

**Boston Public Facilities Department – Egleston Square Study  
October 29, 2020; 6:30pm – 8:00pm**

**MEETING NOTES – Egleston Square Community Meeting**

**Panelists:**

---

David Leonard, BPL  
Michael Colford, BPL  
Priscilla Foley, BPL  
Alison Ford, BPL  
Laura Irmscher, BPL  
Eamon Shelton, BPL  
Taylor Cain, Housing Innovation Lab  
Joseph Backer, DND  
Lindsey Santana, MONS  
Paul Donnelly, PFD  
Maureen Anderson, PFD  
Gabriela Herrera, translator  
Ester Paul, translator  
Philip Chen, ABA  
Steven Gerrard, ABA  
Amanda Malone, ABA  
Ashley Merchant, ABA

Approximately 49 participants (including the panelists)

Natalie from Representative Elizabeth Malia's office attended.

\*A copy of the presentation can be found on the BPL's Egleston Square Branch webpage and print copies will be available at the branch as well.

The presentation was a remote meeting using zoom web conferencing. The meeting also had Spanish and Hatian/Creole translation available.

**Presentation**

- David Leonard introduced the project in the context of Mayor Walsh's core library projects and explained that libraries are our cultural heritage, and while a 21<sup>st</sup> century library includes many additional services, books are still the core of the physical space. David also noted that these are open meetings for the community and encouraged community members to stay involved with the process.
- Maureen Anderson gave an overview of the process and schedule of this study and the project in its entirety through construction for a traditional stand alone library and mixed use development of library and affordable housing.
- Philip Chen introduced the project team and informed participants that Ann Beha Architects is working closely with the Boston Public Library and the Public Facilities Department to develop this study. In addition to the typical team of consultants working with ABA, it was noted that we are also working with a housing consultant, Boehm Architecture. Finally,

- Taylor Cain gave an overview of Housing with Public Assets and how the Department of Neighborhood Development, the Boston Public Library, and the Public Facilities Department are collaborating to explore thoughtful co-location of BPL branches and housing for Boston's residents.
- Steven Gerrard shared insights into ABA's assessment of the existing building and site, noting some of the positive takeaways and areas that need improvement.
- SG pointed out the new program areas that are needed by the library: a larger community room, multi-purpose classroom, group study rooms.
- New and renovated BPL branches are informing development of the building program.
- SG shared other projects completed in other cities across the country that combine housing with libraries.
- Philip Chen moderated a discussion of community feedback and next steps in the study. The section below outlines the community feedback that was heard.

### **Community Feedback**

- The following questions were provided for participants to answer. This time also allowed participants to ask their own question or provide any additional feedback to the team.
  - The best thing about the West End Branch is...
  - The spaces I use the most at the branch are...
  - The most important services the Library provides are...
  - I wish the branch had...
  - What aspects of the existing branch would be nice to see in a new facility?
  - This neighborhood is unique because...
  - When thinking about the design of the housing, the most important consideration is...
  - Combining housing with this branch library will benefit our neighborhood by...
- Participant questioned how many libraries and fire departments across the city are going through this process now.
  - Response: BPL has 3 programming studies and one master planning process underway or about to start with the West End Branch, Egleston Square Branch, Fields Corner Branch, and the Codman and McKim building at the central library. Information on the city's capital budget and projects and can be found on the City of Boston's webpage.
- Participant questioned what was included in the service area.
  - Response: The service area is the area around the library is approximately 1 square mile and includes about 20,000 residents of the Roxbury and Jamaica Plain neighborhoods.
- Participant made a comment hoping that the project takes into consideration the richness of the African American and Latino populations that have been in the neighborhood for decades. Their hope is that the diversity in languages and cultures is embedded in everything that has to do with the project.
  - Response: The branch library is an asset to the community and should be focused on the needs of those who use it. The team and these meetings are designed to hear everyone's voice and incorporate their thoughts into this study. If there are additional comments or questions anyone would like to make there will be another community

meeting in the winter or community members can contact Priscilla Foley with the BPL at [pfoley@bpl.org](mailto:pfoley@bpl.org) or 617-859-2233.

