

DRAFT MINUTES

BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, February 4th, 2014, starting in the BRA Board Room, 9th Floor, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:19 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Michael Davis (Co-Vice-Chair); Deneen Crosby, David Hacin, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, Daniel St. Clair, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were Linda Eastley, Paul McDonough (Co-Vice-Chair), William Rawn, and Lynn Wolff. Also present was David Carlson, Executive Director of the Commission. Representatives of the BSA were present.

The Co-Vice-Chair, Mike Davis (MD), 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. He 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 Saturday, January 18, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the January 7th, 2014 Meeting Minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the January 7th, 2014 Boston Civic Design Commission Meeting Minutes.

MD asked for a report from the Review Committee. Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Hood Park 500 North Project**. David Carlson (DAC) reported that the Hood Business Park was a PDA Master Plan, seen and approved by the Commission in 2000 with subsequent Development Plan submissions and changes reviewed (a requirement of the original approval) as lately as 2008. This was such a Development Plan submission and on its own was a transformative rehabilitation of 130,000 SF, over the BCDC threshold. A vote to review was recommended. It was duly moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the Hood Business Park 500 Rutherford Avenue North Project in the Charlestown neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **190-206 West Second Street Project**. DAC reported that the Project was proposed by the same team that did the 2 H Street Project in the same neighborhood, and the Signal Building on this block. The proposal is as-of-right and, at about 100,000 SF, is essentially at the BCDC threshold. Review was recommended. It was duly moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 190-206 West Second Street Project in the South Boston neighborhood.

Daniel St. Clair (DS) arrived. The next item was a report from Design Committee on the **61-83 Braintree Street Project**. David Manfredi (DM) reported: The Committee saw responses to comments which were good - and with a much better solar exposure. The discussion ended up being centered around the billboard; suggestions were made to modify the building in various ways to improve the relationship. We saw a preliminary response sent to the four of us that were there, and that looked good. MD: If the Proponent could give a brief presentation focused on that...? Linda Neshampkin (LN) of Neshampkin French Architects: David's summary was good. (Using boards, shows the elevation as presented, but marked up.) The single-loaded corridor we had previously didn't allow a view, or rather allowed a limited one, of the billboard; but, it cut off the terrace on that floor. So, the idea was to shift the floor instead to the other side (of the building). LN then showed the new elevation, rendered, and accompanying plan changes. She described the changes, using some of the older views to note the changes they had not yet had time to update on the drawings.

Andrea Leers (AL): Do you have views of the billboard as it is now? LN: I have the old...(looks through boards.) MD: I wanted to ask about the arcade - you said that was gone now? LN: Yes, when the building was moved, we shifted it away from the property line, creating depth. It's better without the arcade now. Also, note that we changed the proposal for the street edge as a result, and that will work better. Kirk Sykes (KS): What is the treatment of the garage door? LN described the treatment, noting the display windows proposed along the garage. KS: Are they opaque, or transparent? LN: Opaque, but illuminated. KS: Is the landscape treatment varied there? LN: We didn't discuss that. KS: There's an opportunity to differentiate between the sides. It will be what you come across (as you walk along). Deneen Crosby (DC) asked about the treatment of the street: What is the setback of the building? LN (looking at a drawing): About 9' from the back of sidewalk. We were cautioned on the treatment of the landscaping as it had been. MD: Looking at the plans, it seems that distance might be more. Where exactly does the billboard land? LN looks through plans and tries to describe, noting the location on the site plan. AL: It's too bad you don't have a new view of the billboard. It's a huge presence. DM: We thought it best if it were independent of the building, so it would be easily removable at a future date. LN found older views of the billboard, and of existing conditions. DM: Shifting the building really helps. MD agreed. AL: I think you should have a view from the Harvard Ave direction, for your own sake, to see its visibility from that direction. Rodney Sinclair (RS) noted the remaining process, saying they would be checking in with the community before the BRA Board meeting. AL: I'm not suggesting it for us, but for *you*. It looks like the massing change will be good, but to truly evaluate it, you should do views. RS: We have done a lot of sketches. AL: You should have brought them. I'm struggling to understand what it's really like; we're kind of guessing. I *think* it's better, but part of our job is to be more *sure* of that. LN showed a series of context photos.

