

MEETING NOTES

ROXBURY CULTURAL DISTRICT PLANNING MEETING

6/16/2016, 5:45 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

DUDLEY SQUARE BRANCH, BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

ATTENDEES: 50 people attended, including Napoleon Jones-Henderson, Milton Wright, staff member from the office of Councilor Tito Jackson, and community members. The meeting was facilitated by Kelley Chunn and Associates.

PURPOSE: This was the third in a series of public conversations about seeking state designation from the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) for a cultural district in Roxbury. This process grows out of the long-term goals of two loosely knit grassroots art and culture organizations, the Roxbury Cultural Network and Common Thread Coalition. Through a series of meetings, this collaborative venture seeks to convene and work with stakeholders in developing an inclusive planning process, including community engagement and stakeholder alignment, for a cultural district in Roxbury and take the steps to complete the application to the MCC.

SUMMARY: Below, please find a summary of the agenda and key themes, ideas, and suggestions discussed during the meeting. This third community meeting was a time to review what was discussed and documented at the prior two community meetings on April 11 and May 9 and to more specifically discuss the vision, mission, and goals for the cultural district in Roxbury. The discussion was facilitated by Kelley Chunn and framed by a short PowerPoint presentation that is available on the planning website (www.roxburyculturaldistrict.org).

AGENDA

- A. Update: Updates since last meeting at Northeastern Crossing.
- B. Vision and Mission Statements and Goals: Working groups drafted a vision statement and a mission statement as well as draft goals.
- C. Mapping Tool: The mapping tool is live - a digital interactive mapping tool used to identify locations within the Dudley Square and Eliot Square areas and some outside of the designated area.
- D. Shared Governance
- E. Next Steps

A. Update

1. Designation Process

- A public hearing before the Boston City Council is scheduled for Fall 2016 and will be held at Hibernian Hall. Council President Michelle Wu (Chair, Committee on Arts, Culture, and Special Events) will preside over the discussion as well as Councilors Tito Jackson (sponsor) and Ayanna Pressley (sponsor). The public is invited.
- Submission of the completed application to MCC.
- Finally, MCC will conduct a walking tour of the district; a date and time has yet to be determined.

UPDATED 11.11.2016

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2. MCC Definition of Cultural District and Culture

- According to MCC, a district must be a dense concentration of cultural facilities, activities, and assets. It also must be walkable.
- Defining Culture: Many of us feel that culture is everything not in nature, instinctual, and genetic. However, MCC is likely issuing a more limited definition of culture with no specific definition, and could be interpreted as a product of aesthetic value, artistic experiences, and an ensemble created for the public.

B. Vision and Mission Statements

In smaller groups during the second community meeting and in the advisory working group, we have been working to draft vision and mission statements and set goals.

1. Draft Vision Statement: To uplift the community of Roxbury as a living repository of arts and cultural expression, past, present, and future. Roxbury is a unique community of people that appreciates its cultural assets both people and places in support of a thriving cultural sector that values all history and builds economic opportunities for all.

2. Draft Mission Statement: To build and maintain a cultural district that identifies and recognizes Roxbury's cultural assets and establishes the tools, strategies, resources, and spaces needed to sustain and grow the district's activities.

3. Identifying Goals: According to MCC the goals of a cultural district are defined as follows:

- Attract artists and cultural enterprises
- Encourage business and job development
- Establish the district as a tourist destination
- Preserve and reuse historic buildings
- Enhance property values
- Foster local cultural development

Over the past two meetings, the community has started to shape the local goals that shift the MCC goals to the needs and interests of Roxbury. The draft local goals are focused on:

- Activating Assets and Marketing Community Programming
- Economic Development: Using the arts, culture, and the creative economy to stimulate inclusive economic development.
- Built Environment: Conserve and develop physical spaces, facilities, and public art in order to preserve history, support arts and cultural organizations and the creative economy.
- Governance and Sustainability: Ensure the long-term successes of the district through strong, collaborative leadership and a sustainable funding stream.

4. How can we work together to achieve these goals?: Some strategies discussed in previous meetings are listed on the website including outreach to ensure youth engagement. Other suggestions included: Outreach to local radio stations, streaming live events and programs, branding and marketing, using these series of meetings as an entrée to multiple-layered dialogues.

Discussed suggestions for cross promotion including: Roxbury Memory Trail, Boston Jazz Heritage Trail, Joyce Ferriabough Bolling's book on the history of African-American's in Boston (support an updated version), Museum of African American History (MAAH) through programming.

Discussed best practices in cultural districts and the need to learn from them in Boston and in other cities. Need for dialogue with other cultural districts and to foster strong ties with other districts.

