

BERKLEE TASK FORCE MEETING SUMMARY

Date: Monday, October 30, 2006

Place: 921 Boylston Street

Present: **See Attached List**

1. Welcome / Introductions / Recap

Gerald Autler began the work session with a welcome and a brief recap of why the Task Force has been assembled. This meeting is a way for the neighborhood to get to know Berklee. The next few work sessions will be used for this purpose. Berklee has not filed an institutional master plan (IMP) with the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

2. Towards a Planning Framework for Berklee

David Hornfischer (Berklee), Dennis Swinford (Goody Clancy), and David Dixon (Goody Clancy) presented a PowerPoint that discusses Berklee's vision and goals, long-term needs, existing conditions, growth considerations, and four directions for the future (see PowerPoint).

(DH) Berklee is the largest music college in the world and hopes to be (if not already) the best contemporary music college in the world. Berklee has worked with Goody Clancy through a strategic planning process where it was concluded that Berklee's number one program need is space. Space constraints limit the college's ability to fully achieve its vision. This was demonstrated on the campus tour. Berklee students are extremely dedicated, as the top criteria for admission is passion for music.

(DD) *A Civic Vision for the Air Rights* was completed a few years ago and identified this end of Boylston as an area that needs to be developed. Berklee would like to continue to solve the conundrum at this end of Boylston. Berklee has a chance to bring life to the streets without bringing traffic and begin to complete the neighborhood with a different building at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street.

(DH) Berklee currently has approximately 150 square feet of space per student (significantly lower than other colleges in the area). Berklee hopes to double their square feet per student in the next 10 years. Incremental progress has been made recently. Two new leases include some of the Tennis and Racquet Club which will be used for a coffee house (opposite the Cactus Club) and office space, and the recently renovated 186 Massachusetts Avenue basement and second floor which is now used for offices.

Questions:

Who is Goody Clancy working for? Are there any conflicts of interest? Goody Clancy is working for Berklee and there are no conflicts of interest. They were chosen for their professionalism and knowledge of the area.

What about the Millennium development at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street? It is not gone, just quiet. There have been no projects that have come forward at the moment.

Four Directions to the Future

Direction 1: Continue to look for space on Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street

Will any of Berklee's leases expire during this planning process with the task force? After new space is built, will the college give up any of these leases? Not likely. Each lease is negotiated on a case by case basis with the land owner. At this point in time, Berklee is planning on staying in all the leases they currently have as per the contracts. Lease space is only about 10% of college space and largely for office use. We have no leases for housing.

Do you contemplate leasing any condo buildings in the area to solve the housing problem? Berklee does not plan lease any condo/apartment buildings in the area for student housing for three reasons:

1. The neighbors have stated that this is not an acceptable option;
2. This option does not create community for the students; and
3. It is expensive to convert and operate small condo/apartment buildings to student housing (codes reasons, etc.)

(DS) To create a more useable parcel to build on land it owns at Mass and Boylston, and to help improve the streetscape at that corner, Berklee will look at acquiring Cambria Street. This will create a more active street edge and allow for better pedestrian access in conjunction with its building plans for the corner. Currently, pedestrians are unsure where to walk in the area, causing a safety hazard.

In terms of urban design, it would be worthwhile to look at the streetscape that is being done at Huntington Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue by the transportation department. The Berklee team will study these improvements and make recommendations as to how they can inform the planning process.

When Berklee acquires properties that are tax paying properties, does the city lose these monies? Yes and no. As a tax exempt corporation, Berklee is not required to pay real estate taxes; however, to help off set the cost of services the City of Boston provides to Berklee and its students, the College makes almost \$300k of payments to the city in property taxes and voluntary payments in lieu of taxes. In comparison to other Boston non-profit institutions, this works out to be more per square foot of space than most others. The college also currently has a scholarship and urban outreach program for Boston students

worth about a million dollars per year. When Berklee is paying rent to a for-profit business, the leased space is also contributing to the property tax base in the city.

Direction 2: Create residential communities within a 10-minute walk

(DS) We are looking at outer Boylston Street near Fenway Park to accommodate up to 600 students that we may not be able to house at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. For example, Harvard University purchased part of the Trilogy development project to house some of its medical school students. This housing on outer Boylston would be primarily for upper class students, most likely in an apartment type setting.

(DH) Students add foot traffic, not parking and vehicular traffic. Developers realize that student housing is often economically feasible and would most likely include some music practice spaces in the building for the students. Having regular Berklee presence in focused areas on outer Boylston would provide for a great security presence in the crossing over the Fens.

What about the Christian Science Center? We have spoken with them and they are aware of our needs. We lease space in three of their smaller buildings.

Direction 3: Participate in air rights development

Will the turnpike parcels be linked together? Parcels 12 and 13 were linked in the Millennium development. Other developers may propose otherwise.

Parcel 13 seems like an ideal fit for the college. We would agree, but Berklee is not interested in becoming a developer of these air-rights parcels.

Direction 4: Concentrate at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street

(DS) Berklee would like to create a significant building in the “heart of the campus.” This building would include performance venues (as this is what the college does), student housing, campus life space, academic space and retail space.

