

Notes from table discussions at the Metro North Regional Forum in Malden on April 30, 2014

These notes represent a summary of the themes, locations, and discussions that were discussed as part of the facilitated table discussions during the Metro North Regional Forum. Meeting participants were asked to think about and discuss four questions:

1. Based on the priority areas shown through our screening tool, what are the challenges or impediments to developing these sites? What sites are missing that should be shown?
2. What type of development would be most appropriate at the sites you know most about?
3. Where are opportunities for coordinating development and open space opportunities? How do we accommodate more open space in these communities?
4. What infrastructure investments are needed to unlock development or open space potential on the priority sites?

The comments have been organized by community and site. There are also a series of general comments about the region as a whole listed at the end.

Site and Location Specific Comments *(organized by municipality)*

Boston (Charlestown)

Sullivan Square

- Needs funding for roadway improvement

Charlestown DPA

- Restoration of the port area
- DPA site is challenging for water dependent uses; maybe doesn't belong

Boston (East Boston)

- Why were no East Boston sites elevated to regional priority areas?
- What about t-stations on blue line as areas for redevelopment or priority development?

Chelsea

Chelsea Everett Avenue

- Flood prone areas – Priority Preservation Areas – Chelsea (and others) - invest in open space alongside development to accommodate stormwater and flooding mitigation.

Chelsea Parkway Plaza

- Include Marginal Street Waterfront as PDA
- Include Forbes site in Chelsea in PDA

Chelsea Downtown Chelsea

- Chelsea Downtown – lack of parking seems to be a limiting factor to development. Demographic shift & transportation improvements could help.
- Need a Chelsea Greenway to Northern Strand connection
- Forbes site – no commuter rail stop – 600 units proposed
- 400-600 units at Forbes in Chelsea

Everett

Commercial Triangle

- Development should include multi-family units and commercial space
- There is an RFP out now for consulting services to complete a Master Plan for this area

- Is there a way to break up the Commercial Triangle area to designate specific locations for multi-family uses, mixed-use, commercial only, or industrial? Seems like there are a number of different uses surrounding this site.
- Is the area environmentally sensitive, brownfields here?
- Is there an opportunity to create a green buffer around some of the existing commercial/industrial uses to buffer residential?
- Mixed use may be better designation in this area
- There are a number of existing scrap yards
- Commercial triangle highlighted as multifamily but it currently has a different character
- Why is commercial triangle housing? It's all industrial currently.
- Commercial Triangle + Everett Ave
 - Eliminate combined sewer overflows
 - Deal with storm water after separation
 - See Cambridge precedents
 - Pollutant load control
 - Sanitary sewer overflows
 - Infrastructure must meet demand
 - Implications for Everett square (backup)

Everett Square

- Develop on Route 99 through Everett not feasible without major transportation investment (e.g. removal of on street parking & creation of parking lots)
- Salt marsh/soft edge restoration to improve resiliency to climate change and flooding along the waterway
- What happens to this area with a casino development?
- Commercial Triangle + Everett Ave
 - Eliminate combined sewer overflows
 - Deal with storm water after separation
 - See Cambridge precedents
 - Pollutant load control
 - Sanitary sewer overflows
 - Infrastructure must meet demand
 - Implications for Everett square (backup)

Everett River Green

- The type of housing matters in this area
- Access to nearby open space, walking path, water
 - Bridge? Talk of fixing
 - How to live both sides
 - Plans for connection to casino site? Pedestrian paths on both sides?
 - Pretty isolated -> i.e. no transit

Lower Broadway Everett

- This should be a Regional Priority Development Area

Malden

Downtown Malden

- National grid site downtown should be considered for Priority Preservation Area – downtown area has insufficient open space for residents
- Malden needs a hospital
- Malden parking study – show shortage – commuter parking
 - Restaurant parking needed in Malden center?
- Malden interested in moving downtown industrial uses to industrial park on east side. This should be a regional priority (IND. Site 99)
- Malden close to Rumney Marsh could be an open space resource/passive recreation – currently filled w/ sediment
- Bike to the Sea – this should be a Regional Priority Preservation Area / transportation investment
- Malden commercial/industrial area along Commercial Street as a Priority Development Area along Bike to the Sea pathway
- What are the impacts on local traffic if downtown continues to develop
- What are the impacts on schools if downtown continues to develop
- Recreational, needs resources to purchase from Hallmark Health
- Cultural centers are key, Malden Center – opportunity to become a center of adult education

