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To:	Michael O'Dowd Project Manager	Date:	January 19, 2016
From:	Elizabeth Flanagan Howard Stein Hudson	HSH Project No.:	2013061.14
Subject:	MassDOT Highway Division Allston I-90 Interchange Improvement Project Place-making Subcommittee #1 Meeting Notes of January 11, 2016		

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## Overview

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016 members of the Allston I-90 Interchange Improvement Project Team and MassDOT staff associated with the job held the first place-making subcommittee meeting. Generally speaking, the place-making subcommittee is comprised of members of the task force in addition to consultants from the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Cecil Group.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the place-making subcommittee is, through the application of its members' in-depth knowledge, to assist and advise the BRA, and Cecil Group to ensure that the transportation options developed by MassDOT do not impinge on the City of Boston or Harvard University's future ability to create a unique district in the Beacon Park Yard parcel which, among other things, allows effective property development, respects and harmonizes with the adjoining neighborhoods of Allston, and provides an open space/public realm system which ties Allston to its riverfront.

The purpose of the meeting summarized herein was for the BRA and Cecil Group to present their initial thinking on open space typologies and begin a dialogue with the task force about open space options throughout the project area. Planning and designing open spaces is particularly challenging within this context given both the needed presence of significant road and rail infrastructure, which puts constraints on open space dimensions, but also the unknown nature of future development by Harvard University. In general, the BRA and Cecil Group proposed a discussion of different types of open spaces that would in turn inform an organizational system for the district as a whole, with a focus on determining which types work well and which preclude desired future uses.

The meeting was structured as a working group session, rather than a presentation. The BRA and Cecil Group began the meeting by presenting different types of open space organizers they thought could potentially work in the given context. Concerns were shortly raised that by looking at many different

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<sup>1</sup> A listing of task force membership can be found at:  
<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/HighlightedProjects/AllstonI90InterchangeImprovementProject/TaskForceMembers.aspx>

options, the community's primary open space desire, an improved riverfront edge, was being discounted. The discussion shifted to the riverfront and its importance to the community. Connections to the riverfront were cited as a key aspect of the project. The BRA and Cecil Group pointed out that although the riverfront and connections to it as a natural resource amenity throughout the neighborhood are essential, other additional open space elements are needed to provide visual and physical linkages to the river.

Perhaps one of the most interesting assertions by taskforce members during the meeting summarized herein is the idea that community members are tightly focused on the Charles River as the area's primary open space and enhancements to this asset because the future development of Beacon Park Yard is unclear and open-ended beyond MassDOT transportation plans. Likewise, much of the conversation was dominated the interplay between members of the BRA and Cecil Group who were attempting to build an intellectual framework for understanding open space as a building block for creating a unique district in the BPY and a handful of taskforce members seeking to use the BRA and its consultants to validate the perspectives they already hold.

The possibility of West Station to serve as a central park element within the community, if it succeeds in also being an active transportation hub in the future, was discussed. In closing, task force members were asked to continue thinking about opportunities for unusual open space uses.

Two more working sessions with the BRA are to be held which will focus on connectivity, mobility, development and, broadly speaking, making a characteristic district out of the Beacon Park Yard parcel. The meeting ended with assertions from both the task force members and the BRA and Cecil Group representatives that the night's conversation was helpful for framing how the project team thinks about open space moving forward; there was a desire to keep the momentum going for the two following place-making discussions.

## Detailed Meeting Minutes<sup>2</sup>

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C: Dave Grissino (DG): Thanks for coming tonight. This is the first of our subcommittee smaller working groups for the place-making effort that the BRA is leading. Thank you for taking some time. I know there are already a lot of meetings on everyone's calendars, and this is really helping us. We're in a stage where we need to understand individual issues like open space and transportation but how they all relate to each other. As the Cecil Group continues to do its work, which it outlined at the meeting in December, their next step is to begin to look at a whole range of alternative scenarios, testing the district to make sure that there can be a range of successful outcomes in the future. We'll identify a number of them; there will clearly be more in the future. We need to make sure that the planning happening right now, the project being implemented through MassDOT's efforts, gives us the

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<sup>2</sup> Herein "C" stands for comment, "Q" for question and "A" for answer. For a list of attendees, please see Appendix 1.

opportunity to have many more conversations and doesn't close down any significant planning concepts.

Our goal for tonight is to 1) talk through the methodology and how we're approaching these individual topics. Steve and Josh will talk about some of the work we're doing and maybe cover some of the ground from the December meeting in case you weren't there, bringing some of that back up to the surface, and 2) talk more abstractly and generally about different open space systems. I think the goal for us is to recognize that open space has the opportunity to organize the district on a grand scale and understand the different types of open space systems that are used here in Boston and in other places that can be used to organize the district. Which of those are viable here? What kinds of systems come along with the development that's down the road anyway?

There may be concepts that you'll be familiar with, like the Commonwealth Mall, but how does an idea like that actually begin to relate to the particular place? If you were here in December, a lot of what I talked about was trying to understand this district, which is a very unique place in the city. We want to talk through some of those types of open space systems and get reactions. I want to leave here with a clear understanding of the types of open space systems that are interesting and important to people. We want to be able to understand how they relate to development because you can't isolate these issues. We're going to talk about them individually, but ultimately their task is going to be to put them all back together again and look at how concepts of open space relate to concepts of development potential, circulation through the district for pedestrians, bikes and vehicles. We want to be able to give sound advice for the alternative generation that's to come.

I know that there has been one district organizing open space concept that has been talked about multiple times by the task force that we will absolutely continue to explore. As we explore the range, we're going to generate multiple scenarios and that will certainly be one of them but I want to make sure that we understand some of the issues relative to that.

With that, because we do have a smaller group, if everyone could go around and say their name and organizations you're representing or where you live. My name is Dave Grissino; I am an urban designer and project manager for the I-90 project from the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

- C: Josh Fiela (JF): Josh Fiela, also an urban designer and planner with the Cecil Group; project manager for the place-making study from our perspective.
- C: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (NCC): Galen is here from Howard Stein Hudson helping me document this meeting.
- C: Carol Martinez (CM): I'm Carol Martinez from the Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation.

C: Paola Ferer (PF): I am Paola Ferer; I am a resident in Allston.

C: George Briones (GB): George Briones, MBTA.

C: Karl Haglund (KH): Karl Haglund, MBTA.

C: David Loutzenheiser (DL): David Loutzenheiser, MAPC.

C: Pallavi Mande (PM): Pallavi Mande, I'm the Director of Blue Cities of the Charles River Watershed Association.

C: Elizabeth Leary (EL): Elizabeth Leary, Boston University.

C: Tom Nally (TM): Tom Nally, A Better City.

C: James Gillooly (JG): Jim Gillooly, Boston Transportation Department.

C: Oscar Lopez (OL): Oscar Lopez, Office of Representative Honan.

C: Stephanie Seskin (SS): Stephanie Seskin, Boston Transportation Department.

C: Amy Mahler (AM): Amy Mahler, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services.

C: Clancy Main (CM): Clancy Main, Office of Councilor Ciommo.

C: Steve Cecil (SC): Steve Cecil of the Cecil Group.

C: Wendy Landman (WL): Wendy Landman, Walk Boston.

C: Barbara Jacobson (BJ): Barbara Jacobson, MassBike.

C: Jorge Briones (JB): Jorge Briones, MBTA.

C: Skip Smallridge (SL): Skip Smallridge, CSS.

C: Bruce Houghton (BH): Bruce Houghton, Houghton Chemical.

C: Renata von Tscharnier (RvT): Renata von Tscharnier, Charles River Conservancy.

