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City sets 3rd meeting on South Huntington Ave. development study

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

City officials will host the third meeting on a study about development along South Huntington Avenue, an area that has drawn concern from some residents due to recent changes and the potential for more.

The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the Curley Elementary school cafeteria on Centre Street, according to the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

A draft of the final framework for future development review within the corridor will be presented at the meeting, officials said. The meeting will begin by summarizing what has happened so far. A fourth meeting is expected to be held in March.

Some residents have said they are wary of significant development proposed, underway and recently completed along a quarter-mile stretch of South Huntington near where Jamaica Plain and Mission Hill meet.

Most opposition to the projects has come from Jamaica Plain residents, while

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most support has come from residents of Mission Hill.

The city's redevelopment authority launched the [study of the South Huntington Avenue corridor](#) because of that ongoing debate.

"We need to have a better idea of how this street should look like and be like for the next five to 10 years," Kairos Shen, planning director for the Boston Redevelopment Authority, has said. "The goal of this study is to give the community and the development community a clearer idea of what the city and the community's expectation would be for any new development."

Officials at the authority have said they do not want the study to stop or delay development proposals.

The authority will use the study to determine whether any further action – including creating a master plan or making zoning changes – will be needed for the area.

"If there are things in this study the community and we need to codify, we'll figure out then what method and tool we can use to do that," Shen has said.

The study aims to focus on development issues including: housing mix and affordability, transportation, parking, historic preservation, open space, access to green space, and the height, density, setbacks and use of buildings, according to Shen.

It is focusing on a three-quarter mile stretch of South Huntington, from its intersection with Huntington Avenue to where it meets Perkins Street.

The strip of South Huntington Avenue is part of a broad section of Jamaica Plain that was last rezoned nearly two decades ago. The city formally adopted the current zoning on Sept. 7, 1993.

In November, the city gave final approval for a project at 161 South Huntington to demolish a 98-year-old special education school building to construct a residential building with about 196 units and around 156 parking spaces. The Home for Little Wanderers, which operated its well-known [Knight Children's Center](#) on that a 3.5-acre property, [recently relocated](#) some programming and services from the center to a larger campus it owns in Walpole.

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In December, the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council filed a lawsuit against the city's Zoning Board of Appeals and the project's developer in an attempt to overturn the board's approval of the plans. The lawsuit remains in the early stages of the court process.

City regulators are reviewing another housing proposal nearby at 105A S. Huntington, that would clear a 1.1-acre wooded lot for a 12-story, 195-unit building, with a parking garage and retail.

At 201 South Huntington, next door to the former Little Wanderers site, sits an 85-year-old building that housed the Goddard House nursing home until early September when it abruptly closed. Goddard's nonprofit board has said it expects to eventually sell the two-acre property. Some expect it will be redeveloped.

A 39-room boutique hotel opened in the summer at 81 S. Huntington, replacing a former nursing home next door to the wooded lot at 105A S. Huntington.

Across the street at 150 S. Huntington, a five-story, 500-space parking garage is under construction on the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center campus.

At 81 South Huntington, a 39-room boutique hotel opened in the summer. Construction of that building began about two years before at the site of the former Pond View Nursing Home, which closed in 2008, according to the Jamaica Plain Gazette.

At 125 South Huntington is the 47,000 square-foot AstraZeneca Hope Lodge Center, which opened in fall 2008. The facility offers free temporary homes in 40 suites to cancer patients and their families. It is directly south of the North American Indian Center of Boston, which is abutted to the north by 105A S. Huntington Ave.

And, about a half-mile away, the redevelopment of the former Blessed Sacrament church campus on Centre Street has drawn criticism recently because revised proposals would build a higher mix of market-rate housing than originally planned for the site.

Residents of Jamaica Plain have clashed in recent years over concerns about

Residents of Jamaica Plain have clashed in recent years over concerns about gentrification in the neighborhood.

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