



Longfellow
Area
Neighborhood
Association, Inc.

P. O. Box 222, Roslindale, MA 02131

longfellowarea@gmail.com

March 9, 2021

Ms. Morgan McDaniel, Project Manager
Boston Planning & Development Agency
Boston City Hall, 9th floor
Boston, MA 02101

RE: Comments re: Disposition of 104 Walter Street, Roslindale

Dear Ms. McDaniel:

The Longfellow Area Neighborhood Association (LANA) first wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to you and everyone at the Boston Planning & Development Agency for acquiring 104-108 Walter Street. We appreciate BPDA's and the City's quick response to this threatened parcel and look forward to the development of four units of affordable home ownership at an enlarged 104 Walter Street parcel. Thank you!

We are heartened to see that BPDA and DND are moving forward to solicit proposals for developer designation for four units of affordable homeownership at 104 Walter. LANA is submitting these comments based on the presentation you and your colleagues made on February 23, 2021 at a virtual community meeting regarding 104 Walter.

LANA urges BPDA and the City of Boston to:

1. Use the neighborhood-preferred site plan and key attributes as a guide to inform future development at 104 Walter, and to providing appropriate public access to the Roslindale Wetlands from Walter Street through 108 Walter. A copy of which is included with this comment letter.
2. Enable review of the RFP language for redevelopment of 104 Walter by LANA and the Wetlands Working Group, a committee of LANA, before issuance.
3. Host a community meeting where qualified developers responding to the City's RFP present their proposed plans to the neighborhood, and answer questions prior to designation.
4. Involve neighborhood representatives in the RFP review and developer selection process.
5. Designate the preferred developer for four units of affordable home ownership by Labor Day 2021
6. Require a landscape plan to be part of the developer's designation application. In lieu of a highly prescriptive landscape plan, we are suggesting that the landscape plan reflect the following values and concerns:
 - a. Visitors to the Roslindale Wetlands and walkers on the perimeter trail should experience a sense of escape from the built environment. Thus, it is important for the landscape and development be appropriately sited and screened from the view of the perimeter trail and the Roslindale Wetlands.
 - b. An aesthetically pleasing barrier fence between 100 and 104 Walter should be erected that provides appropriate shielding 100 Walter from headlights from the parking and movement of vehicles at 104 Walter.
 - c. Native plant species should be used. Newly planted trees should be sufficiently sized (3-inch caliper or larger). Existing invasive species should be removed.
 - d. The service/trash area be appropriately screened from view from the street as well as from the Roslindale Wetlands.

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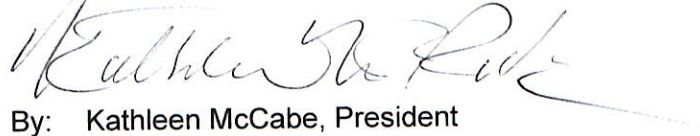
- e. The rear boundary between 104 Walter and the Roslindale Wetlands should be clearly demarcated in an aesthetically pleasing manner.
- f. The Coniston Road viewshed should be considered. The vista from the back yards on the northerly side of Coniston Road should be predominantly vegetative consistent with the Roslindale Wetlands.

Thank you for considering these comments, and incorporating them into the development of the RFP for developer designation for the creation of four units of affordable homeownership at 104 Walter, Roslindale.

LANA looks forward to continued collaboration with you, BPDA and city agencies to advance this project so a beneficial development is created in keeping with the character of the LANA area and the adjacent Roslindale Wetlands.

Sincerely yours,

LONGFELLOW AREA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION



By: Kathleen McCabe, President

Enclosures (2)

cc: City Councilor Arroyo
City Councilor Essaibi-George
City Councilor Flaherty
City Councilor Mejia
City Councilor O'Malley
City Councilor Wu
Chief Chris Cook
Chief Sheila Dillion
John Feuerbach
Aldo Ghirin
Nick Moreno
Paul Sutton
Kirsten Studlien

- **2 STRUCTURES** WITH
A TOTAL OF **4 UNITS**
- **4 PARKING SPACES** (1 PER UNIT)



Key Features of Preferred Site Plan for 104-108 Walter Street, Roslindale

ALLOCATION OF LAND USES

- **Open Space largely at 108 Walter.** The entire “Rear” of 108 Walter to be permanently part of the Roslindale Wetlands along with the “Stem” of 108 Walter that includes the existing BWSC easement and the strip to the north, to be owned by the City Parks Department or Conservation Commission and to be part of the Roslindale Wetlands Urban Wild.
- **Affordable Home Ownership largely at 104 Walter.** The 104 Walter parcel would be expanded approximately 11 feet northeast to match with the BWSC easement line to contain 4 units of affordable home ownership housing (2 units in 2 buildings each) and 4 parking spaces.

