



Redevelopment Planning of Melnea Cass & Washington Street Parcels (Parcels - 8, 9 & 10)

Fourth Community Workshop – July 23, 2008

FULL GROUP SUMMARY NOTES

The following notes are from the small group discussions and reporting at the end of the Fourth Community Workshop on July 23rd, and are intended to summarize the full meeting.

Focus on Wealth and Job Creation

- Promote Wealth Generation through new uses in the technological businesses and health, medical, life science, and green technology service sectors.
- Include a preference for local and regional businesses; ask what incoming businesses will do for Roxbury, and seek businesses that will keep economic rewards in the community.
- Reinforce small area businesses while promoting new businesses and youth entrepreneurship.
- Capture the employment and business opportunities that are “shuttled” (LMA bus shuttles) past the sites and community.
- Work with educational institutions and attract businesses with a track record of commitment to local job training.
- Provide opportunities for permanent jobs, green jobs, and jobs with potential for advancement at all levels.

Uses

- Focus on health, medical and green building sectors.
- Consider the potential for new light industrial uses.
- Attract businesses that will create an 18 hour community with active morning and after-work uses while serving a broad range of users.
- Provide space for start up businesses, including incubator space.
- Use existing businesses as anchors for new service and retail businesses. Consider adding an additional anchor to the sites.
- Attract businesses that complement rather than compete with those in Dudley Square.
- Provide space to support a flexible mix of uses responsive to the changing economy.
- Promote the preservation and development of existing historic assets and support area tourism (Parcel 8).
- Provide year round uses for youth on Parcel 9 that complement the uses of Rice Field.
- Provide housing, including workforce housing that is affordable to Roxbury residents, but balance the need for residential units with the need for wealth generation.
- Provide multiple stories of commercial space above retail space on Parcel 10.

Urban Design

- Focus on the Cass Blvd. and Washington St intersection but allow for development to extend along Cass Blvd., particularly to the intersection at Harrison Ave.
- Create a sense of “place” that will make people slow down and stop in the area.
- Create a pedestrian friendly, people oriented environment; Increase density of foot traffic rather than car traffic.
- Provide safe and pedestrian friendly crossings between Parcel 9 and Parcel 10.
- Investigate new “urban mall” concepts in which businesses are oriented to the street and outdoor space, with café seating contributing to a lively public realm.
- Consider using green areas and paths to break down the scale of building on Parcel 10.

Building and Site Design

- Provide building set-backs to soften corner and street wall conditions.
- Require quality design of all sides of the building while orienting services to the interior of the site.
- Construct buildings between 5 or 6 and 8 stories high.
- Avoid shadowing streets and public spaces through excessive building heights.
- Break up the mass of multiple buildings along the site.
- Allow for more mass on parcel 10 than on the other parcels.
- Design buildings to reflect the historic nature of the neighborhood.
- Include a focus on energy conservation and green building.

Parking and Access

- Accommodate parking needs on site.
- Users, particularly retail customers, should be able to clearly identify vehicular and building entrances and to easily access the site.
- Provide short term surface parking for retail customers.
- Provide structured long term parking for residents and employees; aesthetically, underground parking is preferred.
- Design structured parking sustainably.
- Consider the role of the Urban Ring and Silver Line. Emphasize easy access to the Longwood Medical Center, and other locations where Roxbury residents may find employment.

Other

- Provide for a mix of rental and ownership opportunities.
- Promote partnering with existing abutting property owners / businesses.
- RFP’s should minimize deed restrictions and offer flexible requirements to allow developers to respond both creatively and realistically to market conditions.

SMALL GROUP NOTES

The following notes were compiled during the small group breakout session:

GROUP A

Focus on Wealth and Job Creation

- Direct Benefits to local organizations.
- Attract Businesses with good employment opportunities for the area.
- Provide opportunities for jobs at all levels.
- Provide opportunities for permanent jobs.
- Provide opportunities for green jobs.
- Provide opportunities for local businesses to expand
- Create initiatives for community ownership of the parcels

Uses

- Provide Youth entrepreneurial and job training centers, including trade jobs
- Consider space for Life Sciences
- Consider space for the health and medical sectors
- Preserve historic sites including the Nawn Factory, the Eustis Burial Ground, and the Fire House. Historic buildings may serve as a visitor center, and museums, which will attract not just tourists but also local residents and school children.
- Parcels 9 & 10 should include primarily commercial space with enough evening activities to create a vibrant neighborhood.
- Consider a larger supermarket on Parcel 10.
- Consider several floors of commercial space on Parcel 10.
- Promote commercial and retail uses on Parcel 9.

Urban Design

- Create safe and pedestrian friendly crossings between Parcel 9 and Parcel 10.
- Melnea Cass should include landscaping with trees, safe medians, and stations where Roxbury residents can safely cross and board the Urban Ring busses to work.
- Minimize traffic congestion along Washington Street and Melnea Cass Boulevard.

Building and Site Design

- Create edge conditions that are pedestrian and neighborhood oriented.
- Heights should range from 5 to 8 floors
- New buildings should reflect the historic character of the neighborhood
- Promote green building technology

Parking and Access

- Provide off-street parking and access to buildings along that Boulevard to help calm traffic.
- Parking should be on site, below grade and not visible from the street.

