

BERKLEE TASK FORCE MEETING SUMMARY

Date: Tuesday, December 5, 2006
Place: Berklee College of Music
Berklee Performance Center

1. Welcome / Introductions / Task Force Updates

Gerald Autler began the meeting recapping why the task force was appointed. The task force was appointed to represent organizations and individuals of the community, as Berklee needs the community's input as they develop their master plan. This is a good time for Berklee to hear feedback from the task force and members of the community before they file their Article 80 proposal with the city. No questions were asked about where we are in the process or where we are going.

Task force members were introduced.

(DH) Drafts of meeting minutes from the Task Force Meeting 3 have been circulated. If there are any comments/edits regarding the meeting minutes please forward those to Gerald Autler. The website has been completed and can be accessed at: <http://www.berklee.edu/taskforce>. Under the "meeting schedule and materials" link all documents that have been distributed are posted. If anyone would like to receive a Berklee tour please email myself (David Hornfischer) at dhornfischer@berklee.edu or Yumi Maskey at ymaskey@berklee.edu.

Additionally, the College would like to extend an invitation to whoever may be interested to our Thursday night Singers Showcase – one of the most popular shows of Berklee students.

A reminder that the next meeting will be on February 6, 2007, at 6:30 PM in the David Friend recital hall.

Questions

Was the Globe article a reasonable description of where we stand?

(DH) Yes; however, 2012 for completion of the building at the corner may not be realistic, but it is the only site Berklee currently has where we do not have to be dependent on other people. *The Boston Globe* wanted to know what the building looked like, but we haven't hired an architect so we were unable to provide any images.

(GA) Berklee has been upfront with the community regarding their planning process and wants to hear input – something that is usually not done until after an image of the design has been produced.

Is it correct that Millennium still owns the parcel rights? When will bids be put out on the parcels?

(DD) Not sure, the Turnpike Authority has been saying "no comment."

2. Berklee Presentation and Discussion/Public Comment

David Hornfischer (Berklee), Dennis Swinford (Goody Clancy), and David Dixon (Goody Clancy) presented a PowerPoint that reviewed material previously presented and outlined near-term and longer-term projects for Berklee.

(JM) Two documents were distributed. The first is the *Partnership Chronicle* that outlines, particularly in the last five years, how the community uses Berklee facilities and benefits from Berklee programs. It also includes the amount of dollars that Berklee has contributed to each of the programs. The second booklet outlines the Berklee City Music programs, which include after school, Saturday, and summer programs. Every year 180 students participate in the programs. This year there were 15 high school seniors that wanted to attend Berklee for college, we are proud to say that we were able to give full scholarships to 10 of these students.

(DS) Berklee's first priority is replacing the space that will be displaced by the new corner buildings – the studio and instructional spaces. This must be done before any redevelopment of the corner can take place. The College has been looking at several properties that fit into the general strategies of the College's "Four Directions to the Future." The College has investigated and continues to investigate the options for leasing or purchasing existing space or sites to redevelop along Boylston Street and Massachusetts Avenue. See PowerPoint for areas of focus especially on Boylston Street between Massachusetts Avenue and Ipswich/Hemenway Street.

The college considered the old Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) building on Boylston Street. This property did not work for Berklee because it was an expensive and difficult building; it was out of Berklee's price range for dollars per square foot. The College currently has a purchase and sale agreement with the Fenway Community Health Center (FCHC) on Haviland Street. This building will most likely be for office use and/or general classrooms. The FCHC building is expected to be available to Berklee in mid-2009.

Why can't you get the Turnpike Authority to talk?

(DH) Berklee can not drive a turnpike project itself. We have said that we are interested in participating in some capacity with a developer.

(DS) Berklee would likely not displace active ground floor uses in a turnpike project, if and when it occurs. The most obvious place for Berklee in one of these projected could be the middle floors where academic, student residents and other Berklee spaces could fill in areas that are not as profitable to developers.

Are you interested in buying or leasing real estate?

(DH) Either, as long as it is within our targeted zones. We need to build ensemble rooms and recording studios. If we have the option, we would rather own these types of spaces, as they are expensive spaces to build.

Have you spoken with Emerson or another school for theater space during the transition?

(DH) We are optimistic that there will be opportunities for the theater space during the transition – whether that is at Emerson or other theaters in or around Boston.

What about the parking garage adjacent to the Hynes on Dalton Street?

(DS) That particular building is owned by a large number of parties and it seems to be extremely difficult to communicate and negotiate about this property with anyone that has enough control to speak for all the stakeholders.

