



Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project
CAC Working Meeting #6
Wednesday, June 10, 2009
Location: Christian Science Publishing House Building

CAC Attendees:

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association
Mark Cataudella, Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)
Christian Coffin, Hilton Hotel Boston Back Bay
Sybil CooperKing, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Marie Fukuda, Fenway Civic Association
Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Donald Margotta, Church Park Apartments
Joanne McKenna, Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC)
Craig Nicholson, American Planning Association (APA) – Massachusetts Chapter
Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association
George Thrush, Boston Society of Architects (BSA)
Robert Wright, Symphony United Neighbors (SUN)

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing

City of Boston Attendees:

Heather Campisano, BRA
David Carlson, BRA
Randi Lathrop, BRA
Inés Palmarin, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA
Rodney Sinclair, BRA

Church Team Attendees:

Barbara Burley, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Harley Gates, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bob Herlinger, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Debbi Lawrence, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bob Ryan, ML Strategies

Members of the Public:

Jeffrey Brody, Gainsborough Neighborhood Association (GNA)
John Caux, GNA
Craig Elliot, First Church of Christ, Scientist, Member
James Hartmann, GNA
Jane Hartmann, SUN
Mark Laderman
Cecile Lemley, Resident

MK Merelice, Tech Center at Tent City
Steven Rios, Berklee College of Music
Fred Sealeo, GNA
Jonathan Smith, KV Associates
Lucille Taitt

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, June 10, 2009, the sixth working session of the Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 8:05 a.m. in the Christian Science Publishing House Building by Inés Palmarin, BRA Senior Planner.

Inés began the meeting by greeting the CAC members and thanking them for attending. She then announced that three CAC members had nominated themselves to serve as chairperson of the CAC: Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End; Sybil CooperKing, NABB; and George Thrush, Boston Society of Architects. They were each instructed to bring a brief statement regarding their interest and background to the next meeting. Inés added that she will distribute a biography of each nominee via email prior to the next CAC working session.

Inés then passed around an updated map showing the active, permitted, and proposed projects within a ¼-mile and ½-mile radius of The Mother Church. The Turnpike Air Rights parcels 12-15 were added at the request of the CAC.

Inés then turned the meeting over to the Church Team, led by Barbara Burley and Bob Herlinger. Barbara stated that the meeting's primary purpose was to discuss the real estate potential for the Church site, noting that at the last meeting, the addition of 950,000-SF was discussed as having the potential to be constructed on two specific sites. Barbara reiterated that the three key objectives of this process are to enhance open space, improve environmental sustainability, and identify opportunities for underutilized real estate. She stressed that they want the plaza to continue to thrive.

Questions and comments raised in response to the presentation included:

- Sybil CooperKing stated that it would be good to have a project timeline going forward. Inés agreed to work with the Church Team to provide the CAC with a timeline at the next CAC meeting.
- Sybil CooperKing asked if Floor Area Ratio (FAR; the ratio of a building's floor area to that of the lot that it sits on) can be averaged over a number of parcels, rather than on a parcel-by-parcel basis. David Carlson, BRA Senior Architect, responded that technically, if a proponent has maxed out the FAR on each parcel, it would average out. Alternately, they could pursue a map amendment to the existing zoning and seek a Planned Development Area (PDA) designation. Either way, it is likely that they would emerge with the same result.
- In response to a question from Joanne McKenna, Fenway CDC, Church Team member Harley Gates responded that a building's use determines its tax status, which means that if the Church leases commercial space out to a for-profit tenant, they will be taxed for commercial use of that space. Barbara Burley added that the

Church Team envisions a significant increase in tax benefits to the City if their development project goes through.

- George Thrush added that everyone should keep in mind that the Church maintains public space that under other circumstances would be maintained by the City and that therefore they need to approach this differently, since the Church has a history of being a wonderful steward of the plaza and its environs.
- Sybil CooperKing stated that it would be good to know the history of any Cooperation Agreements between the Church and other entities. Harley Gates replied that the Church purchased most or all of the land they currently own through a series of private sales over many years and added that public record would support this.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, questioned the reason behind looking into this, wanting to know how it will help and if there was a specific concern. Sybil CooperKing expressed her desire to learn more about the history of the site, since it could impact how the CAC might view the future plans for the site.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen stated that that she wanted to look at things early in the CAC stage as positively as possible, without the ball and chain of the past, because later on things could get contentious and they do not want to polarize anyone at this stage. She mentioned that she sees this as an exciting opportunity.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen reiterated Sybil CooperKing's idea that having one residential co-chair and one non-residential one will allow the position to remain balanced.
- Marie Fukuda, Fenway Civic Association, stated that, in general, she feels positively about the project, but information is information, and it would not be harmful to know more about the Church's history on the site.
- George Thrush stated that they should start assembling a list of performance criteria for this process so that they can recognize possibilities and limitations at once.

Inés brought the discussion to a close, reiterating that all requests for further information should be directed to her to handle. Barbara Burley added that the Church Team will cooperate in responding to questions and that from the Church perspective, there is nothing to hide. She thanked the CAC for volunteering their time towards this process.

Finally, Bob Herlinger mentioned that the Church Team has prepared two separate models, which they will use to discuss various concepts with the CAC. David Carlson led the group through the proposed but not permitted or approved projects in the area that were included in the massing model. Bob Herlinger noted that the Church Team had reviewed many massing scenarios on the site in various configurations. The CAC then discussed a number of public realm configurations, with a special focus on the crossing over the reflection pool and the potential reconfiguration of a portion of Clearway Street, tied to the closing of a portion of Dalton Street.

The meeting was then adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.