C: Brent Whalen (BW): Brent Whalen, Allston resident and cyclist.

C: Jim Hynes (JH): Jim Hynes, resident.

C: Michael O'Dowd (MOD): Michael O'Dowd, MassDOT.

C: Chris Calnan (CC): Chris Calnan with Tetra Tech.

C: Ed Ionata (EI): Ed Ionata, Tetra Tech.

C: NCC: Nate Curtis with Howard Stein Hudson.

C: DG: Thanks everybody. With that, I'll turn it over to Josh to talk a bit about how we're thinking about and approaching this and then we can open it up to discussion about the different types.

C: JF: Sure. We are treating these as work sessions so they're a little unstructured. We can adjust as we go depending on the success of this conversation. We really want to get into open spaces as your agenda suggests. The idea is that we're structuring three of these conversations and then we'll take the topics that we outlined at the December 17<sup>th</sup> task force meetings and dig into them in each of these conversations. That will help us frame the way we're thinking about and investigating the alternatives analysis and continue to flush out building a composite of each of these topic areas. We're trying to understand the district alternatives together.

I'll introduce the topic area for tonight: public open space. Were most of you at the December 17<sup>th</sup> meeting? Thinking through what we wanted to do tonight, we had some areas of the study area where there may be more or less flexibility and challenges with opens space and how we think about that. It's easy to abstract the information in a way that gets hard to grasp. You saw heat maps, which are very useful for analysis but it leaves you wanting more specifics in terms of what this actually means and how that unfolds into a real district. That's the conversation we want to have tonight in terms of open space.

We're thinking about the study area specifically through a district building and open space types perspective. We've come up with 6 or 7 open space types as district organizing elements. Then we thought through those types and what they mean in terms of infrastructure and roadways, development potential, and created some simple diagrams to show how that open space type might be applied to the district. We're trying to think about the vast range of open spaces that might occur within the study area and how they might be used to organize and reflect back up on the roadway design that's being developed today.

We're looking for two things out of this conversations: what is the roadway system design telling us that might not be able to happen that we want to be able to happen; and what is the open space network telling us positively about what wants to be carried forward as the characteristics of the district as we start to think about a planning framework evolving. I won't get into too much detail

because we want to move along, but you'll have this sort of structure from before and we can refer to it. We have some of the more detailed analysis that went into it if we want to get into that a little bit. Keep in mind the overall key community challenges that we outlined and have been reflecting upon during our conversations. I'm grabbing some boards that will be laid out on the tables.

C: CC: I mentioned tonight that we won't be projecting tonight so if you want to huddle a little closer to the table we'll be doing a lot of work out in front of us here.

Q: DL: So is your idea to find ways to take the types of parks and open spaces and assign them to the site?

A: SC: There's a whole range of ways you can look at open space. What we need to do is understand the different ways that they can be applied to city building in general and decide which ones work well. I used the example of the Commonwealth Mall. It's something that was designed and implemented for very specific purposes and in a very specific place; it was located within a deep grid and it had a lot to do with real estate value. There are a lot of things underlying the physical form of the Mall. When we talk about a linear organizing concept like that, what does it mean for this area when we have completely different forming principles. The grid and scale of streets are different, the very potential for development. Will something like that work if we're looking for very different densities and land uses? That's the kind of thing we want to dig at with a variety of different open space organizers.

C: DG: This could either be a critique or we could say this is being proposed. We don't want you to look at this like it's a litmus test.

Q: DG: But how does it relate to some of the theory that you're presenting?

A: SC: We'll be returning to some of that but when you start thinking about restructuring a district, it's easy to look at other iconic elements of other districts as a way to understand what could be. But in the same way the transportation infrastructure has a lot of connections and you don't have every mode in every place, you can't have every type of open space in every place. We need to flesh out what are the components that are district building within open space.

Q: DG: Iconic?

A: SC: Well they may be iconic but not necessarily. There are other ways of building open space and different types of open space and that's what we want to get to. The same thing is going to happen to the buildings. Residential buildings come in a range of sizes and styles. To put a district together, you want to have space and a place to do that correctly. This is a very useful language for a large area. We're going to brainstorm those kinds of categories of open space and not every category is going to work. We can kick this off with a series of categories. We have been thinking about this as more of a workshop and discussion than a presentation. So we're going to put these out on the table to talk about and we'd like you to add to the list. There are a number of categories of open space, some of which have

been talked about in the past and some of which may not yet. Do they make sense and if so what do they tell us?

The other thing I would add to that is that each of these types of open space occurs within Allston and other Boston neighborhoods today. So you can focus on one as the focal open space organizer or multiples might occur in the same district at the same time. We're also looking at which might make the most and least sense within this district.

Q: BH: Where I have difficulty is understanding when you talk about open space in the context of other cities and the purpose of the open space. The purpose is defined by what they're going to develop there, not by the open space as an entity in itself. If we're talking about open space along the river, it makes a lot of sense to discuss that kind of thing because there's a lot of community people who utilize that. If you're talking about Cambridge Street, it might be incorporated with housing or things like that. But when you're talking about open space in the context of this development area, which is all owned by Harvard, I ask the BRA, do they have an expectation? Would they mandate housing there as associated with development? In other words, what is this development? Is it going to be office parks associated with office buildings? That's a very different open space. It's more of a lunch space area than a useable area. I'm confused how, if we don't have the context of how this property is going to be used, what Harvard's designs are, then you're really just talking about open space around the perimeter?

A: SC: I have two responses. One, you're right we don't know what the uses are and we can't mandate the uses. That's why we need to consider multiple ways of looking at open space and seeing if they work. You're right; the open space is going to be determined by the use. If it's heavily commercial space, we can have one type of use, and if it's heavily residential, we can have another type. We need to consider multiple ways this can work for different development alternatives for the area. We can't come up with a design. We can talk about a linear concept, but how that plays out will take time. There are places where we need to inform what's happening now if there's a particular kind of system we think has viability in the long run, whether independent of or in relationship to a range of uses. But we can't propose one or the other because we don't know what the ultimate land uses are going to be. We also have to look at open space infrastructure as a technical one that deals with climate preparedness, resiliency, storm water management. In Harvard's thinking, the greenway is as much a technical piece as a recreation space. We need to recognize some of these major opportunities. Good open spaces persist in cities even as the areas around them change. We see that all the time. Open space can have multiple characteristics. People can enjoy a place from a distance or go and throw a Frisbee. There are many layers. I want to kick this off by getting into some of the topics. Not unlike infrastructure, open space has its own inherent value that we need to get our heads around. I'd like to see if we can get into the meat of this.

C: PM: I just wanted to add to the conversation of typology. I feel that it's great to visit this and the criteria you've laid out, but if we could also keep the context of what will be informing these types in the big picture because we can only talk about it in the abstract. So we should understand open space

in terms of connections, circulation, and creation of corridors. To a certain extent, I think these concepts should to be grounded in the context to inform what we're looking at.

C: DG: Just to clue you all in. We want to talk about the overall types and see if any are missing. But we have applied each of these types to the study area context and we have diagrams of that we'll want to talk through. But first what we tried to do is think expansively about what this district, as we create a new area of the city, would possibly want to accommodate in the future in terms of open space network and what might make sense. I don't know the best way to structure this conversation. You can see the 7 types we thought might fit in this context. They might not capture the full extent of what would be applicable but they make sense as a starting point.

As a focal point, I think that something like Post Office Square is something people would identify with, or Central Park. It's a center focal point where people might associate the district with that open space. You can think about a natural feature of the Charles River and the edges of it and how that extends into the district, or the Back Bay Fens as a natural feature and district focus. The Green Way in Boston is a linear feature.