A resident of Allston/Brighton spoke: My favorite part was the tree islands and colonnade. They gave a sense of enclosure, and calmed the street. The tree islands - and encouraging the abutter to do the same, were great, and now the change really takes away from that. MD: The arcade

and the space it creates is neither public nor private. It's an awkward extension of the public realm. Resident: It feels more suburban. We don't need a 65-foot right-of-way encouraging speeders. RS: That was not a huge part of the Committee conversation. The area plans call for bicycle paths. We looked at the section we created in a study, and asked ourselves how we capitalize on ideas in a limited space. The trees would have forced bicycles more into traffic; this allows more flexibility. One can, for example, create an environment without curbs, yet defining it. The bicycle path is an important component of a safe environment. MD: This is something you should continue to discuss in detail, but we will have to take the vote. It then was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the schematic design for the proposed 61-83 Braintree Street Project in the Brighton neighborhood.

The next item was a presentation of the **Hood Park 500 North Project**. Yanni Tsipis (YT) of Colliers introduced the Project team, notably Chris Kaneb (of Catamount Management, owners) and Greg Downs (GD) of SMMA. YT: I'll give you some background since I'm told you haven't seen this in 14 years. (Briefly notes statistics, locus, and the planning context of the recently completed Rutherford Avenue and Sullivan Square plans.) There are new parcels and a possible new street at the edge of this property. (Shows an illustrative Hood Park plan, an aerial view with the master plan buildings in place, then an existing aerial - noting the warehouse addition in question. Zooms in with another aerial.) The warehouse is high, 20' clear. It was used for the DHL delivery service as a transfer warehouse. (Notes Proposed Project stats.) We are modifying the exterior, and inserting a floor. The footprint does not change. [David Hacin (DH) arrived.] YT (showing a perspective taken from along Rutherford): It's a sketch-up, and so limited. (Shifts view to the corner.) The corner is glass, with red brick to each side. The main entrance, as shown in the plan, is half-way down. We have bumped it out to give it a clear indication, as well as providing a public pathway along the building. (Shows a view across the lot from the north.) The HVAC on top is not a part of the Project; it serves the tech uses in the existing building. (Shows a more rendered view, oblique, from an improved future Rutherford Avenue.)

DM asked about the future garage buildings (YT indicates on plan) and then the future connection. YT: We can connect, extended by an arcade. DS: What is the arcade treatment? So, this is a build-to-suit? YT: No, the entire 1.2 million SF Project is a build-to-suit all around. DS: So, you're just proceeding with this (on your own). YT: Yes. The arcade is really just a connection through the building; it exists now. AL: The data center at the back - will that be the subject of the next phase? YT (looking first at Chris): It's a long-term lease, so that's unlikely. (Shows a view of the HVAC atop the building, taken from the NW looking toward the entry.) DM asked about the Hood plan's relationship to the Sullivan Square plan. YT toggled back and forth between the plans. YT: Spice Street had not been considered with the plan originally. But, it will allow the connection. DM: I was going to ask about the entry placement, but Spice Street makes sense of that now. AL: It's not exactly opposite - it's down further. (This prompted a brief discussion back and forth, with different views.) I think the entry not being on Rutherford is right. There should be less glass at the corner, and more at the entry, perhaps.

You're re-cladding the building. I'm not sure you need to use brick. It seems submissive; there's no reason to be so deferential. KS: To pick up on Andrea's point, I didn't see a lot of images of the *whole* facade along Rutherford. That might inform your thinking about the architecture, and the whole Park. It would be great to see street elevations, and some detail about how you bridge that. It really is *one* composition. YT: The building is really showing the client's taste; they wanted brick. KS: I'm not telling you about materials.

GD: A lot of this was discussed and looked at with 480 Rutherford. That was representative of industrial buildings, and also of the architecture of today. The building was brick, had glass at the corner, etc. A lot of what we learned at that southern end has been applied here. The brick is going over an existing block wall. And the windows pick up the truck dock openings. You have to walk *up* to the (elevated) entry. At 480, we started with brick, but ended up with all metal panel at the back. DH: I'm less concerned about the brick. I'm more concerned about the Rutherford facade being a highway facade - one special moment, then a blank, long wall. If character were combined, it would make the experience more continuously rhythmic and interesting. YT: Some of it is architectural taste and style.

