

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Wednesday, November 6, 2019, starting in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:15 p.m. Members in attendance were: Deneen Crosby, Eric Höweler, David Manfredi, Paul McDonough, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were Linda Eastley, David Hacin, Mikyoung Kim, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, and Andrea Leers. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Alexa Pinard and Natalie Punzak were present for the BPDA.

The Vice Chair, Paul McDonough, 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 Friday October 25, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the October 1 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on October 8, 15, and 22. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the October 1, 8, 15, and 22, 2019 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 401 Congress Street project. Boston Global Investors, The Cogsville Group, Eagle Development Partners, and EDGE Technologies proposes the development of 401 Congress Street in the South Boston Waterfront. The building will be primarily office space with ground level retail/restaurant, and public uses. Note that Massport is exempt from local regulation and enters into the Article 80 process voluntarily when its parcels are being developed by outside developers. At 645,000 SF, the project well exceeds the BCDC review threshold. The project has major implications for the public realm through Congress Street to Haul Road and Summer Street. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 401 Congress, Massport Parcel A2 and Triangle Parcel, project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 449 Cambridge Street project. The site will be redeveloped with two new residential buildings containing a total of approximately 166 units, 80 parking spaces, and 2,400 SF of ground floor retail space on Cambridge Street. The location is near many other projects recently reviewed by the BCDC including 40 Rugg Road, 75 Braintree (formerly 61-63 Braintree Street), and Allston Square. It is largely within the Guest Street Planning Study area in which the sites are suggested for residential development. The project continues the development of the edges of Cambridge Street in this area. Review was recommended. It was therefore moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 449 Cambridge Street project in the Allston neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the Washington Village project. This is a NPC from a previously approved PDA. The proponent has submitted a notice of project change for the first phase, Buildings A and B, from two to one residential building with more units and less retail space. Additionally, the associated outdoor area is relocated and reduced in size. As the BCDC previously reviewed this project, a new vote to review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Washington Village NPC for Buildings A and B and associated site design in the South Boston neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 290 Tremont Street, also called Parcel P12c, project. Parcel P12c is part of the South Cove Urban Renewal area owned by the BPDA. As a surface parking lot was not the best use of such centrally located site, an RFP was issued for development. The program includes affordable housing, hotel, parking, and ground floor community space in approximately 30 stories and 426,500 SF. The scale of the project and proposed public realm implications call for a vote to review. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 290 Tremont Street project in the Chinatown neighborhood.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **401 Congress Street** in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood. Elizabeth Stifel offered a brief overview of the BPDA review process to date. Staff's primary focus has been on the usability of triangle parcel which is proposed for public use with an upper story open space as well as the redesign of the intersection at Congress and B streets.

Victor Vizgaitis, Sasaki: What was once the edge of development of the Seaport, this site has now become central to the Seaport neighborhood. This project proposes 600,000 SF of office use. Every face acts as a building front as the building will be highly visible. Key design challenges include the structural support of this site, as the Silver Line runs below the parcel, as well as visibility and public access through the building. The ground level will be a 24/7 connection from Congress to the WTC Ave and T stop. The roof of triangle parcel will be greened and publicly accessible. The program itself has yet to be determined but will be focused on public, cultural amenities.

William Rawn: Can you walk us through the relationship of people to the roadways?

Victor Vizgaitis: The different grades are critical to understanding circulation. There is no singular front door and we intend for the site to be accessible from all four sides.

Deneen Crosby: The natural flow of people through the site will activate the public uses; I'm not sure that with all the levels of grade that this circulation will be easy and clear.

Victor Vizgaitis: We are exploring connections from the grade to the top of the triangle parcel to help improve connections through the site.

David Manfredi: Why and how do you make pedestrians feel welcome? You gave us a hint, but in subcommittee be more explicit about interior program and design that will draw public use.

Eric Höweler: I like the form of the building. The play between convexity and concavity is strong. The challenge of the site is that you have three levels of "ground," so the arches are terminating at different levels which formally feels cut off. Can you accentuate the arch on the sides that are higher up to suggest the upper levels are just as open instead of constrained?

Kirk Sykes: It's critical to consider movement around the building with as much focus as the movement through the building. I'm not quite certain about the character of the interior oasis.

Tom Brady, IAG: The challenge of the intersection of Beacon and Congress. 1100 residential units will become active across the street from this. We're just as interested as you are in seeing how this works.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for **449 Cambridge project** in Allston. David Manfredi was recused.

