

Sullivan Square Disposition Study

Public Meeting: 10-10-13

BREAKOUT GROUPS

Breakout Group Discussion (1 of 2)

- We don't know what the impact of a tower at the T station could be on the Lost Village
 - Consultant: On the Columbia Point planning project, it would be possible see the taller new building (behind the elevated highway) from upper levels of some existing buildings, but it was possible to configure them in a matter such that they would not be visible from the street.
- I want speak in favor of high buildings at the back of the T stop parcel along the highway side of the parcel, or in the middle of the parcel, rather than at the front (street) side. Preference for higher portion of building to stepped back from front street edge of building.
 - Harborview in the Navy Yard is stepped back, but the rear side that faces is Basilica building is an example of this type of failure. That side of the building, which has no stepbacks, towers over the street and its neighbors.
- A 40 foot height at the front of the building like in the South End, with taller parts set back, is much more comfortable, compared with having a 90 height at the front of the building.
- Consultant: All parcels are shows at about 60 feet in front, which is the same as the South End massing example we looked at.
- We're not just looking at height, but also how massive buildings are. 75 West School is a good example of building being too massive for its surroundings. But that building transplanted here would be more in scale.
 - BRA staff: Yes, the context of big blocks and large scale industrial buildings is much more prevalent in this part of Charlestown, than in the historic part that is characterize by smaller building footprints and block sizes.
 - But that design for 75 West School might not be appropriate here.
- On-street parking creates a barrier for pedestrian safety, and creates pedestrian comfort.
 - On the streets where you can have off-street parking, we want it.
- A well designed promenade from the street to the station entrance could do a lot to enhance the T parking lot development site.
 - A lot of thought should be given to the design of this promenade to make it a pleasant walk, with natural light through windows above. (Two separated garages to allow this skylight.)
 - The promenade should be activated with small scale retail, kiosks or carts. The Back Bay T station has good examples of this kind of amenity (including but not limited to farmers market, takeout food/coffee shop and convenience retail).
- Ensure a balance: a critical amount of density creates vibrancy. But balance it so you have enough open space and you're not overwhelmed.

- Parking garages should have fenestration, and/or grilles, and/or some other form of decoration, rather than having open sides. The parking garage at the corner of Riverway and Brookline Avenue (a Beth Israel-Deaconess Hospital garage) is a good example of a dressed up garage: it has an ivy covered concrete grille on its sides.
- Residential buildings should have a mix of scales (height) and ownership tenure. In the mix, low-scale fee simple residential should be considered.
 - A lot of the rest of Charlestown is like that. This should be different.
 - There should be townhouses in the mix, closer to the historic neighborhood part.
- There should be a mix of buildings with modern materials and buildings with historic materials.
 - The contemporary and modern building design could be on the limited number or larger, signature buildings.
 - Having a mix of modern and historic is important.
 - None of the metal panels you see on Harbor View.
 - None of the City Square aluminum wrap around windows.
 - Instead it should be mullionless glazing.
 - No 1980's style banded windows.
 - But banding done right, and stepbacks, mitigate height impacts.
 - Punched windows are appropriate for more traditional buildings in the mix.
 - No buildings up on stilts.
 - No critical systems on lower levels where they could get flooded.
 - Should have some buildings that have majestic corners and edges that are not 90 degrees and are do not have not square corners. For example, a rounded edge at the Carruth on Dot Ave or a flatiron building. Particularly on high visibility corners.
 - Good varied facades.
 - Zinc panels and other panels to lighten up buildings.
- There should be varied heights. There could be a mix of tall buildings (comparable to the height of the Schrafft's building) and smaller townhouses. The total size of all the buildings averaged out would be comparable to a less interesting mix of uniform heights (that were discussed earlier in this process).
- Maintenance of street trees should include irrigation.
- Green space should be sacred regardless of adjacent use.
- On the parks: if it doesn't have active edges, and it's of the scale of City Square there is a risk that could become just a cut through for people on their way to the T.
 - Consultant: and to repeat the famous axiom, as we've discussed, the success of open spaces lies in its edges.
 - For another good open space example, see the park on the corner of Land Boulevard and Cambridgeside Place, across from the Galleria Mall in Cambridge.
- Don't forget the peripheral areas in the recommendations for future projects.

Breakout Group Discussion (2 of 2)

Having the highest buildings line the highway makes sense. It will help to insulate from noise.

What is the elevation of I-93?

Consultant Response: We still need to get that information from the BRA.

Agree that tall buildings against highway is ok, but don't want to see tall buildings on the corners of the parcels.

The view corridors are what need to be protected and maintained. Let's mandate in the RFP the amount of open space required to be built and maintained by the developer. Let's also think more 3-D.

What happens if we concentrate the parking?

Consultant response: We did have a plan with surface parking but at the last meeting we heard that surface parking was not desirable, so we changed the plan to reflect less surface parking.

What about the maintenance of the various open spaces?

Consultant response: Certain parcels would likely be the responsibility of the property owners.

Could we flip the U-shaped building on parcel 5 so the courtyard is on the other side?

Consultant response: We tried that but decided to leave the building where it is so that those units are looking into the courtyard instead of the lot behind it, which is more desirable for those units.

Selective use of pocket parks is nice but an over-abundance might be a missed opportunity.

Consultant response: Parcel 7 was originally contemplated as open space but seemed too much like a traffic island.

Parcel 7 is fine as townhouses but worried about height proposed on parcel 6. Preference to move that height to parcel 5. Ten stories on parcel 6 looks clunky and out of place on such a narrow parcel, instead parcel 5 could go higher.

What about the alignment of parcel 7? Can we configure it to have more open space on the left part of the parcel (side closer to the T station) so that there's more pace for pedestrians since that's where the desire line is?

An 8-foot sidewalk is not that wide. The sidewalks for the desire line should be wider.

Open spaces can be too large and daunting if it doesn't have structure or program.

Maybe a smaller building on parcel 4 to increase the amount of open space on that parcel.

Can we flip the U-shaped building on parcel 4? Or perhaps it's even better to make it L-shaped.

Envision an iconic building being on the MBTA station parcel as a gateway to Sullivan Square. It should highlight that it's a station and should anchor the area.

"Background buildings" should be located closer to the neighborhood.

Would like to understand the access point for Parcel 6, perhaps suggest it as something to look at for further study.

There could be more height located on part of Parcel 6.

No fake historic design.

Potential to go higher on Parcels 4 and 5.

Envision a modern/contemporary design for iconic building, less contemporary look closer to the neighborhood.

Would like to see daycare and other community spaces as first floor uses with outdoor seating.

Green buildings are important; lots of windows and glass.

Would like to see something besides brick for sidewalks.

Study the water retention off of sidewalks; limit run off.