

Stony Brook Neighborhood Association (SNA) 3521 Development Proposal - Automobile Parking Analysis

Draft – September 19, 2011

Updated – Tuesday, April 09, 2013

Please see page 5 for the Updated Addendum.

History

The Stony Brook Neighborhood Association requested, in a letter to the proponent dated June of 2011, that the proposed development keep automobile parking “as minimal as possible... [and that the project be] a transit-oriented development that promotes bicycle and pedestrian travel and for it to be marketed as such.”

This request seemed to affect a change in the residential component of the development being designed by New Boston Ventures. Proposed residential parking ratios are now 1.0/unit, though the number of units did increase.

However, the parking ratio of the retail component, designed by SSG, was not altered. Indeed, if anything, parking ratios seem to have increased for the commercial/retail component of the proposal.

David Fulton of SSG stated at the April meeting of the SNA, while touting the low impact of the storage component, that only 10 parking spaces were required to successfully operate the storage facility. Then, at the first meeting of the Impact Advisory Group formed as part of the Article 80 process, David Fulton stated that 14 parking spaces would be needed for the storage facility. Now, as indicated in the PNF, 19 parking spaces are allocated to the storage facility. This represents a near doubling of parking spaces required by a use which is being billed as “low impact.”

Forest Hills Improvement Initiative

The Forest Hills Improvement Initiative (FHII) was a BRA-lead visioning process that resulted in guidelines for development in the Forest Hills region, which is expected to see significant development in the coming years on more than 7 parcels.

One of the main principles stated in the FHII *Use and Design Guidelines* specifically relates to the issue of parking ratios, with the goals of:

- reducing car dependency;
- minimizing any additional automobile traffic to and through Forest Hills for a smoother, safer flow for cars, pedestrians, and bicycles; and
- guiding new development to promote pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit use, with only the minimum parking necessary to allow retail stores and residential uses to flourish.

As a result, Forest Hills area developments are instructed to follow these parking ratios as specified in the *Guidelines*:

- **Residential:** Min. 0.75 to max. 1.0 spaces per dwelling unit and, for building with more than 10 units, 1 visitor space per 10 dwelling units.
- **Retail / Services:** Business spaces greater than 5,000 Sq. Ft. – min. 0.75 spaces to max. 1.0 per 1,000 Sq. Ft.
- **Commercial / Non-retail:** Min. 0.75 to max. 1.0 spaces per 1,000 Sq. Ft.
- **Car Sharing:** A set-aside for dedicated parking spaces for shared vehicles (such as Zipcar) is required.

Transit Oriented Development

The 3.39 acre parcel at 3521 Washington St. is situated equidistant between 2 major transit stations, Forest Hills and Green Street, on one of Boston's most heavily traveled subway lines, the Orange line. In addition, the #42 bus services Washington Street directly alongside the parcel.

Also, the parcel is located adjacent to the most heavily used bicycle path in Boston. Hundreds of cyclists use this path daily, even in the winter, and the numbers are growing annually.

In summary, superb alternative transportation resources exist to allow the retail and commercial space to thrive without an over reliance on the use of automobiles.

Recently Approved BRA Projects and Parking Ratios

A review of recent BRA-approved projects, completed or under construction, reveals the following:

Project	Residential Units	Retail Sq. Ft.	Automobile Parking	Ratio
154-160 Green Street Mixed-Use Project	13	18,000	16	Less than .8
Centre/Lamartine	30	6,300	13	Less than .5
Parcels V&W	0	44,300	58	1.3
4238 Washington Street	0	50,000	16	Less than .4
125 South Huntington	40	47,000	33	Less than .9

Similar Existing Commercial Structures

A short inventory of similar commercial structures to the one proposed by the proponent reveals the following:

Building	Use	Storeys	Sq. Ft.	Automobile Parking	Ratio
3313 Washington St.	Commercial Office	2	10,100	14	1.39
500 Amory St.	Commercial Office	2	12,300	35	2.85
157 Green St.	Commercial Office	3	9,850	41	4.16

The Brewery Complex

The proponent makes comparisons to the Brewery Complex located between Brookside Avenue and Amory Street in JP. Since 1977, the Brewery has been nurtured by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation into a true treasure of Boston and a destination for hundreds of thousands of visitors a year. It contains over 30 small and large businesses in a complex spanning approximately 140,000 sq ft of active commercial space.

When initially discussing the proponent's proposal with the neighborhood, the Brewery was often mentioned by neighbors as an ideal development to emulate since it is a noteworthy destination full of character located alongside the Orange line and is easily accessible by cyclists. It is crucial to note

that this well-loved destination has a parking ratio of only 1.07/1000 sq ft.

With only 150 parking spaces available and more 140,000 sq ft of commercial space, the Brewery's parking ratio is roughly 1.07. Lisa King, property manager of the Brewery for the past 7 years, states that it is "not possible to know" which of the 30 tenants is responsible for which autos arriving to the complex.

