



# Housing With Public Assets @ Roslindale Municipal Lot

## OVERVIEW & NEXT STEPS

### The Process

In 2017 the Housing Innovation Lab kicked off an exploration into Housing with Public Assets (HWPA), an idea to co-locate housing on top of or next to existing city owned buildings and parcels. The iLab wanted to explore whether this type of redevelopment was right for Boston and if so, how it could be pursued in the future. Following research on location, lot usage and size, and neighborhood housing production, Roslindale was identified as one of the first potential public asset projects for the HWPA initiative. In addition to size and usage, the Roslindale lot was singled out for a couple of important reasons that fit in with the City's priorities related to housing. The lot is located extremely close to public transit meaning that residents would have easy access to jobs in the downtown areas of the City. Also important to note - only 12% of Roslindale's housing stock is income-restricted, compared to the citywide average of 19%. Additionally, more than half of the renters in Roslindale are cost-burdened, meaning they pay 30% or more of their income on rent.

With these factors in mind, the Housing Innovation Lab and Department of Neighborhood Development hosted a series of gatherings and smaller group conversations to discuss creation of affordable housing over the municipal lot as well as related transportation needs in Roslindale. Over the course of this exploration the team connected with residents, abutters, business owners and five different neighborhood groups including: Roslindale Village Main Streets, Walk Up Roslindale, Roslindale Medical and Dental Center, Taft Hill Condo Association, and the Roslindale Business Group.



## What did we hear?

Since the initial community meeting in September we received an impressive amount of feedback ranging from public comments, conversations and letters, to 250+ comment cards collected at a January Open House, showing that the community members in Roslindale have been highly engaged and responsive throughout this process. We heard feedback from community members expressing the following:

- Worry about the impact of construction on the commercial district,
- Confusion and frustration about the potential for co-location at the municipal lot.
- Concern about the potential loss of parking during construction and any reduction in spaces post-construction
- Concern about how public use of the lot would be maintained following the project
- There were questions about the impact of additional density in Roslindale Village and proximity to neighboring buildings.
- There was also support for the creation of more affordable housing opportunities in Roslindale.
- We received comments that described interest in the idea of co-location at the municipal lot and how it could align with goals of maintaining a diverse community in Roslindale
- Feedback encouraging use of different modes of transportation including buses, bikes, and the commuter rail.
- We also heard community members voice a strong need and urgency for additional housing opportunities in Roslindale Village. There was particular interest in housing solutions that could ensure long term affordability, create additional density, and enable residents to remain in the area



This range of responses and reactions highlighted both opportunities, specifically around identifying potential alternative sites for affordable housing creation, and tensions, such as the implications of additional residential development in Roslindale. Additionally, as with any conversation about housing, issues of race and class surfaced during the course the engagement and feedback process. As several community members expressed, the long standing impact of structural racism, decreasing access to opportunity and financial security, as well as opposition to the development of affordable housing, perpetuate many of our city's inequities. While a number of important concerns were raised about the potential location, we also heard that many appreciated how discussions around HWPAs at the municipal lot presented an opportunity to confront how racial and economic inequities continue to shape neighborhoods like Roslindale. As the City builds upon the vision outlined in Resilient Boston, our first ever strategy for advancing resilience and racial equity, we look forward to partnering with communities in neighborhoods on this transformative and healing journey to ensure all residents have access to the resources they need to thrive.

### **Where do we go next?**

The City of Boston continues to explore the potential for HWPAs in Boston. Part of this exploration includes looking at different types of public assets for use. The engagement around the use of the Roslindale lot has helped to inform the HWPAs process and prioritization. In consultation with a number of city departments and agencies, at this time we are suspending the process for the Roslindale municipal lot while the team conducts community engagement for other public assets in different neighborhoods throughout the City. Looking for new and innovative ways to create affordable housing remains a priority for Mayor Walsh and the City will continue to explore potential spaces in Roslindale for the development of additional affordable housing in the future and look for opportunities to collaborate with neighborhood groups interested in the intersection of affordable housing creation and racial equity.