



**Task Force Working Meeting #9**  
**Thursday, September 18, 2008**  
**Location: Corcoran Jennison Office Building,**  
**150 Mount Vernon Street**  
**Dorchester, MA**

**Task Force Attendees:**

Fr. George Carrigg, St. Christopher's Church  
Patrick Connolly, Boston Teachers Union  
Annissa Essaibi-George, McCormack Civic Association  
Sherina Hendrix, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation (DBEDC)  
John Lowe, McCormack Civic Association  
Victoria Maguire, Graduate of UMass Boston  
Paul Nutting, Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association (CSHCA)  
Orlando Perilla, Harbor Point Community Task Force  
Joe Sammons, Geiger-Gibson Community Health Center  
Don Walsh, CSHCA/DBEDC, Chair

**Ex-Officio Attendees:**

Mike Christopher, Office of Representative Martin Walsh  
Justin Holmes, Office of Council President Maureen Feeney  
Jane Lindsay, John F. Kennedy Library and Presidential Museum  
Patricia McCormack, State Archives and Commonwealth Museum

**City of Boston Attendees:**

Jim Fitzgerald, BRA  
Gordon Hansen, BRA  
Tad Read, BRA  
Carole Schlessinger, Crosby, Schlessinger & Smallridge  
Skip Smallridge, Crosby, Schlessinger & Smallridge

**Members of the Public:**

Frank Baker, CSHCA  
Charles Begley, Sovereign Bank  
Anna Benyo, Harbor Health  
John Ciccarella, UMass Boston  
Dan Driscoll, Harbor Health  
David Greaney, Synergy  
Valerie Harms, Resident of Harbor Point  
Suzanne Leblanc, Sovereign Bank  
Paul Lynch, Ironworkers Local 7  
Yanique Morson-Matra, Resident  
Julia O'Brien, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)  
Catherine O'Neill, Corcoran Jennison Companies  
Bob Sloane, WalkBoston

## **Meeting Summary**

On Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the ninth meeting of the Columbia Point Master Plan Task Force was called to order at approximately 5:15 p.m. in the Suffolk Function Room at the Corcoran Jennison Office Complex by Don Walsh, CSHCA/DBEDC and Chair of the Task Force.

Don welcomed the Task Force and provided a few introductory comments on the structure of the meeting, including the fact that the Task Force is getting closer to the stage where decisions will be made and votes taken. Don then informed the Task Force that Joe Sammons, Geiger-Gibson Community Health Center, will be leaving the Task Force in early October. Don then turned the meeting over to Tad Read, BRA Senior Planner, to make additional introductory remarks.

Tad noted a transition between this meeting and the last: the infrastructure improvements detailed in tonight's meeting will become the framework on which the Task Force determines future land uses and other improvements.

Skip Smallridge, BRA Consultant, then gave a PowerPoint presentation (which can be found on the BRA's Columbia Point Master Plan website) of draft Master Plan schemes of street hierarchies, active recreation facilities, bike paths, and a new public plaza at the base of Mt. Vernon Street by the JFK/UMass MBTA Station. He noted that all of the drawings are still in rough sketch form and will need much more refinement and discussion before they are finalized. Skip also provided visuals of existing developments around the Boston area that could inform the design of Columbia Point's new streets, bike paths, and public spaces.

The three main ideas presented included:

1. The Open Space Network
  - a. Returning the "park" to the Morrissey Boulevard parkway by eliminating the chute and adding a large, pedestrian-friendly public space "table" (no curb, traffic calming) at the western end of Mt. Vernon Street.
  - b. A winding bicycle and pedestrian path linking the JFK/UMass MBTA station with UMass Boston.
  - c. New NCAA-regulation ball fields at UMass Boston.
2. The Character of New Streets
  - a. An overview of a proposed street network for Columbia Point, with profiles of seven types of streets and roads graded by anticipated level of service.
  - b. Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets.
  - c. Innovative approaches to underpasses (specifically with regard to Mt. Vernon Street at Morrissey Boulevard), including interesting lighting and support design.
3. Ownership Precincts & an Introduction to Building Heights and Uses
  - a. A general preference for developments with ground-floor retail and active uses.
  - b. The importance of setbacks in mitigating the effects of larger and taller buildings.

