

MINUTES

BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, January 8, 2019, starting in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:15 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Andrea Leers, Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Mikyoung Kim, Anne-Marie Lubenau, David Manfredi, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent was Paul McDonough. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. David Carlson, Michael Cannizzo, Raul Duverge, Matt Martin, and Natalie Punzak were present for the BPDA.

The Chair, Andrea Leers (AL), 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 Wednesday, December 26 in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the December 4, 2018 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from the December 11 and 18 meetings. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the December 4, 11, and 18 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Parcel 12 (MassDOT Air Rights) PDA** project. The proposal is similar to the 1000 Boylston project that the Commission reviewed in 2017. Close to 550,000 SF, the project well-exceeds the threshold for BCDC review and as such a new vote to review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Parcel 12 project in the Fenway neighborhood.

Next was a report from the Review Committee on the **15 Washington Street** project. Located in the Brighton neighborhood on Washington Street, the proposed project includes a grocery store and 270 residential units. At 230,000 SF, the project well exceeds the review threshold. A new vote to review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 15 Washington Street project in the Brighton neighborhood.

Next was a report from the Review Committee on the **Nexus at The Allston Innovation Corridor** project on Western Ave between Everett and Riverdale Street in the Allston neighborhood. In its existing condition, the parcels are single-story parking lots and auto-related businesses. The proposal includes 540,000 SF of lab/research/office space, 40 residential units, and 20,000 SF of commercial space. Well over the threshold, a new vote to review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Nexus – The Allston Innovation Corridor Project.

Next was a report from the Review Committee on the **Bartlett Place Update** project. This PDA Masterplan was reviewed and approved in 2013. At that time, the Commission requested to review future phases and updates. This phase, Lot D, is around 50,000 SF. A new vote to review Lot D and receive an update on the PDA Masterplan was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the update for Bartlett Place and the schematic design for the proposed Bartlett Place Lot D project in the Roxbury neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Design Committee on the **Frankfort/Gove Development** project. Anne-Marie Lubenau was recused.

David Manfredi (DM) noted that at the last Design Committee meeting, Commissioners responded positively to design updates and asked the proponent to continue considering the design of street frontage, green space, and relationship between old and new buildings.

Jason Forney, Bruner Cott Architects: Feedback through the Design Committee focused on the relationship between the Gove Street façade and church elevation, and as a result the team has reexamined the proportions of the façade. The parking area has been revised; pavers and plantings improve the aesthetic and allow for programmatic flexibility. Sidewalk widths increased throughout the project, enhancing the streetscape.

David Hacin (DH): The parking area now looks more like a plaza; we appreciate you incorporating our comments into these updates.

Deneen Crosby (DC): The revised entrance on Gove Street makes a big difference to wayfinding and visual hierarchy.

Jack Scalcione, board member and homeowner on Frankfort Street: The design team has been very responsive to the community, and I would like to thank the Commission for encouraging improvements that continue

With no further public comment, it was moved, seconded and:

VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the schematic design for the proposed Frankfort/Gove Development at the intersection of Frankfort and Gove Streets in East Boston.

Anne Marie Lubenau returned. The next item was a report from the Design Committee on the **60 Kilmarnock Street** project.

Phil Casey, CBT Architects: Through the BCDC Design Committee process, design changes have resulted in simplified façade designs, enhanced pedestrian courtyards that activate the ground plane, and further consideration of the pedestrian experience along the alley. Notably, the building connection over the private alley has been reduced, further set back, and made more transparent.

Linda Eastley (LE): I appreciate you incorporating our suggestions. The biggest compliment to this team is for the array of open spaces that you've created in the span of a few blocks. You are redefining what an alley can look like in Boston and providing a creative model for future development.

DH: I want to compliment you on creating a project that feels like part of the existing neighborhood fabric. My only concern remains on the subject of the bridge as you develop it. I'm skeptical of the transparency on the units on floors five and six.

DM: I remain hung up on the bridge, but appreciate changes you've made to lighten it. That said, there are many other nice changes in this well-designed project.

AL: I encourage you to look closely at if the bridge can be reduced in dimension. We are still reacting to the breadth of it.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded and:

VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the schematic design for the proposed 60 Kilmarnock Street Project at the corner of Queensberry Street in the West Fenway neighborhood.

The next item on the agenda was the presentation of the **Parcel 12 (MassDOT Air Rights) PDA**. David Manfredi was recused.

