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ALLSTON BRIGHTON, FENWAY-KENMORE

BU buys 3 on-campus streets near Kenmore, plans pedestrian mall

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 3, 2012 01:43 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Before summer's end, 134 metered parking spaces will be removed from three streets within Boston University's campus and near Kenmore Square, officials said.

Meters often offer a relatively cheap parking solution. And in this part of the city, they are a haven for some who frequent nearby Fenway Park.

In mid-June, the university signed a deal to pay the City of Boston \$11.45 million to buy three roads that branch off Commonwealth Avenue – Blandford, Cummington and Hinsdale streets, state land records show.

Before the fall semester begins, streetscape improvements will be made to the roads to convert them into a publicly-accessible pedestrian mall, campus spokesman Colin Riley said. By early August, the streets will be permanently closed to all traffic, except for emergency or specially-permitted vehicles.

A total of 134 metered parking spaces will be removed from the three streets, said Tracey Ganiatsos, a spokeswoman for city's transportation department, which manages Boston's parking meters.

The three roads are successive side streets off of the eastbound side of Commonwealth Avenue near Kenmore. Cummington Street also runs behind several BU buildings, and connects to Hinsdale and Blandford, creating a closed loop off of Commonwealth.

About one mile west, another 11 metered parking spaces will be removed from Babcock Street, a side street that also branches off of Commonwealth, according to Ganiatsos. BU owns the section of the street – outside of 300 Babcock St. – where the meters will be removed from, Riley said.

The 145 metered spaces on the four streets embedded within BU's campus are primarily used by students, faculty and staff of the university, the school's spokesman said. The university has assessed its on-campus parking quota and found that it has enough space around campus to allow for the meters to be



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removed.

“I’m not sure there’s going to be any negative impact,” Riley said. Converting the streets into pedestrian-only ways “will improve the area; it will make it more walk-able and safer.”

“There is a sufficient amount of metered spaces in the area for other uses ... and many closer to Fenway Park.” he added, citing how city meters line other roadways, including Commonwealth and Brookline avenues and Beacon Street.

Meters are often the least expensive parking option around during the daytime. They are free on Sundays, holidays and during the evening, nighttime and early morning hours Monday through Saturday.

Many meters in Boston require payment between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays and Saturday. But, the meters along Blandford, Cummington and Hinsdale – like most other meters in that area – are free after 6 p.m. That makes them particularly attractive to drivers headed to events at nearby Fenway Park, especially for weekday Red Sox games, which typically start around 7 p.m.

At three lots and two garages the school owns on its campus, BU charges between \$20 and \$40 to park during Sox games. Those rates are similar to what most other privately-run parking areas near the park charge during ballgames.

The school owns about a dozen lots and garages. Some require special permits. Among those that are open to the public during the daytime, the cheapest rate offered is \$2 per hour.

City meters, meanwhile, cost \$1.25 per hour. Meters also allow drivers to pay for smaller time increments than by the hour or half hour. It costs one quarter per 12 minutes.

Meters in Boston typically only allow payment for up to two hours at a time. But, along Blandford, Cummington and Hinsdale, drivers can pay to park for up to four hours.

However, meters also present the risk of earning a ticket. The city charges \$25

for an unfed meter.

The purchase of the 88,000 square feet of property on Blandford, Cummington and Hinsdale was reported on previously by the [Boston Herald](#) and the [Daily Free Press](#).

The land transaction was part of a plan BU first envisioned in 1986 to use some of the roads' space for future expansion projects on academic facilities, namely the science and engineering research buildings, Riley said.

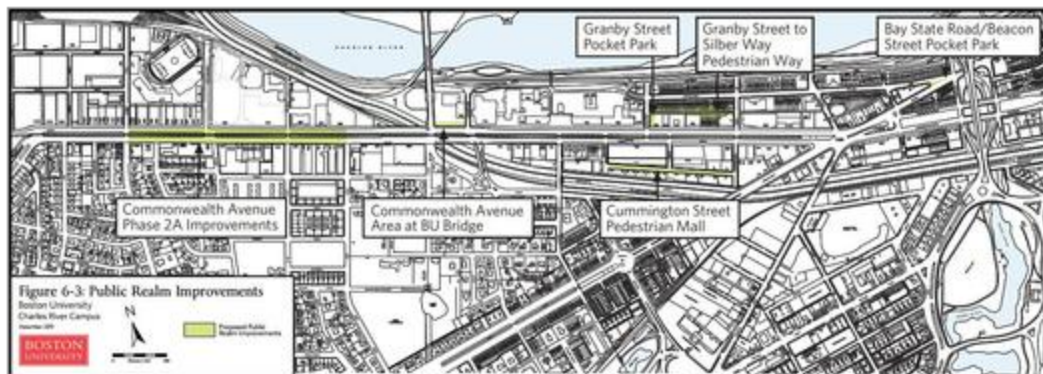
Eventually, the university hopes to replace an existing three-story 38,000 square-foot science and engineering research building at 30-38 Cummington St. with an 11-story, 165,000 square-foot building.

Expanding that space would include extending the building over a portion of the street BU now owns, according to the proposal outlined in the [institutional master plan](#) the university has filed with the city's redevelopment authority.

The school's master plan also proposes eventually adding 50,000 square feet to an existing 84,000 square-foot academic building at the corner of Hinsdale Street and Commonwealth Avenue.

No further details, including construction timelines, for those two projects have been released yet. Proposals made in master plans filed with the city tend to be general in nature; most major projects in the master plan require additional public review before construction can begin.

Other public realm, campus construction projects around BU



Boston University's master plan proposes several other public realm projects, including changes that intend to improve traffic and safety along a half-mile stretch of Commonwealth Avenue from Amory to Alcorn Street.

The proposed changes would be made at intersections, four Green Line B Branch trolley platforms and to pedestrian facilities, including street furniture, trees benches, trash receptacles, lighting fixtures and bike racks, according to the master plan. The project would be a westward extension of similar improvements made to the Kenmore Square area of Commonwealth Avenue.

The master plan also calls for the widening of sidewalks along an about 350-foot stretch of Commonwealth Avenue between the BU Bridge and University Road.

The university envisions building a pedestrian way running along a service alley from Silber Way to Granby Street and two pocket parks: one off of Granby Street and another at the intersection of Beacon Street and Bay State Road.

Over past 20 years, Boston University has invested \$2 billion in on-campus construction, the school spokesman said.

Projects this summer include a \$50-million, six-story new [student services center](#) that will feature a dining hall that can accommodate more than 1,000 students at 100 Bay State Road.

Work has begun on a [\\$24-million athletic field](#) and parking garage complex on the western edge of the school's campus.

The former Hillel House at 233 Bay State road will be transformed into a new admissions reception center. Rich Hall, a dormitory on the western side of campus, along with a graduate student brownstone residence at 60 Bay State Road are undergoing renovations.

Prep work to expand and remodel the law school building is being completed this summer, and a new entrance will be built at the Mugar Memorial Library.

The university also plans to complete the first student residence on its medical

campus in the South End. The project is a nine-story building at 815 Albany St. that will house up to 208 students in two-bedroom suites.

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