

Squares + Streets Roslindale Square
WalkUP Roslindale Zoning Map Comment Letter
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BY ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

Boston Planning Department
One City Hall Plaza, 9th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02201
Attention: Abdul-Razak Zachariah, Planner II
(abdul-razak.zachariah@boston.gov)

RE: Comments on the Planning Department's Squares + Streets Zoning Map Updates

Dear Abdul-Razak,

WalkUP Roslindale appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed zoning changes for Roslindale Square. As a community-based organization committed to a pro-housing and pro-walk, -bike, and -transit future for our neighborhood, we offer the following comments in support of the new and updated zoning map implementing the Squares + Streets small area plan in Roslindale Square.

We strongly endorse the Planning Department's efforts to increase housing availability near transit hubs and community amenities, allowing more residents to enjoy the benefits of living in Roslindale. Boston has a decades-in-the-making shortage of tens of thousands of homes, yet Roslindale's population and housing stock has grown at an even slower rate than Boston's other neighborhoods. The Squares+Streets Small Area Plan noted that Roslindale's population grew only 2.7% between 2010 and 2020, compared with the citywide growth rate of 13.2%. The cost of maintaining the status quo in zoning is clear: reduced housing availability, diminished affordability, escalating rents for residents and businesses, and a rise in evictions and displacement over time.

Expanding S+S Zones

While the proposed zoning map demonstrates significant potential, we also see room for further refinement and support the minor expansions highlighted at the March 18th check-in meeting:

- We would like to see more 2F-5000 zones changed to S0/S1 to reflect the actual development patterns that these areas already have, which is often more than just 2 family structures. These areas include:
 - Lee Hill Rd
 - South St from the Edison Building to Archdale Rd
 - Washington St between Archdale Rd and Lochdale Rd
 - Mahler Rd/Colgate Rd
- Extending S+S zones along Cummins Highway to Sherwood Street
 - Especially with the investment in the former Irving School site, we should be encouraging more people to live nearby and improving the area's walkability.
- Zoning S0 in area facing Fallon Field on South St and Walworth St

Taft Hill + Parking and Curb Access Plan

While we are excited to see S5 zoned in the heart of Roslindale Square, leaving out the Taft Hill parking lot seems like a missed opportunity. We hope this will be revisited in the future as the Planning Department monitors the changes that the Squares+Streets plan and rezoning bring to Roslindale.

We noted in our [comment letter on the Small Area Plan](#) that the Roslindale Square Parking and Curb Access Plan needs to be implemented as soon as possible to mitigate impacts of parking lot development and encourage turnover of valuable curbside space. Even without the potential for development on Taft Hill parking lot, this concern remains salient. As an example, B'nai B'rith will be starting the community process for developing the Home for Little Wanderers Thrift Store/former Bank of America site into much-needed affordable senior housing and street level retail including the thrift store. The current site includes a parking lot extending from

Washington to Cohasset that has been completely unmanaged since the bank branch closed several years ago. We are concerned that parking impacts from such developments may not only reduce the availability of parking for businesses' customers under the current unmanaged conditions, but may also adversely influence public perception of new development within the Squares+Streets zones.

Revisit Zoning More Frequently

Finally, we must not wait another 17 years to revisit the planning and zoning of Roslindale Square and its connecting corridors. We strongly believe that, like nearly every other area of this country does, the Planning Department should regularly review and update both the Small Area Plan and the zoning map for Squares+Streets in Roslindale, assessing how development has progressed and making adjustments to gradually increase the Squares+Streets area and its zoned density over time. While the Squares+Streets team has run an excellent process with remarkable levels of outreach to the community, such an extensive process is both resource-intensive and time-consuming, highlighting the importance of establishing a more streamlined and regular approach to planning and zoning reviews.

In closing, we want to reiterate our deep appreciation for the efforts of the Planning Department and all stakeholders involved in the Roslindale Squares + Streets Zoning process. We also wish to state again our strong and deeply appreciative support for the outcome of this process overall - both in the Small Area Plan and in the Zoning Map. Thank you for considering our comments and concerns.

Sincerely,

WalkUP Roslindale Board of Directors

About WalkUP Roslindale

WalkUP Roslindale, which takes its name from the international movement to foster “Walkable Urban Places,” is a collaborative group of residents dedicated to making Roslindale the most walkable neighborhood in Boston. We advocate for a dynamic, livable streetscape and we support positive changes to our public and private built environment that strengthen walkability and other forms of active mobility as means toward better personal and public health, safety, social capital, economic development, and environmental sustainability. We are led by a steering group of about thirty residents and have nearly 1,000 additional supporters. More information about WalkUP Roslindale and our initiatives can be found at www.walkuproslindale.org. We recognize that no single group of people can be said to speak for our entire neighborhood – instead, please take these comments as representing the collective support of our steering group members (indicated above) resulting from our mission and principles.

Copy to:

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