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

- In response to a comment from Don Walsh regarding discussions of land use and density, Carole Schlessinger, BRA Consultant, responded that the purpose of today's presentation is to provide an introduction to the topic for future meetings. Tad added that this is the beginning of many future conversations.

- Joe Sammons asked about the effectiveness of the proposed street network, given that the new Bayside development would introduce event-level traffic on a daily basis. Tad responded that the proposed street network will add capacity, and is a draft plan that still needs to be tested. Joe suggested considering bus lanes, given current high levels of bus traffic in the area.
- Patrick Connolly, Boston Teachers Union, expressed concern about a street cutting through his organization's property. Carole responded that the proposed road is rendered as dotted to indicate a possible future routing—given that the Master Plan is long-range. Don Walsh added that it is useful to keep all options on the table, since an improved road layout might increase the value of the land owned by the Teachers Union in the long run. Tad went on record to clarify that there shall be no adverse takings by the BRA as part of the Master Plan.
- In response to a question from John Lowe, McCormack Civic Association, Tad noted that variety is important in urban design, and the Master Plan will encourage diverse building styles. Don Walsh added that such topics will be covered in more detail at future meetings.
- In response to Don Walsh's concern over perhaps too much focus being put on bicycle integration, Skip responded that the City's underlying philosophy is to encourage bike use. Jim Fitzgerald, BRA Senior Planner, added that the addition of a new City bicycle coordinator has renewed excitement about biking, but noted that bike lanes could be trimmed if traffic tests warrant this. Orlando Perilla, HPCTF, added that Harbor Point has recently seen a tremendous increase in bike use.
- Joe Sammons inquired about the viability of the proposed street network over time, given the fragmented ownership in the area. Tad responded that the Master Plan will establish requirements that property owners must follow if and when they want to redevelop, leading to a circulation system built over time in increments for Columbia Point.
- Don Walsh commented that Kosciuszko Circle will need to be "fixed" if Columbia Point is to become a magnet for sustained development.
- Joe Sammons expressed his hope that the Master Plan will provide opportunities for a wide variety of income levels, in order to preserve the character and uniqueness of the neighborhood.
- In response to a comment from Paul Nutting, CSHCA, regarding the relationship between Columbia Point and the rest of Dorchester (across Interstate 93 and the MBTA right-of-way), Skip and Carole concurred that creating new links will be difficult given physical barriers, and that it is important to focus on enhancing existing connections. Don Walsh added that CSHCA is expecting the BRA and its consultants to focus on forging new connections between Columbia Point, Savin Hill, and the rest of Dorchester.
- Fr. George Carrigg, St. Christopher's Church, expressed concern over the proposed roadway and bikeway crossing near the church's property.

Tad proceeded to outline the Task Force's next steps, including proposing a community-wide meeting for November designed to acquaint the public with ideas the Task Force has been covering over the past few months.

The following comments were raised by members of the public:

- In response to a series of questions from a member of the public about the timeframe of the project, Tad stated that some of the most exciting ideas from the Master Plan could take up to twenty years to be implemented, and that pieces of the Master Plan would have to be phased over time. Tad also mentioned that the best way for the neighborhood to offer comment on proposed building heights is to attend future community meetings.
- In response to a question from Catherine O'Neill, Corcoran Jennison Companies, Don Walsh clarified that the Channel 56 property is on the market. Tad added that the site is difficult to lease because parking is limited.
- Julia O'Brien, DCR, expressed concern over the proposed connection from the Bayside redevelopment to Day Boulevard.
- In response to a comment from Valerie Harms, Resident of Harbor Point, Tad stated that there is no intention to remove trees, and that the potential on Columbia Point is for more urban character rather than less urban. Carole reiterated that new streets will be constructed on land that is currently developed.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.