

## MINUTES BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, and was held virtually via Zoom to ensure the safety of the public, staff members, and the BPDA Board Members during the COVID-19 pandemic, and beginning at 5:00 p.m. Members in attendance were Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, , Eric Höweler, Mikyoung Kim, Kathy Kottaridis, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were David Hacin, David Manfredi, and. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Meera Deean, Alexa Pinard, Meghan Richard, Natalie Punzak were present for the BPDA.

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 [DATE], in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the March 2, 2021 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on March 16, 23, and 30. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

**VOTED: To approve the March 2, 16, 23, and 30, 2021 BCDC Meeting Minutes.**

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Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **355 Bennington St** project. The project will be a prominent 180-unit residential building in the heart of Day Square in East Boston. At approximately 159,000 SF, review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 355 Bennington St project in the East Boston neighborhood.**

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**355 Bennington St** was the first presentation of the evening.

Meera Deean, BPDA Urban Designer, gave an overview of the planning context and areas of focus during the BPDA Urban Design review process thus far. Much attention has been given to the horizontality of the facade, in particular along Bennington / Bremen Street, the proposed public realm along Bennington and Bremen Streets, and the quality of the courtyard and the units facing the highway.

Damian Szary, Redgate: 355 Bennington is a 150-unit mixed-use project that will add a new retail space to Day Square. It sits at the intersection of several major neighborhood thoroughfares, with connections to the Greenway, Route 1A, Bennington Street, and Chelsea Street.

Amy Korte, Arrowstreet: Day Square today is lacking useable, safe public space for pedestrians. The current site hosts old warehouse buildings, which will be demolished. We're proposing bringing the Greenway up to Day Square through this project. Perspective views from around the site show the bay window facade along with a series of setbacks and nooks to create active outdoor space. There is a courtyard interior to the project. There is a 7000 SF retail space that allows flexibility for either one large urban grocer or three smaller tenants.

Sean Sanger, Copley Wolff Design Group: There is not much tree canopy in Day Square, so we're hoping to improve that condition and help mitigate the effects of urban heat island.

Deneen Crosby: At the design committee, I'd like to learn more about the sidewalk condition with both the existing and re-imagined road network for Day Square. I want to understand the building's relationship to the sidewalk along Bennington Street. It appears there is a highway underpass and I'd like a better understanding of how this project connects to the MBTA connections.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Would like more context at committee. You made reference to wanting to make the interior courtyard publicly accessible, and I want to learn more about how that works.

William Rawn: Facade treatment has great potential. Seems like the project is challenged by the tight dimensions of the sidewalk.

Linda Eastley: The sheer amount of paving that surrounds the site today seems unideal, so I'm hopeful this project with PLAN: East Boston can transform that condition. I'd like to see more openness in the connection to the greenway. I'm intrigued by the inverted bay window facade condition along Bremen. I don't understand how pedestrians would access the courtyard, so let's discuss this at design committee.

Andrea Leers: I appreciate the thoughtful way you've developed scale—the height, massing, and setbacks are working well. I'm still trying to understand where the "Square" is in Day Square and how this project engages it. Let's zoom out and understand what exists today and what is planned for.

Mimi Love: It seems like there is a significant overhang of the building over the connection to the greenway. A study of daylight and the quality of space here and the courtyard would be great to see at committee.

William Rawn: What is the relationship of lobby and amenity space to the public space and sidewalk? Share some examples of successful amenity spaces on busy streets at design committee.

The project will continue in design committee.

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The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **Seaport Square Block L5 project**. William Rawn was recused.

Michael Sorensen, Henning Larsen: Five design concepts have shaped the design of this building and the surrounding public realm: a sense of an urban room, lively public realm, human scale, dynamic facade, and timeless materiality.

Kelly Holzkamp, Henning Larsen: Focus of discussions through BCDC process was understanding this block in its urban and public realm context, extending the public realm through an expressive paseo, and highlighting the future SeaPAC. We've added a tree buffer to the project and expanded the double-height presence of the SeaPAC on the façade along with an expanded public edge.

Linda Eastley: The changes you've made to both ends of the paseo to draw attention and access are successful.