(DH) To make an impact on the student housing need, this corner is needed the most. Parts of the building may be similar in height to the Hilton and Sheraton hotels.

(DD) A building at about the height of the Hilton and Sheraton hotels will stay in context with the surrounding area.

Does the former bank building have any historic designation? We have hired a historic consultant to study this building, as well as the Berklee Performance Center.

I do not think that a 600 bed dormitory makes for a community. And I do not get the feeling of Berklee wanting to be part of the community. A good building design will be able to create several smaller student communities of about 100 to 150 students (four to six of these smaller student communities will total

600 beds). These communities may be created by building three smaller towers, breaking the students in clusters.

I don't think the building fits in at a 30-story height, similar to the hotels. It should be noted that Belvidere Street feels dark. It will be more evident to see what a significant building at the corner could achieve in a massing model. There are pressures on the site and it will be important to find the right balance of height and mass. The hotels currently project an impersonal nature, while Berklee intends to create a building that will bring activity at the street level. What the building does at the street level will become very important.

(DH) Berklee is still assessing the need and/or benefit for acquiring Parcel 14. There are significant constraints and costs due to the railroad and turnpike constraints and requirements. We hope the shape of our project will enable us to take Cambria Street in a way to create a strong street edge and still allow trucks to get into the Hynes.

Is the T interested in doing anything at this moment? We have spoke with the MBTA about renaming the Hynes/ICA stop to Hynes/Berklee and sub-naming is something they no longer will do. Berklee may work with the MBTA on advertising and design of the station. The College is excited about the possibility of working with the developers of the air-rights on creating a significant urban plaza and improving the quality of access to the green line station and the bus stop. While overhead bridges to the T may seem like a good idea, it does not work well urbanistically. There is a desire to keep the pedestrian traffic at street level.

While I am excited to see something happen, the neighborhood does not like the hotels. I am resistant to seeing height at that corner.

I do not mind some height; it is the design that will make the difference for this building. It is a great corner and could use some presence.

Is it necessary to take Cambria Street and what is the process in acquiring that street? It would help greatly. The street currently leads to nowhere from an urban design standpoint.

Cambria Street is part of the traffic circulation.

I think Berklee should focus their growth on the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. That is where I want to see the height. The height will not be bad if the focus is correct.

Are there any committee representatives who live of Massachusetts Avenue present? One lives there and one represents the Church park apartments.

There are a lot of issues that have been presented today and it may take some time to find a resolution. Is the Berklee Performance Center the heart of its mission? Is there community access and usage to the theater? Does Berklee have a policy to allow for other organizations to access the theater? Berklee continues to build its relations with the community. We do have a grant program that any non-profit may apply for that allows the community organization to use the theater without paying for the rental. Currently, this grant fund is about \$30,000 per year. While we are committed to continuing this program, we will never be able to be a promoter for the community events. We are not even able to promote our students. More space for the Berklee will mean more ability for the community to use Berklee's facilities. A smaller 400-seat theater will assist us greatly in this program, as most community shows have a need for 200-400 seats.

Will Berklee only allow big names to use the big theater? Berklee helps the community find the most appropriate space for its activities, whether that is 80, 150, or 1270 people.

What about gravitation towards the South End? During early discussion with the College, its consultants discussed moving the College to various places in the city and outside the city. It was clear that the best place for Berklee is where it is today and we should find a way to make the future work at this location. Many of the areas that were discussed were beyond the 10-minute walking radius that accommodates class schedules.

What about the Virgin Records space? Berklee was interested in purchasing the Virgin Record building for housing and began preliminary discussions with the neighborhood groups at that time. The feedback from the community was that they thought market rate housing was more appropriate in this building than student housing. Berklee did not pursue buying the building after this input from the community.

It is great that Berklee is not planning on putting any parking in the building. Currently, there is a gridlock when all the events, Berklee, Symphony, Red Sox, etc., collide. It would be great begin discussion with BTM and the BPW. The corner project allows Berklee to put no or very little parking in the building because of the great public transportation access the neighborhood enjoys. While some of the performances at a new Berklee Performance Center may increase traffic slightly due to a slight increase in the number of seats, present commuter students will be living at the center of the campus. Berklee looks forward to working with the task force, the BRA and BTM in understanding the traffic impact the projects in the master plan may have on the neighborhood.

It should be mentioned that the set of lights at Belvidere Street is the problem for the traffic jam. The lights should either be set for a shorter duration or be turned off at certain times.

3. Next Work Session

Berklee will present a series of “options for growth” These options will show the results of spreading out vs. growing up. It may be appropriate to have a representative from the BTD join the Task Force discussion in future work sessions. We will continue to provide a forum for discussion at each work session. We will also present what Berklee is currently doing and show how the local community is being served.

(DH) I am interested in hearing where neighbors believe our 1,200 students should be housed in the 10-minute walking radius.

Prepared by: Jill E. Kaehler, Goody Clancy

Note: If any attendees feel that these notes do not accurately reflect discussions, please notify Gerald Autler at the BRA. Amendments will be made at the subsequent work session.