

JP Centre/South CAC Meeting  
Meeting Notes  
September 30, 2009

**Vineet:** The City will draft a letter on the catenary poles, to be signed by the Commissioner and submitted to the MBTA.

**Michael H.:** If poles are to be removed, we should think strategically about which ones to get rid of. There may be potential to use some poles for banners across the street, public art, etc.

**Carlos:** The JP Business Association agrees with Michael Halle and would support this concept.

**Ralph gave an update and background on the Route 39 bus improvement process.**

**Michael H.:** Would like the group to look at cross sections for proposed designs and provide recommendations on changes.

**Michael R.:** The neck downs will mean narrower travel lanes and parking lanes.

**John I. –** At Seaverns Street, buses are already parked in the middle of the road. Don't think neckdowns will encourage bus drivers to pull into the curb. Also concerned that the Route 39 process is not coordinated with the JP Centre/South process.

**Ralph D.:** Responded that currently the stops aren't long enough for the current buses which explains why buses are unable to pull to the curb.

**Michael H.:** Reminded group that he, Michael Riskind, and Michael Epp are all on the Route 39 Committee.

### **Questions and Comments from Visioning Conversation**

**Don K.:** We will create criteria to evaluate options by

**Michael H.:** It is important to have community ownership and participation in the process.

**Q:** How are "special places" defined and what do they mean?

**Ralph:** Special places are nodes/concrete designs where we want activity to occur.

**Lauren O.:** One of the goals of the process is to prioritize non-vehicular modes of transportation. Create environments that encourage people to choose non-car ways of traveling.

**Carlos:** Need parking for businesses to be successful. Parking is part of the economic generator for vibrant business districts.

**Michael H.:** One of the goals of the process will be to encourage a vibrant, local business community.

**Mary H.:** Currently there is no visual appeal on South Street. People walk less down South Street because it is unpleasant. Creating a vibrant sidewalk experience would entice people to get out of their cars and use other modes of transportation.

**Kathy K.:** Slightly troubled by the phrase “create special places.” Perhaps it’s more accurate to say “reinforce and enhance special places.” Does this extend to community events and celebrations?

**Gretchen V.:** One example could be to close off streets for festivals, change the paving pattern in the street or sidewalk – to join the sidewalk and the street experience.

**John I.:** This process needs to connect with the existing/ongoing projects along the corridor to maximize resources and compliment ideas.

**Michael R.:** Likes Don’s Great Streets criteria and analysis. However, disagrees with the amount of street ranked as “good.” In particular, the criteria that says good means there is space to walk with leisure. Most of the corridor should be ranked poor – especially Pond Street to Forest Hills. There isn’t enough space to walk or enjoy the neighborhood.

**Michael H.:** Special places are not always contrived – they can just happen as a result of individualism. A celebration of what has been, what is, and what can be.

**Carlos:** Insufficient sidewalk widths will compromise the street experience. Has there been consideration of adding second floors stepped back with restaurant terraces?

**Gretchen:** Part of the process will be examining appropriate densities for the corridor. Reducing clutter and obstructions will, alone, make sidewalks feel significantly wider without widening them.

**Franklin:** Right now, Centre Street is 75% cars and 25% everything else. We need to deal with the car and make this ratio more human. Need to break out of the mindset that we design around cars. Improved pedestrian conditions will improve business. The Arborway Committee has a 30 minute PBS video about London and how they have improved the pedestrian quality on the street.

**Vineet:** This process is an opportunity to rethink the street. The City is open to new ideas and is committed to making 21<sup>st</sup> century streets.

**Lauren:** Make sure this process works in coordination with other projects – such as the bike share program. When, where, and how will the bike share fit into the JP Centre/South corridor? Also, need to think about trees. Maintenance is tough and research is needed to look at best practices and viability so we don’t end up with unsustainable trees.

**Kathy K.:** Need to not only focus on the face of the street, but also what happens behind the buildings as there may be some interesting and important opportunities.

**Michael R.:** Important to remember that different groups see and experience the streets differently – through their own lenses. Hyde Square is a very young neighborhood and it need to be looked at from a youth perspective – more youth need to be engaged. Also, there are accessibility issues that need to be tuned into. For example, the slight grade in front of Stop and Shop is troublesome with the bus stop. It’s hard for seniors to use this bus stop.

**Vineet:** The City will design and share a survey oriented toward visitors to the business districts to learn more about how people are shopping and traveling in the district.

**Michael H.:** The survey should inform fears/perceptions. The goal is to use the public space most efficiently and a solution should be addressed based on information.

**Carlos:** Enforcement is an issue. For example, deliveries made during rush hour are not allowed but not enforced. CVS keeps their windows closed, but nobody tells them they need to have certain store front standards. Need a transparent street experience and enforcement/standards from BRA and BTM.

**Mary H.:** Need to talk with the business owners to make sure they understand the rules but that their needs are addressed. Don't want to make it too difficult for business owners to operate.

**Question:** Will there be parking for employees and businesses? The fear is that removing a lane of parking will mean overflow parking in the neighborhoods.

**Carlos:** Need to encourage commuting programs within businesses – T pass subsidies, carpooling, etc.

**Question:** How can we bring in customers from outside of JP into local businesses?

**Gretchen:** Creating a predictable and reliable system for getting to/parking in the district will help bring people to the area.

**Comment:** Hyde Square to Jackson Square is becoming a regional destination and known around the city as the "Latin Quarter."

**Question:** In regards to the survey, will the community have ownership over the survey? Would be good to get people involved in the survey.

**Question:** Wouldn't bringing the trolley back in the middle of the street discourage drivers?

**Comment:** For the survey, we need to include people who aren't already in and around Jamaica Plain. We want to attract more people – how can we gather more information about impacts and outcomes?

**Michael H.:** Need to think about connecting modes of transit through a wayfinding strategy. For example, signs from pedestrian routes to transit stops.

**Carlos:** One way to think about the corridor is through the aromas one experiences traveling from the Latin Quarter to Hyde Square, to Centre Street. There should be more music on the street – a venue somewhere for local musicians.

**Comment:** The JP Historic Society has a historic presentation on Jamaica Plain and provides walking tours of the neighborhood. It would be interesting to bring someone in for a presentation or to take a walking tour as a group.

### **Next Steps:**

Consultants will begin to develop a streetscape palette

City and consultants will develop a survey and bring back to the community for review

Sit with business groups to understand needs and issues