Alexa Pinard, Urban Designer at the BPDA, introduced the key design challenges from staff perspective. These include how to have the two buildings address the growing neighborhood behind it and effective facade activation.

Robert Brown, Perkins + Will: This area of Allston is under a lot of development. This project drops two levels across the graded site. We plan to extend the streetscape of the recently developed 40 Rugg Road project to improve the overall public realm. One building will contain compact units in accordance with Boston's Compact Living Guidelines Pilot. Rendered views show the design of a taut building envelope with cut outs for decked amenity spaces. We're still developing the design.

Chris Jones, CRLA Landscape architects: Emory Street is a private way will become a public way and be transformed with this project. We will be following Boston's Complete Streets Guidelines and including a wider sidewalk with a furnishing zone and street trees.

Deneen Crosby: I'm glad to hear that you are developing the landscape and public realm experience in conjunction with the new surrounding developments.

Kirk Sykes: I'm concerned with how you make a lively, safe pedestrian environment around the garage entry.

Eric Höweler: The greatest challenge is activating the ground floor along a sloped grade. I think the architecture is robust and I appreciate the dialogue between both buildings. I wonder about the relationship between the front and back of each building.

William Rawn: I think that the architecture is very strong as a model of 6-story that scales to the neighborhood. Use those skills on the ground floor, too.

Public comment: Could you move the garage entrance to Rugg Road and have a more fully pedestrianized Emory Road?

The project will continue in design committee.

The **Washington Village project at 235 Old Colony Road** was the next project presentation. David Manfredi was recused.

David Chilinski, PCA: We have a few slides to show you what was initially proposed and where we are at now. The two smaller buildings have been combined at the corner of Dorchester Ave, Old Colony

Road, and Damrell. Vehicular and pedestrian access have been better integrated into the streetscape. Like the project presentation before this, a portion of the units will be Compact in compliance with the City's Compact Living Pilot. The park is designed to be public and contains many of the same elements of the original park but are now more visible from the street, with frontage on Damrell.

William Rawn: I want to compliment you on making changes that did not disrupt the ideas you started with three years ago. The new park looks good. The edge on Dorchester Street feels lost.

Eric Höweler: Look for things that bind the buildings together. I don't think it's too big and I don't think the design needs to be chopped up as you are showing. I'm concerned about the thinness of the expression—it feels applied—and might benefit from a more cohesive design approach to the facade.

Deneen Crosby: I appreciate that this is like the original park but now more public facing. But I wonder about the edges, particularly when no building surrounds it. So really think about the edges.

There was no public comment. The project will continue in committee.

The next project presentation was for **290 Tremont Street (Parcel P12c)**. David Manfredi returned. Aeron Hodges, Stantec Architects: This project is located next to the Tufts Medical Center Garage. The proposal includes 171 affordable housing units, 200 hotel rooms, a community space, and 300 parking spaces. We will be sharing infrastructure with the abutting properties in exchange for a through block connection to future development on Washington Street side of the site. The facade design is inspired by the texture of bamboo slips and will be translated into textured and varied precast concrete panels.

Sarah Kudra, Dream Collaborative: The meat of the project is the affordable housing program. There will be a common amenity floor for rental and ownership units with gathering and laundry space. Family friendly building.

Paul McDonough: This is a very complex project, particularly at the ground floor. Consider the ways lighting, access, and safety work together at all hours.

Deneen Crosby: The trick to this will be creating a public draw to the public courtyard; there is no direct siteline. The key will be the potential library/future ground floor program and how it shares access with this public court.

David Manfredi: There is so much complexity here. Is the building expression overly complex? You've done a great job mixing programs, creating porosity through the site, engaging with existing context. But I find the building hard to understand. What are the horizontal datums that tie this project together?

William Rawn: The portal through the site through to Washington is a laudable effort. Don't give up on this part of the design.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **1717-1725 Hyde Park Avenue**.

Mike Dougherty from The Architectural Team introduced the project, highlighting the changes to the sections and elevations made through the BCDC Design Committee process. Mike: Primary focus of feedback was on simplifying the building corner. We did that and carried some ideas through from other parts of the building, like introducing a setback from the bridge and at the top floor.

David Manfredi: You've simplified the design and the buildings feel better on the site. This is the exact kind of place that more housing should be integrated in Boston. We appreciate how you've responded to feedback from the commission.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved seconded and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for the Residences at Readville Station at 1717-1725 Hyde Park Avenue, bounded by Hyde Park Avenue, Milton Street, and the AMTRAK Mainline and MBTA Commuter Rail Tracks in the Readville Neighborhood.