Malden Hospital Site

- Fellsmere Pond – overrun/highly used. The area is a respite for nearby assisted living.
- Malden hospital should be a Priority Preservation Area
- Malden hospital site as preservation area

Lower Commercial Street

- Lower Commercial Street/ the riverfront in Malden should be a combination of a Priority Development Area and some Priority Preservation Areas along the riverfront (tri-city redevelopment effort)

Medford

Medford River's Edge

- Canoe launch proposal may raise health risk issues because of contaminated sediments on the banks of the river?
 - Balancing access and recreational opportunities vs. health risks
 - Applies to some Everett sites as well on the river
- Open space should face the waterfront
- This is our priority. Lots of opportunity for development
- Correct PDAs

Wellington Station/Station Landing

- Why isn't Wellington a Regional Priority Development Area?
- Meadow Glenn Mall is seeing more vacancies – it is close to Station Landing - potential for redevelopment – already multi-family housing there
- Include Station Landing as a Regional Priority Development Area
- Station landing Medford as a Regional Priority Development Area

Mystic Avenue Corridor

- Mystic Avenue Corridor – ripe for redevelopment, has not had a lot of public access to parkland but could use some in the future if development is to take place in the corridor

Melrose

Lower Washington

- Lower Washington has a Smart Growth Overlay Zoning designation
- There are large impacts to local traffic needs to be addressed as a result of new development in the corridor
- Need to provide connectivity of open spaces to east and west from this corridor

Tremont / Essex Street Corridor

- New zoning being put in place for the corridor will accelerate development
- There is some concern about infrastructure being able to support new development
- There is a need for more Complete Streets (bike and pedestrian improvements)
- There are good opportunities for future development in the Tremont Street corridor
- The Melrose projects look good from a Melrose perspective

Revere

- There doesn't seem to be any sites of regional significance in Revere?
- Regional – we need to spread/distribute the sites across Metro North communities
- If a casino does not locate in Revere, why wouldn't this be a regionally significant development site? Why not a mixed-use master planned area?

Broadway CBD

- Broadway central business district could be critical to attracting new residents with disposable income to Revere

Parcel H

- Significant housing planned at the Parcel H location (why is it categorized as commercial?)
- Why only parcel H included. Why is it commercial when housing is moving forward
- Wonderland & Parcel H – combine these two sites to be one Regional Priority Development Area – commuter rail definitely a regional transportation investment
 - This area should be a mixed-use master planned area. The crossing between the two sites is a signalized intersection.

Wonderland

- Wonderland privately owned right now waiting to reduce parking requirements near T
- Parking from a developer's perspective should be closer to 0.5 spaces / residential unit but the current parking required by the City is 1.5/ residential unit. Revere hasn't seen it play out.

Somerville

Assembly Square

- Take out Draw 7 Park from the overall boundary and the parcel along water should be green space as well. This information should in the open space layer.

Brickbottom

- Infrastructure is a big issue in Brickbottom
 - Somerville is working to better orient streets and improve infrastructure
- The City is currently writing zoning to allow for master planned developments that will create a comprehensive look/feel to the area

- This is part of the process of recovering the entire City
- Public/Private Partnerships will be a key element to the redevelopment of Brickbottom and other major transformational developments across the City
- Inner belt parcel lines are confused, need to check the boundaries of these areas
- The large and varied uses in this area calls for a larger plan for the area

Union Square

- Phase 1 of Union Square and Boynton Yards is on a five year timeframe
 - Grid system for the roadways in the area, key to good redevelopment pattern
- Need to improve bus service frequency in the area

Winthrop

- No comments were made on the Winthrop sites.

