

MINUTES  
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, 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 5:00 p.m. Members in attendance were Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Mikyoung Kim, Kathy Kottaridis, Andrea Leers, Mimi Love, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, David Manfredi, Kirk Sykes, and William Rawn. Absent was Paul McDonough. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present, as were several BPDA staff including Joe Christo, Matthew Martin, Richard McGuinness, Marcus Mello, Grace Ng, Alexa Pinard, and Scott Slarsky.

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 stated that the meeting was being recorded and thanked the Commissioners for their contribution to make the city beautiful, livable and equitable. She then conducted a role call of Commissioners. This hearing was duly advertised on 2/18/2021 in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the February 2, 2021 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from February 9, 16, and 23, 2021. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

**VOTED: To approve the February 2, 9, 16, and 23, 2021 BCDC Meeting Minutes.**

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **11-21 Bromfield Street** project in the Downtown neighborhood. This is a 441,000 office project over 100,000 SF threshold and review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 11-21 Bromfield Street project in the Downtown neighborhood.**

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **119 Braintree Street** project in the Allston neighborhood. The project is an office, research, and residential project of 470,000 SF, well over 100,000 SF threshold. Review is recommended. Mikyoung Kim was recused. It was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 119 Braintree Street project in the Allston neighborhood.**

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **88 Black Falcon Avenue** project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood. The project is a 230,000 SF project over 100,000 SF threshold. Review is recommended. David Manfredi was recused. It was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 88 Black Falcon Avenue project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.**

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for the **Jan Karski Way Extension Project** in the Dorchester neighborhood. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Tamara Roy, Stantec: The site is in a transition zone between the South Bay retail center and parking field, and an established neighborhood of triple deckers. The team stitched the landscape to the buildings to tie together the two fabrics. We also created a set of civic plazas, and made sculptural changes to the pedestrian bridge to make it feel lighter. We also added bicycle parking to activate Enterprise Street, and adjusted the massing along Enterprise Street. Lastly, we widened the sidewalk and made material changes to soften the edge.

Linda Eastley: I really like the changes you've made along Enterprise Street. It feels more gracious and is pulling in the historic fabric. The pedestrian bridge feels light and really pulls in both sides of the courtyard. Lastly, I love there is activity that will be generated by the bike room. I would pay special attention to the finishing of the bike rooms.

Tamara Roy: We like to use graffiti art and graphics in bike rooms. We also took Mikyoung's comments to heart regarding the plaza to make it more civic.

Mikyoung Kim: Thank you for doing that. This project has come a long way. There is a diversity of spaces and I appreciate what you have done.

David Hacin: I feel the same way. This neighborhood has had so much unlocked potential. I feel like the nod to the preservation issues and the amount of green that will front Enterprise Street is exciting. I think the pedestrian bridge solution is really clever is a lighter sculptural connection. I also think the step down and material change near the wood-frame historical houses was a very thoughtful move. This will be such a transformational project for this part of the city.

David Manfredi: You have listened to all of our comments during subcommittee and took them to heart and I appreciate that.

Eric Höweler: What is in the bridge? Are there single-loaded units?

Tamara Roy: Yes, there is a single loaded hallway with units.

Eric Höweler: I like the idea of a bridge with a different tectonic, and the metal sculpted rainscreen. The sprandel and vision zones are a little confused. The relief looks like it's been pasted on, rather than being integral. I would keep working on the spandrels. Now, they feel left over and flat. I love the idea it catches light and shadow, but it doesn't feel quite resolved.

Tamara Roy: Yes, these will be resolved.

William Rawn: Do you have an image of the bridge coming from the other side? I didn't know that were units on the other side.

Tamara Roy: I don't, but surprisingly it looks almost exactly the same. We tried to keep a similar proportion of solid to void on both sides.

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

**VOTED: That the Boston Civic Design Commission recommend approval for the schematic design for the Jan Karski Way Extension Project in the Dorchester neighborhood.**

The next agenda item was a presentation on the Fort Point Open Space Plan.

Richard McGuinness, BPDA: I hope you have had an opportunity to see the 100 Acres Open Space Concept Plan. We have been working on this project for over a year and have had a great public engagement process. We kicked off the process in spring 2019 with public engagement to create destination-quality open spaces. We want to improve connections to other neighborhoods, and the three open space types we have been working on with our consultant, Sasaki, are urban wilderness, community living room, flex space/outdoor gallery. In this planning process, we want to diminish the amount of roadways and create a better public realm. We are also using this plan to guide the development of 15 Necco and 244A Street. We wrapped up public comment on the document in January, and have recently scoped the 244A Street project. The parks to the east of A Street are on land controlled by the United States Postal Service and will not be included in the zoning.

