFP out for clean-up (unsure as to which standards they will be cleaned, likely not residential). The draft recommendation was to keep the Readville Yards site in a heavier manufacturing/industrial zoning district (as it is now), but there seemed to be some interest in lessening the degree of industrial uses that might be allowed there in the future. Perhaps it might be suitable to rezone it the same as the Stop and Shop Warehouse (LI-2 vs. I-2). There is a real concern of allowing

heavy manufacturing at this site for residents in Readville due to truck traffic and environmental contamination health concerns.

- Someone requested a comparison matrix of what is allowed in some of the newer industrial districts (i.e., LI-1, LI-2) for previously adopted zoning codes in other neighborhoods. The BRA can pull this together for the November meeting.
- Discussion on cleaning up lighting industrial areas with wider sidewalks, potentially larger front setbacks, potential commercial storefront, nice designs. Make it more attractive for the average person to walk through these areas.
- Discussion on height in Cleary/Logan Squares. There was a long discussion regarding the recommendation suggesting a base height of three stories, with a height bonus for redevelopments setting back or using a mansard-type roof for stories up to five. Some residents are still opposed to anything over three stories. What is allowed now is 3 stories closer to Logan Square, 3 ½ stories closer to Cleary Square. It is not possible to “downzone” and recommend anything lower than 3 stories. We will try to come to a final resolution of this recommendation by the next meeting in November. It is hard to come to a consensus on this particular item while many residents in Hyde Park have yet to show up at meetings and vocalize themselves. Someone suggested adding a footnote in the zoning that would potentially allow any development to go slightly higher than 3 stories if and only if there is an x% of a grade present. Those details to be worked out. Several community residents were open to this idea.
- The 1.5 parking ratio was debated but not confirmed. Many residents of the public were not satisfied with this parking ratio for any newly constructed housing unit. This will likely need to be discussed in the upcoming November meeting (and try to come to a consensus/happy medium). The highest residential parking ratio in the city is in Roslindale at 2.0 per newly constructed unit. This ratio will ultimately be a negotiation with the BTB (City’s transportation dept) when the rezoning process starts.
- When staff/consultant recommended eliminating small industrial districts where existing industrial uses were not present, there was vocalized support from the audience.