C: WL: I have a suggestion. The way the room is set up there are people who can see and people who can't. Maybe we could open up the circle.

C: DG: We had an RSVP system- we were a little unprepared for the numbers. It's always open but the RSVP was so we could get a handle on numbers. I had an even smaller table to start and Nate told me to make it bigger; my apologies for the setup. But we can open it up<sup>3</sup>. We know that there has been an open space concept that has been talked about quite a bit. The Allston Esplanade has been part of the dialogue for a long time. It is a district organizing way of talking about it; it's number 2 on our list here. If you can hold tight, we'll get to it, but I want to make sure we got to all of these. We'll talk about the ideas that have been put out as we move along.

C: HM: I think all of this abstract textbook stuff is interesting as background but this entire site is bordered by the Charles River and to not start there seems really confusing to a few of us. You could start by saying how you make the edge of the Charles River really exceptional. And we need to have great ways to get there if you're coming from West Station, Ashford Street or North Harvard Street or some building that Harvard builds in a hundred years. And then you need a great way to get over Soldier's Field Road. I can't imagine a solution that doesn't include those. I can't imagine it. I don't know if other people...

C: DG: I think it's unfair to characterize this as a textbook exercise.

C: HM: I apologize for those words but-

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<sup>3</sup> There was a pause in the conversation to reconfigure the room.



- C: DG: Let me finish. We're trying really hard to understand how an entire district ought to work and all we're trying to do is make sure we keep all the perspectives. It won't be one-dimensional. There are so many dimensions to what happens. The Charles River is a driver here. I want to put forward that we're trying to have a conversation that looks at all of those perspectives.
- C: HM: But Harvard's not going to build a soccer field. And if they do, I think that's so far away from the interests of the neighborhood and the region that trying to say that a softball diamond ...does anyone care about a softball field? Or do we care about a great walk along the river with great ways to get there from north, south and in the middle. I think our priorities should determine where to spend the time for our discussion.
- C: DG: I think to Bruce's earlier point to use, our charge is to make sure that there is a number of ways that this district can play out, not just design one solution.
- C: HM: I don't understand that.
- C: DG: The planning has yet to come. We have a long way to go before the real planning for this area is going to evolve. I understand that there are big moves that could happen that could put in position the infrastructure but we can't develop a master plan for this area. That's certainly not the charge we have before us. If we are going to have an impact on what's being built as part of this project, we need to think hypothetically but also as professionally as we can about building a district in this area through a range of potential outcomes to see if there's anything we need to make sure this infrastructure doesn't preclude. We may not be looking at building a soccer field right now, but 20 years from now, we don't know what the uses will be and if it's heavily residential and if the need for recreation is a higher priority than it is for the community right now, we need to make sure that we've understood where something like that could happen because it's not going to be able to happen everywhere. We need to keep ourselves open at this point and open to the possibilities rather than focusing on one option. We know there is a concept that is very important to you and we will continue to look at that. But we need to make sure we have the right things opened up to look at in terms of alternatives for the next phase.
- C: NNG: I have to leave. So although I do agree with Harry about prioritizing access to the river and how we get to the river, I think another priority should be that whatever green space and open space we get connects other parts of the neighborhood, Allston and Brighton, to this area so that North Allston also has some connections to it. I get very concerned that this is going to turn into a gated community that isn't accessible to North Allston and even Allston main streets. How we try and keep that as open as possible is as much of a priority to me as maximizing the river space. So I just want to get that in there before I have to leave. I apologize for having to leave but I did only have an hour to stay.
- C: HM: I want to follow the point that we're only trying to not preclude things that Harvard might want to decades from now. MassDOT has very specific plans for Soldier's Field Road, and I think a lot of us are here because we hope to discuss specific elements that will be done by MassDOT in this project and

how those may be improved in a whole bunch of different ways. If we say we need to talk about recreational uses for people who may or may not live here in the future, that takes away from the time we have in the next two months with the Cecil Group and their limited budget to also ask how we can make a great park along the Charles River and have great access to it from the north, south and west. I don't understand how we'll get all that done in the time we have.

C: DG: I think that's a legitimate concern. We don't want to discount the fact that there's something that will be done. We are working within the parameters of what has been outlined by the engineers. We are not engineers and there's a whole team that have been working for a couple of years on this and that's not our charge. But there are places that need to be refined. If we have 7 of these and expand it to 8 and decide that there are 3 or 4 that can create or maximize the connections to the river, ways to get to it, create iconic open space that will help overall development, that's all the things you're talking about, it puts them all back together again. The district is made up of a number of these things ultimately. If there any that are limited by this plan then we need to understand that.

We're probably saying the same thing, but we need to look not just at the one along the river but also things that impact all the way back through the district. Going back to the Commonwealth Mall example, it a good example of talking about long layers of open space organizing the area but what does that mean in this place? If you want to use a linear open space concept, how does that happen in a district like this versus somewhere else in the city in terms of land use, timing and physical structure? We need to go in looking at other things.

What we're hearing now means maybe we won't fall too heavily on recreational uses. If there are others we can imagine being important ones to test as alternatives, that's one of the outcomes we had stated for tonight: to cull this list down. It's not to say we shouldn't know if recreational uses are possible. Parks Department is going to want to know that too, that we didn't just discount it. That's important to the city. If this is going to be a residential area, then recreation uses are going to be important, even if it's not a field. Let's go through and have Josh quickly walk through this and then we'll go back.

C: WL: Let me try and explain what I think people are thinking. There is a very intensive set of parameters within which this area is operating. It's almost like there's a blank slate discussion rather than showing the roadways schemes and what this would mean in this context. Maybe that's the issue. Maybe that's what you've been doing, because this seems so generic.

C: SC: And we would love the opportunity to actually talk a little bit about what we've done and how we're thinking about it. I would ask that you let us get to the agenda before you judge what we've done.

C: DG: We had hoped to walk through some of the logic but let's just dive right into it.

C: NNG: I'm not sure people can handle the logic. We've been talking about this for a year and a half already so there's a lot of think about.

C: DG: Sure. And our charge is discreet. It's a very different context than what we've talked about in the past. We're coming at it from a different perspective and we wanted to lay that out. Let's dive into it because I want to make sure we get to the materials that have been prepared.

C: SC: From an open space topic perspective, we're looking at conclusions at this level and at the more detailed study level. A very valid conclusion is a natural feature type that takes advantage of the Charles River but there might not be enough of a district building open space type to carry the rest of the acreage that's not on the river. So which of these other types need to be coupled with that? One of the suggestions was a linear connection. There has to be another type. And there are other valid types of the 7 that we've laid out that couple with the level of a natural feature. We do need to think about it at this level. We need to have conclusions at this level that we're reporting. There have to be more of these 7 types, one of them, for example recreation space, might not make sense but there have to be 2 or more which couple together to work on a district wide basis.

C: DG: In Harvard's IMP area, that's another significant open space area so we need to be thinking about north-south as well as east-west. There are things that are much more expansive beyond the edge of the river.

C: SC: So what we've done is take each of the 7 types, looked at the study area in the abstract of applying that type to the area. There are several assumptions. This is focused on open space, not thinking about it in association with development potential. We're trying to have these narrow focused working group discussions with you all so then when we go back to combine everything together, we have what you've said in the back of our heads and can incorporate that.

