

MINUTES

Highland Park Neighborhood Coalition, March 14, 2023

The meeting was chaired by Mark Martinez and attended by 31 people *

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Community Service Officer Mike O'Rourke gave his incident report. There were no questions.
2. One United Bank presented their proposal to develop 52 John Eliot Square, (the former garage at the corner of Center and Roxbury Streets) into a bank branch and corporate offices. There were too many unanswered questions, so the meeting agreed to postpone a vote until One United provides further information. Questions were raised about lack of commitment to utilization of MBEs, amount of community benefit, whether the plan has to include a roof deck/party site or community meeting spaces, and whether abutters have complaints about compromised site lines.
3. Michelle Murray and developer, Mike Chavez presented plans to create a third-floor unit in Michelle's attic at 30 Juniper Street, increasing the FAR from 0.83 to 1.0 and adding 817 sf to the usable space of the building. The meeting voted overwhelmingly to approve the development (10 – Yes, 1 – Abstention)
4. The meeting voted to approve the election of those standing for HPNC Steering Committee: Mercy Bell, Mark Martinez, Rodney Singleton, and Judith Walker, and for the two HPNC Secretaries: Kate Phelps and Holly Shepherd. The motion to approve the slate carried (16 – Yes, 1 – Abstention.)
5. The Highland Park Neighborhood Coalition Steering Committee will be seeking some new participants as the tenure for participation will be staggered, maintaining some continuity from existing board members while including new board members.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES:

Hawthorne Youth and Community Center: The HYCC is hosting a neighborhood cleanup with Northeastern University on **Saturday, April 1 from 9:30am – 12:30pm**. All residents are encouraged to join in. At HYCC. Gloves, bags and refreshments will be provided.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mark Schafer asked for volunteers to help organize a yard sale at UU Church sometime in early May. He is also, along with Paige Cook, JD Garcia and the UU Church, looking to set up some panels of neighborhood elders to speak about their histories in Highland Park. Folk interested in helping with either initiative should email Mark at msmexico2@gmail.com.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, April 11, 7-8:15pm

ATTENDEES: Mery Bell, Rachel Centeiro (Liz Miranda's office), Mike Chavez, Bob Cooper, Dan Cruz, Dago Fadelu, 2 representatives from GA Donovan Management (One United Bank Project Team), Suleman Gujere, Matthew Hyatt (One United Bank), Cecelia Isaac, Christopher Jenkins, Corey Jordan (Chynah Tyler's office), Steven Keyes, Scott Knox, John Kyper, Mark Martinez, Bruce McLay, Michelle Murray, Kate Phelps, John Piacitelli (One United Bank Project Team), Keisha Santana, Boston Neighborhood Liaison for Roxbury), Mark Schafer, Andrew Shelburne, Holly Shepherd, Rodney Singleton, Jose Soares, Judith Walker, T. Williams (COO, One United Bank).

Highland Park Values Statement

In order to safeguard its unique character of racial and economic diversity and shared open space, the Highland Park Neighborhood Coalition has identified four main values for developers to respect:

- 1) to protect and develop affordable housing,
- 2) to conserve communal open space and trees,
- 3) to honor Highland Park's historic sites and
- 4) to prevent displacement of longtime residents.
- 5) to give priority to projects that provide significant worker and business opportunities that address the wealth gap

In assessing whether a project is beneficial to Highland Park, we consider the following:

1. the impact on neighbors currently residing in homes targeted for development
2. number of affordable homes lost or gained
3. the number of rental units lost or gained
4. the amount of communal land lost or gained
5. the developer's compliance with Boston job policy of equity in hiring and pay
6. the extent to which wealth imbalance is redressed through opportunities for building equity
7. the maintenance of safe streets and pedestrian safety
8. the balance of parking and housing density
9. the creation of energy efficient homes
10. the quality of restoration planned for historic sites
11. the likelihood of student housing arising from high bedroom count

Equity and Inclusion Initiative

The aim of the Equity and Inclusion initiative is twofold: to redress in some measure the wealth imbalance between white people and people of color in Boston, and to preserve the racial and economic diversity which makes Highland Park unique.

The building of luxury homes in Highland Park has increased considerably over the last decade, increasing the overall percentage of affluent white residents. While there is still subsidized housing in Highland Park, and more units of affordable homes are in the planning process, much of the subsidized housing is threatened by the ending of deed restrictions. Our goal is to slow the displacement of our neighbors of color by creating an Equity Building Fund with which to assist Black and Brown Highland Park residents to stay put and to gain equity through homeownership.

Developers and homeowners alike are understandably eager to profit from the escalating property values in the neighborhood. Because of this, we, the community's residents, have an opportunity to benefit from, and not just be the victims of gentrification.

The plan is to demand of developers seeking to build market-rate housing in Highland Park that they contribute cash as their "community benefit" - either \$15k per unit or 10% of the profits from each unit, whichever is the greater - to this Equity Building Fund. This formula will be flexible depending on the percentage of affordable units included in each project, and the cash amount will be reviewed annually.

Highland Park homeowners, too, may contribute to the Equity Building Fund, signing a pledge committing to contribute \$15,000 or 10% of the sale of their home - whichever is greater - when they sell property in Highland Park. The amount of the Highland Park Pledge will be reviewed annually.

The Highland Park Neighborhood Coalition (HPNC) (or an elected subcommittee thereof) will manage the Equity Building Fund. The contents of the fund will be kept in escrow so that no money can be touched until all aspects of the fund are legally and practically completed.

During this “growing” period, the HPNC (or an elected subcommittee thereof) will:

- 1) establish the criteria used to determine which neighbors are eligible and
- 2) decide how best to help eligible recipients attain homeownership.