

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

May 18, 2010 at 6:30 PM

E-18 Police Station (basement)

1249 Hyde Park Avenue, Hyde Park

### Attendees

*Hyde Park Advisory Group (AG) Members (12):* 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

*Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) Staff:* Ted Schwartzberg, Tyler Norod, Timothy Bevins

*Consultant:* Carol Schlessinger of Crosby/Schlessinger/Smallridge (CSS)

### Meeting Notes

Ted Schwartzberg (BRA) introduces the BRA staff and consultant team.

Ted: States the meeting's purpose as reviewing past presentations and setting the agenda for the next community wide meeting in June. The goal is for the Advisory Group, through this discussion, to reach a more complete understanding of previous meetings and presentations and achieve a more developed vision of wants and needs for the community.

Advisory Group Member (AG): We wanted this opportunity to discuss our overall thoughts. 6 large topics were established at the previous public meeting: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Open Space / Recreation, Transportation, Urban Design / Historic Preservation / Public Realm / Government  
Each member of AG took some of these 6 home to go over a little bit more in-depth; from here we will each present our thoughts and concerns for our specific focus areas.

### RESIDENTIAL

---

AG: If we rezone residential, we must keep in mind that this is what will happen into the future. Existing houses should be grandfathered in. Need to focus on making area appealing for new people to come and live here.

AG: Need to eliminate the lack of continuity in zoning- currently zoning lines are arbitrary. Don't want industrial in middle of residential, etc. Would like to maintain continuity of neighborhoods.

-Is there anything we can do about absentee landlords through zoning?

-The variance process is confusing for homeowners.

-As of right development is easy to abuse on the residential side. We need to put more teeth into the as of right section if we are going to keep it, otherwise perhaps do away with as of right all together.

AG: Perhaps we should address this on main visual corridors. Otherwise, without as of right zoning, a huge burden is placed on the community with a backlog of ZBA cases.

AG: Need to protect green space and pocket parks.

-Evaluate selective permit parking (some streets have it, some streets don't).

-Should adopt LEED ND healthy community plan.

-Ensure we have mixed use zonings to support TODs.

-Zoning needs to be better understood by landowners, renter's etc.- should develop an educational program.

AG: Very concerned when we say no as of right. On corridors, we should have a review process. Some lots should be capped at heights etc. others should not. Design review should incorporate the context in which the building is sited, rather than just looking at the building only.

-New residential construction around the new mixed uses developments/transportation is what we want to see.

AG: General vision statement: we want to support a diversity of housing choices: rental, ownership, starter and retirement housing, as well as a diversity of pricing. Around certain areas, we want to encourage transit use and subsequently reduce parking in those areas.

CAROLE: Asks if AG can try to establish if there are agreements or disagreements so there is a sense of progress on each topic rather than open-ended discussion...

AG: Concern is time; also don't want to put an end to the discussions tonight.

AG: Not sure we need to be in full agreement about these topics yet

CAROLE: Main points for Residential section are:

1: look at review process

2: ensure compatibility of zoning

Everyone seems not to be sure about what the solution is, but agrees what the key issues we need to keep moving forward on are.

---

## COMMERCIAL

---

AG: People are most concerned about how there is a lack of shops in Hyde Park. We need to get better stores here, and then retain them- many are priced out by increasing rent costs. Lack of stores and places for people to go to are the main issues.

AG: Increasing the parking available would have a big impact on increasing the desirability of coming down to these new stores. Should improve the flow of traffic and increase parking.

AG: Agree with everything said so far, would add we need to have someone really look at traffic flow and identify problems and solutions. Commercial district currently is a cut through to get to other places- need to identify how to lessen the danger for people walking there

-Three story model is a great- in some areas perhaps we could go past this but as a whole this is desirable- the Townsend's building is a perfect example of this.

AG: Let's identify the 3-story model as a point of contention

AG: When churches are in session, all the parking goes away around them.

-Way finding, signage

-Potential opportunity for our own post office square near town's parking lot

AG: If 2-3 floor buildings are built, they should have step backs and balconies (as they are near Fairmont). This way the pedestrian does not feel enclosed and tunneled in.

AG: Need to get the board of trade involved in this process in order to move forward

AG: Retail at the transit stations is critical.

-Potential for stores on river street that are currently backing up to the parking lot- if the retail were two sided and faced both street and parking, would really open up area.

-Where else can industrial uses go? Don't want to see these uses removed just for aesthetics. These are still important and provide jobs.

AG: Potential opportunity with Bank of America in center of everything- city could work with them in rerouting and reorienting the traffic flow. Need to get public works involved in this process.

-The pedestrian crossing here is very worn down.

## INDUSTRIAL

---

AG: Empty industrial lots- should try to attract new green industries, some living space, perhaps some arts uses.

-Tidier Industrial spaces- cleaner yards, signage, paint.

-Better access to the river, which is often butted up against the industrial uses.

-Lower end of Hyde Park- potential area for performing arts space, brewpub, place to rent bikes etc. to create an environment that caters to people interested the arts and outdoors.

-Photos provided from San Antonio showing the river walk and other areas as an example of what they have been able to do with their small river- relates a lot to Hyde Park.

*See appendix 1*

AG: Can't build houses up near stop and shop warehouse- extreme flooding risk. Instead would like to see businesses stay up there, a good place for them, that's not too far out of the way

AG: Pockets of industrial along A street / B street etc., perfect example of the incompatibility of uses we have here. Lots of empty space along lower Hyde Park Ave.