Joe Christo, BPDA: Sasaki was selected as our consultant in August 2019. We began our community engagement in earnest in November 2019 and have continued the engagement since the onset of COVID. There are key elements of the waterfront park that are core to our resiliency strategy. The Phase 1 Inland Park includes a variety of

programming, and a raised path. The future phase Inland Park includes an art corridor, and bicycle path, and the active park has more recreational uses.

Deneen Crosby: What is the plan for this as a greenway system? When this is constructed as a greenway, who is responsible for maintaining it as one system?

Richard McGuinness: The plan in 2006 was that the parks would be transferred to a nonprofit. We would like to transfer the parks in this plan to a nonprofit or the Park Department, but have the developers contribute funds for their maintenance. We are looking at solutions for long-term design maintenance to make sure they feel open to the public. West Service Road is being redesigned with pedestrian improvements to connect to Seaport Square and Fan Pier. We are thinking about this broader system.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: There seem to be two buckets of issues from the community: ground floor uses/programming, and a 20 percent reduction in the size of the waterfront park. Could you elaborate here?

Richard McGuinness: The report makes recommendations that provide basic services for the parks such as bathrooms and changing areas, and mix of ground floor uses and programs to activate the parks. We recommend civic and cultural spaces, such as library space. There is actually an overall increase in open space. We are trying to survey this area to make sure the open space between the G4 parcel and 15 Necco Street isn't diminished.

Linda Eastley: I noticed that there is one location that noted public art. This seems like an amazing place to have public art. Can you discuss some of these conversations with the neighborhood about public art?

Richard McGuinness: This is a great artist district. We want to make sure this open space will be available for revolving and permanent art. There will be dedicated interior space for the Fort Point art community dedicated for their programming.

Deneen Crosby: I know the intent of the green space was to be a regional resource at the minimum. There is a lot of opportunity for outreach to the arts community to draw people to this greenway. It takes a lot of work to maintain and pay for this arts programming to happen. How is this in place to happen?

Richard McGuinness: These properties are subject to Chapter 91 and we have a good model at Atlantic Wharf where they are required to provide public space with a yearly review and public input. We would use the same model here.

Kirk Sykes: Can you elaborate on the terminus of the park at Haul Road?

Richard McGuinness: There is a pedestrian bridge planned to connect these parks to South Station, and a bridge linking this park over Haul Road to the convention center. We want to

make sure this park is buffered from Haul Road to not diminish its quality. We are planning this park to have active uses and a dog park.

Mikyong Kim: Most cities have a commitment for art in the project budget. I think art will lend character to this neighborhood and open space network, but I would love to know that there is a financial commitment on behalf of the developer. Small and temporary pieces are not enough to give character to an open space of this scale. A percentage commitment would go a long way to making this an arts district.

David Hacin: I want to second that. Sometimes a few more iconic, dramatic pieces are more effective than smaller pieces.

Joe Christo: We had thought about this in regards to the fountain. We appreciate these comments on the arts and agree it is a regional draw.

Steve Hollinger: The community process over the past year was based on the GE project. This idea was first presented to community in November 2020. We are seeing a major reduction in park space near the channel. Since July, Related Beal has moved the G6 building edge past Wormwood Street. Lastly, locating a public art project and fountain in the parcel between G4 and 15 Necco Street denies opportunity to have activity along Channel. The fountain should be in a different space.

Tom Ready, Fort Point Neighborhood Association: We want the parks to feel like public space and not extensions of buildings. The amenities should be phased appropriately. There are a lot of housing units within the vicinity of this plan, and we want to get it right. We look for the BPDA and Commissioners to take this into consideration.

Sara McCammond: A lot of the resiliency seems to be more focused along A Street. I wonder if we can really wait to capture the stormwater when Phase 2 develops.

A subsequent meeting will be held when there is a finalized plan.

Next was the presentation for **11-21 Bromfield Street** in the Downtown neighborhood. Mikyong Kim was recused.

Alexa Pinard, BPDA: The process for PLAN: Downtown has created a notion of character areas and we are looking to preserve the look and feel of the Ladder Blocks. We are looking at the relationship of this project and its height to the Ladder Blocks, and discussing the potential of public realm improvements.

Mark Rollins, Midwood Development: Our vision for Bromfield is to create an innovative mixed-use development that respects the character of Downtown and the Ladder Blocks

while providing opportunities for growth and the continued economic development of the district. We are focused on three key features: high quality design, sustainability, and public realm improvement.