Discussed strategies for sustainability including:

- Building model of economic development
- Identify funding streams
- Membership dues on a sliding scale
- Community benefits as it relates to planned development projects
- Develop innovative ideas for growing the program long- and short-term
- Matching funds

C. Mapping Tool

- Revisions were made to mapping tool following feedback during the second community meeting.
- Current mapping tool is available on the website. One has the opportunity to: log in, zoom in or out, drag and drop the various icons as you deem appropriate on the map.
- Additionally, we encourage users to add comments to the icons they place.
- Deadline to take the survey is July 16. Help us to promote the survey on social media including: Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- This is just one of many strategies used in the ongoing process of developing an inventory of cultural assets.

1. The icons were revised based on discussion with stakeholders and conversations with Representative Byron Rushing. While we need to meet the application requirements for MCC, we also wish to include a broader range of categories that better reflect Roxbury's assets. Currently, there are icons for:

- Cultural centers, art galleries, movie houses, theaters, museums, performance space
- Educational spaces, libraries, building

- Churches, parks, landmark, burial ground, public art
- Informal gathering places, gardens, park, farm
- Creative business, food, people, film or recording studios, studio space (live or live/work), rehearsal space, special event space
- Other

2. Discussion and questions on mapping tool:

- Q: What do you do with mapping food experience? It doesn't always happen in a formal restaurant. MCC does not include restaurants in the asset inventory, but the range of restaurants in Roxbury that reflect the diversity of the community are an important cultural asset.
- Q: How do I share the survey? The mapping link is live and can be accessed on the website.
- Q: Is there any vetting for adding icons? There is an icon for other. This can be used for additional icons not represented.
- Q: Is there a specific icon for music? Could include performance spaces, but not necessarily theatrical spaces. Music icon will be added.

D. Shared Governance

1. How do we maintain and sustain the cultural district? The following recommendations were made: Community partnerships, collective brain trust, use of logos to show collaboration, attend advisory meetings.

2. What are our shared values? The following were discussed: practice transparency, build community trust, practice inclusion. We also need to think strategically.

Q: If and when we receive cultural designation, we will have information that we are gathering by looking at best practices across other districts and strategies for ensuring sustainability, replicating successful models.

Q: How will decisions be made for the district? How often will the partnership meet? MCC Private Public Partnership & Management expects plan for advisory (overseeing) district.

C: Voting and ownership are key. You must own property i.e. Prince Hall, sororities, fraternities, professional organizations.

3. Anticipated governance structure being discussed will need to include the following:

- Board of Directors (size and term limit)
- Executive Steering Committee
- Executive Director reports to Board of Directors
- Number of meetings annually
- Budget and Finance Committee
- Marketing
- Programs
- Event Planning

- District ambassadors
- Youth role or separate youth board
- Project based ad-hoc working groups

4. Other examples of cultural district governance:

- New Bedford Seaport District: members are from both inside and outside the district, mayoral appointed Cultural District Executive Committee, 15-member steering committee
- Boston Literary District: the structure based on literature is a “state of mind,” 10 executive partners, boundaries comprises of primarily the Back Bay area with some literary resources outside of the district and they promote literary activities throughout the Boston area, district must be walkable, felt the MCC designation was inclusive and flexible, received \$5K in matching grants from the city.
- Natick Center Cultural District: use a membership in-take form, website, have laundry list of benefits, their Board of Directors is comprised of business/community leaders (12, dues ranging from \$50 to \$1,200 however the city provides more funding for the district in Natick than they will in Boston, provide marketing and advertising opportunities.

E. Next Steps

- Assets in Roxbury: We are inspired to seek this designation because we know that Roxbury is rich in cultural assets with places such as: Edward Everett Hale House, Dillaway Thomas House, Clarence “Jeep” Jones Park, Malcolm X/Ella Little Collins House, Hibernian Hall.
- The list of partners supporting the district continues to grow and now includes: Haley House Bakery Café, Skylab Boston, Dudley Main Streets, Kelley Chunn & Associates, Historic Boston Incorporated (HBI), The American City Coalition (TACC), Bay State Banner, Roxbury Community College (RCC), Celebrity Series, Madison Park Development Corporation (MPDC), Jazz Boston, Nuestra Comunidad, Darryl’s Corner Bar & Kitchen. Please join us and help us connect with other entities that wish to be actively involved in the district management.
- There is an upcoming meeting with the Boston Public Schools. Throughout this process, people have stated that they want the district to benefit youth. Eager to find ways to involve and partner with local schools including: James P. Timilty Middle School, Madison Park Vocational Technical School, Roland Hayes School of Music, Boston Day & Evening Academy and others.
- Share the website mapping tool, make it viral!
- Next meeting: Boston City Council Hearing in Fall 2016. Happy to schedule additional smaller meets with neighborhood associations, etc.
- All are welcome to join the Advisory Working Group that meets every two weeks.
- Keep in touch through Facebook, Twitter, the website, and email and help spread the word about the cultural district planning process.