AG: Many of the sites along Hyde Park Ave. are contaminated from past industrial uses

AG: Area along River Street can be used for the production phase of stained glass, furniture making, art etc... they can be sold or displayed in the commercial area, but perhaps use these spaces for the production.

AG: Along Lower Hyde Park Ave, large portions of the industrial lots are not actually being utilized by the companies- just dead paved space. Perhaps zoning can allow multiple uses on these lots.

## OPEN SPACE / RECREATION

---

AG: Spreng Park is a great spot, well used. Could put roof over picnic tables etc. to increase use of the spaces into winters.

AG: Need to act fast to protect Mother Brook, Outer Bank Park.

AG: Goals: community gardens, pocket parks, improved access.

-Major challenge: Taking back these waterfronts from private ownership. If land were made public, could improve access to waterfront.

-Way finding signs and connector paths along Mother Brook and Neponset.

AG: The area around Neponset is so polluted from past industrial uses; nothing can really be developed here until the pollution is addressed. DCR and EPA are working with the families that live there.

AG: Area near post office could be a good place to put larger building tower, if one is to be built.

AG: Area around Fairmont station behind blockbuster needs a lot of work and access here must be improved.

---

## TRANSPORTATION

---

AG: Promote change in neighborhood from primarily private vehicles to other modes of transportation.

-TOD has best potential at Cleary and Fairmont. Logan Square is most pedestrian friendly area.

-Still important to have parking in these areas, until everything is built out, this is still primary means of transportation.

AG: Can't forget that walking is itself a form of transportation and we must accommodate and make provisions.

AG: Traffic flow is backed up by people looking for parking while driving through main intersections- new parking must be located so as not to interfere with traffic flow.

AG: Goal is to slow people down, get people interested and get them to stay here. Can do a lot with easy fixes such as signage, opening up one-way streets and synching the traffic signals along Hyde Park Ave.

AG: Public transit- increased density at Cleary and Logan, but perhaps some midrises along perimeter of Cleary and Fairmont- would bring people in and out, become commuter rail stations.

-Community is in decent shape with bus routes- more along Manapan Station.

AG: More bike lanes needed, especially along River Street and Hyde Park Ave. Need to integrate bicycles into overall transit plan.

AG: Parking structure is going to be needed once area is fully developed.

AG: Interesting that when we had retail discussion, entire talk was about traffic flow- what can we as a zoning committee do to deal with traffic? How do we influence it, and deal with flow?

-Transit thoughts:

River Street and Hyde Park Ave do have high counts, but they still work.

Places for busses to turn around, need some more room

Making one-way streets is not going to work; we don't have the room for loops

Should assess bus stop locations- are they in the best spots?

Public transit- what's going to happen with Fairmont- put it underground? What will impact of this be?

Hyde Park station has opportunity written all over it

Incorporate structured parking into concentrated developments around transit stops- an appropriate place for this might be near Main Street, or at train station (Hyde Park) because this area will have more going on around it, helps mitigate safety concerns

AG: Until we have density, people are going to come in cars so we have to have parking

AG: Lack of bike racks is a major issue

AG: Davis square has great bike racks connected to parking meters- distributed rather than concentrated at clusters- a model we could follow.

---

## URBAN DESIGN HISTORIC PRESERVATION PUBLIC REALM GOVERNMENT

---

AG: Everett Theater needs to be revitalized- this is an incredible opportunity and would be a great asset to Hyde Park.

AG: Theater is not registered with the National Historic Registry, so no restrictions for revitalizing it

AG: Historic Boston has identified Everett Theater as a great building to focus on. We should highlight the other opportunities identified by historic Boston.

-MTBA's ability to develop on their properties with what seems to be no community process must be addressed- do they have any obligations to city?

AG: Not subject to zoning or design review by city.

AG: If we establish a vision, we should present it to MTBA and ask that they consult with us whenever they're going to build within Hyde Park

AG: this is something they do elsewhere and often even though not required; we can send this message to them.

AG: The fact that the longest, most crossed streets cross walk is faded is indicative that though we have city council, mayors office, public agencies etc. that oversee public realm, issues are often only visible to residents- should create a mechanism that enables users of the public realm to easily get a conversation going. For example, a couple times a year, a public entity checks in to see what's working, what's not working.

AG: That exists to some extent already: community taskforce / community resources group

---

TED: Let's try to schedule the public meeting for the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June.

CAROLE We will present much of what you guys have seen- let people walk around and learn more about the topics that interest them. I will circulate the presentation and a draft of the script so that you can get a sense of the tone of the talk so you guys can make some comments

---

Member of Public (MP): Are there any more buildings planned for the area on river street where Price Right is?

AG: Yes, plans for a phase 2, developer intends to build to suit, so new buildings won't go up until clients are found.

MP: Are the river areas past the dams behind price right intended to be cleaned up?

AG: Eventually yes, but first we must focus on the areas around the dams as they are the most polluted.

Meeting adjourns.

## Appendix 1

Below are some photos of two areas of San Antonio, Texas. First is the [Blue Star Art Complex](#), a great model for stream-side renewal of historic, industrial buildings. Next is an old defunct brewery turned into a retail, education, office market and recreational complex. Last is the San Antonio Riverwalk recently extended to the Museum of Art.











