An Infill Grand Slam: Assembly Square

Rail~Volution 2012
Alden S. Raine, PhD
AECOM

Los Angeles
October 16, 2012
Setting: MBTA Orange Line
Zooming In

Downtown Boston: 2.5 miles

Sullivan

I-93

Assembly Square

Wellington

Station Landing TOD
Zooming In

- Existing Mall: 130 acres
- Park: 65 acres
- Station site
The Old Plan

- IKEA directly on the riverfront
- Mixed-use plan:
  - × modest density
  - × suburban template
  - × auto-oriented
- No station
- Sophisticated opposition
- Litigation, political gridlock
Breakthrough in 2006

- A new Mayor: **Joe Curtatone**
- A new developer: **Federal Realty Investment Trust**
- A state Growth District designated by **Governor Patrick** (2010)
- A Development Covenant with the City of Somerville and a Settlement Agreement with the Mystic View Task Force:
  - Land swap: move the IKEA store to the interior of the site.
  - A high-density, mixed-use waterfront TOD plan.
  - Genuinely accessible parkland on both sides of railroad.
  - All parties agree to work for a new station.
  - Maximum daily trip limit of 50,000 tied to the station.
The New Plan

- 2,100 residential units
- 500,000 sf retail (+ IKEA)
- 1.75 million sf office
- 400-room hotel +/-
- 8,000+ permanent jobs
- $1.5 billion private investment
Getting It Done

2007-2008
Project OK'd by MBTA and FTA

From ineligible why-do-it to poster child
Getting It Done

2007-2008
Project OK'd by MBTA and FTA

2009
Basic design issues resolved

From ineligible why-do-it to poster child
Platforms and tracks, headhouses, access
Getting It Done

2007-2008
Project OK’d by MBTA and FTA

2009
Basic design issues resolved

2010
Site infrastructure breaks ground

From ineligible why-do-it to poster child
Platforms and tracks, headhouses, access
ARRA, local TIF, I-Cubed “state TIF”, developer
Getting It Done

2007-2008
Project OK'd by MBTA and FTA

2009
Basic design issues resolved

2010
Site infrastructure breaks ground

2011
Station design complete

From ineligible why-do-it to poster child
Platforms and tracks, headhouses, access
ARRA, local TIF, I-Cubed “state TIF”, developer
100% developer funded, MBTA approved
Getting It Done

2007-2008  Project OK’d by MBTA and FTA

2009  Basic design issues resolved

2010  Site infrastructure breaks ground

2011  Station design complete

2012  Station, Phase 1 devt break ground

From ineligible why-do-it to poster child

Platforms and tracks, headhouses, access

ARRA, local TIF, I-Cubed “state TIF”, developer

100% developer funded, MBTA approved

450 housing units, 280,000 retail, cinema

2014 completion

No IKEA... no problem.
Funding the Station: a Partnership

Total cost: ~$56 million

- Federal Realty committed $15 million, including every pre-construction dollar.
- SAFETEA-LU included a $25 million New Starts Authorization, $1 million was appropriated.
- With strong gubernatorial support, MassDOT “flexed” $15 million in FHWA funds.
- State Economic Development filled a $25 million gap.
Why Is This a Grand Slam?

A textbook Smart Growth political coalition.
Why Is This a Grand Slam?

A waterfront brownfield in the urban core.

A textbook Smart Growth political coalition.
Why Is This a Grand Slam?

- Over 5,000 daily boardings at an infill station.
- A waterfront brownfield in the urban core.
- A textbook Smart Growth political coalition.
Why Is This a Grand Slam?

- A waterfront brownfield in the urban core.
- Over 5,000 daily boardings at an infill station.
- A textbook Smart Growth political coalition.
- $1.5 billion in mixed-use private investment.
Assembly Square:

- 130 acres
- 5% of Somerville’s land area
- Comp Plan Target, 2010-2030: 29% of growth
1. The sustainable communities alliance of transportation, environment, and development is essential.
   - And believe it or not, community groups might actually join state and local government in embracing high-density TOD.

2. Joint development often raises legitimate transit “ops” issues, requiring executive leadership and sound technical answers.

3. Where there is true value in station-area real estate, developers can be motivated to make infrastructure contributions.
   - Nothing is more cost-effective than entitlement and design funding.

4. District infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, utilities, parks) costs a lot; TIF and related forms of value capture work well at this scale.

5. Location...location...location = **positioning**...**positioning**...**positioning**.