



MassDOT Turnpike Air Rights Parcels #12-15
CAC Working Meeting #16
Thursday, December 11, 2014, 6:00 p.m.
Location: St. Cecilia's Parish Hall

CAC Attendees:

Brandon Beatty, Back Bay Resident
Kathleen Brill, Fenway Civic Association (FCA)
Fritz Casselman, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Brian Doherty, Building and Construction Trades Council of the Metropolitan District
Valerie Hunt, Fenway Neighborhood Resident
David Lapin, Community Music Center
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Teri Malo, Fenway Studios
Barbara Simons, Berklee Task Force
Gil Strickler, St. Cecilia's Parish
Steve Wolf, Fenway Community Development Corporation (FCDC)

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Massachusetts State Senator William Brownsberger
Caitlin Duffy, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Jay Livingstone
Mohona Siddique, Office of Boston City Councilor Josh Zakim

City of Boston Attendees:

Shaina Aubourg, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
David Carlson, BRA
Jonathan Greeley, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA

State of Massachusetts Attendees:

Joe Cheever, MBTA
Mark Gravalles, MassDOT
Mary Runkel, MBTA
Drew Leff, Stantec Consulting
Carla Moynihan, Robinson & Cole
Jeffrey Simon, MassDOT
Bill Tuttle, MassDOT
Gretchen Von Grossman, MBTA

Members of the Public:

Randall Albright, Back Bay Resident
Alleyn Alie, Tishman/AECOM
Kevin Benjamin, Stull + Lee
Kenan Bigby, Trinity Financial
Kelly Brilliant, The Fenway Alliance
Rebecca Brooks, Back Bay Resident

Kwesi Budu-Arthur, Cambridge Seven Associates
Robert Burnham, Kleinfelder
Don Carlson, Back Bay Resident
Elizabeth Christoferetti, Utile
John Copley, Copley Wolff Design Group
Tawan Davis, The Peebles Corporation
Matt Ellis, Ellis Strategies
Michael Epp, Kleinfelder
Richard Giordano, FCDC
Abby Goldenfarb, Trinity Financial
Peter Gori, Colliers
Grace Holley, FCDC
Tom Holtey, Back Bay Resident
Tim Horn, FCA
Tracey Hunt, Fenway Resident
Christopher Janes, Resident of 360 Newbury
Gary Johnson, Cambridge Seven Associates
Jim Keefe, Trinity Financial
Curtis Kemeny, Boston Residential Group
Neil Kollios, HDR
Elliott Laffer, NABB
David Lee, Stull + Lee
Geoff Lewis, Massachusetts Convention Center Authority
Nancy Ludwig, Icon Architecture
Pam McDermott, McDermott Ventures
Blake Middleton, Handel Architects
Dave Newman, The Strategy Group
Amelia Patt, The Peebles Corporation
Richard Pien, Boston Ward Five Committee
Sue Prindle, NABB
Deirdre Rosenberg, NABB
Tina Schaefer, Resident of 360 Newbury
Carolyn Spicer, McDermott Ventures
Steven Csipke, Fenway Resident
Susan Tracy, The Strategy Group
Jack Train, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bob Uhlig, Halvorson Design
Andre White, Trinity Financial
Bill Whitney, Berklee College of Music
Jacqueline Yessian, NABB

Meeting Summary

On Thursday, December 11th, 2014, the sixteenth working session of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Turnpike Air Rights Parcels 12 – 15 Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. in the St. Cecilia's Parish Hall by Jonathan Greeley, BRA Planner.

Jonathan welcomed everyone and explained that the meeting would provide an opportunity to further explore the proposals for Parcel 13 (all of which are available on the BRA's project website: <http://www.tinyurl.com/Parcels12-15>) presented by Trinity Financial, The Peebles Corporation, and Boston Residential Group at the previous CAC working session. He noted that both the CAC and BRA will write comment letters, but that the final decision ultimately rests with MassDOT. He also reminded the group that the Article 80 Large Project Review process is still to come, and that the project falls within the jurisdiction of the Back Bay Architectural Commission.