If we look at a focus open space type, which is modeled on Post Office Square, the scale of which you can see dotted in the green rectangle. This is a focal point in the financial district and would reach across these two lots up to West Station. This is an open space type that wants to be in the center of the district, it wants to be of scale, and it wants to be a focal point. In terms of development potential, it creates real estate value on its edges. This is an organizing element that would be a district organizing feature. It would not be precluded by the roadway design but certainly would have to be thought of in terms of development potential.

C: DG: If you have some kind of iconic open space, you have the focus in the middle of the district, not at the edges. They can add value but they displace land that could be used for other uses. The scale becomes really important. Post Office Square works with the uses around here. A central space starts to push out the edges. Do you all see this as a necessary element? There are a lot of districts that don't have a major focus. What are the characteristics of an open space like this that you think are necessary?

C: NNG: It might be helpful to hear the pros and cons.

- C: SC: There's been a lot of discussion of the Charles River and the Soldiers Field Road alignment work with an expanded park and public space on the river side of things. If you take the Back Bay Fens, it averages around 800 feet in width, including the land and waterway. If you put that to scale, this is a very similar scale offset. We're not going to get quite that range of open space and it is imaginable that there will be a constraint as we push in to the road network, but a more sweeping curve could allow for more room on the riverfront. From a place making perspective, that looks feasible and is a reasonable goal.
- Q: NNG: Can you clarify the dimensions? And what is happening on Soldier's Field Road to create what you've drawn there?
- A: SC: These are not layouts, just applying the open space types. This distance in the green here, plus or minus 800 feet which is the Back Bay Fens around the Muddy River. That's a dimension that is a system focused on the natural resource as a district-wide open space organizer.
- Q: SS: I'm sorry; the words don't necessarily make sense. The shaded green is the approximate size of the Back Bay Fens at various points. Or this is the development area that is impacted?
- A: SC: We're looking at open space types as district organizing features. The scale of the organizing feature that is focused on a natural feature such as a river, the Back Bay fens has the scale to provide an open space to a vast amount of the area around it.
- Q: SS: So shaded green is where buildings would be?
- A: SC: The shaded green is looking at a comparable district open space district feature.
- Q: HM: Like a mile down toward the city of Boston?
- C: PM: Can I help this conversation a little bit? If we are going to use the Back Bay Fens as an analogy, let's talk about the functionality, not just the dimensions of the open space. I think what might help, is how does the Back Bay Fens form a function that is beyond passive recreation and an open space amenity for the region? And that might help people understand why this kind of open space needs to be shaped or situation in a specific way rather than talking about the dimensions from an off-set standpoint. I would talk about it from that perspective; I think it's more compelling.
- C: SC: Yes, and what we're trying to do here is show an analogy as a way of guiding the conversation. We're not proposing that the Fens or Post Office Square literally be here; it's just a frame of reference.
- Q: WL: What do you mean by the 800 feet? Could you just put your finger on that in the drawing?
- A: SC: (Referenced board). From the river's edge to the inside of the green hatch is 800 feet.

Q: NNG: What does that tell us?

A: SC: That is an average dimension of the Back Bay Fens as an open space. What that tells us is that you're looking at that scale of open space if you're leveraging the Charles River only as an open space aspect. There needs to be another one of these types that is applied within the district independent of and connecting to the Charles River as an asset.

Q: NNG: We're not importing ideas. We are given the situation on the Charles. We have a very complicated transportation issue. How do we make something that is more than roads but has character? Why not look at giving the Charles River the opportunity to expand and create an open space. Yes there will be other linear components and pocket parks but we need to start with the strongest element and work around that. To imagine Post Office Square in the middle of the space, it seems like an artificial thing, as someone else has already suggested. We don't have open space that we can subdivide. We are given a very restrained site; it's a great opportunity and we need to work on this as a starting point and then look at what else is needed for residences and open spaces. It seems way too abstract to look at green spaces across the nation.

C: SC: We're going to have trouble getting into the conversation we'd like to get into.

C: HM: This is conversation we'd like to have. We've been waiting over a year so I don't want to leave it so quickly.

C: SC: I'm only talking about 10 minutes. We get a choice; we can dig into these. We use these to unlock conversation. We're not proposing that the Fens come here. It's to understand the vocabulary and the different types. We can take one of the fundamental open spaces- the Charles River- and open it up and get into the topics of how it should inform what's happening. Or we can through all the types, see what's on the table, and go through them one at a time from there. It's either way. I'm open; I've heard suggestions both ways. The point is that we want to ground truth each of these ideas, but it's hard to start the conversations.

C: PM: I think what you're hearing from this group is that the Charles River is driving this conversation and has been for years. Let's acknowledge that and say how is that informing this discussion rather than starting from the other end and laying out the options and seeing how they fit into the puzzle.

C: SC: That's fine. There are a number of constraints obviously on the amount of open space that can be created. As a district making and informing strategy, how much open space is the minimum and the maximum? And another question is the vertical circumstances. In Brooklyn, New York, there's a place where the infrastructure goes under the lip of the open space that goes right up to the water's edge. If you're 20 feet back from the edge, you're looking at the Hudson River and Manhattan. For all intents and purposes, it is an open space system that goes all the way to the river. But right underneath you, is the infrastructure with cars and trucks. Does that count in your minds, if there was a connection to

that open space and how wide does the connection have to be? Another thing is how far does the district identity extend? How do you know it's there? I'd like to hear what you think should be done.

- Q: HM: What does influence mean? I'm perplexed by that concept. I live on Mansfield Street and it's a mile in any direction from the Charles River and all of the routes are horrible and to some extent unsafe and my neighbors are scared to ride a bike to the river. But absolutely, all of North Allston and a large part of South Allston or even Cambridge, you're influenced by having Magazine Beach. I don't understand what we're talking about.
- A: SC: We can talk about it in real estate terms. Proximity to amenities affects the values. If someone says you're one block from the Charles River Park and the other says 18 blocks, it's going to more heavily influence places with physical and visual connections. That's how parks work.
- C: NNG: We're not in Harvard so we're never going to be 3 blocks from these amenities. We'll never be a mile from them but we're hoping that it won't increase the sale values of our properties so much that it affects our quality of life.
- C: HM: I think the concept is if it's a great place to get to, whether you live on Babcock Street in Brookline, and it's not about increasing your real estate value or student village at BU and now you can somehow amazingly walk down to the Charles River, that's great. I don't think it's about increasing rents in the student village or seeing housing values on Ashford Street skyrocket. But it should be, "Hey, isn't this amazing that there's not just an 8 or 10 foot wide path but a great natural resource and for the people biking from Watertown or Belmont to get to their jobs on Beacon Hill, that's great for them too." That's promoting all sorts of other goals, environmental and otherwise. That's affecting them even if not through real estate in Watertown.
- C: SC: I say that as one example. Connections, proximity and the nature of the activities themselves become key connecting points.
- C: GM: Just to bring it up, in order to make open space realized, you have to connect to it. I think your next meeting on mobility and connectivity should be merged with this conversation. How much influence you want your proposed park to have is how easy or safe it is to get to it. For instance, we're about a block and a half from the Charles River. But I don't think anyone on Western Avenue sells Charles River connections to the River because Soldier's Field Road is that severing point. So if you don't have the bridge or connection, or you take away the freeway that prevents you from getting to that public space, then you can have that influence seeping back into the neighborhood.

I want to be clear, until you put it into the grid, which we've been talking about for a year and a half, how that connects to the bicycle/pedestrian path that is proposed, how it connects to the intersections with the bridges, and are they 6 lanes wide or 3 lanes wide... If it's 3 lanes wide, the connection will come back into the community. If it's 6 lanes, you're not going to feel a connection to it. I work here

with a bunch of kids and they don't go to the Charles River because the pedestrian bridge, even though it's there, it's really inaccessible. It comes down to the transportation conversation.

