

MINUTES

BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, July 9, 2019, starting in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:15 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Andrea Leers Chair, Anne-Marie Lubenau, Paul McDonough, David Hacin, David Manfredi, Deneen Crosby, Eric Höweler, Kirk Sykes, Linda Eastley, Mikyoung Kim, Paul McDonough, William Rawn. None were absent! Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Michael Cannizzo, Kristina Ricco, Meghan Richard, Dana Whiteside, Jeong-Jun Ju, 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 Thursday, June 27, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the Amended February 5, 2019 Minutes, the June 4, 2019 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on June 11 and 18, 2019. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the February 5 and June 4, 11, and 18, 2019 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Northeastern University EXP**. Northeastern University's (NEU) current Institutional Master Plan (IMP) was reviewed recommended for approval by the BCDC in November, 2016. At that time the Burke Street dormitory (now known as Lightview) and the Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering Building (ISEC) were reviewed as IMP projects. The EXP Project will expand and compliment the ISEC program by providing additional classrooms, laboratories, and a dynamic new makerspace hub supporting the entire campus community. Ground-level program space will serve makerspace, active learning classrooms, and high bay robotics research. This will place these exciting programs on display while providing them with the direct street level access needed for periodic vehicular equipment transport. Levels four through seven will provide new open, efficient, flexible, and adaptable research laboratories arranged to support the needs of interdisciplinary research clusters. At 350,000 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 Northeastern University EXP associated with the Northeastern University IMP at 795 Columbus Avenue in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston.

The next report from the Review Committee was the **3368 Washington Street** in Jamaica Plain. The mixed-use project consists of ground floor office and warehouse space for Pine Street Inn and the upper levels reserved for an estimated 225 affordable residential units, with 140 units designated for supportive housing for individuals served by PSI. The remaining 85 units will be available to households earning between 60% and 80% of area median income. The project totals around 170,000 GSF. As such, a new vote to review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: hat the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 3368 Washington Street project in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Design Committee on the **BU Data Sciences Center**.

Paulo Brokoff, KPMB: A key change includes a larger public realm on Commonwealth Ave by shifting the building north and east. The façade skin has been lightened, and the scale of the building broken down with more shifts in volume. We've added a reveal of a double-story event space at the top. With feedback from the Commission, we've revitalized the ground plane, particularly at the rear of the project where a walkway and court serve to connect the neighborhood behind. At each terrace level of the building, the roof terrace acts as an extension of interior program and collaborative spaces for the internal departments. We envisioned the design as a kit of parts corresponding to internal office and collaboration spaces.

Anne-Marie Lubenau (AML): I'm having difficulty understanding the revisions because they are subtle. Can you clarify?

Paulo Brokoff: (Presented before and after slides). We shifted building, opened façade skin, lightened the top of the building, changed the coloration, added a reveal to break down the scale of the building, and enhanced the landscape design.

Linda Eastley (LE): At the most recent Design Committee session, we discussed the way this building might be viewed from different sides. As you get deeper into the design, I hope this might become part of your story. I commend the improvements you've made to the pedestrian experience on all sides of the building, particularly at the rear Laneway.

David Hacin and Deneen Crosby requested clarity on the design and grade of the rear Laneway.

Mikyoung Kim (MK): I appreciate you committing to a landscape design on the terraces; this makes the civic spaces in this project even more generous.

Deneen Crosby (DC): Consider the edge treatment of plantings on the terrace.

Pam Beele, Chair of BU Community Task Force: Express appreciation and support from the greater community. This project has evolved through comments from the Commission. Your hard work is appreciated by the community.

Andrea Leers (AL): This project started strong and got better at every presentation. Public realm contributions will be valued by the city.

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

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

Next was a report from Design Committee on **Commonwealth Pier**.

David Hacin: At the most recent presentation to the Design Committee, the present Commissioners were very pleased. There was some discussion about the stair and the dock at the building's edge.

Laura Marett, Sasaki: The redesign celebrates the historic elements of the existing building by maintaining the façade that fronts Seaport Blvd. Our interventions cut into the building to carve out public space and create additional daylight for the interior offices. One of biggest comments from the Commission regarded the program of public space. We were asked to study the location of the niche public space at the rear of the building and water's edge; we have decided not to relocate this.

Matt Petrie, Sasaki: We've made some changes to the main public plaza, which include expanded planting areas for additional trees. Major change at the viaduct level (connecting to World Trade Center) now maximizes amount of green space to communicate a clear vehicular terminus. As you move through the head house into the connector space on the viaduct, the space becomes more intimate. We are still developing the activation and program for the public realm at the perimeter on the ground level. We want to better understand the programming opportunities being implemented in the district before finalizing the design. We've added a series of planters and trellises at the pierhead and will be reconstructing the apron at the water's edge.