The next project was **Allston Square**.

Dartagnan Brown from Embark Architects presented a series of views of the project. Through a series of five Design Committee meetings, the BCDC worked with the proponent team to come up with a cohesive approach to design and public realm strategy for Allston Square. The project proposes five buildings on the north and south sides of Cambridge Street in Allston, including the restoration and renovation of two existing buildings.

Deneen Crosby: We made several requests to simplify material palette. The strategy and language of design is much improved.

Kirk Sykes: The project has made a lot of progress from the initial presentation, particularly at the ground plane. We want the buildings to read independently in some ways.

David Manfredi: The sixth and seventh floors still need to be focused on. This is an incredible project that is transforming several blocks of Allston and creating a new neighborhood entrance. This can continue with BPDA staff.

Eric Höweler: In a way, building up to and next to a historic building is harder than not. This is an incredible set of projects in the ways it engages with the existing fabric. The transition between the Jack Young building and the new Allston Hall is tough and seems like the most awkward. These transitions are opportunities for continued simplicity of material and color choice.

Kirk Sykes: I'd like to move to approve with further consideration of upper massing particularly, as it relates to the top floors and the relationship between various buildings.

This motion was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the Allston Square Project in the Allston/Brighton Neighborhood with the proviso that the project team continue to work with BPDA staff on the design of the top floors and the relationships between buildings.

3368 Washington Street, the Pine Street Inn, project was presented next.

Eric Robinson, Rode Architects: This project has undergone a robust community process, particularly recently. Initially a 6-story building, now 5 with 4-story drop along Washington Street. We worked quite a bit on the public realm in terms of the streetscape and entry sequence, which is now a consolidated single entry for all residents. The loading dock has been removed to allow for a larger community space. This is a 100% affordable housing project

David Manfredi: The combination of several things makes this front entrance feel suburban: planter against the building, shape of roofline, raised planters along the street. It feels very barriered.

Eric Howeler: There is a lot going on, particularly because of all the agitations/sawtooth cuts in the facade along Washington Street. This is articulated like 6 different buildings. Do you need this many materials? I'm looking for more cohesion than differentiation. A quieter statement would be okay.

Deneen Crosby: This is a responsive team. I would feel comfortable with continue finesse of the building entry and streetscape design with BPDA staff.

Alan Benningfeld, abuttor: I speak for myself. I support the spirit and intention of this project. The changes made are in the right direction and the reduced massing is a better fit with the neighborhood and character, but there is still much to be done regarding the design and public realm. Want to thank the developer and design teams for being responsive to the neighborhood. Hope to encourage everyone to continue to engage the neighborhood in an iterative and productive discussion.

A motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the proposed 3368 Washington Street project in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood with simplification of the sawtooth at the front, the facade materials, entry eyebrow, setback and planters

The final presentation from the review committee was for the **Suffolk Downs PDA Masterplan**.

Tom O'Brien, HYM Partners: We have undergone an extensive community process with more than 300 public meetings over several years. The project has worked with the BCDC in more than 8 meetings. Public benefits include the massive open space and diverse retail, 10% of which will be dedicated to local retail businesses in the East Boston and Revere communities.

Kishore Varanasi, CBT Architects: We have introduced more varied height zones in response to scale of the abutting Orient Heights neighborhood. We removed the jug handle vehicular entry to create a more internal street network at the edges of the site. The organizational framework hasn't changed much but individual pieces have been shaped. Design guidelines in the form of 30+ descriptive slides and frameworks were presented.

PM: Congratulations to you all on an extraordinary process and resulting project.

William Rawn: Looking at the list of committee meetings, it's evident that we are familiar with the project and have had a good dialogue. We are happy with the big moves and recognize that the smaller moves will evolve and experience great variation over the next 20 years of development. We have confidence in the overall plan and the team's approach.

Deneen Crosby: I particularly like the open space, environmental strategy, and street grid. It could tie to the existing neighborhood more but the public park is a big set towards that.

Kirk Sykes: At the last meeting we had concerns about the relentless podium.

Kishore Varanasi: We have design strategies and options about ways that parking can be eliminated in the future or that blocks can be cut up.

David Manfredi: The strong ideas you originally introduced have held up and improved through the process. Relationship of open space plan to views and walkable streets are strong and will be comfortable.

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

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for the PDA Master Plan the Suffolk Downs Redevelopment Project at the edge of the East Boston neighborhood with the conditioned upon review of all subsequent area plans, open space, and building designs.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 9:04 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for December 3, 2019. The recording of the November 6, 2019 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.