

Tonight: Meeting focuses on Blue Hill Ave. corridor

By Mike Deehan, Special to the Reporter Apr. 25, 2012

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City Hall is teaming up with residents and merchants for a reinvigorated effort to reshape the Blue Hill Avenue corridor. Mayor Menino's Neighborhood Response Team is working with local groups in an attempt to root out crime in the area and find out what kind of community the neighborhood would like to become.

A flyer publicizing meeting tonight called on residents to help develop a plan of action "to transform Blue Hill Ave corridor to a walk-able vibrant neighborhood." The flyer says the meeting, to be held at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the Rev. Michael Haynes Early Education Center at 263 Blue Hill Ave. in Roxbury, will deal with prostitution, drugs, drinking, loitering, economic development and community engagement along the Blue Hill Avenue corridor.

Hosted by Nuestra Comunidad, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Dorchester Bay EDC, the NDC of Grove Hall and Project RIGHT Inc., the meeting will serve as an opportunity for city officials from the Inspectional Services department to present their plans to the community and to solicit input from neighbors that haven't yet had their say.

"The Mayor's neighborhood response team for the Blue Hill Avenue corridor has been working with residents, service providers, law enforcement officials and a host of community activists to try to engage everybody in a collaborative effort to try to change the culture along the Blue Hill Avenue corridor," said Darryl Smith, assistant commissioner of Inspectional Services.

Smith said crime is the primary challenge for the area and outlined the elimination of prostitution, loitering, public drinking and drug activity as targets of the effort. ISD has already begun working to close down prostitution and drug dens, according to Smith.

In order to get residents thinking about the possibilities of what their neighborhood could look like, ISD officials hosted a trolley tour of other Boston neighborhoods with main roads two weeks ago. The event drew about 30 stakeholders from the Blue Hill corridor.

Smith said the goal of the effort is "to engage the community in a discussion of 'when we reduce the negative activity, what would you like to see along the corridor?'" The tour of other neighborhoods took BHA residents to Hyde Square and Centre South in Jamaica Plain and Roslindale village to view features of those neighborhoods Blue Hill Ave. may want to adopt.

The tour met with neighborhood leaders in each stop to discuss how to build and maintain community features.

Shortly after taking office in 1994, Mayor Thomas Menino established the Blue Hill Avenue task force, a team dedicated to the one mile stretch of road between Grove Hall and Dudley Square.

Transportation around the corridor has long been an issue of contention for city and state officials. In 2009, the community rejected a plan by the state transportation department to revamp the Rt. 28 MBTA bus with new articulated busses and dedicated bus lanes. A perceived lack of community input resulted in the plan being pulled after local officials reversed support for the federally funded plan.