Mikyoung Kim: This is going to be a great addition to Boston.

Andrea Leers: The attention given to the SeaPAC has made a huge difference—it now has its own presence and identity instead of just being a small part of the building as a whole.

Hearing no public comment, a motion was made, it was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for the schematic design of the Seaport Square Block L5 project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.**

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The next project for a vote was **Old Colony Final Phase project**. William Rawn returned. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Mike Doherty, TAT: The central promenade is now more green with a variety of courtyard spaces and plazas. Throughout the design committee process, we refined building entries, added detail to building railings and sidewalks, and simplified the façade design so that the building design logic is more clear. The presentation shows views of the building massing and before and after details of the building elevation.

Marcus Cantu Parker, Copley Wolff Design Group: We've added more trees and greenscape wherever possible in response to comments from the Commission and are providing more information on the raised terrace spaces.

Linda Eastley: I appreciate the proponent responding to our comments. We'd talked about increasing the softscape throughout the project. I like that there is now a gathering place between Buildings 4 and 5, so continue to develop this.

Deneen Crosby: I'm confused by the discontinuous fire lane access, and I'm concerned that you'll have to pave the center green space to meet fire standards. Keep thinking carefully about this.

Mimi Love: The size of this block is challenging and I appreciate how responsive this team has been. I think the architecture has come a long way—we've urged you to simplify and though the materials have been reduced it's still engaging.

Hearing no public comment, a motion was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for the schematic design of the Old Colony Final Phase project in the South Boston neighborhood.**

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The next project for a vote was **Mildred Hailey, Phase One project**. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Tamara Roy, Stantec: We've come before the Commission four times since December. This approval is for both the master plan and the phase one buildings, and the Commission requested more detail to the buildings along Centre Street and near the Jackson Square MBTA station.

Shauna Gillies-Smith, Ground, Inc.: We were able to set the building back to expand the sidewalk to more than 18' with a furnishing zone, planting zone, and frontage zone along Centre Street and

Lamartine. At every meeting, we discussed the pinch point from the Southwest Corridor entry on Centre Street, and we've explored two options as alternatives.

Mark Eclipse, PCA: Much of the focus of discussion in design committee was the relationship of the buildings to context and materiality. Building 1A will have brick on Heath Street, and we've added more color to white walls. Building 1B kept pattern but not too much color. We've added color in the space at the central plaza.

Andrea Leers: The adjustments you made in coloring, patterning, and materials are successful.

Deneen Crosby: The edges of this project and connection to Southwest Corridor Park seem improved and you've addressed our comments.

Mimi Love: I appreciate the diagrams and changes to the facade treatment.

Several public comments addressed the importance of maintaining as many trees on site as possible.

A motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

**VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of Mildred Hailey, Phase One project in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood.**

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The final presentation and vote for the evening was for the **Bunker Hill Housing Redevelopment, Buildings F & M.**

Megan Pasquina, Leggat McCall Properties: At the last design committee meeting, the Commission asked us to enhance the secondary entrance at Building F and to simplify the geometry of the courtyard of building F. We also hosted a tree-focused public meeting.

Tamara Roy, Stantec: As you know, the design of these buildings was based on references to the neighborhood context and patterning inspired by Morse Code.

Andrew Arbaugh, Copley Wolff Design Group: Studied which trees are able to be preserved. Included larger caliper trees throughout the courtyard.

Tamara Roy: You can see the changes we've made to Building M in material application. It reflects the study of architecture on the other parts of Medford Street in Charlestown.

Megan Pasquina: We had a public meeting regarding trees a few weeks ago. As part of the presentation, we expanded the ongoing public review processes for the project to incorporate tree preservation and reporting measures. There were 164 comments provided by 51 people. 43 of the comments were neutral or supportive.

Deneen Crosby: I appreciate the honesty and follow-through of the team in studying the ability to preserve existing tree canopy. Now that we have more information on trees, I think it would be nice to look at the strategy of the inner courtyards. As the existing buildings are deconstructed, care must be taken to try to preserve as many trees as possible.

