

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, December 8, 2020, and was held virtually to ensure the safety of the public, staff members, and the BPDA Board Members during the COVID-19 pandemic, and began at 5:00 p.m. Members in attendance were Mikyoung Kim, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, Paul McDonough, William Rawn, Kirk Sykes. Absent were Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, and David Manfredi. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Matt Martin, Gerald Autler, and Natalie Punzak were present for the BPDA, among others.

The Chair, Andrea Leers, 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 Friday November 17, 2020, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was a report from the Review Committee on the **1234-1240 Soldiers Field Road** project. The project is a proposed 730,000 SF mixed-used development on 3.14 acre site, which currently hosts the Skating Club of Boston (which will be relocated). The proposed program includes residential, retail, and hotel in 3 buildings on the site in addition to 72,000 SF of publicly accessible open space. The project well-exceeds the 100,000 SF threshold for BCDC review, so review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 1234-1240 Soldiers Field Road project in the Brighton neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee.

The first presentation was for **780 Morrissey Boulevard**.

Brian O'Connor, CUBE3: Initial presentation at the September 1 Monthly Meeting. Since then, adjusted the building massing to better integrate with the landscape—a courtyard now opens to the neighborhood and there is a through-connection to the bike path at the rear of the site. Public realm connections from Morrissey Boulevard along Freeport Street and along the building that we've focused on programming for public art. At the suggestions made at Design Committee, we've added more green scape to the public realm and created a community mural wall along the bike path.

Kirk Sykes: At the last committee meeting, we discussed hardscape and areas for food trucks as well as the covered porch area that connects to the multimodal path. Can you summarize what you've changed?

Brian O'Connor: A key part of this has been adding an art consultant to our team. We've introduced a line of low planters and shrubs toward the edge, added trees, lighting. We envision dynamic lighting underneath the overhang.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: What would we see in between art installations?

Brian O'Connor: Envision a stone element with integrated lighting to keep this pathway active and engaging.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Public comments throughout this process have been appreciated. There were several public comments at the last meeting about the grade change and relationship of this project to Climate Ready planning. How have you addressed this?

Brian: We're planning for a lot of visual and pedestrian connectivity.

John Harding: We've been working closely with the IAG to address concerns. We think the art wall featuring birds and nature speak to the history of this area and respond to the natural landscape that will be softly lit but still visible from the freeway.

William Rawn: I applaud the changes that have occurred on this project. There's an energy and intelligence to it that I see setting a framework for future development sites around the project.

Public comments:

Maria Lyons: I appreciate the addition. What most concerns me is that this project is the first of many to come without comprehensive planning or community visioning.

John Roche: This project has improved, but there are some troubling implications that this project will be the first of many new developments. This has been a parkway since the 1920s and it's frustrating that these important elements of the city are being redeveloped without thoughtful consideration.

Andrea Leers: There has been a tremendous evolution in this project.

Hearing no other comments, a motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for the schematic design of the 780 Morrissey Boulevard project in the Dorchester neighborhood.

The next project from Design Committee was for the **Allston Green** project.

David Snell, PCA: Last time we were before the full Commission was January. Since then, through three design committee meetings we've decreased the height of Building A from 14 stories to 7, increased setbacks around Building C, refined the material palette site-wide

to create a family of materials, refined fenestration throughout to reflect internal programming, and increased the public open space. The building footprints have shifted to increase public green space. Views from the greater context. Broke down building on X street to speak to the townhomes across the street.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Another project that has really evolved. We talked about the rear/North elevation of Building C—what will the back of this building look like?

David Snell: Mural, vertical plantings, patterning with materials

Mikyong Kim: This project has gotten a lot stronger. The nooks and changing rhythms in the public realm make a good pedestrian experience. It's exciting to hear that the project plans to prioritize integrating local artists, this project has some significant art elements in terms of scale and reliance on the art to add character to the project. I want to make sure these components come to fruition as the project is constructed. Full support. Team has been responsive and made this a neighborhood destination.

David Snell: For what it's worth, the commitment to the murals will be written into our cooperation agreement with a financial commitment.

William Rawn: I had originally raised concerns about the low rise building at the corner, and this has been much improved.