- Participant questioned how the amount of shelf space for materials compares from the old branches to the new ones?
  - Response: The BPL takes into consideration the size of the existing collection and future growth. Space must also be allocated for patrons to circulate, or browse, around the shelving.
- Participant questioned if the library and housing would be publicly owned or be transferred to the developer.
  - Response: As we are still in the early study phase, nothing has been decided yet, and this would depend on the type of housing, which is currently being explored.
- Participant requested that open space for the community be included in the program.
- Participant questioned how library services to the community would be provided during construction. The current closing for covid has been hard on the community who rely on the library for computer access and other services.
  - Response: The staff remains active in the community and collections will be transferred to the nearest branch for access though a new satellite branch cannot be opened during construction, as this would take away funds away from the construction.
- Participant reiterated to everyone that a new branch library will be around for the next 50 years. Participant also asked for dedicated space for the friend's group.
- Participant is interested in the combination of affordable housing and a library and would like to know what the types of units would be and if parking would be provided.
  - Response: All types and quantities of units are being considered now. We are still in the early study phase, so nothing has been decided yet.
- Participant asked if the city would be the owner of the housing portion.
  - Response: The library portion of the building will be owned by the city and would have a condo type arrangement. The ownership of the housing portion of the building is typically owned by the developer, but these issues are still under review.
- Participant from the Boston Housing Authority noted that they would be happy to engage with members of the community and the Housing Innovation Lab to explore potential affordable opportunities.
- Participant is concerned about longer timelines in the schedule because of covid. It was also questioned why mixed use was not proposed in the JP or Roslindale projects.
  - Response: The pandemic is not holding up the process of this project. This study is part of the process and is in the early stages. As for why housing was not considered at other branches, this is a new concept that was not considered when JP and Roslindale were designed many years ago. BPL noted that housing is being considered for all library projects now.

- Participant noted that they are in favor of 100% affordable housing and that family sized units should be included. Participant also suggested that the property should go into a land trust.
- Participant listed a number of items they would like to see, including a teen area with plug-ins, comfortable seating, small café for coffee or tea, a community room, 100% affordable housing, and a stop sign and safer crossing in front of the branch.
- Participant notes that they love the library and do not want it to be torn down and has some reservations about taking a public space and transforming it into a partially private space.
- Participant commented that they are excited for the possibilities with this project and is looking for more indoor space, transit improvements in front of the branch, and is supportive of affordable housing.
- Participant questioned if the team could expand on how housing combined with the library will work, in terms of management, resident satisfaction, and other examples in Boston.
  - Response: The redevelopment of the Chinatown branch will include housing, and this is in the works currently. Other examples can be found in Chicago, DC, and NY which explore different ownership models and types of housing.
- Several participants noted their support for affordable housing.
- Participant questioned if there is consideration for a new library without housing.
  - Response: The team will be exploring all options.
- Participant questioned if a developer for housing and a library would receive additional support for the funding needed to create affordable housing.
  - Response: The Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) helps support affordable housing at many levels and all types of housing are part of the conversation right now.
- Participant noted that there should be intentional outreach to the African American and Latinx community and to truly hear what everyone has to say is important in the fight for racial justice.
  - Response: The team is making sure there is outreach to everyone and encourages everyone to take the survey.
- Participant would like to see permaculture principles and sustainable practices implemented in a garden space that relies on local and indigenous plants.
- Participant noted that the front of the building is part of Olmsted's design and would like to see it preserved. It was also noted that they do not support using any of the land for parking.
- Participant noted that many of the patrons that use the library use it for its computers and internet access and noted that with covid and they library hours they do not have access to joining the web meetings or filling out the online surveys. What outreach is the team doing about this?
  - Response: Print surveys are available at the branch, along with printed copies of the presentation. Community members can also reach out to Priscilla Foley at [pfoley@bpl.org](mailto:pfoley@bpl.org) or 617-859-2233 for any other needs. Copies of the presentation can also be mailed out upon request.

- Participant questioned if the survey is available in other languages.
  - Response: Yes, the survey will be available in Spanish.
- Participant questioned how participation in the CAC will be determined.
  - Response: If interested in joining, then please reach out to Priscilla Foley.

#### **Next Steps**

- The next community meeting will be in the winter 2021.
- Community members should take our survey, which can be found on the BPL's Egleston Square Branch webpage, or they can contact Priscilla Foley at [pfoley@bpl.org](mailto:pfoley@bpl.org) or 617-859-2233.

#### **Closing**

- David Leonard ended the community meeting and thanked everyone for participating.

*Notes prepared by: Amanda Malone*

*This is ABA's understanding of the issues discussed during our presence; please issue any clarifications/omissions to ABA within five working days of receipt of these minutes.*