

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, December 4, 2018, starting in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:15 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Vice-Chair Paul McDonough, Deneen Crosby, David Hacin, Mikyoung Kim, Anne-Marie Lubenau, David Manfredi, William Rawn, Kirk Sykes. Absent were Andrea Leers, Linda Eastley, and Eric Höweler. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Alexa Pinard, Corey Zehngbot, Michael Christopher, and Natalie Punzak] were present for the BPDA.

The Vice-Chair, Paul McDonough, 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 November 18, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the November 6, 2018 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from November 27, 2018. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the November 6 and November 27, 2018 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Hotel Alexandra Project**. Located in the South End, the project consists of a 12-story addition to and restoration of the existing hotel building at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Washington Street. The project is located in a City of Boston Landmark district and is visually prominent from significant public rights of way. As such, review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Hotel Alexandra project in the South End.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Boston University Data Sciences Center**. The project proposes a 305,000 SF academic building at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Granby Street, contained in a 305', 19-story tower. As such, it is well over the BCDC review threshold of 100,000 SF. A vote to review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Boston University Data Sciences Center on the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Granby Street in the Fenway neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Motor Mart Garage Project**. Located in the Park Square area of the Midtown Cultural District, this is a proposed 20-story residential tower addition to the existing garage. At 685,000 SF the project is well over the BCDC review threshold of 100,000 SF. A new vote to review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Motor Mart Garage in the Midtown Cultural District.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **41 LaGrange Street Project**. 41 LaGrange is a proposed infill high-affordability project of a 19-story, 207' tower in the Midtown Cultural District. The project is located adjacent to the Kensington Place project on Washington Street and 47 LaGrange that the BCDC approved earlier this year. At 135,000 SF, the project exceeds the BCDC review threshold of 100,000 SF. Review is recommended. As such, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 41 LaGrange Street project.

Votes were passed for signature. The final report from the Review Committee was for the **Whittier Choice Neighborhood Phase 2 Project**. This project is located in the Roxbury Strategic Plan area has been seen by the BCDC previously. In 2017, the Commission approved the project with the requirement that later phases return for design review. Therefore, the proponent is returning with Phase 2A, understanding that it has been seen by the BCDC previously. A vote to review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Phase 2A of the Whittier Choice Project.

The next item on the agenda was a design update on the **Suffolk Downs** project. The Suffolk Downs team, David Nagahiro and Devanshi Purohit of CBT Architects and Douglas J. Manz and Thomas N. O'Brien of HYM Partners, presented updates to the Master Plan. The most significant changes to the site address the block design along Waldemar Avenue and the relationship of the project entry to Suffolk Downs T-stop. Resiliency mitigation is a priority in the design and use of open space on site, including wetlands and a stormwater basin. Having completed the review process in Revere, the team anticipates Phase I beginning in the northern portion of the site located in Revere. Every open space and building will

Deneen Crosby (DC): The topography onsite is dramatic, and we previously emphasized the connections to the T stops.

Kirk Sykes (KS): How does your resiliency strategy change or evolve over time?

Douglas J. Manz: Weak points are on the edges, and we've been addressing long and short-term solutions at the city and state planning levels.

Paul McDonough (PM): Thank you, and we expect an update when Phase One B is in development. The Suffolk Downs PDA Master Plan will continue to work through the Design Committee process.

The next presentation was for the **Alexandra Hotel Project** at 1767 Washington Street. Nick Colavito with Alexandra Partners introduced David Nagahiro with CBT Architects, who outlined the ongoing public process for the project. The building holds the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Washington Street. Originally built in 1875, the building has long been vacant. The proposed addition will contrast with the Victorian detail of the existing building, set back along Massachusetts Avenue and Washington Street in deference to the strong details and cornice lines of the existing building. The design minimizes the impact of the core. Building height is dictated by the number of rooms required to make the project feasible, and considers options for apartment and condo. The existing Silverline bus station will be moved further down

Washington Street. Ground-level focuses on reinvigorating the entry sequence of the Hotel Alexandra.