My second point is whether you frame this as 'we have a new district, what is the value of the new district going to be based off the open space' or 'we have a neighborhood that is separated by all these atrocious off ramps, and how do we view the existing neighborhood and how that bleeds into the open space across Cambridge Street?'

C: SC: What's going to happen is we're going to have a new district over time. We're looking at planning for that whole district. We're of course planning for how it's going to connect to and be used by or passed through. But the changes are going to be happening within that district.

C: GM: I would argue, as a resident that the land value of this 100 plus acres will be what it will be. But what will the new development, the pocket parks or whatever, influences my life a block from that place. The priority is connections to the Charles River.

C: SC: Yes and this is what I'm trying to get at: the connection to that waterfront is absolutely critical to be meaningful to this area.

Q: DL: Do you have a map that shows connection?

A: SC: We do. I want to re-highlight this map that is from the open space and recreation plan. This looks at the existing parks and service areas that they have and the large gap of the study area. We're trying to think from an open space and district perspective, which of those approaches could be leveraged best to fill that gap for existing residents and others.

To segue into the next type, which is looking at some of those connections. This one is just looking at artificially creating some of those new areas, either, as Steve suggested, with a secondary ground plain as in Brooklyn or with air rights. But looking at how park space can be integrated into that and leveraged, for example, that could be another approach used along the Charles River to expand the frontage without relocating Soldier's Field Road eventually.

Q: NNG: You mean going over Soldier's Field Road?

A: SC: Lifting the edge of the park.

C: NNG: That's a reasonable conversation.

Q: WL: Can I ask another question? I kind of assumed the city would have a point of view from the perspective of the City of Boston and DCR about what it is desired from a city building perspective. I know the residents and task force are very interested in seeing a much better connection to the

Charles, not just to the neighborhood but regionally. Right now, the park doesn't serve anyone very well as a park. I know that the city can't say what development should happen but I want to know what you would like to see along the banks of the Charles and that would say an 8 foot strip is not sufficient to serve to the city, the community and state.

It's a magnificent river. Not to mention resiliency and climate change that we also need to be thinking about. It would be great to hear something about that. We're seeing all of this stuff, and I understand the analytic side but what do we want? The community has been saying for a while what we want, but what do you want? Do you think an 8 foot strip is adequate? Do you think it needs to be 20 feet or 50 feet? How do you get across the intersection at River Street to make it work?

A: NNG: Because the planning is yet to come we try not to presuppose anything and our sincere goal is that whatever happens, we want to recognize how a district like this over time deals with real estate, open space, and be connected not just in the east west directions. Because there are other assets in the north, we want to understand connections. I can't say 8 feet versus 12 feet versus 25 feet but I can tell you the goal is to make sure this whole area functions as well as it can. There are a lot of city building functions and open space is not an isolated concern. We're talking about it tonight but we need to couple that with how open space connects to development and mobility. We don't have a plan. And I don't think that end that at the end of this process we'll have a plan. But we need to have the planning tools to understand all the different components together.

Q: WL: Just as the community has had goals, the city and DCR have some goals; which isn't to say we're all going to get what we want but the goals are more than having all the pieces fit together.

A: NNG: No and I think the letters we've submitted as part of this process and presentations we've given have articulated our goals. They are different in that maybe they're not as place specific. Our goals have been dealing with overall aspirations and not overly specific. We know there are specific things being done that will ultimately affect that. We need to look to see if there are places to propose modifications to what's been planned by MassDOT. If there is something of value and importance that is being precluded by what's proposed now, we need to recommend to that. We can't get there without going through this process.

Q: DL: Peer review will be very specific. The work that's been done on alignments of roads, etc. Moving Soldier's Field Road is one thing idea; is that something we should be looking at to work with MassDOT? I want to hear DCR's perspective.

A: KH: Soldier's Field Road is an interesting contrast to Memorial Drive. There are sections of Soldier's Field Road that are almost as wide or wider than the River on the Cambridge Side but nobody goes there because the cars are going fast and it's almost inaccessible because it's so far from one access to another. I think DCR is interested in upgrading this area and there are many ways of doing it. We are feeling like we are part of a much larger process. I don't think there is such a thing as "what DCR



wants.” DCR struggles to take care of what we have and we think this is an unsafe and under designed portion of the river.

C: NNG: That’s a good start.

Q: HM: Is this the type of thing we’re going to get to discuss as some point in this forum<sup>4</sup>? Doesn’t have to be tonight but when you see this are you guys going to say we’re completely out of order and this is out of our scope or are we just a meeting ahead of you and we’ll talk about this in January or whenever?

C: GM: The focus of this is on extending the park land of the Charles River to be usable by changing some of the traffic patterns.

C: HM: And improve traffic with drivers going from Soldier’s Field Road out onto the Mass Pike which is one of the heaviest usages of this part of the conversation.

C: GM: We’ve talked about moving Soldier’s Field Road from day one.

C: HM: We think an essential component is dealing with the piece right next to the bridge where making a much bigger park in the belly of this section would be great for the people in that district but for people by bike or on foot traveling along the river, if you still have a 5 foot wide pinch point, it feels like we’ve missed some opportunities.

C: SC: One thing I’m sure everyone is aware of is the desire to have open space as a continuation of green space has been articulated in master plans and the question is the other forces pushing back, infrastructure closer to the river. Part of that challenge is figuring out how much is enough and the tradeoffs. If you can’t get there, it’s not very meaningful. Connections to it are critical. The next question is width. We wanted to broach the notion that you might not be able to get the kind of width you want on the actual level of the river but you may have opportunities in the way that you span across over time to do that as well. There’s a question- you’ve had your hand raised very politely for a long time, I’m sorry.

C: Robert Tremouille (RT): I have a lot of experience with the DCR. Magazine Beach is walled off from the Charles River so you cannot see the Charles River from Magazine Beach except for one tiny opening. The DCR has turned the Cambridge side of the Charles River, from the BU Bridge east into a massive construction zone. They will destroy hundreds of trees. This is what the DCR does. The DCR’s legislative liaison bragged to me that they were destroying nothing but maples. This is no coincidence. November 10<sup>th</sup> there was an objection filed to the mayor and about the logging. The same day, the head of the DCR was fired without given reason.

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<sup>4</sup> A handout was passed around by GM.

- C: DG: Looking at this there are a lot of different issues. I'm not an engineer so I can't weigh in on the technical feasibility, but the impacts on the majority of the district in terms of development and air rights and all that is very little. What does impact it is the mobility and circulation. We have to understand development that will happen on western side. What does the relocation of a road like this to accommodate an open space like this mean for the development? If you're going to think about uses along the river, is there space to realistically locate housing that would naturally go hand in hand with an open space along the river. If you're going to move the road even further, what are the pros and cons?
- C: SC: I would like to know what you think happens in this park. Formal recreation has certain dimensions and there are relatively few spaces along the Charles River where there is a baseball field or a soccer field. Those drive certain dimensions. You can have a third of a tennis court. But there are other kinds of activities- what kinds of uses do you see in this park? There are formal kinds of recreation but there are also more passive forms. What kinds of things happen in this park and what does that tell us about how big it should be?
- C: DL: The big ball field at Mass Eye and Ear has a big wall. I've never been in it. Sometimes that can be a bad thing.
- C: PM: I wanted to add that I agree with you Steve that program does dictate dimension but it is way too early to talk about programming dimensions. We need to talk about this open space in terms of infrastructure and we can't give dimensions with infrastructure without examining what it's serving. I would take a pause when you talk about riverfront development because whether we like it or not, a lot of people in North Allston have waterfront property, and this conversation needs to shift from looking at development parcels. We are looking at a lot of infrastructure challenges from the perspective of how we deal with cases like Sandy hitting New York City. Water doesn't respect that when there is an intense storm event.

