



Task Force Working Meeting #12
Thursday, December 4th, 2008
Location: Boston College High School,
150 Morrissey Boulevard
Dorchester, MA

Task Force Attendees:

Fr. George Carrigg, St. Christopher's Church
Patrick Connolly, Boston Teachers Union
Bill Cotter, Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association (CSHCA)
Dan Driscoll, Harbor Health Services
Annissa Essaibi-George, McCormack Civic Association
Matt Gordy, CSHCA
Sherina Hendrix, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation (DBEDC)
John Lowe, McCormack Civic Association
Victoria Maguire, Graduate of UMass Boston
Paul Nutting, CSHCA
Mark Rooney, South Boston Neighborhood House
Don Walsh, CSHCA/ DBEDC, Chair

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Massachusetts State Representative Martin Walsh
Mike Christopher, Office of Representative Martin Walsh
Justin Holmes, Office of City Council President Maureen Feeney
Jane Lindsay, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum
Brian Maher, Boston College High School
Meagan Maloy, Office of Senator Jack Hart
Patricia McCormack, Commonwealth Museum & State Archives

City of Boston Attendees:

David Black, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.
Jim Fitzgerald, BRA
Casey Flynn, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
Gordon Hansen, BRA
Tad Read, BRA
Chris Riale, Crosby, Schlessinger & Smallridge
Carole Schlessinger, Crosby, Schlessinger & Smallridge
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA
Skip Smallridge, Crosby, Schlessinger & Smallridge

Members of the Public:

Frank Baker, Resident of Dorchester
Greg Dicovitsky, Transit Realty Associates
Tony Disarcina, Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates
David Greaney, Synergy
Jim Gribaudo, Corcoran Jennison Companies
Chris Horne, MIT Student
Tim Love, Utile, Inc.
Paul Lynch, Harborpoint Liquors

Paul Lynch, Ironworkers Local 7
William C. B. Lynch, Resident of Savin Hill
James McNeil, Hotel Workers Local 26
Catherine O'Neill, Corcoran Jennison Companies
Peter Rogers, Corcoran Jennison Companies
Pete Stidman, Dorchester Reporter
Michael Vaughan, Nauset Strategies, Inc.

Meeting Summary

On Thursday, December 4th, 2008, the twelfth meeting of the Columbia Point Master Plan Task Force was called to order at approximately 5:10 p.m. in the Loyola Function Room at Boston College High School by Don Walsh, CSHCA/DBEDC and Chair of the Task Force.

Don welcomed the Task Force and then turned the meeting over to Tad Read, BRA Senior Planner. Tad explained that tonight's meeting will offer the Task Force the first three-dimensional glimpse at the plans discussed over the past few months. These images will help to illustrate key design issues, including building heights and volumes, and the relationship between the various development parcels. Tad emphasized that there will be a particular focus on the "ground plane," or what it will be like to walk around the new Columbia Point. Tad stressed that while there will be some opportunity for reaction to tonight's presentation, the next Task Force meeting will provide the group with an opportunity to have an open discussion.

Before handing the meeting over to Carole Schlessinger and Skip Smallridge, of Crosby, Schlessinger and Smallridge (CSS), Tad called attention to the fact that even though the buildout scenarios will include proposals for their properties, both the Boston Globe and Sovereign Bank currently have no plans to redevelop.

Carole began the presentation by reviewing the core Master Plan principles, which include recommendations on urban design, connectivity, land use, views, and open space & recreation. Skip then presented the first three-dimensional views of the Master Plan.

Skip began by highlighting changes made to the illustrative site plan since the last Task Force meeting. The Corcoran Jennison plan saw three changes:

- A new building element at the shoreline, towards the northeast corner of the parcel;
- A new three-story retail structure on a former surface parking lot abutting Mt. Vernon Street; and
- The Doubletree Hotel addition is narrower, and better frames the new street.

In response to the addition of a central open space along a newly-realigned main street beginning at the MBTA Station and continuing through the Synergy property, CSS reorganized the Globe site's street system to match the changes. In the Sovereign Bank parcel, CSS added a new building to enclose the property's proposed open space and provide a continuous street wall along Morrissey Boulevard. Skip also pointed out an added pedestrian "street" to be added where the current pedestrian bridge exists.