DC asked about the site treatment; YT showed the site proposal on a slide. GD: On the building, it's difficult. We wanted to do what we could to transition it to the rear/future build-out. The comments made tonight are similar to what we heard before, and they are good. We did the same on the other side. MD: We will discuss in Committee. It's not a question of style, but some characteristics. One part of that might be the relation to the existing. DC: And the extension of the notion of Rutherford that exists along there. YT: It likely will be torn up; it's very intentional NOT to invest there. KS: Even if there is a future building on the parking field, to Deneen's comments, interim conditions can last a *long* time. So... DM: I would ask you to speculate how the PDA might evolve. Not asking you to do any work beyond that, but I don't want to preclude anything that might make it all better. With that, the Hood Park 500 North Project was sent to Design Committee.

The next item was a presentation of the **190-206 West Second Street Project**. Peter Zagorianakos (PZ) of Triad Alpha noted he was the owner, and introduced the Project design team. He showed the locus, noting West Square across the (C) street, then his property extent at 190-206, then his Signal Building project on this block, and the City property that lay in between the two - now likely to become a City park and community garden. PZ: This Project is as-of-right under the new zoning, done in 2010. The BRA considers this a transitional area. We have designed a Project we think fits with the context of the area. (Shows views, notes context.)

KS asked about the Public Works building on the adjacent property. PZ gave more background, noting the first intention was to offer it for affordable housing. Then it was a park, and parking; but there was more grant money available for community gardens. DH asked about the plan, a U-shape, vs. the Second Street view shown. PZ: That's the out parcel. We don't own, but we offered to buy. There's a shed on that now. It's subject to the same zoning. So we are proposing a 5-foot setback all around. DH: You should show mass there as we consider your

Project. I just wanted to know so we could consider that in the review. MD: And show the park. PZ: We do show that on our West First Street view (brings up board). We have made the building different there, because of the park, with triangular bays. Note the retail at the base. PZ then walked around the building with different views, answering minor questions from the Commissioners.

KS: What is the material at the bottom? PZ noted the stoops along C Street. Ron B showed the intended brick, with blocks at the base. AL: What is your entry location strategy? We discussed that on another project in the area. PZ: Mine (2 H Street). MD: Bring that to Committee. DH: We should talk about the retail in Committee. In many projects, the retail looks really low, and feels really squashed in terms of the public realm. Your horizontal line - while it does something architecturally (it floats), we should look at that. PZ noted the floor-to-floor heights: 11'6" at the ground, 11'1" above that. DH: We don't need that detail. You could break the line. AL: One could understand the building as something that comes to the ground. I would have a look at that; it could work on both sides. That brings up another thing - this is a real opportunity to continue a language, a familial language, with what you did at 2 H Street. DC: You have a prominent corner adjacent to the park open space (on West First) - look at that. AL: You had entries on the side street? PZ pointed them out. DH: In terms of the long-term viability of the retail space, it may not be crazy to recess program above the retail, so that you are in a lofty space that seems more inviting. It's an image-able tenancy. Not everything has to be right at grade. PZ: That's an interesting idea - I could shift some units. Like Charley's on Newbury Street. DH: There are many spaces like that in Boston.

DM: You know what would be really helpful, is if you dropped in West Square next to your Project, so that we understand more about the retail corridor, etc. PZ: It's an *industrial* corridor. There's a garage, a bridge at Second Street, a PCB-laden site, and the BCEC. And a lot of stuff going on. DH: There's a project on D Street, very unfortunate, with a blocked lower floor. KS: This is a handsome building, a nice Project already. It's neat that the building has a variable base. You should have thought comprehensively about that datum; consider treatment with materials that don't accentuate the shortness. PZ: They will be retaining walls, for the landscape. DH: One other suggestion I would make, is a streetscape plan. PZ: On C Street and part of West Second, there are trees, etc. established by the BCEC. We will follow that. First Street is tight; we can't have that. DH: Why wouldn't you put in a wider sidewalk? PZ: The Signal Building is built to the lot line. Existing buildings are, generally. I'm not sure about West Square. You said plain concrete with trees at 2 H Street. AL: That was the 2 H Street solution. On the townhouse entries, two are like an anomaly. Three, like you're starting something. On the First Street elevation - noting some strategies (to break the low line) - you could elevate your canopies. DH: Or, take a unit to give a second story space. And at the entry. The area suffers from this, too. DC: Provide more information on the street treatment. KS: Maybe the quality of the landscape plan could be a little better. With that, the 190-206 West Second Street Project was sent to Design Committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:11 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission

is scheduled for March 4, 2014. The recording of the February 4, 2014 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.