

WVNA Squares & Streets Questions - March 28, 2024

BPDA Responses

Housing inventory and affordability

What is your goal for the number of units to be added to the inventory in Roslindale?

The BPDA does not have a specific goal for a number of units to be created in Roslindale. While a primary goal of Squares + Streets is to produce more housing in planning locations such as Roslindale Square and map new Squares + Streets zoning districts to do so, we do not plan for the production of a specific number of units that will primarily come through private development.

How do you see the affordability levels (%AMI) in this number. For example, so many units at 80% AMI, so many units at 60%, so many affordable homeownership opportunities?

We do not have a specific production goal for a number of income-restricted units, but beginning in October 2024, the new inclusionary zoning (Article 79 of the Boston Zoning Code) goes into effect, which increases the number of income restricted units that a developer needs to commit to and lowers the AMI requirements.

For homeownership units, that means 17% of the units or square footage will be required to be income restricted. 50% of the income restricted units will be restricted up to 80% AMI and the other half will be restricted up to 100% AMI. This does not mean that a developer cannot propose AMIs at a deeper affordability level.

For rental units there are different options developers are required to abide by depending on the size of the project. For the specific requirements based on scale of development, please take a look at page 2 [here](#). Generally, the new zoning requires a range of 17-20% of their units or square footage as income restricted at an average of 60% AMI. For projects over 50,000 square feet, projects are required to include 3% of their units to be set aside for voucher holders. Generally voucher holders make 30% AMI. This allows for tenants with deeper affordability to access more units.

Additionally through the S+S process we are actively looking at the disposition of public parcels of land or potential acquisition of land to create more housing with deeper affordability levels than Inclusionary Zoning typically produces.

Support and protections for business owners

Business owners have already been told that their buildings will be razed when the leases are up. Also, business owners have had difficulty when landlords build above – they cannot

maintain their business and keep it in the black. What protections can you put in place for these businesses? If provisions are being discussed, please share what they look like.

BPDA staff and the Planning Advisory Council are presently working on an anti-displacement strategy with attention to residential, commercial, and arts and culture displacement concerns. The City has programs that work towards alleviating anti-displacement issues, such as [The Office of Housing Stability programs](#), Boston Home Center [foreclosure prevention support](#), and the [Acquisition Opportunity Program](#) (AOP). However, those programs have not been comprehensively packaged as an anti-displacement toolkit in the past. This process will be an opportunity to better package and identify gaps within those existing City resources for anti-displacement.

Green space

Will existing green space be affected at all? We need more trees not less.

Existing protected green space, such as Veterans Park, will not be negatively affected or built on through Squares + Streets. The Small Area Planning process will be analyzing existing open space assets in the planning area to seek opportunities for enhancements to these spaces, which may include additional seating, tree planting, public art, etc. We are not looking at building new developments on protected open spaces or otherwise reducing their quality. Additionally we would welcome feedback on where new street trees or landscaping could be added to the square, including within existing protected open spaces, public sidewalks, or intersections that are being redesigned.

Historic Buildings:

A number of buildings on Washington Street in the Overlay District are noted by Historic Boston as of significance. Can you maintain the protections for these buildings that are currently afforded by Article 67? If not, what protections are offered under Squares and Streets?

The BPDA is currently seeking responses for a request to hire a historic resources consultant to update existing Area Forms in the first four planning areas. Area Forms are Mass Historic Commission documents that summarize the historic, social, and cultural importance of specific sites and buildings. The consultant's work will assess historic assets, including buildings, structures, sites, and landscape features of historical, architectural, or cultural importance within the study area.

Parking:

How will it be affected? It's already a big issue, especially on Belgrade Ave and Washington St.

There are no parking minimums proposed in the new Squares + Streets zoning, but that does not mean a developer can't propose parking spaces. All projects must meet ADA requirements, which may include parking spaces if necessary to meet these requirements. Finally, eliminating parking minimums also gives small-scale developers and property owners the same flexibility

that is currently afforded to large-scale developers subject to the requirements of [BTB Parking Maximums](#). This is a way to encourage a broader range of scales of development, and can increase project feasibility and affordability if a minimum number of parking spaces is not required.