My point is that we need to look at open space and infrastructure. The programming will come based on the land uses around them. But the connections to the river, the functions of the open space and infrastructure are guiding this design. I think more than point of view, we have not had that vision discussion. Everybody is shying away from that by saying that's not what our charge is but we need to see a vision. We can talk about how much of that vision is feasible in the next 5-10-15 years. We need to have that conversation and then figure out how to get there. But to say the engineering will drive parcel size and the programming determines how small or big our river front park needs to be is missing the point.

- C: SC: I guess the thing that we see in terms of desire is that there are many visions that occur but the ones that stick will be the ones that fit the environmental conditions and constraints. All I'm after right now is a simple thing that would help us. We've talked about thing that are drivers getting to and from connections. I'm trying to figure out what drives the size of the river front park as being enough, not too

little or too big. I put one thing out on the table- I don't think we'll have baseball fields there but what are the things driving that dimension? Yes?

- C: NNG: It's interesting that there is a planning process going on for Smith Field, maybe three quarters of a mile up Western Avenue so it's not really relevant for this space. The community has been very clear that, although Smith Field will retain formally structured ball fields because it has always had them and the Parks Department wants to preserve them, the interests of the community have been overwhelmingly focused on the maybe 10 percent of the park space that will not be dedicated to those sports uses but will in effect be passive, seated space looking over green space (although it will be full of baseball games, maybe that will enhance it or not). That's what the North Allston and Brighton community has locked in on- the possibility of some restful green space.

When you translate that thinking to this parcel by the river, it is obvious to me that that would be even more attractive. It would answer the question without having to think too hard about it. Would you like to sit in a space looking out over an active river as it unfolds? Of course. How many square feet you need for that, I don't know, but more is better but would there be enormous demand for that? Of course, because it would be one of the most beautiful places in the whole metropolitan area.

- C: NNG: Back to Dave's point about the scope of this study and figuring out what MassDOT's plan may or may not preclude and making sure we're not raising any flags; the flyer that was passed out points out that the basic minimum that we would want for this green space is space for safe two way bicycle traffic. That's the bare minimum, which we don't have today. That condition of not having enough space for a two-way bicycle track would be maintained with MassDOT's plan because it doesn't change the section of the path as it approaches the River Street Bridge. So right away, there is something that MassDOT's plan is precluding that is high priority for the people that use it today and will continue to use it until all those parcels are developed. I think taking a look at how the roadways are and whether there are ways to expand at the very minimum the entire length to have two-way bicycle traffic, it would also be nice to have separated space for pedestrian traffic and then maybe space for a couple benches. At this spot there are pretty spectacular skyline views. That seems to me to be a pretty big deal and is not possible with the MassDOT plan.

- C: NNG: I want to point that there are NACTO guidelines about the width of a bike path. I think it's a minimum of 12 feet for a shared use path and probably more like 14. We might not be able to get that but having a 4 ½ or 5 foot path is so far out of the guidelines- it's not that it makes riding less enjoyable, but it's dangerous. We first have to look at making it a viable transportation link. Right now it is struggling to do that. Then we have to look at where we have space and how we can make it better. The other thing is that if you have a greens pace, if you build in some of those area, for instance talking about an elevated highway, a lot of the time that green space will be in the shade, not somewhere that's really pleasant. I would be concerned about saying 'look at all this green space' if a lot of it is in shadow and next to a highway. We should make sure the pass through transportation has its needs met and then look for ways to make it better.

- C: SC: There are effective minimums for transportation but they don't allow space for you to sit and enjoy the view. Infrastructure wants to push towards the river and we're pushing back. We need to make sure we understand the minimum that works. The diagram we've shown is a bit of a cartoon but it says that what the Fenway has is a totally different scale and we don't have that much space. Let's talk about the business about getting to the water's edge.
- Q: NNG: Could we just pause to see if there's a really interesting idea about a park at the edge of a river before you move on to the connective tissue of the area. Can we hear any more about ideas for that space along the river?
- A: DL: We mentioned sitting areas. The linear space for bikes, pedestrians, running and whatnot could be 20 feet, let's say. But the sitting area is more than just having a sitting area- it needs a buffer. If you're along the Esplanade and you want to sit, what kind of buffer space do you need? The second question is if you were to move Soldier's Field Road back, how would you interface with the development on the other side of it? Would DCR allow and would MassDOT consider having a lid over a section of Soldier's Field Road that would allow permeability? Or move Soldier's Field Road all the way back to the other road and have development between.
- C: SC: That's a little hard for me to imagine because I don't know how you get to it at that point but that's something to think about.
- C: SS: Getting back to your point about it operating as infrastructure; you brought up Brooklyn and you may remember during Sandy that the carousel was alone in a river of water. So thinking about how that impacts the development here as well. Will it be sustainable over a period of 20 years? I think it's important that we address that in the design.
- C: AM: I know the piece we're looking at is slim but could be a grander community space. I'm thinking about under the Brooklyn Bridge, Dumbo, they have that park parcel that's overlooking the river to Manhattan but they also use that as the Sunday location for the Brooklyn Flea, pop-up community space. Obviously that's seasonally dependent, but thinking a bit more about things other than picnics. It's dependent on how much space along the river. There's a huge need for transportation access that isn't car, bus, T dependent and trying to think more broadly about what will create community around here that isn't just making everyday life easier, like wider bike lanes. Rather, what will create community? We're at all the same community meetings and what I keep hearing over and over again is creating real community space, whether it's this parcel here that's a little bit longer along the river? I know that's what you were trying to get to with pocket parks.
- C: SC: Yes and I think the idea of open space creates community; it's for all of us. There are different types of those open spaces and our question is what are the locational characteristics of those open spaces. Brooklyn is a good example because they can get together and have informal activities by the river but

there are other places that can occur and they can be connected. We're trying to figure out how that can work.

- C: DG: We'll come back to this in a different meeting but we will be looking at how all this relates to development. We can talk about the a number of things along the river and spread out through the district but ultimately, anything has to be built and maintained and a recognition of how they're going to stay that way. A lot of that has to do with the relationship to development. We have to think not just about size and location but how it will be structured and the real estate value around it. That impacts long-term sustainability as much as environmental considerations or financial considerations to make it a place people want to be. The danger would be to not have understood that dynamic and have it be fallow or unsafe. We need to return to that.
- C: BJ: I agree with your point that viewing open space, greenery as infrastructure and keeping in the context that it is a transportation oriented project, I think it's really important that we consider the connectivity of parks with sustainable transit and resiliency planning. You brought up development, I know that is a huge question and thinking about how this open space connectivity will not serve just one type of development but will connect to the community that is already in existence. It is important to look at it not just as a district but realize that it is in an active neighborhood with people who are here, rather than an abstract.
- C: SC: Sure.
- C: DG: If we bundle all of this together, what we're hearing, and the takeaway, is recognizing that the space on the river is the fundamental district organizational opportunity and should provide connections to the new area and the existing areas with different open space types. If we think about how all these layers relate to each other, that's a very base level but to come up through this logic and have these fundamentals that begins to structure an alternative. There will be other alternatives but what we're hearing loud and clear is that there is one that is paramount to this community that has those fundamentals.
- C: WL: I want to add one other thing to that. The river's edge is critically important to the district and the neighborhood; it's also a regional asset. All the things that happen inside that triangle are essentially local assets. That's what I was trying to get at when I was saying DCR should have a point of view. The river's edge is an open space; resiliency and quality of life asset that describes the entire region. It doesn't just belong to this area; it belongs to the region. The Charles River is the organizing principal for much of the Boston area and this is the spot that doesn't work. We spent a huge amount of money creating the new Charles River Basin near North Station because that was a missing piece of the asset. This is another missing piece. I'm thinking that has to come into it too.
- C: SC: I think that's a really important idea. The best pocket park that happens here is not the same as the Charles River as a regional open space network.