Gordon Gill, AS+GG: The site is at a unique location in Downtown. We are surrounded by low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise buildings, and context was important. In comparison to the previous proposal, this project is much shorter in height and steps down to its context. We have looked at fenestration and datum lines to shape the building. We step up with terraces to provide outdoor spaces. Lastly, we are very interested in building performance and mapped the heat gain and loss of the building. We have textured the building to improve efficiency and create a rich, contextual façade.

Ian Downin, Mikyoung Kim: The project will include improvements along Bromfield and Washington Street to create a cohesive public realm experience. The ultimate goal is to maintain unique experiences distinct to the character of both Bromfield and Washington Street. The project is looking to improve the larger connections along Washington Street. It includes enhanced street furnishing and paving.

Juan Betancur, AS+GG: We are looking closely at datum lines of the adjacent buildings as regulating lines. We are proposing a warm palette with stone and terracotta. We looked at the stepping down along Bromfield Street and create a strong corner. We are targeting the building to be LEED Platinum and zero carbon.

William Rawn: The challenge of this project is when the height and bulk is too much and when it is not. How can you show us that the height and the bulk is not too much? The detailing is interestingly done. I'd like to deal with height and bulk in design committee.

Kirk Sykes: The explorations of how the building addresses the elevations along Washington and Bromfield Street were quite comprehensive. However, I don't quite understand the Province Street side of the building.

David Hacin: The project is interesting and more sensitive in scale than the last proposal. I wonder if you could create an animation or make a model for the BPDA model. We need more views more to help us understand how the building will be seen and understood in the larger context. It is hard to understand this massing in this complex site.

Linda Eastley: I'm interested in how the building reveals itself from different views, and I want to learn what it feels like to be next to it, especially on Bromfield Street. What pedestrian elements are being introduced to building façade to give pedestrian scale? I want to better understand these thought processes.

Deneen Crosby: I actually think Franklin Street is the green connector in this area. I think there is an connection to how you treat Franklin Street. Washington Street is largely paved, but these cross streets have more of an opportunity for green spaces.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I appreciate that the building is shorter and I am curious about how the massing is resolved as the building increases in height. I appreciate the analysis of the rhythm of openings, but I desire more insight into the building's texture. I thought about Burnham's Reliance Building in Chicago in regards to translating texture in a contemporary way.

Jonathan Evans: I want to know more about how the materiality contributes to the narrative of the project.

Andrea Leers: It is a good choice to not put parking in this building. Bringing it together with the open space at Millennium Tower is a good and strong thing. Creating a two-three story base condition is responsive to this area. My questions are understanding how the massing responds to each block. A physical model, sections, and street elevations would be I think it's a really good departure and I appreciate the thinking going into this.

Mimi Love: I would like to understand more about the base. I understand the transition from a larger to smaller scale of windows, but I want to understand how this works with the bays. I am confused about elevation of Provence Street; more of an explanation of this would be helpful.

Eric Höweler: I am excited about this project. It is doing a lot of things across scales. The adjacencies are super exciting and I am excited to see the paving extend to Franklin Street.

Tony Ursillo, IAG member and AG member on PLAN: Downtown: This project is well higher than current zoning. There is a lot of uncertainty for residents and developers due to current zoning. There is a collective consensus that some character areas deserve special consideration, and this project is in the Ladder Blocks character area. This proposal is out of character with the area in terms of the adjacent neighborhood buildings in the spirit of PLAN: Downtown. I would ask the Commissioners to consider the project in this context.

Greg Galer, Executive Director of the Boston Preservation Alliance: We are greatly concerned about the character of this entire Ladder Blocks area and the implications of moving one project forward given the significant height above zoning. I also question the relationship of the project to Province Street and the Sam LaGrassa Building.

Matthew Broude: The proposal includes loading on Province Street which is an active pedestrian way with storefronts. I am concerned this will create risks for pedestrian safety. We should also minimize wind tunnel effects. Lastly, I would hate to see the outdoor performance space on Washington Street overshadowed figuratively and physically.

Kimberly Trask, IAG member: I appreciate the comment about the green connection. This project is also part of the Washington Street corridor, a historic shopping and cultural district. It is important to keep a consistent look and feel in this context. I hope this will be apparent when more detailed studies are shown to committee.

Marc Ebuna: I would like to echo the concerns about wind tunnel effects. I am less concerned about shadows. I appreciate the heterogeneity and façade of the building. I think this is moving in the right direction.

The project will move to Design Committee.