Linda Eastley (LE): I'm excited about this project. The new carved-out plaza will be visible to everyone on Seaport Blvd. I appreciate you thinking about the corners of the pier to draw visitors around the edges of the building, particularly because it is so long. We spoke about the stairs in Design Committee, and these will be visible from far away, too. Keep thinking about their design.

David Hacin (DH): Idea of theatrical public art at the edges to draw pedestrians is great; ensure this doesn't get lost in the budgeting/construction process. These will be gateway art pieces to the city from the water.

Andrea Leers (AL): Sense of occupancy coming around the corners through trees, umbrellas, seating can be an additional draw to pedestrians along the building perimeter.

Kirk Sykes (KS): Lighting strategy could be a way of animating this project, especially from the water. The building could have a different character at night.

DH: Remember that the experience from the water is so important.

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

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the proposed Commonwealth Pier Revitalization project in the South Boston Waterfront district.

The Commission transitioned to presentations of new projects. The first was **3368 Washington Street**. Prior to the project presentation, Kristina Ricco, Senior Planner at the BPDA, introduced the context of PLAN: JP/Rox: Formal zoning has not been adopted by the BZC, but the BPDA is using this nearly finalized plan to review new developments. The plan studied 4 focus areas, including Jackson Square, Egleston, Green Street, and Stonybrook/Forest Hills. This project is located within a 65' density bonus area; this is the max allowable height. There is a priority for active ground floor use in this formerly industrial area.

Meghan Richard, Senior Urban Designer/Architect at the BPDA: BPDA Urban Design staff have focused on active streetscape and compliance with PLAN: JP/Rox. We have some transportation concerns regarding parking, loading, and Washington/Green Street intersection.

Eric Robinson, RODE: The project has developed with a focus on design equity and a quality building. The site currently holds the Pine Street Inn facility for administrative and maintenance (warehouse). We've been thinking about how to create an autonomous experience for residents through connections to the outside with large windows. This project follows many of the guidelines and principles laid out in PLAN: JP/Rox and is the first major development along the Washington Street corridor. We'll be expanding the sidewalk to 13' plus 9' more at entry. This is a publically funded project so there are no decks or balconies on the facade, but we have designed interior window seats and larger window openings. The design of the front elevation anchors at the corners with more playfulness in the middle. We plan to use metal panel and fiber board. Community space will be located on the ground floor and along with offices, so it will be an active use (but not retail).

David Hacin (DH): Why isn't there a relief or plaza above the lobby entry since the roof shown is just an inaccessible green space? The massing seems complicated as a serpentine with two branches.

Eric Höweler (EH): I share some concerns about the massing; what is the expression of it? There seem to be awkward corners where some units might be facing each other. This seems to be a modern, adventurous interpretation of a courtyard building. Can you use the serration to create privacy and sense of bay windows?

Linda Eastley (LE): The corner of Washington and Glenn is important. It would be great if it had a more important program.

Anne-Marie Lubeanu (AML): I appreciate your sensitivity to the context. Consider the vertical movement in design as well, and think how what future development on adjacent sites might relate to this project design.

John, owner of property across the street (brewery), IAG: This is an exciting time in the neighborhood. Please study shadows because this will impact the value of surrounding residential and commercial properties.

Neighbor: There isn't enough excitement on the exterior of this project. The neighborhood deserves something much more exciting on the exterior instead of blank, bulky faces.

Bill Reyal, resident in the neighborhood and urban planner: Washington Street wants to be more commercial and serve residents. Could driveways be reduced? Whatever we can do to improve the ground floor and sidewalk experience will be important. Activate the public realm. The project will continue in design committee.

Next up was the presentation of the **Northeastern University EXP**. Mikyoung Kim departed. David Manfredi was recused.

Elizabeth Stifel: Staff has primarily focused on the design and development of the façade skin, as well as the building's relationship to the landscape design and upcoming Melnea Cass project.

Bob Schaffer, Payette: Northeastern is anxious to build out its research portfolio, and this project will contain 350,000 SF of expanded research and robotics programming. The project is an extension of the ISEC building which was recently completed and awarded the 2018 Harleston Parker Medal from the BSA. Extensive pedestrian walkways integrated into the site to connect with the ISEC building next door. EXP will have three entrances. Multistory engaging frontage to animate façade with student activity and work. Along Columbus there is a 2-story robotics space.