Anne-Marie Lubenau (AML): I commend you on your analysis of the existing architecture. How will this relate to the immediately adjacent and broader context in the South End, as this is a significant change in scale?

David Hacin (DH): I am excited to see something happen on this site and your strategies are smart. I would like to understand the height of this project in the larger context, particularly the Boston Medical Center. My concern has less to do with this project and more with the implications for other new sites for development along Massachusetts Ave, a district known for its recognizable scale. I would also like to know where Boston Landmarks Commission stands both on this project and in regards to tall projects in this district.

David Manfredi (DM): We need a model, and long views, as you will see this project from a lot of places. This project is very thoughtful and is appreciated. In some ways, this project will be a harbinger of things to come along Mass. Ave.

KS: I would also you to think about how this elevation relates to those along Mass. Ave, and to clarify the nature of the roof deck above the existing building.

Bud Larabee, South End resident and Washington Gateway Main Streets and Chester Square Executive Boards: The businesses are greatly supportive of this project. This is a gateway to the City, and we want it to regain its prominence. Abutters and community members are impressed with the quality of the design and sensitivity to neighborhood input. Our issues: revitalization of the corner, critical point of safety (building structure).

Greg Galer, ED Boston Preservation Alliance: We haven't had a chance to meet yet, but we agree with many of the comments of the Commission. This is a great opportunity to discuss the important issues of precedent.

The **Boston University Data Sciences Center** was next on the agenda.

Paul Rinaldi with Boston University. Marianne McKenna Planner at KPMB. Data Sciences serves as a hub for the university's faculty and students. The face of the building aligns with adjacent building, as Commonwealth is a backbone of the campus.

Ken Greenberg: When we prepared this Master Plan in 2012, we consolidated the university in a dense, transit-oriented form. Speaks to the relationship of porosity and activity along Commonwealth Avenue.

Marianne McKenna: The stacked form shapes views from Kenmore Square and along Commonwealth Avenue. Because multiple departments utilize the building, development of the plans fosters collaboration and connectivity. Fly-through video presented by Paulo Rocha, Principal at KPMB.

DH: I was struck by the exciting approach to this project. Would like to understand from a more citywide perspective --from around town. I think BU will have this strong relationship between this building and the law school tower. The building remains fairly heavy at the top, and personally I wish it grew lighter. Exciting and dynamic building that ends in a blunt way.

Mikyoung Kim (MK): I'd like to know if there are opportunities for inside/outside relationship, and the accessibility of the important axis. What is the relationship of all the landscape spaces with the canopy over them?

DC: Need to know more about the strategy for the open space--why is the courtyard plaza on the North side and not open to Commonwealth Ave. Would like the plaza on the front side to be a little more generous. Like seeing into the building.

KS: I think the transparency on Commonwealth Avenue is quite exciting. There are two typologies that may be interesting to look at in Design Committee: both how this fits into a mile-long linear campus, and the river in the context of the campus.

AML: How has this corridor evolved over time? Does this establish a precedent as a high spine, especially since this acts as a hub for the campus? How might this anticipate further development?

William Rawn (WR): I would also if you've considered carving open space out along the Northwest corner of the site so that it would be next to a street, and more useful for the campus. At the northwest it might get at least afternoon sun. Many of us would support a bold style for the architecture in this new center for the campus. My question for discussion at committee: is this stacked volume design the right focus?

DM: I think the direction is marvelous. This is a move don't make five times on the campus, it's a move you make one bold time on the campus. Hope that the internal circulation is as important and connected to streetscape as it seems to be.

The next presentation was for the **Motor Mart Garage**.

Phil Casey, Principal at CBT Architects, presented the design. The residential tower is centered on the western side of the structure. The sculpted form is compliant with shadow regulations on the Boston Common and is sensitive to surrounding open space. Residential amenity components integrated into the stepped form of the tower. Ground floor is activated with retail and existing garage entrances and aims to promote connectivity to Statler Park. The tower facade extrudes vertical proportions from the existing garage facade.