Jonathan then introduced Bill Tuttle, Director of Projects in the Office of Real Estate and Asset Development at MassDOT. Bill reminded the group that all public comments on the proposals would be due on Monday, December 15th. He acknowledged the quick review timeframe but also reiterated that there is a good amount of institutional momentum on this project and so MassDOT is planning to move forward as intended, as quickly as possible.

CAC Co-Chair Fritz Casselman, Neighborhood Association of Back Bay, turned the meeting over to the first proponent. Each proponent was given 5 minutes to present an overview of their development proposal. A summary of the presentations and resulting Q&A discussion follows.

Boston Residential Group: Boylston Place

Curtis Kemeny, Boston Residential Group (BRG), emphasized the proposal's focus on adequately addressing the needs of DOT and the new MBTA station. He noted the firm's intimate and longstanding connection with the site, and spoke about how parking constraints and the market drove the firm's decisions about uses, which include student dormitory, retail, and specialty hotel. The project will reconnect the shopping corridors of Boylston and Newbury streets.

He then addressed CAC and public concerns about the above-zoning height of the project as well as the unsponsored dorm, noting that the concept will evolve and change over time, but also acknowledged that certain modifications will have trade-offs: a reduced height would need to be compensated by DOT through a lower land sale price or other negotiation. He cited local project experience and the firm's ability to successfully work through a productive public process.

Trinity Financial: The Boylston

Jim Keefe, Trinity Financial, emphasized the firm's commitment to the neighborhoods of Back Bay and the Fenway. He spoke about Trinity's belief in public process, seeking to improve projects through communication with the community and design buildings that fit into the neighborhood. He noted that the design would change going forward and reminded the group that the firm's original proposal for Parcel 13 had followed zoning requirements. He also spoke about the firm's passion for taking on challenging projects, noting the vibrancy of the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street and the opportunity the project represents. He concluded by emphasizing the firm's commitment to and confidence in transforming an underappreciated intersection into a vibrant public space.

The Peebles Corporation: The Viola

Amelia Patt, The Peebles Corporation, began by highlighting Peebles' 31 year track record of successful public-private partnerships and their commitment to a transparent and collaborative process. Tawan Davis, The Peebles Corporation, noted that the firm has welcomed public

input, and looked carefully at the Civic Vision document, MassDOT's Feasibility Study, and the height requirements outlined in the zoning before assembling their proposal. The project carefully considers the neighborhood context and recommends an appropriate density, while keeping in mind that the community had asked for a project that stands out. Tawan showed examples of the firm's projects in Washington, D.C. and Miami. He noted that the proposed design would continue to change and that the firm was committed to expanding opportunities in the city with a focus on women and minority owned business, affordability, and job creation. He concluded by reiterating that Peebles would be a new and exciting choice for Boston and would deliver a unique and special project for the city.