DH: This is a really exciting project and the renderings are beautiful. There is nothing in the presentation that contextualizes this with the surrounding neighborhood. We need to see a model to understand the scale and context.

DC: How does this project fit into the identity of the campus as a whole, or how might the landscape strategy better integrate the campus? Would a visitor know this is a main entry to the campus?

LE: This brings vitality along Columbus Ave, but I want to learn more and improve the view from the rear. A model will help us better understand the layers of open space.

KS: Public realm is interpreted broadly here. You are redefining the context of the city, esp with as an addition to the ISEC.

AL: This is the challenge. You've made a terrific building (the ISEC) and now you have to make its partner. You had a simple doodle at the beginning of your presentation, but I'm not seeing clear development about an idea that connects these two buildings on campus. The exterior is too continuous compared to the plan and feels very opaque.

Alison Frazee, NE Task Force: Consider Ruggles Station. There is a designated heat island in IB 2030 along Melnea Cass.

David Manfredi returned. Next was the project update of **Bartlett Yards** in the Roxbury Neighborhood. Cliff Boehmer, Davis Square Architects: In January, we brought this project to the Commission to review building D. The 2013 siteplan was approved with a lot of open space but not much connectivity, which we've found to be a challenge. Buildings B and E have been completed. Building A is funded. Today, we are showing you changes, which include a new walkway on the north side. We have improved the grading condition on site and removed a secondary driveway. We have been working on getting parking under the buildings instead of on surface lots so that the green spaces on site can become connected and better programmed.

Dana Whiteside, Project Manager at the BPDA: Purpose of this presentation today is to demonstrate the changes since the previous approval. Goal was to increase public places throughout the site plan. F lot parcels have changed sight lines. You are not reviewing the specific design of these buildings.

Mikyoung Kim (MK): The removal of the secondary driveway was a great change.

AL: As the plan evolves, so will the design of the public areas surrounding each building.

A motion was made, seconded and:

VOTED: The Commission recommend approval of the Barlett Yards revised site plan with further presentation/review of subsequent buildings as they are developed.

The next item on the agenda was an update for **776 Summer Street** (the L Street Station) in South Boston.

BK Boley, Stantec Architects: We've made some changes since you last saw the project. We've been working with the community and the BPDA for two years. Since then, we've repositioned the buildings onsite to create more porous and prioritize three pedestrian passages through the site: a neighborhood complete street (wunruf), an urban mews, and a historic industrial alley along the length of the existing turbine. We are studying famous precedents of reuse of turbine halls. Ours will open onto a 2-acre waterfront park that incorporates a series of stairs that frame overlook views of South Boston and Downtown. The massing takes a low-rise plateau approach along East 1st Street. Resiliency strategy to raze the length of the site. Building and streetscape character play off of existing brick turbine buildings at the request of the community. Artful street design, retail shops, warm materials, artful expression. We consider the turbine hall to be as much of the public realm as the waterfront park. We are trying to show envelopes for future buildings in our design guidelines.

DH: It'd be helpful to understand what is specifically mandated in the design guidelines for approval of this PDA.

DM: This is nice, view corridors, etc. I'd like to understand what in the infrastructure is a must have and why this is the case. How are decisions about demolition being made?

DC: Need clarity in the open space strategy connectivity across grades.

DM: Is there a datum in the ground plane between new and old?

AML: Diagramming to break down site and phasing for us would be helpful.

David Beele, SB State Rep: Property in question is subject to a deed restriction that currently prohibits housing. My colleagues and I have been encouraging commercial use here.

Joanne McDivot, resident in City Point area and Board of Director, IAG member: Our board has not voted on this project after a number of meetings with the developers. Turbine hall is important to maintaining character of the community. We can work with the developer to make sure that commercial use here fits into the residential neighborhood this project is surrounded by.

The finally project update for the evening was for the **36-70 Sprague Street** project in Hyde Park.

Joel Bargmann, Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype, Inc.: 2 years ago we had 559 apartments planned across the site. Since then, the project has downsized to a 5-story consistent height, now revised to 36-40 Sprague only, with two buildings holding 247 units. Amenities frame the main plaza. A bridge connects two buildings. 300 parking spaces below courtyard accessed off of Sprague. Coworking space has been added both for residents and community asset.

DH: Is there the opportunity for a drop off on Sprague?

DM: What are the alternative uses/contingency plan for the rest of the parcels in Phase II.

AL: It would be helpful to see a physical model and diagrams that explain the pedestrian and vehicular entry sequence into the site. Long building seems problematic compared to previous scheme with 3 buildings. What's around this project?

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:10 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for August 6, 2019. The recording of the July 9, 2019 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.