

## **Hyde Park Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group Meeting #1**

May 12, 2009 at 6:30 PM

Logan Square Municipal Building

1179 River Street, Hyde Park

### Attendees

Hyde Park Advisory Group Members (13): Barbara Baxter, Victor Carrara, Gene Clegg, Cuthbert Downey, Ken Fields, Barbara Hamilton, Liz Marini, Jay Paget, Steve Roller, Nancy Savelle-Thimble, Anne Lee, Robert Vance, Rob Villegas

Public/Press: Ann Giovanni, Jennifer Santos (Hyde Park Bulletin)

BRA Staff: Marie Mercurio, Ted Schwartzberg, Jeong-Jun Ju

City Staff: Bill Conroy (BTD), Brian Clinton (Councilor Consalvo's Office), David McNulty (ONS)

### Meeting Notes

Marie Mercurio (BRA) introduces the BRA staff and consultant team who will be working on the neighborhood plan. She recognizes Bill Conroy of the Boston Transportation Department, Brian Clinton of Councilor Consalvo's office and David McNulty of the Office of Neighborhood Service, who will also be working on the project.

Advisory Group (AG) members next introduce themselves.

Marie next reviews the AG logistics, communications and co-chair selection process. She asks the AG for co-chair nominations. It is determined that nominations will be left open. Marie stated that additional nominations could be sent to her by e-mail. The AG can vote via email, and hopefully the Chair and/or Co-Chairs will be designated by the start of the next AG meeting (June 2, 2009).

Marie then discussed the timeline for the development of the neighborhood plan and the rezoning of the neighborhood. She also discusses the plan for community meetings with the AG.

The consultant team next gives a powerpoint presentation on the history of Hyde Park as well as the goals, purpose and plan of action for developing the neighborhood plan.

At the end of the presentation, Marie asks for question from AG members, which leads to a discussion of the MBTA's involvement in the transportation planning process. Marie replies that members of the MBTA staff have been involved in planning, meeting with BRA and other city staff. They will continue to work with city staff and the consultant team going forward. If and when an upcoming AG meeting goes into transportation specifics, Marie can invite an MBTA representative.

The AG next discusses the Hyde Park zoning district boundaries. Marie will put a map of the boundary area on the BRA project website.

AG members then request a list of short bios on each other so they can get to know each other, and each others' areas of expertise, better.

Next the AG discusses several examples of the challenges in the neighborhood related to building design. Design problems are contrasted with density. Many of the group members agreed that design seemed to be a much bigger issue in Hyde Park than density and scale. Several agreed that higher density can be appropriate for many areas in Hyde Park, given the design is consistent with the neighborhood character and fabric.

Next the AG addresses environmental remediation challenges in Hyde Park and opportunities for green areas. Potential opportunities for the Thompson Center and the Martini Shell are discussed. AG members mention that a handful of property owners hold a large number of commercial properties, which may present challenges if individual landlords oppose suggestions that come out of the planning process. AG members then underscore the importance of focusing energy on the use of space behind commercial buildings, particularly at the parking lots of the Hyde Park Commuter Rail station.

Group members agreed that there was a wealth of natural resources in Hyde Park but the built environment does not embrace it. Accessibility to the river is a problem.

The AG next discusses the differences between as-of-right housing development and development requiring zoning variances. The AG mentions the recent development at Fairmount station as example of a project that was done as-of-right, which probably would have been much better if it were built to exceed the current zoning restrictions. The building housing Townsends is given as an example of what the zoning should try to encourage. The AG mentioned that it would be good to have a quicker design review process for good design. They wanted to know what the obstacles that projects giving a good example in the neighborhood have to go through.

The AG then continues to discuss the area around the Fairmount station, noting the importance of reorienting development to the river. One of the goals for Cleary Square, the other end of the retail district, should be place making, AG members state.

AG members next discuss the opportunities for outdoor recreation in the neighborhood. This issue will become more important as new schools move into Hyde Park.

The AG then discusses several specific developments and buildings in the neighborhood. The Shops at Riverwood are acknowledged as having a major impact on the neighborhood. A supermarket (Price Rite) that will anchor the development is acknowledged as an asset to the neighborhood. They also note that the development will embrace the riverfront, not turn its back to it. They also mention that the developer will

be preserving the stack/chimney formally used for the industry as a historic preservation measure.

An AG member mentions the U-Haul building as an example of a beautiful building that is covered by less attractive siding. Apparently, under the siding, there is a brick and window façade that is very attractive. This building has a prime location on the river.

The area around Hyde Park Avenue and the Truman Highway is noted by members as becoming a mini commercial district (pizzeria, U-Haul, laundry, tailor, etc.). Members note that it will be important for the neighborhood plan to address this area in a manner that encourages positive development.

Members next express the desire to learn more about the development – or lack thereof – that is occurring around the Grandma’s Coffee Cake factory, in the industrial area along Hyde Park Avenue. There is a very successful gym that has located there. Another project, the Westinghouse factory artist lofts, is discussed. Its 63 units of live/work space will be coming online this fall. The importance of artists and the creative economy as a whole to Hyde Park is discussed. The niche development strategy from the Retail Market Study which supports the artist culture in Hyde Park seems to also be supported by the AG.

The AG then discusses the use of City resources, including the BRA’s Research Department, to most effectively advise development and incentivize certain types of uses (i.e., biotech was mentioned), particularly in industrial areas.

Marie then reviews the plan for communications with the AG. She asks if e-mail is an acceptable primary means of communication. AG members state that it is. The AG agrees to meet again on June 2, 2009 to further define goals and objectives, and to discuss the kick-off meeting with the community at large (mid-June 2009).

Meeting Adjourns.