Next was the presentation for **119 Braintree Street** in the Allston Neighborhood.

Matt Martin, BPDA: This project is along the Braintree Street Corridor and in the boundary of the 2012 Guest Street Area Planning Study. It is located in a neighborhood that is seeing a lot of development projects in the pipeline and reaching the full build out scenarios as noted in the Guest Street Area Planning Study. The urban design topics of focus are the overall scale of the building in relationship to the immediate context and the cantilevering of the upper floors above the expanded public realm along Braintree Street.

David Bracken, Bracken Development: The Blank family has owned this site since 1964 and it has gone through multiple iterations along the way. The commuter rail station has changed the nature of this neighborhood. We started working with the Blank family in 2019 and have had many meetings with stakeholders. We are including lab space and dynamic ground floor uses in Building A, 96 housing units in Building B, and an improved public realm with a new park.

Preston Scott Cohen: This project embodies two very different urbanities of Boston – on one hand, the Mass Pike, and the other, a neighborhood. We are trying to contribute to by building a piece of a city as an urban aggregate. The Boston Landing Station is an important destination and the park is the main aspect of the project that attaches itself to station. We are making a new type of street, and the building adapts to the street and the city. The bay windows beg you to consider the connection of being inside the building. Building B will be clad in a panel system, and Building A will be partly brick and partly precast with metal and glass panels on the side facing the Pike. There is a special moment where Building A turns to face the park. It is an interesting dramatic moment of being elevated along the Everett Street Bridge. There is a different speed and character along the Pike. We are creating a wider street, and are introducing depth by layering a monumental scale onto a façade repetitive pattern.

Ian Downing (Mikyoung Kim Design): The project will feature a signature public space and significant improvements to Braintree Street. We see the role of the park to provide a distinct character and complement the existing parks in the neighborhood. The park space celebrates vertical circulation and is a multilayered, multi-programmed open space. We are creating greater connectivity to the neighborhood, and see this as an opportunity to make the circulation a design feature of the site. We are looking to use industrial materials to reference the context and history of the site.

David Hacin: It is a little hard to understand the scale of the massing and the nature of the project from renderings alone. We need other tools like fly-arounds and views from the Mass Pike. The syncopation of the building is very thoughtful but I want to understand the experience from, and relationship to, other vantage points. Seeing how this project fits into the massing along with other developments in the area would make me feel comfortable with the scale. We should also consider aspects of sustainability that come with this location.

Linda Eastley: I want to emphasize this point, and understand the scale of the building in relationship to North Beacon Street to Cambridge Street to the Pike. I was really struck with the context of the building and how this building reacts to these changes in scale. I would like to understand the heaviness of the cantilever from the pedestrian experience. I applaud the wider sidewalk along Braintree Street, and would like to see schemes where you didn't include the cantilever.

William Rawn: I find there is a freshness to the façade and the avoidance of flat facades on both faces. I hope that we don't lose this welcome change to most of what we see building built today.

Eric Höweler: There is definitely an urbanity to this project and it is a protagonist in the city. There are careful massing moves to connect to multiple scales. The height along the Pike seems like a good massing move. In committee, you could bring a Rhino model to look at. I agree that the articulation of the facades is a big part of the project. If this building got flat, it would be a shame. It will be important to keep the richness of the façade, texture, and depth.

Mimi Love: This will have a high height along the Pike and will be different from what is there currently. I'd like to better understand this. I appreciate the views of the park and how the project ties to the commuter rail. This is really exciting with the stair feature. This connection to the station is successful.

Deneen Crosby: I'd like to better understand the circulation and how people will be walking through here, and if the space works for them. I also wonder how the project connects to the underside of Everett Street and if it connects to open spaces on the other side.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I am curious to better understand the building as it intersects with the public space and the bridge. This is such a pivotal moment. The translation of the Boston bay window is a welcome alternative to the flat facades we are seeing.

Jonathan Evans: I want to understand if there is a system to the bay windows and if we can further refine and articulate this, and cleverly break the rules in some moments.

Andrea Leers: I appreciate the approach to this project as an urban issue as it is squeezed between the Pike and the existing 2-3 story buildings. Seizing upon the presence of the

Everett Street bridge is a smart idea. Along Braintree Street and Guest Street, there are intervals of buildings and intervals of spaces between. Building A has a narrow footprint, but is longer than most of the buildings along Guest Street. I wonder if there are ways to make it more permeable across so it is not a walled-off edge, but more permeable from the Pike and the neighborhood side. Is there some way to let the street between the rowhouses work as an opening through the building? The length will be a more important factor than height. The façade along the Pike has a strong presence as a continuous wall.