Kirk Sykes: Nice job maintaining the individuality of each building while integrating them with shared language. Diversity of site types, but they have a good scale and contribute to a strong sense of place.

Public comment:

Jo-ann Barbor: Comments are appreciated and the design is well received. There has been community push back about the size of units and lack of ownership availability. This is important to the community.

Andrea Leers: I'm really impressed with the way this project has transformed from a tower with a diverse set of buildings into something that is very cohesive. This is varied, has two open spaces, but still feels like a piece of the neighborhood.

Hearing nothing else, a motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the Allston Green project in the Allston neighborhood.

The Commission moved to the project presentation for **1234-1240 Soldiers Field Road** in the Brighton neighborhood.

Gerald Autler, Senior Project Manager and Planner at the BPDA, gave a presentation on the ongoing Western Avenue Corridor Study. The proposed project falls within the plan's study area. There are a number of large proposed projects undergoing review in this area,

several of which have recently come before the Commission. The key planning principles for this Study are to create new parks and urban open spaces, improve connections through the neighborhood and to the river, support an active, multimodal Western Avenue, include a mix of land uses including housing that serve a broad cross-section of residents, and ensure careful consideration of building heights and character.

Matt Martin, Urban Designer at the BPDA, introduced the project from the perspective of BPDA Design Review thus far: At 10-12 stories, the low-rise portions of the project are still at least twice the height of newer buildings in the area. We have concerns about the compatibility of building height and massing with neighboring context, both with existing and as envisioned through planning studies. The length and shape of the building “bridge” element linking multiple individual buildings into a larger complex has been a focus of our review. A high percentage of the proposed open space is devoted to circulation and ramped conditions in service of SFR foot bridge, which is not the best use of this space.

Eric Robinson, RODE Architects: Former Boston Skating Club site and currently houses Studio Allston hotel. Connecting point between dynamic Allston neighborhood and the Charles River Park. Three-acre site that is currently 100% impermeable surface. Existing elevated crossing over Soldiers Field Road is not in great shape, but this is the key pathway from Allston to the splash pad, tot lot, and parking in the DCR park area. The massing strategy of the project has been informed by shadow studios, open space connections, street grid alignments, through-block connections. A central green space faces south as an amenity for residents and the community. The project creates stronger edges along Western Ave and Soldiers Field Road. The ground floor plan includes ~13,000 SF of retail to anchor rental and hotel buildings and to create pedestrian engagement across the site. We’ve heard a need for artist space in the neighborhood so we are engaging in dialogue about this as the project evolves.

Mikyoung Kim: Walk us through the need for such significant grade change across the site.
Eric Robinson: To reach the bridge. looking at 14' wide bridge at 16' high for vehicle clearance. So this part of our site is that high, with an accessible ramp coming down to Telford.

Kirk Sykes: What is the nature of the interior street? If there weren't a road through the site, could this be entirely ped/bike?

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I'm curious about what other massing configurations you considered. What is the trade off with green space verse height. Are there alternatives that still make significant investments in public space but maybe with less height?

Mikyoung Kim: Ramp is a big architectural move and I wonder if some of the length could be brought interior to a building to help reduce its impact on the landscape.

William Rawn: Nature of street edge on Western Ave? There's an opportunity for a much stronger central street to the rest of the neighborhood. Question of porosity on Soldiers Field Road. Portal reads more like a building than an open space as shown. Also questions

of building girth and views from the Charles River. I want to better understand shadow impact across Soldiers Field Road for future conditions.

Kirk Sykes: At committee, more context photos would be helpful

Mikyong Kim: Also prepare sections through the site. I like that you've expanded Telford Street and I want to better understand it.

Andrea Leers: South facing public space is sound as a first principle. Would like to see other studies to understand how you got here. Concerns: porosity is currently blocked by raised corner of the site (because of parking). Is the Peabody Terrace tower a good model for this project given the height? Can we think about a new datum/datum range instead of a point tower? A model would help us understand how the project and grades connect and relate to their context, both in the existing and future conditions.

There was no public comment. The project will continue in design committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:13 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for January 5, 2021. The recording of the December 8, 2020 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.