Skip provided an overview of some form determinants for the proposed development in Columbia Point. These include:

- Creating a cohesive and clear district;

- Fitting within the existing context;
- Emphasizing select views, or viewsheds, to either landmarks or scenic natural resources;
- Using architecture as wayfinding for connectivity and street definition;
- The form of buildings themselves; and
- Mitigating shadows/allowing sunlight “shafts” or “slots”.

Using these starting points, Skip presented the massing drawings. The first focus was on the MBTA Station development as a gateway to the neighborhood. Skip previewed a new idea, which includes a second-floor “picture window” station lobby to help visitors and residents visually orient themselves without the Morrissey Boulevard embankment barrier in the way. Additionally, the tower was shown as being roughly 25 stories.

Skip continued, introducing more three-dimensional massing diagrams under strategic headings:

- **Connections:** Street walls will indicate pedestrian and road connections. New proposed pedestrian connection through Sovereign site linking Morrissey Boulevard to Mt. Vernon Street at the current location of the footbridge.
- **Internal Landmarks:** Massing and street design will allow for straight-shot views from the MBTA Station to the Globe parcel park, and from the Globe parcel park to Boston College High School.
- **Context:** The Boston Globe parcel buildings facing Savin Hill will be four-story townhouses, to stay in concert with the surrounding neighborhood fabric.
- **Orientation:** Building massing will highlight intersections (in height) and street placement, as in the Back Bay. Cornice lines will also aid in wayfinding.
- **Street Wall:** If the St. Christopher’s Church/Boston Public Schools properties were to be redeveloped, it would be ideal to maintain a cohesive street wall along Mt. Vernon Street.
- **Sunlight:** Setbacks and gaps between buildings will provide sunlight to Morrissey Boulevard.

Skip provided analogues for Columbia Point’s proposed streets: with a 100 foot width, Mt. Vernon Street is similar to Boylston Street, Summer Street, and Newbury Street; at 70 feet, the new street through the Synergy site is comparable to Arlington Street; and the closest parallel to Morrissey Boulevard is the Riverway.

Questions and comments raised in response to Skips’ presentation are summarized below.

- In response to a question from Don Walsh, Skip indicated that there is a meeting with the BRA and the MBTA scheduled for next week.
- Paul Nutting, CSHCA, questioned whether the current elevation of the MBTA pedestrian bridge (as carried into new building design) will be sufficient to see over Morrissey Boulevard.
- Mark Rooney, South Boston Neighborhood House, inquired about the present State Police garage abutting Kosciuszko Circle, and whether it would remain in the future. Skip indicated that the garage will remain.
- Massachusetts State Representative Martin Walsh indicated that the Master Plan should be sensitive to the impact and perception of proposed building heights in the abutting neighborhoods to the west.
- John Lowe, McCormack Civic Association, inquired about the shadow impacts of the MBTA Station tower. Skip responded that those calculations can be made easily.

- Don Walsh suggested that a parallel could be drawn between the MBTA Station tower and the Prudential Center, given their relationships with the surrounding community. Representative Walsh refined this notion, likening the proposed tower to the Westin Hotel at Copley Place, due to its immediate adjacency to residences.
- In response to concerns voiced by Paul Nutting over the availability of view corridors for the streets adjacent to the expressway, Skip replied that Sydney Street currently has buildings which obscure its view east.
- Annissa Essaibi-George, McCormack Civic Association, expressed concerns over density and height, indicating that she is worried about the connection between the old and new development, as well as greater traffic demands. Skip responded that with transit-oriented development, densities tend to grow, but this can be mitigated through good design.
- In response an inquiry from Jane Lindsay, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum, as to whether the massing diagrams reflected a high or low buildout scenario, Carole replied that these drawings were closer to the high build scenario.
- Father George Carrigg, St. Christopher's Church, expressed his concern that families and communities must be part of the Master Plan. He stressed that the Master Plan address affordable housing issues. Tad responded by briefly outlining the City's inclusionary development program, which requires 15% of the dwelling units in a new development to be affordable to low and moderate income households.
- Dan Driscoll, Harbor Health Services, expressed concern over the land use chart's "housing" label: as one number, it doesn't account for affordability, size, or other variants. He emphasized that the Master Plan must include a mix of housing types, noting that there are almost no children in the market rate apartments at Harbor Point.
- Paul Nutting stated that in his experience, having ownership housing allows residents to solidify their sense of community, regardless of whether they have children.
- Tad added that he will bring more information about the City's affordability policies to the next meeting. In the meantime, further information is available on the BRA's website: <http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/AffordHousing/AH.asp>.
- Representative Walsh mentioned that affordability should be looked at on a site-by-site basis, as Columbia Point is not a typical Boston neighborhood.