Though Mike's Fitness is one of the top five tenants and draws to the complex, the PNF is not accurate when it attributes 2.5-3.39 spaces per 1000 sq ft to Mike's based on a study conducted nearly 6 years ago. Since then Mike's has expanded (in 2009) from their initial 10,000sq ft to 15,000sq ft. The Brewery has also expanded its leased space. Changes in mode have also come about from higher fuel costs and the economic recession of 2008. Cycling has surged in popularity in that time. A conversation with General Manager Mike at Mike's Fitness reveals that "parking is important... [but the] majority of our clients arrive by walking or biking. The majority of our clients are local."

Flourishing Jamaica Plain Businesses with Minimal Parking

Jamaica Plain is a neighborhood known for its progressive residents and their focus on and support of sustainable practices. There are many successful businesses in JP with little-to-no off-street automobile parking. Here is a partial list:

- Harvest Coop Market
- City Feed and Supply
- Ten Tables Restaurant
- Fresh Hair Salon
- Tres Gatos Restaurant and Bookstore
- Canary Square Restaurant
- Footlight Club Community Theater
- VeeVee Restaurant
- JP Licks Ice Cream

In addition, dozens of other successful locally-owned shops/commercial establishments in JP rely on one municipal parking lot located in the business district off of Centre Street, which has approximately 110 parking spots. These businesses include:

- KitchenWitch
- Centre Street Cafe
- Boing Toy Store
- Blanchards Wine and Spirits
- Wonderspice Restaurant
- Bukhara Restaurant
- Costello's Tavern
- Fire Opal Gifts
- Ace Hardware
- Yumont Hardware
- The Real Deal Restaurant

Recommendation:

The neighborhood is hard pressed to find any establishment built in JP in recent years that has an automobile parking ratio as elevated as that requested by the proponent.

The evidence is clear that businesses can flourish in urban areas, serving local customers who arrive via low-impact modes including bicycle, by transit and on foot.

The proposed allotment and configuration of the commercial/retail automobile parking, with a requested ratio of approximately 2.25 – 2.61/1000 sq ft* for the overall 28,000 sq ft retail, fails to take advantage of alternative travel resources within easy proximity. This has the effect of encouraging excessive automobile use which has tremendously negative impacts on the neighborhood and the region.

Urban air quality, water quality, productivity, public safety and a sense of neighborhood are all negatively impacted by over-reliance on automobiles.

The automobile parking ratio requested for the retail/commercial portion of 3521 Washington Street project is not acceptable to the Stony Brook Neighborhood.

We recommend the following ratios, which are in accord with Transit Oriented Development, the Forest Hills Improvement Initiative recently approved BRA projects in Jamaica Plain and the community's wishes.

Component	Automobile Parking Spaces	Approximate Ratio
Residential	42	1/unit
Retail/Commercial	28	1/unit
Storage	10	.08/1000 sq. ft.
On-street	11	
Total	91	

*calculated as $73-10(\text{reasonable for storage})=63/28=2.25$. Assuming shared use of the storage parking at night, $73/28=2.61$

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Project	Residential Units	Retail Sq. Ft.	Automobile Parking	Ratio
154-160 Green Street Mixed-Use Project (now Bartlett Sq.)	13	18,000	16	Less than .8
Centre/Lamartine (now 270 Centre Street in Jackson Sq.)	30	6,300	13	Less than .5
Parcels V&W (now Arboretum Place, 3815 & 3840 Washington St.)	0	44,300	58	1.3
4238 Washington Street	0	50,000	16	Less than .4
125 South Huntington	40	47,000	33	Less than .9
<i>New Projects Below</i>				
105A South Huntington Avenue	195	1600	176	0.90
161 South Huntington	196	0	175	0.89
Blessed Sacrament - 365 Centre Street	118	11000	150	1.16
3371 Washington & 197-201 Green St.	21	5200	32	1.22
<i>New Project Average</i>				1.04

Relevant excerpt regarding Stop & Shop at 301 Centre Street and excessive parking from *Parking Policy in Jamaica Plain* by Christina Kim, Jamaica Plain resident and Masters' Degree Candidate, Tufts University, Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, dated May 4, 2012.

[The] Stop & Shop lot is badly underutilized. The spaces next to Martha Elliot fill up when the health center is open. However, the rest of the Stop & Shop lot is only about 1/4 full, even at peak grocery shopping times. These acres of asphalt are not a good use of land in a densely settled neighborhood, especially a neighborhood adjacent to a major subway and bus station.

The City of Boston should work with Stop & Shop to redevelop a portion of the parking lot. The side parking lot may be an ideal place for a row of townhouses facing Walden Street. A small commercial development could be built in front of Stop & Shop to complete the streetscape along Centre Street and create a more pleasant pedestrian environment leading from Jackson Square into the Hyde Square business district. This redevelopment would be consistent with the city's efforts to encourage transit-oriented development near T stations.

Recently there has been an increased awareness of the negative impacts of parking-centric development. Free parking requirements make car use more affordable, but drive up the cost of housing and goods and services for everyone, even non-drivers. By making driving easier, free parking encourages more driving which leads to road congestion and increased emissions. Parking requirements also inhibit the development of land for other purposes, replacing potential housing, offices, and shops with parking lots. Cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle have eliminated minimum parking requirements to allow the market to determine the parking supply.