- C: DG: That's a good place to start.
- C: SC: I think there's going to be an orientation as there has been in the shaping of all these other pieces of the River too. I'd like to get to this topic on the idea of connection between the neighborhoods, the community and the river.
- C: NNG: One last thing- it might be really helpful if next time you brought a couple examples of other sections of river front park and how wide they are and what type of things those have. We know other sections of the river and it would be useful to know how many feet they are.
- C: SC: What can you do in 50 feet versus 8 feet and what can you do here? I think that would be really helpful.
- A: KH: Steve, the short answer for that is really easy. From Charles Circle to Harvard Street, the connection to Beacon Street is 300 feet wide. From there, at the BU Bridge, it's 100 feet plus the islands. From there, it goes down towards Harvard and MIT.
- C: HM: The one section by the Silber Way overpass I think is the notable exception because that's where it bulges out and there's the outdoor fitness area. That's the first place, once you get upstream from the Mass Ave Bridge where it's more than just a path.
- C: GM: Where development hits the river with the Cambridge Galleria, the canal that comes in goes right to the buildings. That's open space but it's also developed land.
- C: SC: That's one of the great things. You can have open space that connects to a riverfront and then creates literally a canal but begins to be an open space connector. It's not the only way to connect to an esplanade. In Back Bay you have wonderful streets and wonderful bridges, but there aren't any great parks, although at one point there was and maybe should be again. The idea connects the river and open space; that's one way of doing it. It can also be through the streetscapes and bridges and all sorts of things. I want to know how much the idea of open space as a connector or just physically being able to get through great transportation circulation, great streets and sidewalks, is part of what that connection is going to be. We have connections in multiple directions. How much of that is open space or streets? One way to connect open space is not to have the same open space but there are a lot of cities, for instance Toronto, where there are a series of little parks that you can see from one to the other. It's far more interesting than just a simple boulevard of trees. So you can do it all kinds of ways to make those connections. To the extent that open space is a connector, what do you all think about that as a way of approaching this?
- C: GM: For Soldier's Field Road, if it hits that wall, it's nothing. You're talking about building over it; if you have a plan we'd love to see it and see the cost. IF we could bury the freeway or build over it, not a tunnel but just building over, you're solving a lot of the problems.

- C: AM: The width that that would result in too. How much of the path would be a community boulevard? Could you and your three friends who are riding bicycles be able to go over at the same time? I want to get a sense of whether it would be a footbridge or scaling what you're thinking of against other footbridges that currently existing in the city. That would be helpful to determine what we want.
- C: NNG: We don't want any of the ones that we have.
- C: NNG: Better ones.
- C: PM: I want to offer a different way of framing open space as connections. We talked a lot about bike/ped connections and bridges and streets. Those are all valid ways but we could also look at it from a landscape standpoint. We have a corrugated way of connecting patches with corridors in the Olmstead tradition of what drives open space. I think there are a lot of principles we could be looking at that could drive these decisions and shape these open space but also make them have rationale.
- C: SC: In Providence, what we suggested is that every open space should be seen from the next one. It's a simple enough idea and doesn't say where it's going to be but you can tell whether it's going to work or not. The first reaction to an open space corridor is to connect the dots but does it need to be parallel or connect all the different pieces? I think there are a lot of different ways to do this in reality.
- C: NNG: Does the drainage and topography allow for the creation of a water feature? Day-lighting the river? I don't know the drainage flows there, but if yes that could help.
- C: SC: Yes, actually there's a whole topic on water drainage. Some of that may be practical, some may be symbolic. There is a whole story about drainage. Physically trying to do that, in cities, the amount of stuff going on below grade is mind blowing.
- C: PM: That needs to drive the discussion here too.
- C: BJ: We can put straight lines anywhere but will people use it?
- C: SC: It's an interesting question; when you're in an urban area, for instance the fronts of buildings, or they will be in the middle of streets and then there are ones that are in the middle of blocks. If dense enough, they work pretty well but it's hard if they're not actually associated with a street and sidewalk. Structuring streetscape and development, those fundamental questions come to play pretty quick.
- C: DG: We'll also be thinking about what the secondary system of streets is. Understanding it typologically and what is going to inform the idea about the second streets.
- C: SC: That's right, we're still at the superblock size for a bunch of these. There will be intermediate streets and open spaces to help inform that.

C: DG: We're coming up on 7:00 so I want to give you the next steps. The purpose of bringing all this information here tonight is to glean from you all what the hottest issues are, what the focus, not the only thing, but the things we want to make sure the open space idea fulfill is strong connection to the fundamental resource of the Charles River. The connectivity points are great, maximizing mobility to get to the river and other parts of the network. The idea of connectivity across the network is another major takeaway.

The next couple of meetings are going to be focused on mobility, connectivity. We want to talk about development and the quality of the spaces. Those are the two next topics. We have some tentative date that I need to check on internally. I hope it to be somewhere around the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month, first week of February so we can keep this energy going but have time to respond to what we hear and bring it back. Anything fundamental that we're missing from what I just summarized? Takeaways?

C: SC: There's an open space type I want you to look at and start thinking about. We have discovered that in this country and all over the world that unusual infrastructure projects can create unusual, non-traditional open space opportunities. The High Line in New York is the classic example. There's a wonderful sculpture park in Seattle where Alaskan Way emerges. There are these funny triangles of land and connections for pedestrians and this wonderful sculpture park emerges. It really is a neighborhood asset that you'll never find in the handbook of traditional open spaces. So we should be trying to understand what unusual opportunities it could unlock and find ways of informing that as well. This isn't just like any other place; it has a lot of infrastructure that would be good to work with.

C: NNG: It's great to finally be having conversations about what kinds of things will fill in the spaces between the highway- to keep in mind we don't know when the development and open space aspects will be built and a million things could change between now and then. The thing that is going to be built first is the highway so in places where there is a clear difference between situations where the highway is in one place but creating these links opens up a lot of other possibilities, then in my mind the most important thing that your group can do is to raise those up and point out the key junctures where something about the highway design is having a big impact on our options.

C: DG: Based on the conversation tonight, we talked primarily about Soldier's Field Road. From what we're hearing, so many of the things that are a part of this project we didn't talk about, the part of the project that's being built now

C: NNG: I meant the entire roadway infrastructure.

C: DG: Right, maybe that's another way of me saying it. To achieve some of these fundamentals, Soldier's Field Road would change the most.