Abe Menzin, Samuels Associates: We've been working on this project since 2012. After years of work with MassDOT, we have decided to resolve numerous infrastructure challenges onsite to enhance the public realm and use on this site, which include the busy intersection at Newbury Street and Massachusetts Avenue, narrow sidewalks, and unsafe shared bike and bus lanes along Mass Ave.

Kevin Lennon, Elkus Manfredi: The revised design includes 30 foot sidewalk that includes a cycle track and buffer along Massachusetts Avenue. We will deploy Boston's Complete Streets Guidelines wherever possible. Public realm improvements include a below grade subway connection and improved bus stops. Parking will be located below the office tower on terra firma, with two towers concentrated on these portions of the side. A retail podium will join the 10-story hotel/residential tower with the 14-story office tower at the ground plane and through a roof terrace.

Eric Höweler (EH): Views from the turnpike will be important to show in future presentations. This should be a spectacular gateway to the city.

Abe Menzin: We've calculated that 50 million people will experience this building from the Mass Pike every year, and we are definitely considering the quality and significance of this view.

DH: This feels to me like an analogous condition entering the city. Consider the design as a compositional gateway and threshold into Boston. I think the work that you're trying to do at the pedestrian level and urban realm is admirable. This site can complete the retail loop from Newbury Street to Boylston Street. I'm trying to understand how the podium and the buildings that flank it (do not) engage the ground.

Additionally, I think the diagonal sweep of the amenity carve outs work against the critical flatiron corner.

Mikyoung Kim (MK): Consider the views on the roof terrace, given the relationship with the turnpike. Explain at Design Committee how the building inflection relates to the pedestrian experience at the ground plane.

LE: The pedestrian experience on the west side of Mass Ave seems very complicated to me. Can we introduce more green, even visually, to the experience over and from the turnpike?

Anne-Marie Lubenau (AML): There is a certain timelessness in this area, as architecture from different eras intersect, that I encourage you to integrate with your design. Are these two distinct buildings linked by a podium, or are they more of an ensemble? I find it troubling that this green space is not publicly accessible. Embodied in the plan for this area is a mission to think about the public realm.

William Rawn (WR): So many developers have tried to make a run at this site, and it has never been able to happen. In many ways, this proposal is generous to the city. I want to compliment you on the contributions made at the pedestrian realm and to the bus and subway. The podium is the one piece of the design that feels old, rather than future-thinking. I would encourage that the vocabulary of the podium be rethought. If anyone can make successful, innovative retail here, your team can.

AL: In some ways it is completely understandable that you would site your two buildings on terra firma and link them with a retail podium. But the trace of turnpike with the void space above the podium is too prominent, and the mission of knitting the city back together is not quite accomplished. I would be interested in looking at other massing options that you have explored. I could see these buildings as a series of structures, made more like the fabric of the city that you are trying to piece back together.

Jackie Yessian, Chair of the development committee of the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay: This is not the termination we believe would be successful on Newbury, and would not enhance the pedestrian experience

Sue Prindle, Chair of the architecture committee of the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay: In the proposal from April, the towers were better related and the sky was not as blocked. Take the Newbury Street view into consideration in your comment.

Martin Roche, Chair of NABB: Looking ahead at the project's public process, there will be many opportunities for public comment on this project. We want to work with the proponent to create a project that better integrates with the neighborhood.

The next item on the agenda was the presentation of **15 Washington Street**.

Kent Knight, Elkus Manfredi: The existing conditions onsite include an expansive surface parking lot, Whole Foods, and Citizens Bank. 5 Washington was recently approved across the street from this site. Surrounding uses are predominantly multi-family residential with the exception of the Baldwin Elementary School and a rehabilitation center. Proposed program expands Whole Foods, introduces 72,000 SF of retail, 320 parking spaces, and 270 residential units. Core design principles are to size and scale the project with surrounding context in mind and articulate the massing by means of setbacks and distinguishable components. Heights around the site are around 4-6 stories. 7- and 9-story building across the street. At 7 stepping down to 5 floors remains in character.

Kirk Sykes (KS): Expanded context information will be important at Design Committee. I think a 5-story building works a lot better than a 7-story building.

LE: There are a lot of great things being done here (surface parking going away, paying attention to the sidewalks), but I am concerned when looking at the model. This feels like a very large building in a more fine-grained neighborhood. This is more than doubling the allowable height.