General Comments/Questions

Open Space (Preservation Areas)

- Should figure out a way to better utilize the space under the Tobin Bridge for open space
- There is a general lack of park space for recreational activities in Metro North
- Need to extend the Northern Strand connection into Downtown Malden
- Connect the Northern Strand in Everett to Wellington Station and Gateway Park and the Chelsea Greenway in Chelsea
- Connect Chelsea Greenway to Northern Strand and to the East Boston Greenway
- Connect Bike to the Sea/Northern Strand in Everett to the Greenway in Chelsea
- Bike path connections – Chelsea to Malden Greenway
- Open space in these communities should magnify existing assets
- Linear greenways along the waterfront are keys to:
 - Resiliency for flooding/climate change
 - Attracting residents and employees
 - Can serve as walking routes/bike paths -> can these be elevated? Are they more about infrastructure than open space?
 - Need to maintain and expand access
- Somerville Community Path along the Green Line Extension isn't represented on map
- Add bike connections to Boston from points north – the only access is Route 99 through Everett
- Need to have state and local incentives for urban forest -> deal with loss of vegetation on private property (people paving over green spaces and cutting down trees)

Transportation/Infrastructure

- Need to extend the Silver Line from Chelsea into Everett
- Create a fixed transit stop in Everett, silver line extension and/or commuter rail
- Senior transportation and senior housing are both major needs and major challenges – they are reliant on The Ride which is inadequate
- Route 1 has an impact on the entire region – traffic congestion – 2 hour backups – need state and federal funding
- East /West route needed for traffic improvements. Something like Route 16 to Route 1 or Route 60 to Route 1
- Improve east/west corridors
 - Remove toll on Route 1 to keep traffic from crossing there and into the neighborhoods
- There is a long overdue fix needed at Wellington Circle and Santilly Circle
 - In collaboration with the MBTA
- In general there is a great need for funding for street reconstruction
 - Not enough money for infrastructure, \$10 million in shared need for the Everett/Chelsea stretch of Beacham Street alone
- Better connect Station Landing and Lower Broadway to the rest of the community in Everett and Medford
- Infrastructure funding is needed to help mitigate flooding and better stormwater management
- Major investments needed in stormwater on both private and public properties, along Mystic and Malden Rivers

- Investment/funding for culvert issue in Everett/Chelsea to assist development of the Commercial Triangle area
- Funding to address flooding problems and strategies for innovative coastal community solutions
- Infrastructure for climate change – sewage pumps needed Malden, etc.

Parking

- Perhaps parking enforcement is necessary near TOD
- Challenges: high cost development and high parking ratios
- More transportation access and parking is needed

Brownfields

- More brownfields funding is needed in general
- Mass Development brownfield grant program needs to be funded with a signal investment

Designated Port Area (DPA)

- DPA issues – limiting dev potential
- Relax designated port area restrictions
- Chapter 91 issue – Designated Port Area (DPA) limits mixed age development (Vancouver – great example)

Development

- Assembling parcels can be costly and challenging for developers and municipalities
- Low-Income Tax Credits – shared and targeted to larger mixed-use mixed-income development sites
- Waterfront housing is important; why is there not a more regional approach?
- Casino sites – need to be built higher (more like 20 stories)
 - Build higher -> subsidy needed
- Route 99 industrial area relocation in Malden is on-going process
- Struck by the need for housing, yet we only have room for 9,000 units

Additional Comments

- We need more training for the trades
- Training for work-entry skills
- IT incubator/industry to attract businesses and employees to Metro North
- How many Metro North residents do not have a driver's license (also car ownership)?
- Need more/better coordination among municipalities in Assembly Square area/the corridor from Sullivan Square to River's Edge
- What brings state investment to a tipping point where it will successfully attract private investment – and then should state involvement scale back?
- Community hearing needed for each community
- Map social resources/community assets
- Social infrastructure needs to be built along with residents, connections between cities too
- Historic preservation heritage tours around neighborhoods