What about the phone company building on Belvidere Street?

(DS) We were told that it was full of phone switching gear and hard to relocate.

(DH) We will look at that option again.

(Back to PowerPoint slides.)

(DD) The great thing about the proposed Berklee building at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street is that they are able to meet their needs and create a community building at the same time. Ninety percent of the time when a building is in the Globe, the building has already been designed and financed. This is not the case for Berklee – they deeply believe that creating this building should be a collaborative process with the neighbors.

Thinking has begun on defining the criteria and characteristics that will distinguish the right building from the wrong building. The following criteria/characteristics address suggestions made at the prior Task Force meeting:

- Breaking massing down, creating communities of students by groupings;
- Massing can be more varied and articulated and does not need long massive floors;
- The building is at the crossroads between the Fenway and Back Bay neighborhoods and it is understood that the building must honor these neighborhoods coming together and can not have blank walls; and
- It has the ability to solve some of the safety problems of crossing Cambria Street.

The massing can be described in three parts. With the first floor as active, music inspired space that might bring music to the streets instead of burying it in the interior (as it currently is in the Berklee Performance Center). The next couple floors will consist of student life and academic space. The student housing will be located in the third, top part of the building.

One measure that is often used to determine whether buildings fit is their shadows (see PowerPoint presentation). The preliminary studies illustrate that a building of this height will not add shadows to important public spaces during the equinox. Other studies will be prepared as part of the ongoing review and design process.

The facades of the two existing buildings – the Bank building and the Berklee Performance Center – are being evaluated to determine how they can most appropriately be honored and possibly preserved.

At this point the College is not planning on developing parking at this site. A traffic and parking study will be conducted. However, preliminary conclusion is that during the day traffic will be reduced as more students will be living within walking distance of the college; therefore, they will not need to drive to the campus. At night there may be some new traffic added, depending on the demographics of the audience that is attending the theater performance. It is anticipated that the current parking supply in the neighborhood will continue to supply the needs of the performances at the new performance venues. However, theatre seating is not significantly increasing.

(DH) We also would like to buy Cambria Street from the city.

(DS) Berklee currently parks their trucks on the street and we would want to develop a building where they will not have to do this. We have been investigating accommodating off street servicing for this building.

(DD) Berklee wants to animate and activate the public sidewalk. The goal is to let people who do not attend Berklee experience the creative background that is present in this institution.

Will the retail in the first floor space be for community use?

(DH) Yes, the public venues would be located in this space.

(DD) I can imagine cafes where everyone can perform, music stores, spaces that are related to what Berklee does. These spaces will also be pedestrian-friendly.

(DS) There is a lot of circulation and functions that need to happen at the street level; everything will be done that can make these spaces active and not “institutional”.

Where do the remaining beds that are not located in this building go?

(DS) We would like your input.

Are Berklee students required to live on campus?

(DH) First year students were at one time; however, that was relaxed due to limited housing.

(DD) Students in Boston can out pay more than other people for housing because they live in smaller spaces, two people in a room, etc. Berklee should not have a problem building housing that is always occupied. Berklee housing provides students with other amenities that they do not find in apartments in the community – such as practice rooms.

(GA) Many institutions in Boston have built new housing, as you are aware. All of these institutions still have a waiting list of students wanting to live in their housing. We believe there is the demand and it is good public policy to have the institutions house their students.

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The Berklee students that live in my apartment building are great; however, we do it make it very difficult for them to practice. I think they would want this type of living situation where they can practice.

Have you looked at any types of joint venture with either of the conservatories?

(DH) We did sell to the Boston Conservatory our parking lot, which is adjacent to their theater, as it was too small for us to build anything on and they needed the space to improve their theater. The New England Conservatory is a little further away, but if there was a large enough project that we could both participate in, we would consider the option.

What is the status of the private dormitory that is going into the YMCA on Huntington Avenue?

(GA) Not sure.

(DH) We would welcome this opportunity if we could participate.

I would like to see a focus point on the preservation of the façade of the Bank building.

(DD) We are looking at ways to integrate the facades of the Bank and the BPC into a new development.

The corner building was built in 1902, as the first headquarters of the Back Bay Bank. The building was originally supposed to be part of a larger development. I believe the building currently holds the corner in a very strong way.

(DD) Berklee values the building's history. It is part of their culture and Berklee does want to preserve the most significant aspects of this building, which we believe to be the façade.

When did the State Street Bank move out of the building?