David Hacin: To piggyback off this, it is worth noting that Building A steps out towards the Pike. This is an important moment that is worth understanding more. The syncopation of the façade is intriguing, and I want to understand what it feels like looking down Braintree Street. Are there more opportunities for modulation near the smaller scale homes?

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I am concerned about channelizing Mass Pike. I want to focus on how the fabric of the city knits itself as it spans along the Pike. Some of the beauty of the Boston bay windows approach adds interest but can be broken down and played around with while it is uniformed architecturally.

Kirk Sykes: When you do a building like this, there is an expectation of a rhythm of interest. I want to see this project on a macro public realm level from other vantage points. We should pull back to the North Beacon Street view, and see what it looks like from the residential fabric.

Marc Ebuna: From a layperson's perspective, this project brings a lot to this neighborhood. I think the approach near the bridge is particularly interesting, and I am curious to see how this interface looks for someone coming off the commuter rail. I also would like to see this from the neighborhood context.

The project will move to Design Committee.

Next was the presentation for **88 Black Falcon Avenue** in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.

Elizabeth Stifel, BPDA: The urban design review topics include the legibility of the historic structure, the safety and clarity of the Harborwalk/urban realm, and the clarity of pedestrian wayfinding.

Chris Chandor, The Davis Companies: We have been working with Massport for quite some time on this proposed addition. We have put significant investment into the existing structure, and the proposed use for the addition is life sciences.

Jeffrey Tompkins, SGA: The site is unique and in a working port with an industrial character. We are trying to bring clarity to circulation and access to the site by creating intersection

improvements, a new vehicular access ramp, and improvements to the MBTA Silver Line stop. We need to laterally brace the historic structure and developed a gantry-like structure that wraps the building. We are looking to maintain the industrial elements of the façade through materiality and color. Lastly, we have added a cantilevered walkway to invite viewers vertically, and stepped back the upper floors.

Drew Stangel, OJB: We want to establish a warm gateway and arrival to the site. We are thinking about episodic moments and vertical artwork to emphasize the history and culture of the space. We want to bring people to the pier, and establish a pedestrian zone while delineating between pedestrian and vehicular movement. There are opportunities for interpretative wayfinding on the site.

Andrea Leers: There is a lot of good thinking on the ground. I am finding it very uncomfortable that there are four floors looming over three in a way that makes the original structure illegible and in competition with the existing building. I think the strategy needs to be looked at again and doesn't add up to a satisfying whole.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I share Andrea's concerns and would like to see your design-making process in subcommittee. The role of the site as a gateway to the city is very important and an opportunity. I had trouble tracking the different parts of the building.

Eric Höweler: The massing tapers off and should be more emphatic. It is difficult to see where the new and old meet. The massing and tectonic strategies could better articulate between the new and the old. It could be a lot clearer.

Mimi Love: The overhang is uncomfortable and compresses the reading of the historical building below. The stepping down of the building doesn't tie with the overhangs. It is hard to appreciate the original building with this approach.

Linda Eastley: There isn't a lot of interest in the long pedestrian walkway. I want to see the context when the cruise ships are present and understand the overall experience. The architecture of the industrial bracing could be bolder and be artistically celebrated to create a cadence. The overlook could be interesting with adequate wayfinding.

Kirk Sykes: I wonder if there could be programming to make the pedestrian experience more exciting. We should be thinking more about how to entice people to come to this part of the city.

Deneen Crosby: Does the nature of the street have to be a complete wrap-around of the building? This could function as more of a shared street. This should be a more generous space with reclaimed granite instead of painted asphalt.

Mikyoung Kim: I worry about the maintenance of the painted surface and want to explore how materials can be used to make a more welcoming pedestrian experience. It would be helpful to see views extending from one end of the site to the other, and more moments

for a cadence. If there is a sense of the typology of public art you are considering, I would like to hear about that.

Linda Eastley: Seattle has interesting examples of how to experience a pier. This is the gateway to Boston Harbor and a fabulous place to explore.

Kirk Sykes: I would view this building differently if the trusswork were cradling the addition in a more uniform way.

Matthew Broude: I used to work in 45 Drydock Building and I would encourage the design team to explore how to make this site more easy to navigate for pedestrians.

Tom Ready, Fort Point Neighborhood Association: I enjoy going to this place and getting takeout food to watch the planes. The activation should wrap around to the end of the pier and there should be more thought for bicyclists.

The project will move to Design Committee.

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There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:15 p.m. The recording of the meeting was digitized and is available upon request.