MK: This is a groundbreaking project for this neighborhood, but there is a scale issue. There is a fragile population across the street and by loading on Washington I don't know that you resolve the pedestrian challenges here.

DH: The overhang of the residential building above Whole Foods is startling. Maybe the projects' scale can change to be more stepped in relation to the hill. This project feels like something typically found downtown but this is a residential neighborhood.

WR: I applaud the hiding of the parking. The residential building's U-shape faces Allston Street; if it faced Washington St it might help resolve the uncomfortable cantilever along Washington Street.

Eva Webster: People in the neighborhood are upset with the massing and weight that this project introduces. There is no green space. Major concerns for the elderly population in the neighborhood.

The **NEXUS at The Allston Innovation Corridor** project presentation was next.

Mike Diminico, King Street Properties: Over 50 years, this site has consisted of low-rise industrial uses, empty lots, and narrow sidewalks. The future we are planning for consists of residential, institutional, and commercial use focused through the lens of science and research.

David Godfrey, Dimella Schaeffer Architects: The site extends along Western Avenue. We've studied the massing along Western Avenue from Cambridge to Watertown; our project is the nexus between 10-story institutional projects in Cambridge and residential scale in Watertown. The site is composed of three separate buildings, ranging from five to seven stories tall. Across the ground floor, you will find neighborhood-scale retail and restaurants, laboratory space, and artist studios that front Artists' Way. There is about an 8' grade change between Artists' Way and the neighborhood that will be used to screen views from the neighborhood. We are proposing a green space and service road to buffer the project from the neighborhood behind it, including a pocket park. The residential scale informs datum lines across the building massing.

LE: As you think about the larger block on the south side, it seems you would want to connect Speedway from the North and Westford Road on the other side. (This is an open view corridor but not a public realm pass-through in your proposal). Think more simply about this pedestrian passageway. Additionally, the project doesn't feel porous along Western Ave. Grade changes feel like a barrier to the neighborhood. Instead of separating this project from the neighborhood, I encourage you to think about ways to integrate it.

DC: I'd like to hear more about Everett.

David Godfrey: We're proposing to pull the building back to create a 10-13' sidewalk along Everett Street. We are cognizant of the ongoing Allston-Brighton Mobility Study and are in conversation with the BPDA about this area.

WR: The form on the north side of the street feels quite singular, especially in contrast to the building across the street. We can discuss this in design committee.

AL: When you come to subcommittee, we need to have a better understanding of the residential building that fronts a large garage. It seems marginal right now.

KS: I'm curious about how the community is reacting to this project, as a former industrial area becomes a lab. This project becomes an inflection point of design and scale, and in turn, you should think carefully about the back of the building which becomes a new front to neighbors.

MK: When you return, it would be helpful to have finer grain information about the quality of the public realm that you are creating, including materiality and furnishings. This is going to redefine the experience along Western Ave. It would be helpful to compare this project to some others like those in Kendall Square or Boston Landing.

EH: Across Boston, buildings are being developed at a transitional scale between neighborhoods. The façade of the laboratory building evokes a troubling faux-industrial design. Find a way to be authentic, and active, and appropriate without a mythical history in your design.

The final project presentation was for the **Barlett Station** project.

Meena Jacob, POAH: This projects' PDA Masterplan approved in 2013. We continually have productive conversations with BPDA staff process.

Greg Minott, Dream Collaborative: This portion of the project creates 52 units of housing for seniors. The building is sited on a hill, and the building levels terrace to create open space decks into the hillside. Galleries underneath terrace.

Deb Meyers, DMLA: Site conditions contain a steep slope on Bartlett Station Drive. We will continue elements of public realm into site with nice entries and porches. Pedestrians can connect through walkways from neighborhood to Bartlett Station Drive.

LE: Can the building interior also serve as vertical circulation? Make the open space as accessible as possible. Either the building or the terrace or the landscape are the key to tying this district together. With a senior population, this may mean ramps or an elevator core. This green space will be the heart of this district as you've designed it and it would be a shame to separate it with a retaining wall.

AL: Focus on site circulation and engagement with streets around it. You're creating a great gathering place for activity. Think further about how the surroundings are enabled by the connections.

It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission approve the schematic design for the Lot D project, that BPDA staff will work with the proponent on increasing connectivity across the site, and that a PDA update will be presented to the Commission in the future.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:20 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for February 5, 2019. The recording of the January 8, 2019 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.