

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, September 22, 2020, and was held virtually to ensure the safety of the public, staff members, and the BPDA Board Members during the COVID-19 situation, and beginning at 5:15 p.m. Members in attendance were Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, Mikyoung Kim, Andrea Leers, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Paul McDonough, and William Rawn. Absent was David Hacin, Eric Höweler, David Manfredi, and Kirk Sykes. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present, as were several BPDA staff including Natalie Punzak and Meghan Richard.

The Chair, Andrea Leers, announced that this was the meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission. The Commission meets on the first Tuesday of every month; this meeting was held as a special bi-monthly meeting as an extension of the September 1 Monthly Meeting. Following a roll call of the present Commissioners, 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, August 21, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Whittier Choice Phase III project** in the Roxbury neighborhood. This is the final phase of the redevelopment of the Whittier Street housing site through the Whittier Choice Neighborhood Initiative; the Commission has previously reviewed and approved phases I and II. This phases of the proposal contains 172 units in a 12 story building, and proposes 220,000 SF. Review is recommended. As such, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Whittier Choice Phase III project in the Roxbury neighborhood.

The Whittier Choice Phase III project was then presented to the Commission as the first project presentation of the meeting.

Meghan Richard, Urban Designer at the BPDA, introduced the project to the Commission; whose goal is to transform this area of Lower Roxbury and improve the quality of life for all residents. The Whittier development lies between the P-3 and Crescent parcels which will be redeveloped as part of the PLAN: Nubian Square process.

Meena Jacob, Preservation of Affordable Housing: This is a Choice Neighborhoods Project, funded by a grant through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Commission previously approved the master plan, phase I, and phase II.

Michael Liu, The Architectural Team: Phase I is presently occupied and Phase II is under construction. The massing that the Commission approved in 2017 had a Phase III that was larger and 15 stories tall. The proposal now is reduced and construction type changed to a stick and podium building with parking on the second floor to make the financing for the project work. The master plan is centered on a pedestrian spine that runs from Cabot Street through the site to connect amenity spaces, green space on site, and Tremont Street, and helps set up a gridded urban design framework. This path is intended to be accessed by residents only for security measures, as it passes through the residential buildings and courtyards. Second story parking level is designed to be adapted for future office/commercial use. The building massing cants in response to Ruggles and Tremont Street and there is pocket plaza at the corner of Tremont and Ruggles at the building entrance. Perspective views show materiality (planning for a facade rain screen system). Form and material give impression of multiple masses instead of one flat building. Future of Tremont St hopes to become a boulevard and less of an arterial. The team used a 3D model to show specific views through the site.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Draw people through the pedestrian corridor with a strong terminus at this site along West street.

Deneen Crosby: Will the roof of this two-story segment of the building be a green roof? This will be very visible at the end of the pedestrian path.

Linda Eastley: I want to compliment this team for introducing a better urban framework with Choice Street and West Street that make this feel like a neighborhood and for creating a sense of place at the intersection of Tremont and Ruggles. I want you to think more about the pedestrian experience through the site and what might happen to a pedestrian entry if the program on the second floor were to change in the future. Urban Design framework overall is working beautifully.

Andrea Leers: Trying to understand how the building meets the ground. This project has transformed from the original massing, but I suppose that the change of construction type impacted the volumes. This massing works very well on Tremont and Ruggles. The way the big building meets the street is thoughtful. The resolution of the building as it comes to the ground beyond the corner at West and Whittier Street feels less resolved. Maybe these first and second floors are more contiguous and read more publicly. The scale of these windows suggests these are private residences instead of the programmed amenity spaces.

William Rawn: I think we all really appreciate the sensibility of the urban design of this entire site. I think there could be some heightened variety on the facade. Glad that the parking entrance has been relocated to Whittier Street. Concerned with treatment of parking in general and glad to hear that this will not be a grill on the exterior.

Mikyong Kim: Shape of oval green spaces could be more of a canopy of trees with planting at grade instead of raised planters. Really important civic space and think about opening it up with less planters and more at grade planting for pedestrian and visual transparency.

Andrea Leers: To summarize, I think we'd like to see this in design committee to work out the follow: the West Street terminus/face and how it meets the pedestrian path, thinking more generously about landscaping at the front, and looking at elevation studies that add some variation to façade/window patterning.

Public comment - Alison Pultinas, Former Commissioner of a Church on Ruggles Street: Would like to see more views on Ruggles to understand the relationship of Phase 3 toward this church. Some nice, mature street trees had to be removed for Phase 2 and it would be nice to include more in this plaza.

Public comment - Dolores Boogdanian: Where would be the intake and output for ventilated parking? This might impact the pedestrian experience.

Michael Liu: Intake and exhaust would probably be located on the second level and integrated with the facade.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

Next was the update to the Commission on for **60 Kilmarnock Street** in the Fenway neighborhood. 60 Kilmarnock Street was reviewed in 2018 and recommended for approval by the BCDC at the January 8, 2019 meeting. Since that time as the project has continued to develop, changes have been made that warrant an update to the BCDC, primarily massing changes from three to two courtyards on Queensbury Street.

Philip Casey, CBT Architects: Key changes to the project since BCDC approval are reduced building massing by approximately 15,000 SF, moved main entry to Kilmarnock from Queensbury, courtyards are now bigger along Peterborough Street. Still maintaining horizontal datums informed by cornices, upper story step backs, and the overall design intent of the project. The ground floor is now more discreet, lined with residential units and resident amenity instead of commercial space. Added balconies throughout. Courtyard is now semi-public because it is larger and street-facing. Circulation through the connection over the public alley is now wider and more welcoming, including a dog park and more active urban plaza for activity.

Deneen Crosby: I hope you keep the benches you've shown in these renderings because there is a need for spaces of rest in the public realm. The courtyards and public realm feel more generous and welcoming now. I think the more defined the entry to a residential building becomes, the private it feels, so keep this in mind.

Linda Eastley: I appreciate you coming to show us these changes. I think this project is getting better and better. Glad to hear you're thinking about restricting use/time for deliveries and loading on the dock accessed off the public alley. This will change the character of one of the most remarkable parts of this project. Addition of dog park is great. Lobby off plaza will work well.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I think the changes have improved the project and I appreciate the time you've taken to share these updates with us.

Andrea Leers: Moving the main entry of the building to Kilmarnock was smart. Focus of activity is clear. Now there are two nice, spacious courtyards. View from Peterborough has always been tough. Not sure that more glass to wrap the corner is better. Seemed better when this was mostly masonry.

William Rawn: The reduction of one bay and courtyard along Queensbury seems to have reduced the sense of mass, and this is an improvement.

Public comment - Dolores Boogdanian, resident of Fenway neighborhood: Anything that enhances the residential function of this building is a positive change, like the removal of retail and reduction of scale/massing shown here.

No other action was required.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 6:45 p.m. The recording of the September 22, 2020 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.