- C: GM: If we have a train viaduct, for instance, we could have a highline. So it's not just Soldier's Field. I think the biggest constraint is the river. We could have another conversations about the roads or the I-90 overpass over Cambridge Street and come up with totally different functions that play into it.
- C: SC: It is our job to see where the transportation needs to be met and to think about opportunities we wouldn't have seen otherwise. That's our job.
- C: PM: To reiterate- it might be useful in the follow up meetings to have a really critical look at mapping of context. We all would be able to see the opportunities for open space linkages and where they should fall if you had a pretty good sense of what was happening in the north with the IMP, what's happening on the west side with the New Balance. These are big pieces that guide these fits. Examining those aspects in that larger context needs to happen every time. We need to see visuals that help us have that discussion.
- C: HM: To what Steve and Jessica are both saying, one other piece that we didn't talk about tonight is over the turnpike itself. You did have an image that we gave short shrift. We didn't have any time to be discussing it tonight but this is a great thing to be discussing. But on the subject of if the highway gets built, what gets precluded without any decking above it, how do you mitigate all the air and noise pollution impacts on both neighborhoods to the north and south and how do you create open space connections from the neighborhood and from the new site to the river? They're doing it in Dallas and St. Louis, all the cities doing decking over highways. We know it's a lot easier to do before the highway opens than after. We should think about that same spirit with what you're showing there. You're showing it a bit to the left, almost outside the project area?
- C: SC: There are places in San Diego, I worked on a project a long time ago, the bridges that go across the highways are really broad and have gardens and great space. You wouldn't know they were a bridge when you drive across them. There are all kinds of ways to do this. We're suggesting any of these are a proposal. If you add them all up, there's no development at all, it's all open space. But the point is we can look at unusual spaces to enhance the area. So thanks for responding to that.
- C: HM: So I'm also imagining if you went over the Cambridge Street overpass towards the river and you could turn right and basically go over the highway straight to the river, who knows how exactly, but that's an interesting area we could have a conversation about.
- C: WL: In the next meeting we'll be talking about connections, but I think the conversation tonight about the green line junction, we made a point about actually showing the context. We need a bigger map and probably on the screen.
- C: SC: We will definitely have slides next time.
- C: WL: I think that would be really helpful for the ways we're talking about connections regionally.

C: NNG: I have a question and I know we want to be respectful of everybody's time- I had this scheduled for 5 to 7. Steve and Josh, you pose a question about more a central park. I don't think you intended to propose it as exclusive but additive to the park. We didn't really get a chance to talk about it but the question I have is whether that is an idea that captures anyone's imagination and should also be a part of this?

C: GM: I want to touch on that. Where is the central location? It's hard to think of this project as anything but transportation because that's the lens we've been allowed to look at it from up to this point. It's also hard to have a central part of the project because it's not going to be developed on our timeline so we don't really have a say on when things get plopped down so we don't get to say where we'd like to have a plaza or a fountain or land uses. We can't talk about that. We've been viewing this as how to get around. I think that's why the Charles River has become such a focal point because it's a resource that we have, that we know works; that we know we are cut off from, and that we can tangibly think of drawing on everything. We know it's a problem that needs to be addressed. It's hard to ask if there can be a central park to even look at this triangle of scale.

That said, West Station could be, if it becomes what it should be, that center, Porter Square-style draw where the commuter rail, red line and buses connect. Transportation would drive the central park. If they build like they build the New Balance station, it's not going to be a central draw. It's going to be a waste of time for people waiting to get out to Worcester. If there are connections and it's decked over, than that becomes the draw. Otherwise, we're all looking at the river.

C: DG: That's what our alternatives could do. Essentially, we don't know. There could be fundamentals that are part of our alternatives. If you think about taking advantage of what you have, the connections to it, along those connections into the neighborhood, then we could begin to look at how various secondary systems are brought in over time. We could look into those systems and getting out to the river. We can try to understand different ways that can play out on the basic arbiter of getting to the river.

C: SC: In this case, the notion of an iconic central space is a little hard to figure out and may be tough with the edges we have. And that's ok. In Portland, they have these relatively small blocks, 200 feet by 200 feet. Typical office buildings use about 25,000 square feet so you can fit two office buildings on the same block and they have this left over space. When they have one block that is open, there is a 200 square foot open space surrounded by other development and that seems to work too. It becomes kind of an orienting part of it. It seems to me that a central park orientation in this area fits.

C: AM: I feel like we have two examples. I use to live in Chelsea. In East Boston there is the Piers Park area with a small park and the docks stretching out into the harbor. A friend of mine got married there. It's used for all these different uses all the time. That part of the neighborhood has been getting more expensive recently. But you also have the airport park by the blue line where there is more low-income housing but also a big condo building. That part of the neighborhood is very immigrant heavy. There's

this beautiful green space with a train station, the major T station on one of the most efficient lines we have with major bus connections and access to the airport. So we do have good examples in the city of good community space that doesn't have a central park scale.

- C: HM: To answer your question, it's going to be loud and noisy and will have cars around those middle blocks no matter how much they reduce those lanes. Whether it's 7 or 4 lanes. Cambridge Street South and Stadium Way is still going to be a noise area. Give me a choice of whether to have my wedding on Cambridge Street South or along the Charles River? Do you want to have a picnic on the banks of the river where at least there's no noise coming from the river itself? If you live on Ashford Street, there are no pocket parks. Going to the river you can make a big enough space where it's more than just a bike path or walking path with views. It's infinitely nicer than being next to the Mass Pike and a rail yard.
- C: AM: If you look at the existing green space assets in Allston you'll find there are significantly less in this community than in an institutional use. We're virtually inaccessible because of Soldier's Field Road. One of the major themes that has come out of this process is connecting north and south. I think west station provides a really interesting opportunity to address some of the need for green space and open space on that south side of the pike and providing really vibrant connections. Hopefully you can work on that in addition to an excellent river edge.
- C: DG: That's a great segue to our next topic. We would love to make sure everyone knows when the next meeting will be, two weeks from now, we'll get a date out as soon as we can. When you get that email, please RSVP so we can get an idea of numbers. Thank you all for coming; this was helpful for us to hear. We knew what the hot topic was and we're leaving knowing just how hot that topic is.
- C: GM: Did we thank you yet, BRA and Cecil Group for putting all of this together? I thought we had a really good conversation. I wish the project team had stuck around to hear all of it so I hope the notes get to them.
- C: DG: Meeting notes will be a part of everything as well.
- C: GM: We need more eyes and brains on this so it's really good to have your team here.

## **Next Steps**

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The next task force meeting will be held at 5:00 PM on Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the Fiorentino Community Center located at 123 Antwerp Street, Allston. This session will again feature the BRA and its consultant, the Cecil Group, as the featured guest speaker on place-making. DOT and elements of its team will be there to answer any transportation questions which arise and document the meeting, however, the presentation made and focus of discussion will be on the BRA place-making effort. All task force sessions are open to the public.

## Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

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First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Galen	Allis	HSH
Jorge	Briones	MBTA
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	HSH
Chris	Calnan	Tetra Tech
Steve	Cecil	Cecil Group
Paola	Ferrer	Resident
Josh	Fiela	Cecil Group
James	Gillooly	Boston Transportation Department
Anabela	Gomes	Brighton Allston Improvement Association
David	Grissino	BRA
Karl	Haglund	Department of Conservation and Recreation
Bruce	Houghton	Houghton Chemical
Jim	Hynes	Resident
Ed	Ionata	Tetra Tech
Barbara	Jacobson	MassBike
Wendy	Landman	Walk Boston
Skip	Lauren	CSS
Elizabeth	Leary	Boston University
Oscar	Lopez	Office of Representative Honan
David	Loutzenheiser	MAPC
Amy	Mahler	Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
Clancy	Main	Office of City Councilor Ciommo
Pallavi	Mande	CRWA
Tom	Nally	A Better City
Michael	O'Dowd	MassDOT
Carol	Ridge-Martinez	Allston/Brighton CDC
Stefanie	Seskin	Boston Transportation Department
Robert	LaTremouille	Friends of the White Geese
Renata	Von Tscharnier	Charles River Conservancy

Brent	Whalen	Resident
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