Next, David Black of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin gave a presentation on updated transportation analyses. Before proceeding, he cautioned that the analysis is not entirely representative of what will happen at Kosciuszko Circle. Columbia Point is served by both local and regional traffic. The Master Plan will encourage efficient usage by both groups. The difficulty is that any expansion of the roadway network will be absorbed by regional traffic looking to avoid the expressway. David outlined the following transportation goals for Columbia Point:

- Encouraging smart growth land uses that minimize vehicular traffic;
- Enhancing non-automobile mobility;
- Defining the roadway hierarchy to help local traffic and accessibility; and
- Identifying strategies to address traffic and roadway issues.

David presented some diagrams of existing level-of-service and peak hour traffic at key intersections, and reiterated that for the purposes of this study Kosciuszko Circle is regarded as part of the Morrissey Boulevard corridor. David continued, covering the traffic impacts at key points within four scenarios: 2008 existing, 2020 buildout under current zoning, 2020 Master Plan low buildout, and 2020 Master Plan high buildout.

The new distributor roadway network will work to spread the traffic around the neighborhood, rather than channeling it narrowly down major corridors. The new road connecting Morrissey Boulevard to Mt. Vernon Street and Day Boulevard will draw a significant amount of traffic away from Kosciuszko Circle.

Regarding Kosciuszko Circle, David offered a number of alternative improvement strategies to ameliorate traffic flow. These include:

- Improving basic signage and striping;
- Eliminating the left turn from the "Chute";
- Eliminating U-turns from the Interstate 93 northbound exit ramp through the Circle;
- Creating slip lanes for immediate right-turns;
- Signalization improvements;
- Constructing an overpass or an underpass; and
- Relocating or reconfiguring the Circle as a T-intersection.

David emphasized that construction phasing will be very important, as replacement roadways will need to be in place before Morrissey Boulevard's "Chute" can be dismantled.

Questions and comments raised in response to David's presentation are summarized below:

- Annissa Essaibi-George indicated that the prohibition of left turns and/or straight movements from the northbound ramp at the intersection of Interstate 93 and Columbia Road improves traffic conditions dramatically. David responded with a number of improvement strategies for that area, including restriping lanes, optimizing/coordinating signal timing, and the construction of additional lanes.
- Representative Walsh announced that he, State Senator Jack Hart and City Council President Maureen Feeney had met to discuss transportation improvements for the Kosciuszko Circle and had sent a letter to both the State Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the State Department of Administration & Finance (A&F) to seek the appropriation of the \$700,000 earmarked in the 2008 Transportation Bond Bill to study Kosciuszko Circle. He added that approval from DCR and A&F will hopefully be forthcoming. In the short term, in the spring, DCR will be closing one lane on the Morrissey Boulevard ramp to Kosciuszko Circle for emergency repairs of the bridge under DCR's accelerated bridge repair program. Construction should last for approximately eighteen months.
- In response to a question from Paul Nutting about the benefits of one segment of the new connector road, David replied that there were many, noting that phasing is still an important issue to discuss. In response to a follow-up question from Paul about the potential profitability to abutters on the new road, David replied that the new road would add value and provide a new street address to those adjacent properties.
- Jane Lindsay voiced concern over a surge of traffic within South Boston neighborhoods. David responded that the new road would not open up a floodgate of traffic.

Before closing the meeting, Tad announced that the next Task Force meeting will be held on Thursday, December 18th at 5:30 p.m. and will continue this discussion. Tad also noted that the MWRA will give a presentation on their new odor control facility at this meeting.

Additionally, it was determined that the next community-wide meeting will be held on Saturday, January 24th, 2009.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:10 p.m.