(DH) We bought the building from State Street Bank in 1982.

If Berklee were to obtain the Cambria Street, would the trucks be able to make the corner piece?

(DS) We are looking at creating a larger turning radius, working with transportation engineers at VHB. They continue to say that this will work, as long as there is a big, gentle radius.

What is the current zoning and the proposed height of the building?

(DH) We are currently in the St. Cecilia's overlay district for zoning. We could propose one giant cube 20 stories high, but we believe it would be more aesthetic to break the massing into three slender towers.

Both of the hotels in the area, the Hilton Hotel and the Sheraton Hotel, are down a significant slope from the site that the Berklee building will sit on. The height that is being proposed is high, while the spine of the hotels is low.

(DD) We will look at the massing with the topography. Berklee has the unique ability to do what a larger building does successfully without adding the negatives, such as parking and increased traffic.

The traffic is a concern. Also with a building that high, deliveries, illegal turns, servicing, and additional larger buildings at the intersection are also concerns.

(DH) Student housing does not generate much traffic. The dining and theater currently exist in that location, so it will not be much different then it is now.

(DD) Berklee will investigate and improve understanding of problems currently at the intersection, not create problems. They hope to be able to bring their current servicing under the building.

Has any thought be given to what materials will be used?

(DH) No, this would be part of the architectural competition. One thing that we do know is that the dormitories on the upper floors will require a lot of windows.

It is important to keep in mind the difference between the existing cultural institution in this area and a new luxury condo project that could go in this area, such as Millennium. It is obvious that Berklee, as a cultural institution, contributes a different type of community to the area than a luxury condo development. Having worked on other condo projects, this is a unique opportunity for the area to solve problems.

I ride the number one bus back and forth between Boston and Cambridge and when I am coming back into Boston you can see that there is a lot of room for improvement. If Berklee is able to do something to improve the urban design along Massachusetts Avenue in this area then, that would be great.

(DH) Berklee is not wedded to this idea of a tall building. What we do know is that we need to house 1,200 additional students.

(DD) If any air-rights towers were to be developed, they would most likely need to be taller than what Berklee has to be.

Is Berklee willing to commit to payments in lieu of taxes?

(DH) We are the leading PILOT institution in Boston on a square foot basis. We make PILOT payments on all of our owned buildings and pay full taxes on our leased spaces.

(JM) We exceed nearly 10-fold the community service requirement that we are required to contribute.

There is a two-fold approach to these payments in lieu of taxes. One contributes to the larger community and the other provides tax relief for the citizens in the community. The pilot programs allow for a 75% discount. I would like to see “full value” contribution.

Do you require students to live on campus?

(DH) We currently do not require students to live on campus because we do not have enough room to mandate students to live on campus.

A tower at this corner will push development in other corners to happen eventually.

(DD) The corner that Berklee currently owns has been looked at for a long time as a corner to place a tower.

Is Berklee privately-owned?

(DH) No, we have been a not-for-profit since the 1960s.

3. Next Steps

(GA) What are the key issues and questions on people's mind, so we may begin to set an agenda for the next meeting? What information would you like Berklee to present?

Berklee should approach the city about the rights of ways that it would like to purchase.

(DH) We currently feel that it has been premature to approach the city, but we will explore this more.

I would like to see what, more specifically, Berklee has looked at; such as, the telephone building, Fenway Park area, turnpike air rights, etc.

A representative from the Boston Transportation Department should be at the meeting so we can get an idea of the traffic study.

(GA) It seems to make sense regarding the direction that the proposal is progressing. I will see what I can arrange for one at an upcoming meetings.

Where are students living that do not live in Berklee housing?

What is the status of the discussion with the Christian Science Church?

(DH) They are currently conducting their own study, and we have not been able to get an answer from them. We continue to tell them that we are interested.

I would like to see other proposals by other colleges that are currently out there for student housing.

(GA) We can get that information.

I would love to see a more comprehensive study historic resource study of the neighborhood. This is valuable because historic studies are usually done on a piecemeal basis. A comprehensive study would allow the College to plan with complete historic resource information and could make decisions within a framework of historic preservation. In the past some institutions buy buildings and they do not fit into the

“vision” of the plan and then they are forced to advocate removing the buildings or significantly altering the buildings. It would be important to have all this information as the College plans.

(GA) For the next meeting (February 6, 2006), Berklee should provide the current student resident locations, real estate endeavors, and a historic update/status report. Berklee will also continue to look at locations of where they can house students.

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.