

Comments to HRA – 9/10/23

Dear Mr. Zaia, Chair, and Members of the Hull Redevelopment Authority,

Please accept the following ideas and comments for HRA plans for the HRA site and other sites in Hull. These comments request what I think is the first step – rethinking the HRA mission. The comments also include specific suggestions for what uses might be promoted for the HRA site and what facilities might be provided there and elsewhere in town. Some of these comments are ideas that other people have thought of and presented and I agree with them.

Thank you for your consideration.

1. Please rethink your mission and goals.

They should no longer be about constructing new buildings on the HRA site. Constructing new buildings might suit other communities' development plans, but it does not suit our seaside, barrier beach community where views need to be protected and sea level rise creates a new set of problems for permanent buildings and people living and working here. The site's best use is to be developed as a public park.

The park will have economic development value because it will be another reason for people to come to Hull. People will come to the park for the vistas, healthful, fun activities, and what they can experience and learn about the seaside environment. The park will enhance the framework for the whole town because these are the kinds of amenities people want to live near and find recreation in.

2. Please consider these suggestions for a new direction for the HRA mission

That the HRA adopt the following:

- a. The HRA intends to develop a plan that will maintain the intrinsic, natural value of this site; its open space; physical access to the water; and views and vistas.
- b. The HRA sees that the site's best use is to provide a building-free space for active and passive recreation and appreciation of the beauty and biological diversity of the Hull environment at the HRA parcels' location.
- c. The park will provide year-round access to the ocean and bayside. It will be an opportunity to share information about life by the ocean and be a gateway to the benefits of waterfront environments and experiences (recreation and learning – fun!). The site could be called the HRA Seaside Gateway Park.

- d. The HRA will engage in development of housing for senior residents and residents with low incomes on sites that are not in low-lying, flood-prone areas.

3. A new approach for the HRA – Planning a Multi-Use Park

I think the maximum benefits of the HRA parcels will come from protecting and enhancing several of the site's attributes: a. the site's existing beauty – especially the vistas; b. proximity to both the ocean and the bayside; c. existing open space and potential for many parkland uses; and d. location near a prime commercial district near the entrance to town.

The HRA development plan for this site should be focused on: a. providing access to appreciate the vistas; b. planting and sustaining a seaside, vegetated park and accessible pathway network where people can observe and experience this special ecosystem; c. providing access to the bayside and ocean waterfronts; d. creating spaces for informal, active and passive recreation; and e. offering the possibility for temporary, seasonal open air markets and food trucks as appropriate commercial activities in the HRA Seaside Gateway Park.

4. HRA Plan – The HRA Seaside Gateway Park

- a. Encouraged recreation uses at the Gateway would include, for example: picnicking, family sports and games, frisbee, soccer, softball, wiffle ball, painting and drawing, birdwatching, sitting, sunbathing, yoga, tai chi, walking, running, swimming, and fishing. Parcels 27-061, 27-119, 33-067, 33-010, and 27-035 would be the main body of the park. (Small portions of parcels 33-067 and 33-010 might be needed for abutting, park-related uses.)
- b. The planting theme would be a xeriscape (low-maintenance, low-to-no watering) landscape plan. (These plantings would be designed by a professional landscape architect and use plants appropriate for our seaside environment.) Part of the site would be a ballfield, playground and walking paths. Other areas would be landscaped. Plants would be labeled and there could be other informational material about the plants and animals in the seaside environment.
- c. Other information on the history of the town and region; shipwrecks in the vicinity; links to the Hull Lifesaving Museum; information on fishing, lobstering, fish and wildlife management, and surfing are all sample topics for interpretive installations in the park that would add depth to the ways people could appreciate their environment and location.

- d. The site would be busiest during warmer months, and would provide for seasonal, temporary, open air markets, restaurants and food trucks. The town would charge fees for the rights to a spot in a section of the HRA site set aside for these uses. A location for these activities might be on the southernmost area of the HRA site, on parcel 33-009 (and possibly part of 33-010).
- e. A small-boat launch ramp could be planned for paddle boards, sail-surf boards, kayaks, and other small craft, providing additional access to bayside water based activities. Parcel 33-066 (and possibly 33-067) would be the site of the ramp and access drive. (This facility's construction and use may require some dredging.)
- f. Parking could be in three locations: a. The largest amount of parking might be in the parcel along Phipps St., parcel 27-034 and part of 27-035. (The HRA might negotiate a land swap with the Department of Conservation and Recreation for their parking lot, currently in the middle of the HRA site. This would unify the HRA parcels, allow the DCR to maintain its number of parking spaces and possibly reduce the number of spaces needed from the HRA parcels.); b. A small parking lot could be provided on parcel 33-066 on the bayside of Nantasket Ave. and just north of Bay St. in the area currently used for parking near the bayside gazebo; and c. more parking would be provided off-site and would be served by shuttle bus transit. (The town would seek approval from the MBTA for use of the unused parking spaces at Nantasket Junction commuter rail parking lot and would seek seasonal increased service of the 714 bus to and from the commuter rail station and the HRA site.)
- g. Funding for construction of the park could come from the funds that the HRA currently uses to give financial support to community activities and facilities that are helpful to the town's economy or economic development, such as the Carousel and the Hull Trolley.

Funding for maintenance of the HRA Gateway Park would come from: a. renting out the open air market spaces, restaurant and food truck spaces; b. private donations, or support from a Friends of the HRA Gateway Park; and c. fees from collaborations with organizations that might use and appreciate the site for its intrinsic value to the environment and Hull community, such as educational institutions and environmental organizations.

5. New Item for the Revised HRA Mission:

In addition to planning and developing the HRA Seaside Gateway Park, the HRA should focus its attention on developing low income and senior housing in non-flood-prone locations in Hull. This includes the current Town Hall property. There are likely other sites in town – possibly with structures needing rehabilitation – that might be good candidates for HRA-led construction or rehabilitation. The HRA should actively seek to help the town address its shortage of this housing.

I would like the HRA to explore and identify the process that would allow the HRA to adopt this new focus and task – development of senior and low income housing on new, non-flood-prone sites in Hull. I imagine there would be many important approvals needed, including possibly from local boards and state and federal agencies. I don't know. I do think, though, that if the HRA and the town wanted to change the course for the HRA mission and enable the HRA to pursue construction of senior and low income housing on non-flood-prone sites, there might be a workable process to accomplish it.

Thank you for inviting additional public ideas and comments for the HRA Plan. Thank you for considering these comments.

With Sincere Appreciation,
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