

***Town of Weymouth
Massachusetts***

Robert L. Hedlund
Mayor

75 Middle Street
Weymouth, MA 02189



Office: 781.340.5012
Fax: 781.335.8184

TTY: 781.331.5124

Press Release

For Immediate Release – July 12, 2016

Planning Department will hold public meeting to discuss walkability needs and improvements in future revitalization plans for Columbian Square

Discussion will be facilitated in partnership with WalkBoston.

Contact(s): Robert Luongo, Director of Planning & Community Development
rluongo@weymouth.ma.us, 781-340-5015

Weymouth, MA – The Department of Planning and Community Development will hold an informational meeting for the general public on Thursday, July 21st at 6:30 pm in Friendship Hall at the Old South Union Church, located at 25 Columbian Street. At that time, the Department will present information on pre-existing conceptual plans and designs for traffic improvements to Columbian Square. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss what additional improvements should be considered for pedestrian, bicyclists, and other non-motorists in the square as new designs are considered. To facilitate discussion, information on walkability and placemaking - creating new public spaces for public enjoyment – will be presented by the non-profit walk advocacy group, WalkBoston.

Conceptual plans and designs for Columbian Square date back to 2008. That year, the Cecil Group prepared a Town report of recommended improvements intended to strength the best facets of the village and implement key elements of the Town Master Plan. These include a signalized intersection, slowing traffic, improving safety, extending sidewalks, and generally making the square more walkable and pedestrian friendly.

As a next step in revitalization, the Weymouth Town Council has appropriated \$20,000 of Union Point mitigation funds for the purpose of hiring a consultant to review and update the Cecil Group's 2008 plans and designs. Prior to this step, the Planning Department wishes to hear from residents and businesses on how and to what extent walkability

improvements and placemaking should be incorporated into future designs for Columbian Square. Placemaking refers to a community design approach in which downtowns, neighborhoods, and village centers are reinvented by creating public spaces that promote public health, social interactions, and better business.

WalkBoston, a statewide nonprofit walk advocacy group, will be a guest presenter and facilitator at the meeting. Staff from WalkBoston will identify the benefits of improved walkability and placemaking in village centers and will also facilitate discussion on how such design ideas can be incorporated into future designs for the square. WalkBoston has previously partnered with the Planning Department to conduct senior-safety walk audits throughout the town, including an audit in Columbian Square.

This public meeting is not intended to be a hearing on any partial or final design of the intersection at Columbian Square. Rather it is a *pre*-design meeting intended to gauge community interest for incorporating walkability improvements and placemaking into the design phase of Columbian's Square revitalization. Public comments will be taken, and all interested residents and businesses are encouraged to attend.

###