MAJOR ELEMENTS

- **Pedestrian Public Access Path** to the Roslindale Wetlands be created from Walter Street through the stem of 108 Walter to connect with the Loop Trail.
- **Protection of Roslindale Wetlands Urban Wild** by acquisition of the largest privately owned parcel in the designated urban wild area and permanently protecting it through ownership by an Article 97-protected entity (Boston Parks or Boston Conservation Commission), preferably along with a Conservation Restriction held by Mass Audubon.
- **Creation of 4 units of Affordable Home Ownership** on the expanded 104 Walter parcel in two separate, differently-sized two-family/townhouse style units, with a smaller-footprint dwelling in the rear to minimize impact on the Wetlands and visibility from Coniston Road and the rear yard of 100 Walter.
- **Maintenance of Existing Boston Water & Sewer Commission easement** that will serve as the driveway for the housing on 104 Walter and also serve in part as access for occasional Boston Parks Department vehicles for maintenance to the Wetlands.

LANDSCAPE ELEMENT FEATURES

- **Landscape & Privacy Fencing Buffer** along the northeasterly boundary of 108 Walter should be maintained (adjacent to 112 Walter). Invasive species, specifically the Norway maple trees, should be removed and replaced with non-invasive appropriate tree/shrubbery species that provide a full green buffer.
- **Landscape & Privacy Fencing Buffer** along the southerly boundary of 104 Walter (adjacent to 100 Walter), including the planting of additional vegetation and trees (3 to 4) as part of the buffer, with specific efforts to screen headlight glare from the parking area on abutters.
- **Green Fence should be erected at the rear of 104 Walter** to clearly demarcate the boundary between 104 Walter and the “Rear” of 108 Walter

(which will become a permanent part of the Roslindale Wetlands). The fencing should be incorporated with the landscaping, either as part of the fence or adjacent. The view from the Roslindale Wetlands of the fence should be green and vegetated.

- **Ample Yard Space** between the two 2-family structures should be provided for future residents.
- **Landscape edge** should be designed and planted between the BWSC easement/driveway and the pedestrian path.
- **Grading:** The structures should be built and the site should be graded to protect the abutting properties from storm water runoff.

PARKING & PAVEMENT

- **Four off-street parking spaces** will be provided for the residents of the affordable home ownership units – one space per housing unit – on the expanded 104 Walter parcel.
- **No off-street parking** for Wetlands visitors. Pedestrian, bicycle and transit access is encouraged.
- **Bicycle parking** for residents and visitors is encouraged.
- **Permeable pavement** to enhance climate resiliency is strongly encouraged throughout the site.

DEMOLITION

- **All existing structures should be demolished** that are currently on the two parcels. This includes the two sheds on the rear of 108 Walter; the dilapidated old barn that straddles the current 104-108 Walter property line, and the existing blue house.
- **Recycle and re-use materials** from the demolished structures as much as possible, either as part of the new affordable housing at 104 Walter or elsewhere.
- **Current tenants** should be supported in relocation by the eventual ownership entity and developer with as generous a timeline and as much assistance as possible.

HOUSING FEATURES

- **Net Zero Design** should be integrated in the design, construction and operation of the new affordable home ownership units.
- **Variety of Unit Sizes** contained among the 4 units of affordable home ownership offered on the site.
- **Context-sensitive design** so that the homes look and feel like they are part of the LANA neighborhood and Walter Street, so that a similar scale, type of materials and style is incorporated.
- **Configuration of the design** of the housing should focus intensity of the uses away from abutters and the Wetlands. This includes entrances in the 2-family closest to Walter Street likely should face Walter Street.

CLIMATE RESILIENCY WILL BE ADVANCED BY THIS SITE PLAN & VISION BY:

- **Protecting the Roslindale Wetlands** which provides for storm water runoff storage, wildlife habitat, and tree cover for heat island mitigation.
- **Adding additional trees and landscape features** to both 104 and 108 Walter that provide buffers, but also enhance heat island mitigation, absorption of carbon, and facilitate absorption of storm water.
- **Net Zero Housing** with four units of affordable home ownership.
- **Invasive Species Removal** with the extraction of invasive Norway maples and other invasive species on the site.

EQUITY WILL BE ADVANCED BY THIS SITE PLAN & VISION BY:

- **Creating 4 units of Affordable Home Ownership** in the LANA neighborhood which is facing rising home prices and gentrification.
- **Net Zero Design** with new energy-efficient construction enabling lower long-term operating costs.

WHY DEMOLITION?

The two community workshops discussed the legal, financial, and material / structural maintenance concerns with affordable condo developments as well as the importance of energy-efficient construction and net-zero goals. The extensive interior reconfiguration gut rehab required to create 2 side-by-side units would likely negate most “embodied carbon” benefits of retaining the house. Additionally, the two community workshops as well as the immediate abutters discussed the importance of a site plan which has adequate side and rear lot line setbacks, that is consistent with the “street wall” along Walter Street, and that allows for a comfortable amount of useable yard area for the residents of the new housing. Considering all these factors, the community’s recommended vision is to remove the existing house and deteriorated outbuildings, re-use and re-cycle as much of the material as possible, and create two new structures of two side-by-side condo units each in a traditional and contextual design which blends in with the neighborhood.

The existing circa-1890s house has not been inventoried by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the City of Boston has not determined it to be historically significant. Within the past 10-15 years it was abandoned for at least a year over an entire winter season and its condition is not known.