

Boston Society of Architects (BSA)

The Housing Committee Minutes – 16 January 2009

Date: 20 January 2009

In attendance were Alberto Cardenas, Doris Cole, John Dalzell (Presenter), Anne-Sophe Divenyi, David Flaschenreim, Diane Georgopulos, William Hammer, Terry Heinsin, David Johnson, Marga Piaseki, Kyle Rebidoux, John Schmid, Monica Sidor, St. John Smith (Co-Chair), Femerico Soripno, Ilkka Suvanto, Garrett Ulm.

Future Meetings

20 February – Modular Housing

20 March – Solar Decathlon

Presentation

Mr. John Dalzell, Senior Architect

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and Project Manager, for the Forest Hills Improvement Initiative

“The Realities of Density”

Mr. Dalzell noted the BRA appreciation for housing initiatives in Boston sponsored by the BSA, especially 2 previous programs for the Forest Hills MBTA Station Area.

The BRA has determined that neighborhood design issues shall be Community based consensus.

Goals and Outcome

- Community Vision.
- District Concept Plan.
- Development use and Design Guidelines – 6 sites.
- MBTA Invitation to Bid.
- Transportation and Street Scape issues.

Community Workshops and other meetings

- 9 Interactive workshops were scheduled.
- Community information meetings were held.
- Numerous workshop group meetings were held over a period of 22 months.

Emerging Community Vision

- Improved Traffic Patterns.
- Safe smooth flow – car dependency.
- Pedestrian/Bicycle Improvement.
- Vibrant Mixed Use District.

- Community Orientation.
- Green/Sustainable Development.

District Wide Plan

- Unlike certain other proposals for the redevelopment of the Forest Hills District, the overpass remains intact, a subject, heavily political, is beyond the scope of this study.

The overpass remains a defining feature of the District, rising 30 feet above the street, but with rising hill sites, east and west, forming overviews above the overpass in each direction, and with a straight shot along the Orange line to the City of Boston.

More than 10,000 cars per hour pass through the area, which is not considered a big impact on the site.

- 4 sites west of the overpass and south of the MBTA station were reviewed.
- The Station parking lot is of special interest.

It offers a place for Pedestrian crossover to the Arnold Arboretum.

Also pedestrian crossings north and south along the Washington Street Spine.

- General data

There are 708 housing units Office and Commercial. 152,000 sq. ft.

Retail/Services. 125,000 sq. ft.

Open Space. 192,000 sq. ft.

Anchor store needed.

Need a wide variety in the kind of businesses sought.

There will be a principal commercial use on each side of the overpass at the intersection of Washington St. and Hyde Park Avenue; a safe, attractively landscaped pedestrian crossover is designed to connect these two principal points of commercial use.

Sustainable Development

- Design concepts are intended to take Transit Orientated development (TOD) and Smart Growth concepts, together, to the next level of reality; i.e.:

a compact, complete, community, with:

mixed uses
concentration of Utilities
walkability
green

- Use of an Architectural approach – visual images.
- Each site is linked at connections with landscaped strategy to interconnect the 6 sites effectively.
- Housing is intermixed and varied in each site consciously and effectively.
- Work opportunities – need for extensive daytime activity.
- Two sites east of the overpass are developed with commercial uses.

The Washington Street site allows for setback commercial uses on the lower floors to encourage pedestrian passage through to residential uses behind the street frontage.

- The bus station site on Hyde Park Avenue is retained, with commercial office space adjacent, with landscaping to connect and soften this part of the proposal.
- On the opposite side of the street, wood frame, market rate housing is proposed.
- Rehab strategy.

Need for many smaller commercial anchor stores, a few 10,000 sq. ft. and smaller units.

Need urban groceries – 17,000 sq. ft.

Reflections

The MBTA Parking Lot was the most controversial site. A low parking structure with residential use above was considered.

Across the street, small businesses were considered, consistent with an existing lumberyard.

Perhaps too much housing is proposed. A loss of 50% of 400 affordable units (200) may not be a great loss to the district, provided market rate housing is increased accordingly.

Or conversely, too much commercial properties are proposed.

Perhaps too much change is included.

Housing is linked to lower land values, which intern brings us back to higher density with less than 50% affordable units. Probably the range will be between 20 to 40 units per acre.

Forest Hills needs an elastic plan, to be able to respond to the market potential, as these opportunities are offered.

End of Presentation

Next Meeting

Friday, 20 February 2009, in the BSA Fifth Floor Conference Room, 52 Broad Street, Boston, MA, beginning at 8:30 a.m.

End of Meeting Minutes