The curbside regulation and parking plan for Roslindale Square, completed in March 2023, is also being implemented this spring.. Please reference page 5 for updates to curbside regulations [here](#) that outline expected parking regulation changes for blocks within Roslindale Square.

Building Design:

Will people have a say in the design of buildings? I think many look too commercial and don't fit in with the family-friendly look of Roslindale. I like the town feel, not the city feel.

Part of the Squares and Streets planning process includes a vernacular analysis of Roslindale Square. The vernacular analysis analyzes the existing conditions of the planning area by identifying the physical features, spaces, and public realm elements that make Roslindale Square unique. The end product of this analysis and community feedback will identify ways for new buildings to incorporate the unique design elements of each square through urban design guidelines. We will be presenting the vernacular analysis to the community and getting feedback on what we have found in the upcoming visioning sessions on April 29th and May 7th.

Additionally, all projects that trigger Article 80 large or small project review will still go through traditional design review, which will be based on the urban design guidelines that come out of this planning process, and community review process.

Appeals and Conditional Approvals:

At what point would someone building in an S district need to go to the ZBA? (e.g.: In some of the proposed new zoning types, there are several things that are considered “conditionally approved”. What will the process be for conditionally approving uses that are zoned conditionally approved?)

Once the Squares + Streets zoning districts are mapped with the community, the proposed zoning map will be brought for a vote to both the BPDA Board and the Boston Zoning Commission for adoption. Only after those two things happen will the S districts be applicable to specific parcels in Roslindale Square. After that, if a proponent would like to request a variance from the new zoning, they would need to ask for relief at the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Any applicant can ask for relief, but it does not mean that the ZBA will grant it.

For uses that are conditionally allowed, proponents will need to petition the ZBA for a conditional use permit. A conditional use means that it's an allowable use but only under certain types of conditions. Currently the process for a conditional use permit includes an abutters meeting and then a hearing in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Please see the use table [here](#), starting on page 14, which shows conditional uses; they are the uses listed with “C”.

Will S&S make it easier for people to get curb cuts for driveways, which will help take cars off the street

The S+S process will not change the curb cut application process for existing property owners.

Will S&S expedite the implementation of new cross walks and speed bumps and eliminate the current lengthy process?

That is our hope! The goal of S+S is to capitalize on existing pots of money and programs to implement recommendations for transportation improvements such as new crosswalks and speed bumps on a faster timeline.

Empty Store Fronts

Will S&S help fill existing empty store fronts?

The goal is to build upon the existing assets in the square and make it a place that attracts new businesses and has minimal empty storefronts and vacancies.

Neighbor Recommended topics for BPDA meetings and workshops:

- Deep dives into each district and the use tables – so that people understand what is allowable and what is prohibited AND what that mapped radius really means (too many different answers from different people floating around)
- Climate resiliency approaches and requirements as we allow more as of right development in S&S
- Water management and understanding the topography of Roslindale as we map out S&S districts
- Anti-displacement strategy and requirements for developers (we don't want to lose residents and businesses)
- Public Transportation infrastructure – as we add more people to an already broken system
- Parking strategy –more people/more cars/no offsite parking requirements – what does this really mean
- Housing – how do we mandate developers go above and beyond to create truly affordable housing? How do we require a certain amount of units/buildings dedicated to senior housing (allowing for aging in place) , ADA housing, workforce housing, etc. be included in S&S small area plan?
- Historic preservation – how do we ensure that our historically significant buildings/spaces will not be razed?
- Green space and tree preservation – how do we maintain our green spaces and our mature tree canopies as we allow for more development?
- Increased/Improved utility infrastructures that can support a population growth that will come with more development

- Increased/Improved access to public service needs that will come with more development – SCHOOLS!! Traffic enforcement, etc
- WHAT HAPPENS NEXT – a developer is ready to develop – now what does this mean for the community? Does it just happen? Is there a design review, etc
- How do we hold developers accountable for quality building and adhering to original agreements with the community? How do we force developers to keep their affordable commitments/green space commitments etc in this community and not let them just pay to make these requirements go away.

Thank you for these suggestions.