WR: I think this is a very intelligent scheme, and I compliment the facade integration of the two programs. You've come close to letting the curves dominate the building, have you considered applying this design language to the entire building?

DH: For me, many of William's comments hold true. I support the idea of embracing the curviness of the form, so long as that is the intention of the architecture. If not, the existing Motor Mart garage is curved on one side and angled on the other. This project is so sculptural that we need to have a model to understand the form and relationship to the surrounding Park Square neighborhood.

DC: I'm appreciative that you extended the open space strategy from Stuart Street by tabling the intersection. Do you consider form in relation to wind in addition to shadow?

KS: Given the significance of the building you're proposing, how much should remain the same of the existing garage? Vehicular access on both drives would likely not be approved today.

Greg Galer, Preservation Alliance: We think this is a location for density, and the proposal takes care of the facade. We look forward to working with the Proponent and Commission to make this project successful.

The next project presented was **41 LaGrange Street**.

Jay Szymanski from The Architectural Team: Kensington and 47 LaGrange Street Project are proximate neighbors. The site's footprint has been extruded up. Limitations of setbacks determine window openings, and the fenestration is simple. Ground floor fronts LaGrange, and the design focuses on pedestrian experience because the elevation will rarely be experienced given its urban context and proximity to neighbors. The presented views capture glimpses to the project.

AML: I'm concerned about the street level and desire for transparency. How do you distinguish the building from a similar row of buildings similar in character?

DH: When I look at the new views of LaGrange Street, I'm confused about the vehicular access and it seems that it should be a pedestrian way. I would like to understand how vehicular circulation on this street is actually working. There is quite a lot of sawtoothing at the sidewalk level, and I'm wondering how this will be managed and maintained. I think we need to look critically at the blank, west elevation as an interim condition in the worst case that the building at the corner of Tremont and LaGrange does not move forward.

DM: The relationship of the edges of these buildings is very difficult, and is not a typical Boston problem.

The final presentation of the evening was an update for the **Whittier Choice Neighborhood Phase 2** Project.

The existing Whittier Street Apartments will be completely demolished and redeveloped. All 200 units of public housing will be preserved by recreating 210 new deeply subsidized units through the Project-Based Section 8 program. Replacement housing will be built both at the original Whittier property and off site in the Whittier neighborhood. In total, 509 new moderate-income and market-rate housing will be built on-site and off-site.

PM: This project's first phase has been previously approved. The second phase morphed, but the previous approval was only for Phase 1. Even though the Commission had seen part of the whole, phase 2A is currently being reviewed. BCDC approved the MASSING of all three phases, as well as the architecture of Phase 1. The proponent now seeks approval for the architecture of Phase 2A. The only functional difference is the elimination of a 4th floor on Phase 2 (as a result of financing). The Phase 2 is now 3 stories tall.

Megan Bell, The Architectural Team: Views presenting relationships of building design. Color palette unifies design. Design scheme deploys stacked flats with a double-loaded entry.

Rob Adams, Halvorson Design: The site design enlarges street trees and creates larger front yards. Two open spaces have been created, one a hardscape and one passive green space with sunlight. Interior courtyards will only be accessed by residents.

KS: I think the through-block connection is important and breaks down the project. This looks quite compatible with the other components of the project. This is a great alternative to the existing conditions.

DC: Anything you can do to setback gates from the face of building would allow for visual penetration to secured areas.

A motion was made to approve the schematic design for the project, as the Commissioners saw fit that the project's design has been sufficiently developed through previous BCDC processes. Hearing no public comment, it was therefore moved, seconded

VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the schematic design for the proposed Phase 2A of the Whittier Choice Project in the Roxbury neighborhood.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:05 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for January 8, 2019. The recording of the December 4, 2018 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.