- Create a connector to employment centers such as: the South Boston Waterfront, the Longwood Medical Center, and other locations where Roxbury residents will have easy access to employment

GROUP B

Focus on Wealth and Job Creation

- Provide organized job training for youth.
- Reinforce small area businesses while promoting new businesses.
- Consider a development bank that serves the community
- Consider partnering with RCC/Wentworth/NU to introduce educational institutions and job training that will lead to employment.

Uses

- Take advantage of the economic trends in medical and life sciences.
- Provide incubator space for new businesses.
- Consider hospital related light industry use on upper floors.
- Provide some housing for local residents while critically investigating the number and balance of these units.
- Consider restoring historic uses with links to newer uses. Specifically, historic buildings near the burial ground could be restored and the same ratio of housing could be returned to the site.
- Consider a playground on Parcel 9 adjacent to Rice Fields
- Consider two floors of retail on Parcel 10.

Urban Design

- Consider the unique aspects of each site.
- Make sure the buildings are not isolated.
- The site could act like a pedestrian mall for the residents and community: Newbury St. and the South End are good examples of mixed-use walkable neighborhoods while the Cambridge Side Galleria, Copley Place, Dudley Square and Quincy Market provide either more or less desirable examples of urban malls.

Building and Site Design

- Thoughtful attention should be paid to the side of Parcel 9 that faces Rice Field.
- Retail and businesses should face out to the street.
- Buildings facades should open up to the street with high quality architectural details.
- The RFP should incorporate green design guidelines along Melnea Cass Blvd. and the other major streets.
- Opinions differ on whether eight stories is too high for the area or whether these particular sites are appropriate to accommodate that height. Greater height can also add value.

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Parking and Access

- Carefully consider the effect of the Urban Ring project in this area.

- Minimize below grade parking if it will increase total development costs per SF. High development costs would force higher rents which small neighborhood friendly businesses might not be able to afford. A well designed parking structure might work better than surface or underground parking.
- Provide necessary parking for stores, but let pedestrians, rather than cars, guide planning.
- Don't just provide parking for the people going to the LMA; bring them into the area.

Other

- Establish strong linkages to Dudley Square to strengthen the retail corridor along Washington Street.

GROUP C

Focus on Wealth and Job Creation

- The focus for these sites, given their location and the state of the market, should be on wealth generating commercial and retail development.
- Provide good job opportunities and training that could serve local residents.
- Given the nature of the housing market and the amount of affordable housing in the area, housing on this site should be minimized with preference for more wealth generating commercial and retail space.

Uses

- Uses should contribute to an eighteen hour site with evening uses such as a gym, jazz club or restaurants serving the local community
- Retail should serve a broad range of users including residents, visitors and daytime workers. Sandwich shops and other uses that serve a variety of economic groups and demographics are desirable.
- All parcels should support a flexible mix of uses that will be viable in a tight and changing economy. I
- Institutional uses, if considered, should be minimal.
- Provide activities for youth and elderly populations.
- Provide health and medical sector uses that supply good jobs for the neighborhood.
- Consider adding one to two anchor stores, in addition to Tropical Foods and Harrison supply to activate the site.
- Provide housing that is affordable to the range of Roxbury residents currently living in the area.
- It should be determined that housing, both in surrounding areas and on site, is sufficient to support retail, community, and commercial uses developed on the site.
- Design streets and sidewalks that accommodate cultural uses and events.
- Attract businesses that complement rather than compete with uses in Dudley Square.

Urban Design

- Support activated sites.
- While Washington street should remain the primary gateway, there is support for an urban design concept that supports two gateways, one at Washington Street and

one at Melnea Cass Blvd., that will make promote active develop stretching along Melnea Cass Towards Harrison Street.

Building and Site Design

- Housing may be provided on upper floors or less trafficked areas.
- In addition to the green space at the corner for Parcel-8, parcel 10 could also accommodate a green space that would both break up the building mass and serve as a connector between Melnea Cass and the rest of Dudley Square.
- Heights should range between 6 and 8 floors with an understanding that construction of 8 story buildings may be more financially feasible than construction of 6 story buildings. The 12 stories considered for the Ferdinand building provides a context for this height.

Parking and Access

- Users, particularly retail customers, should be able to clearly identify vehicular and building entrances and easily access the site.
- On street parking should contribute to easy site access and traffic calming.
- Enough easily accessible short term surface parking should be provided to allow retail to flourish.
- Long term parking should be below grade

Finance

- Like Downtown Crossing, there should be a healthy mix of short term rental to keep the area relevant and long term ownership to ensure stability and commitment to the area.
- Tax Increment Financing, Bonding, or other incentives should be considered to attract development.
- On parcel 8, development should remain feasible while still respecting the needs of the Heritage State Park.
- Revenue sources for development will have to be different than they have been in the last several years
- Make sure that the price of the land lease is not unnecessarily high such that it would discourage development of the land.
- RFP's should minimize deed restrictions and offer flexible requirements to allow developers to respond both creatively and realistically to market conditions.

Other

- A PR campaign should look to quell the negative reputation that the larger Dudley Square area has shouldered the last few years and revive its reputation as a vibrant, cultural, and safe retail district.