

WALKING TOUR SUMMARY NOTES

Holton Street Corridor – Community Wide Planning Process

May 7, 2009

STREETS

Circulation/Traffic

- Can an at-grade crossing be accommodated at the proposed Telford Street or at the existing Everett Street light with a safe landing and walk on the Park side?
- Can we add a light/pedestrian crossing at Telford that would be in tandem with Everett; can the pedestrian crossing be on-demand (push button activated)?
- Public parking lot along river serves as a regional resource during the week for employees and even students commuting.
- Can the ramp along soldiers Field Road to service road be better reconfigured?
- How can the traffic be better dispersed through the neighborhood, so that Western Avenue is not so jammed that people are cutting through neighborhood streets to try to get to their destinations?
- Should we consider bus access along Lincoln Street, two-way traffic for the entire length, bike lanes?
- Need to think about and coordinate bus/bike/pedestrian/car in the Lincoln corridor and how that accesses the commuter rail station in the future.
- The intersection at the Everett Street bridge needs to be studied by BTM now; traffic flowing on and off of the bridge is heavy and fast moving and creating dangerous conditions for the traffic trying to gain access to the bridge from the lower section of Everett or vehicles that want to continue to travel south on Everett from Holton Street.

Connections

- Can there be a new (or reconstructed/reconfigured) pedestrian/bike bridge to the Charles River over Soldiers Field Road?
- Bridge needs to be updated to current code and reconfigured to be more accessible from many desire lines; it's less used because it is not convenient.
- Would like to see Soldiers Field Road depressed to the west of Telford so there is an uninterrupted connection to the river from a new greenway/open space connection along Allston Resource building.
- Can there be another connection to Soldiers Field Road to the left of Everett that is not Telford Street?
- Would like to see a new pedestrian/bike connection to the neighborhood and supermarket shopping area south of the turnpike that would link the north/south sections of the neighborhood.
- Want a bike connection along Lincoln Street (e.g. taking strip of land north of the turnpike barrier to build the bike path).
- Lincoln Street is used by commuting traffic to by-pass the neighborhood; Soldiers Field Road is the more scenic connection; and Western Av is the more neighborhood/institutional place connection.

- Would like to see a new pedestrian/bike connection to the neighborhood and supermarket shopping area south of the turnpike that would link the north/south sides of the neighborhood.

Character

- Improvements should come to Telford to complete the street as new development comes on line, engage the skating club in this discussion.
- On weekends and mornings, the river side of Soldiers Field Road is well utilized by recreational users.
- Build a higher sound barrier along Lincoln Street (e.g. recycle fencing material along Western Av for the Science Complex).
- Want a greening of Everett Street (and more streets within the neighborhood) via vision of Charles River Watershed Association/Allston Brighton CDC and Urban Forestry Challenge Grant report.
- Want an improved bike connection over Turnpike at Everett Street.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

- The community wants and anticipates a commuter rail station on the opposite side of the Mass Pike across from the southern end of the new Telford and Market Street, but desires a better more convenient way to get to it, both on foot via a pedestrian/bike bridge and by bus connections. Would like to see a visionary design for a beautiful pedestrian/bike bridge to the commuter station and beyond.

LAND USE/DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

North of Holton Street

- More info is needed regarding what is proposed for Charlesview on Telford. Will the building be 6-8 stories, residential, market rate (to be confirmed).
- Is housing the right choice for this area, as currently no other housing exists in the area, can we do more retail in this area (between Western and SFR on Telford)? Some discussion as to why it would make sense to keep retail together and focused on Western Ave. There was discussion that this initial housing development could be the start of a turn toward dense housing in the area along the river. Community expressed concerns that this would not really be “bringing home ownership” to the existing neighborhood, and does not complement the existing housing type, as it would be considered luxury housing (not family-oriented).
- Does Charlesview need to go where it is currently proposed? Can the “Charlesview” typology (low income/poor families) be dispersed throughout the neighborhood to truly become a mix of housing types, rather than all 200+ in a single location?
- Neighbors do not want to replicate Charlesview as it is today in this new location; they consider it a failure to put all of the lower income families together again and think it will not be good for the existing neighborhood.

- How high is the existing broadcast (cellular?) tower in the area, other taller buildings? These could be used as reference points in future discussions on height, as a comparison.
- Putting Telford Street through, as currently proposed, would force a shift or relocation of McDonald's on Western Avenue.
- The community wants to understand why the Charlesview model is the way it is proposed and want to understand the consequences of how any changes would affect it as far as design, financing, management, etc.
- Should a new school be considered in this plan to accommodate all of the new families in the area?
- Could see higher scale residential uses along Soldiers Field Road and more retail along Western Avenue; residential use would activate the riverfront better.
- Could envision a green space with outdoor seating/patio connecting Western Av to Soldiers Field Road (in the corridor adjacent to the resource center and hotel).
- Keep the McNamara House as it is and in the plan.

South of Holton Street

- The former Cabot, Cabot, and Forbes (CCF) building was purposely designed to have four "front" faces, so that the building can be flexible and re-oriented to suit the needs of the final occupancy.
- Could envision the Cabot, Cabot and Forbes building as the music and arts academy, community center, or a biotech academy affiliated with Harvard.
- Could envision more space built out south of Holton Street for spin offs to the Science Complex.
- See less residential build out along Lincoln Street but a mix of office/larger scale.

Overall Land Use comments

- Some of the community would consider more height and density to get some more of what they want into the plan (e.g. open space).
- Community wants the plan to incorporate home ownership, truly mixed income housing, and Harvard interests (residential and business) in the neighborhood.

OTHER

- What is the approval process for currently vacant parcels in the neighborhood? It seems that buildings are going up with little or no warning to neighbors, and many seem unsuited to and inconsistent with the neighborhood character. It seems that lots are being maxed out, and this type of development is a disservice to the character of the existing neighborhood. Neighborhood wants to be more involved in what is getting built in the neighborhood, regardless if it is as-of-right or not. The neighbors want to ensure that what is going up is ownership-oriented and family friendly, which is consistent with the existing housing stock.
- Can the BRA get State Police involved on SFR, as their barracks are located in the vicinity?
- Can we work to make improvements to the neighborhood that work better now, not wait for the CWP to conclude?

SHORT TERM 1-5 years IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

- New sidewalks (Everett Street for example today, half the sidewalks are asphalt !!)
- Front Yard Tree Planting Program: Creating Green Streets....Harvard donates trees to people to plant in their front yards.
- Create Telford Street in the next 3 years.
- Neck down, tables,...and other traffic calming measures.
- Create sound barrier along Lincoln Street
- Find interim use for (former) CC&F property... and other Harvard properties... maybe artist studios.
- Move farmers market to Kmart parking lot...more central to neighborhood.
- Expand mentor and tutoring program for neighborhood kids by Harvard students.
- Create Harvard work force housing in Holton Street corridor.