

MINUTES  
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, January 4, 2021, and was held virtually via Zoom to ensure the safety of the public, staff members, and the BPDA Board Members during the COVID-19 pandemic, and beginning at 5:00 p.m. Members in attendance were Linda Eastley, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Kathy Kottaridis, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, William Rawn, Kirk Sykes. Absent were Andrea Leers, Jonathan Evans, Mikyoung Kim, Anne-Marie Lubenau, and Deneen Crosby. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Adam Johnson, Nick Carter, and Scott Slarsky were present for the BPDA.

The Interim Chair, Kathy Kottaridis, announced that this was the meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission that meets the first Tuesday of every month and welcomed all persons interested in attending. She added thanks to the Commissioners for the contribution of their time to the betterment of the City and its Public Realm. This hearing was duly advertised on December 12, 2021, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the December 7, 2021 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on December 14, 2021 and December 21, 2021. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

**VOTED: To approve the December 7, December 14, and December 21 BCDC Meeting Minutes.**

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The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **355 Bennington Street in the East Boston Neighborhood**.

The project team, led by Amy Korte and Sean Sanger, presented updates to the project and responses to Commission feedback, including changes to the landscaping, streetscape, and public realm activation.

**Commissioner Eastley:** I want to commend you for creating a real amenity. This is going to be an incredible catalyst for the whole area. One of my favorite parts is along Bremen, as you get a glimpse of the greenway as it comes into the square.

**Commissioner Kottaridis:** The scale and the size of this is appropriate for the next generation of growth in this part of the neighborhood. What's happening behind the nooks and the setbacks?

**Amy Korte:** Our lobby, plus co-working space and possibly a lending library.

**Commissioner Sykes:** It has evolved very nicely. What will those scallops be like at 2am, will there be enough lighting for security?

**Commissioner Love:** The team has been very responsive to all of our comments, in particular the lighting along the street. It's all looking great. In the area with the Massport easement, what's happening?

**Amy Korte:** There's a retaining wall and a dropdown. We can at least line it with planters.

**Sean Sanger:** We can create a green wall and use the existing canopy tree. It will also be planted as a pollinator garden.

**Commissioner Manfredi:** It's a very nice project. The scale is totally appropriate. You've created a really nice strategy to create some scale and provide context that others will build on.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 355 Bennington Street.**

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The next project was **380 Stuart Street**. David Manfredi was recused.

The project team, led by Carolyn Desmond and David Nagahiro, presented changes and updates to the project, including aspects of the ground floor, the West Plaza and East Passage, and the overall tower massing.

**Commissioner Hacin:** I appreciate the work you've done, and the thoughtful presentation of the history of the project. One of my big concerns was skepticism about the open spaces, but you've made those spaces much more believable as extensions of the outdoor space. The tangents and vertical stacking create a building that is dynamic, but is grounded. The only caveat is that we need to make sure these stacked buildings do feel special, as there are many going up across the city.

**Commissioner Eastley:** What is the material of the underside of each of those lobes? On one of your diagrams they had a bold color.

**David Nagahiro:** We would love to express the underside of the soffits.

**Commissioner Eastley:** This is a fabulous project. Can you comment more on the quality of the green wall in the back of the project? Can you explore more colors and materials? Lastly, why is the red passage way so orthogonal?

**David Nagahiro:** We can explore all of that. In part, we wanted to make the passageway controlled and defended from the elements.

**Commissioner Eastley:** It doesn't feel like it's a part of the building, in terms of height and the angles.

**Commissioner Hacin:** It also connects to the Loews Building. How much of your thoughts are because of the red? If it were more like the rest of the building, it may fit in.

**David Nagahiro:** We'll be looking at the red. We want to make it clear that this is pedestrian prioritized.

**Commissioner Sykes:** On the changes to the massing, you've been successful. It would have been nice to see a night view. I endorse what you've done here.

**Commissioner Love:** I agree that the red is somewhat appealing, but needs to have a larger conversation. Maybe as part of the same resolution as the soffits. Overall the project is in a much better place. The last comment I have is about having eyes on the water feature.

**Commissioner Howeler:** Maybe the water feature could have some kind of lighting or reflective? The tower is good. I've said before I don't think you need the verticality, but that's for you to resolve. It's a strong form.

**Commissioner Hacin:** Is the glass curved?

**David Nagahiro:** We wanted to be elegant in our material transitions, to express the corners in as way you don't perceive.

A number of members of the public spoke to oppose the project, on grounds of wind, traffic, and height.

**Commissioner Hacin:** How has this project progressed on the BPDA side?

**Elizabeth Stifel:** This is a Notice of Project Change. That is a different review process than a large project review. The Commission is reviewing the changes to something already approved.

**Carolyn Desmond:** The NPC is not changing any of the height or density that has already been approved. In 2015, it went through years of review with an IAG. None of that has changed.

**Nick Carter, BPDA:** PDAs are not tied to ownership or the building.

**Commissioner Rawn:** Can we see what the previously approved project was like in terms of height and girth?

**Commissioner Eastley:** So nothing is changing in terms of height or density?

**Carolyn Desmond:** Correct.

**Commissioner Hacin:** Were those project elements approved by the BPDA?

**Carolyn Desmond:** The PDA went through an extensive public process.

**Commissioner Rawn:** Is it accurate that a headquarters building has a separate set of zoning rules?

**Jennifer Schultz:** Anything that have already been approved in the PDA carry forward. SKANSKA is

not proposing any changes that may be changes of the City's review (height, floorplate, etc.) The PDA has stood in law for decades. The NPC is the only jurisdiction of what can change: the skin, the design, and general massing.

**Commissioner Hacin:** The lack of public interaction makes me uncomfortable.

**Russell DeMartino:** We knew there would be negative comments. We are happy to continue meeting with neighboring residents. There may simply not be a way to build this building and respond to every comment.

**Commissioner Kottaridis:** We are always pleased to hear feedback.

**Commissioner Hacin:** It is uncomfortable having to vote on this knowing so many members of the community are out of the loop.

**Carolyn Desmond:** It would be ideal if we could focus on the design tonight and then have further public meetings.

**Commissioner Howeler:** If the question we are voting on is "is the project better than what was originally approved," than I think we can vote on that.

**Commissioner Eastley:** I'm very sympathetic to the comments we've heard. As a body, we're being asked to think about the design and impact to the public realm. I feel satisfied that we have created a better project. I would be comfortable voting with the understanding that further meetings and public process will occur.

The motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

**VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of 380 Stuart, provided that the Proponent continues to work with the BPDA on the issues of wind and traffic mitigation.**

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 6:58 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for February 1, 2022. The recording of the January 4, 2022 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.