CAC Q&A

- Kathleen Brill, FCA, asked BRG for more information about coordination between 360 Newbury and the retail space in Boylston Place. Curtis Kemeny responded that the two projects would be integrated, with the MBTA station connecting the retail spaces of each building at the ground level. Boylston Place's retail would also feature vertical connections to rooftop recreation spaces and restaurants, creating a public benefit.
- Fritz Casselman asked for more information on the connection of the 360 Newbury building to the proposed building on Parcel 13. Curtis responded that making the MBTA station ADA-accessible requires elevators directly below 360 Newbury, meaning that the any reconfiguration of the station entry requires the use of the building's foundation. BRG is proposing creating a pavilion that would connect to retail in 360 Newbury.
- Fritz followed up to ask whether Trinity or Peebles had any comments on the relationship between 360 Newbury and the MBTA station. Nancy Ludwig, Icon Architecture, noted that Trinity's previous proposal included work to understand the Boylston Street entrance, and that their project will have structure that lands within five feet of 360 Newbury. She also mentioned that Trinity has worked in similar conditions elsewhere, and that despite the complexity of the project, felt comfortable that it would be doable. A representative from Peebles spoke about the need to minimize impacts and their commitment to working with 360 Newbury to create an optimal solution.
- David Lapin, Community Music Center, inquired about Trinity's previous attempts to secure a designation for Parcel 13 and how those processes had added value to their proposal. Kenan Bigby, Trinity Financial, spoke about how time gave the firm the opportunity to explore many schemes and develop ideas that have now resulted in a proposal that responds sensitively to the site's constraints. He noted that the firm's continued involvement speaks to their commitment to and passion for the project.
- Brandon Beatty, Resident of Back Bay, asked each group to give an example of a contentious public process that they had worked through.
 - Tawan Davis, Peebles, spoke about the firm's failed attempt to win a referendum to rezone a large acreage tract in Napa County. He also mentioned the challenges the firm faced when entering the market in Miami, acknowledging the difficulty of entering a new community. The firm ultimately built a successful project there: the St. James Royal Palm Hotel.
 - Jim Keefe, Trinity, noted that the firm has been through many contentious processes. He spoke about working with the Pine Street Inn to create permanent supportive housing, a project where they faced much opposition from the community but were ultimately able to get the project approved.

- Curtis Kemeny, BRG, spoke about a project in Jamaica Plain where the firm was converting the former Home for Little Wanderers into apartments. The neighborhood was just beginning to transition from institutional to residential, so the community process and determining an appropriate balance of affordable housing was difficult. Ultimately, the firm settled on 23% units deemed affordable across a mix of unit types and multiple tiers of AMIs. The building will be completed in August 2015.
- Barbara Simons, Berklee Task Force, asked Trinity and BRG if they had ideas for reducing the heights of their projects, both of which significantly exceed zoning regulations.
 - Curtis Kemeny, BRG, noted that he was comfortable reducing height but that it would mean a trade-off, mostly likely in what the firm could pay MassDOT. Noting the complexity of expectations and requirements involved, he mentioned he was happy to discuss the issue further.
 - Kenan Bigby, Trinity, explained that the firm's previous proposal was zoning compliant (but did not involve building a full deck over the Turnpike), but that the most current MassDOT Feasibility Study had given them more opportunity to explore height. He noted that the firm was flexible in considering height moving forward.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen, CAC Co-Chair and Back Bay Association, asked Peebles to explain how they were able to afford building within the zoning regulation. Tawan Davis explained that their building price is competitive and that the relationship between height and value is not necessarily a binary tradeoff. He noted that the project baseline is mid-range, with opportunity to adjust parts of the project. He also spoke about how the income derived from a four-star boutique hotel and condos would create value that would help offset the cost of the deck.
- Steve Wolf, FCDC, thanked the teams for meeting with FCDC's Urban Village Committee on Tuesday night, noting that affordable housing was the number one concern. He asked all three firms to consider how to go beyond the Inclusionary Development Program (IDP) minimum of 15% affordable housing to create more impact.
 - Jim Keefe, Trinity, explained that building affordable units on-site can be difficult, but that the firm would build more if they could find a way. He mentioned the possibilities of lowering the average median income (AMI) tiers or finding a location within the community to build a larger number of units off-site.
 - Tawan Davis, Peebles, spoke about the firm's ongoing search for suitable alternative locations in the Back Bay or Fenway to build off-site affordable units.
 - Curtis Kemeny, BRG, explained that the requirements are different with dormitories and thus involve linkage funds rather than affordable housing. He explained the firm was hoping to partner with the Berklee College of Music and noted that the student housing included in BRG's proposal would help free up other rental units in the neighborhood, which could potentially be designated as affordable units. He also mentioned that BRG would consider working with the City of Boston to help fund other related projects in the neighborhood.
- Steve Wolf asked MassDOT if the State would be willing to use this project, which is designed to generate revenue, as an opportunity to address the affordable housing crisis in the City. Bill Tuttle, MassDOT, replied that the organization is very concerned with affordable housing, but that in this case the funds from the development go directly towards the rebuilding of the Hynes MBTA station.