Andrea Leers: I'm mindful of the fact that like each master plan we review, adjustments are made as project considerations evolve. What Deneen suggests will happen as each block comes back to the Commission for review. Focusing on buildings F and M tonight.

Councilor Lydia Edwards: I want to thank the BCDC for calling for extended public conversation about trees in this project. I am here to amplify the environmental justice concerns, but acknowledge the sense of urgency from residents to begin Phase 1 of this project. There will not be a perfect plan to satisfy all advocates around this project, but this plan can continue to improve. We want the developer to continue to maintain as many mature trees as possible on site. I am submitting a line item in the City budget allocated to buy and integrate mature trees into this project. We need to continue to monitor the tree canopy in this project and in Charlestown as a whole. We've made clear that the youth, especially the youth residents of this project, will lead advocacy for the environmental justice movement for this project. I ask that the BCDC continue to move this project forward by recommending approval for Phase 1.

Public comments:

Dan Jaffe: These two buildings seem very plain even though previous presentations showed more detail. Concerned that with the focus on trees, we've lost attention of what will be permanent: the buildings. They need to be unique.

Karla Wert: I live with and serve the BHA residents. Here to show support. Highly support the positive environmental impact for our residents. The environment is not just the air, it's the buildings and walls around us. Offers the opportunity to improve air quality, lighting, public safety. Want to thank the commissioners for making the project better with your comments

Johanna Hynes: As the first phase of this project, it's important to get this right. If you care about environmental justice, you would prioritize the preservation of trees on this site. I've spent weeks talking to residents who aren't aware of the changes to their landscape. Mature trees cannot be replaced.

David Meshoulam, Speak for the Trees, Boston: Thanks to the commission for work in helping save some of the trees in Phase 1. This project has unfortunately become contentious in recent months, which reflect some of the challenges and concerns of removal of private trees all over the city. Removing these mature trees in the midst of climate and equity concerns is a problem. We've made specific requests of the developer as the project moves forward.

Brian Callahan, Charlestown res and biz owner: Echo councilor Edward's support for Phase 1. Any other delay would be detrimental to residents present and future.

Tina Goodnow, Charlestown Resident Alliance (CRA) and IAG: Proud of the way that our residents priorities are reflected in Phase 1. The development team has been responsive to our comments by adding doors and private spaces for residents. Residents here will continue to lead the design process.

Tess O'Brien: Thanks to the commissioners for using their platform to push the team to preserve trees. Implore the architects to explore the same changes and preservation of trees in future phases ahead of time. Future projects should treat trees as a design constraint not an afterthought. I think the rhetoric around this project has been damaging. I echo Councilor Edwards' comments and look forward to future.

Yvonne Lalyre: Appreciate the good intentions. I've spent the last few days talking to residents of this project and I asked many people I'd they knew about the removal of trees, and they weren't aware. Misconceptions about replacement.

Diane Valle: Speak in support of residents who were never asked or part of this project. Has not been a transparent process.

Lydia Agro, Chief of Staff of Boston Housing Authority: We started the redevelopment process for this project more than 5 years ago. Residents and the CRA has been at the table throughout.

Nancy Martinez, President of Charlestown Resident Association: I've lived here for more than 26 years. We are tired of living in buildings that are beyond repair. This is a once in a generation opportunity to rebuild a neighborhood for all residents across many incomes. More than 100 families have already been relocated, waiting to return. It's important that we get this right and move forward.

Andrea Leers: I want to thank the public for thoughtful comments. Many voices have informed this project. Deneen's comments about continued consideration for the preservation of trees as the master plan moves forward are important. I appreciate comments urging us to invest energy and detail in these buildings, and for asking us to see trees as a design constraint from the beginning of all development processes. Before us today is the approval for the first phase of this project. The subsequent phases will return to the Commission for review.

Linda Eastley: I want to thank everyone who has been an advocate during this process and sent letters. We're at an important moment in a continuum of more than 5 year process and it's important to think about environmental justice from both an outdoor and indoor perspective.

A motion was then made, moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for the schematic design of Bunker Hill Housing Redevelopment Phase One Buildings F & M project in the Charlestown neighborhood.**

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There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for May 4, 2021. The recording of the April 6, 2021 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.