- Meg Mainzer-Cohen asked about valet parking in the Peebles proposal. Tawan Davis, Peebles, acknowledged the challenge that parking on this site presents, noting that the project intentionally limits retail in order to minimize parking. Blake Middleton, Handel Architects, explained that using a lift system creates options, including using the alley, but noted that they could alternately pursue including a ramp space within the parking structure. He also added that the limited amount of retail would keep truck sizes relatively low. Nancy Ludwig, Icon Architecture on behalf of Trinity Financial, noted that a lift facility could be located in the alley with a small platform, but also reminded the group that lower parking ratios have been prevailing citywide, suggesting that they could potentially decrease the number of parking spaces provided.

Public Questions and Comments

- Elliott Laffer, NABB, asked whether the proposals had considered stormwater recharge. All three proponents indicated that they had begun to consider retention options at this stage and looked forward to working with the relevant City departments to address the issue as the design progresses.
- A member of the public asked about the impact of the student population on the site and the project.
 - Tawan Davis, Peebles, spoke about the public plaza and open spaces as a means of accommodating students, also noting that retail could be tailored to students.
 - Curtis Kemeny, BRG, explained that the proposal embraced the student population by including dormitories and noted that the project's retail would in part be tailored to the students.
 - Kenan Bigby, Trinity, noted that the proposal is very sensitive to students in the area, aiming to provide public spaces with a large plaza, and even considering more specific program such as an amphitheater. He also noted that the proposal is flexible and acknowledged that there is the potential to add student housing, or smaller institutional or collaborative spaces to the project.
- A member of the public voiced a concern that the affordable housing proposals seem to be planned as off-site, which is a problem considering the neighborhood's current lack of diversity. They also asked about how much on-street parking would be accommodated. Kenan Bigby, Trinity, explained that their proposed parking ration (approximately 0.25) seems right, and emphasized that the development would be pedestrian friendly. Curtis Kemeny, BRG, noted that there would 13 on-site only spaces; Tawan Davis, Peebles, replied that there would be 138 spaces.

CAC Discussions

- Meg Mainzer-Cohen expressed concern about the truncated review process and the need to select a developer without having enough information. She noted that a letter from the CAC at this stage would be best as a pro/con list. David Lapin wondered if more time would help.
- Fritz Casselman suggested that the evaluation could be based on the 120 foot height requirement. David Lapin responded that the proposals all include many trade-offs and that a decision based solely on height would be illogical. Steve Wolf commented that Peebles followed the Civic Vision by staying within the height, demonstrating an attention to citizen input. He also noted that shape, size, urban design, and traffic factors are important to focus on. Jonathan Greeley added that the scenarios in the RFP were not intended to be prescriptive but rather to frame the project and give bidders a sense of the physical reality of the site.

- Jeffrey Simon, the Assistant Secretary for Real Estate and Asset Development at MassDOT, noted that all the discussion amongst the CAC has indeed been valuable to MassDOT and that pros and cons are a very helpful way to understand what is most important to the community. He also expressed his understanding that time is regrettably limited, and acknowledged that the project to find a designee had originally started in 2008, but reiterated that the goal is to select a great project that is feasible. He reminded the group that the designs will change through the Article 80 process, but the developer chosen will be constant – it would be helpful to hear perspectives on the teams. He also reminded the group that the Feasibility Study was mainly focused on engineering, not zoning.
- Steve Wolf asked if the CAC would be able to meet with the designated proponent before the Article 80 process began; Jonathan Greeley confirmed that this is the BRA and MassDOT's intention.

Jonathan then closed the meeting, reminding the group that all project documents can be found on the BRA's project website: <http://www.tinyurl.com/Parcels12-15>. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 p.m.