

DRAFT MINUTES

BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, August 2nd, 2016, starting in the BRA Board Room, 9th Floor, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:25 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Michael Davis (Co-Vice-Chair); Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, David Hacin, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, William Rawn, Daniel St. Clair, and Kirk Sykes. Absent was Paul McDonough (Co-Vice-Chair). Also present was David Carlson, Executive Director of the Commission. Representatives of the BSA were present. Matthew Martin, Michael Cannizzo, Jeong-Jun Ju, Erik Hokenson, Sonal Gandhi, and Andrew Grace (Office of John Barros) were present for the BRA.

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 Tuesday, July 19, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the July 5th, 2016 Meeting Minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the July 5th, 2016 Boston Civic Design Commission Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **159-201 Washington Street (St. Gabriel's) Project**. David Carlson (DAC) noted that this project, adjacent to the St. Elizabeth's Hospital campus, proposed to save an existing monastery building and remove a church and dormitory (site owned by the Franciscans) and build well over 600 units of housing in new buildings on the site. This was a new Project, at about 660,000 SF well over the BCDC threshold; review was recommended. It was duly moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 159-201 Washington Street Project, on the St. Gabriel's site, in the Allston/Brighton neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Packard Crossing (45 Brighton Avenue) Project**. DAC noted that this project, near the previously seen and approved (but troubled by ZBA) 89 Brighton Avenue Project, was about 147,000 SF, over the BCDC threshold. Review was recommended. Again, it was duly

moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Packard Crossing (45 Brighton Avenue) Project in the Allston Village neighborhood.

David Manfredi (DM) was recused from the next item. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **General Electric Headquarters Project**. DAC noted that this project was in the 100-Acre Plan area and straddled the Fort Point Channel Landmark District. A prominent Project for Boston, at over 380,000 SF, it was well over the BCDC threshold and review was recommended. It was duly moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed General Electric Headquarters Project in the 100-Acre PDA Plan area (and partially in the Fort Point Channel Landmark District), within the South Boston Seaport District.

DM returned. The next item was a report from the Design Committee on the **Washington Village Project**. Deneen Crosby (DC) reported that the Project had developed much more information on the site and buildings; garage treatments were still being worked on. David Chilinski (DChil) noted that some changes came about as a result of meetings with the IAG and community, and they have coordinated with the DOT AVE Plan. DChil: There was a concern from the Commissioners about the ground floor programming; we have adjusted and improved that (indicates site plan). We also modified a side street to be more of a neighbor. There is retail now along Damrell Street. (Shows overall view; notes heights and the idea of substantial accord; notes program elements; notes the Halvorson work, and trees along Damrell, the open space; shows additional views, including one from Tuckerman, and views of the towers.) Daniel St. Clair (DS) arrived. DChil: (Shows elevations.) We have integrated the building treatment with the garages, so that some of the tower elements come through. It's less of a podium, more a part of the tower. In some places, the tower comes all the way down. (Shows views from the pedestrian level.) Where the short-term garage is visible, there is a special effort to treat the openings as a window-like articulation. (Shows diagrams of a garage structure with slopes, then annotated facade studies, and precedents.) We took the idea of shielding the diagonal, and show a variety of approaches with some details. (Goes through each building, primarily 'C' and 'D'.) We are using specialized lighting, with shields, so that the direct view of the lighting is cut off.

Kirk Sykes (KS): This is a phenomenon we're seeing more and more of. We're seeing blocks strung together, and you don't see the lights.... But I would like the green wall more. Something artful, with more creativity, given there's no people. I like the precedent of the green, and the jazzy horizontal images visible on one of your slides. DChil: That was one of our studies. We intended to be like the Channel Center Garage screen. We can't do it everywhere, but that would be our 'artful' approach. DS: One of the other things was bringing the facades down, with the base connected to the tower. This is better - you're making the parking something else. KS: The variation could

even be solid.

Bill Rawn (WR): This is one of the issues, where [structured garages arise] due to the cost of affordable housing, and soil contamination. And this is a neighborhood where you would want to provide more animation. I'd suggest that we develop Guidelines, as we did with bridges. DAC: We can do that. This site is also constrained due to the 120' parcel depth. WR: My concern is that 120' will become block widths, instead of 145'. David Manfredi (DM): Another consideration is options for conversion - when we no longer need cars, or have more varied transportation modes. We should try to get ahead of this. MD: More than just guidelines. We do need to get ahead of the issue. There is a lot of development here. Consolidating the impact of parking is a considerable benefit. KS: The tradeoff for this project is compelling architecture for the parking floors. But consider the Brookline Avenue parking garage, or Shanghai...break up the homogeneous strategy. Andrea Leers (AL): It's one thing to have a strategy for one building, but another thing on a whole street. Maybe a different strategy.... Rather than pretending there's a series of buildings, there's a screening system that is dynamic, and continuous. I'd like to volunteer to assist the BRA. There are several buildings downtown with this coming. David? WR: We should try for interim guidelines within a month. MD: We should draft our own. I recommend that the Proponent continue to work with the BRA on pushing the envelope, a condition of the vote. Linda Eastley (LE): The space where Damrell meets Old Colony is great; I'd love that to be even more active. MD: Given the context, the planning, the support of the neighborhood - I'd move to approve with the condition above. This was seconded, and it was

VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the schematic design for the Washington Village Project at 235 Old Colony Avenue in the South Boston neighborhood, with the condition that the Proponent work with BRA staff to boldly enhance the treatment of the parking garage areas.

David Hacin (DH) arrived. The next item was a presentation of the **159-201 Washington Street (St. Gabriel's) Project**. Brian Connor (BC) of Cube 3 Studio noted the location and introduced the team. He showed an aerial of the site, noting the path to Warren Street, and St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Then context photos along Washington, and the site. BC noted the landscaped edge, the retaining wall, and the slope, consistent along the site edge; he described the monastery and other buildings in photos, noted an overall 50-foot grade change across the site, and again showed the path. BC: The path is part of our planning strategy, which is to maintain the buffer, honor the monastery, and develop the site at its edges. We've placed more mass and density at the top of the hill, taken an initial cut at a master plan. Seven stories at the top, 5-4-3 stories stepped to the left, 6-4 stepped to the right. We have 380 parking spaces (notes parking entries in Building 3, on the left), and bicycle parking is distributed throughout. (Shows floors by layers.) There are public spaces on the ground floor of the Monastery and in Building 1 (to the right). (Shows a 3-D drawing of the overall site, a view from the entry, views obscured by trees. Describes the procession through the site- a café area in Building 1, the approach to 2, a view of 3 with and without trees, and the new Shrine. Shows partial elevations of the buildings.) We are mixing warm, wood-like material with metal, and breaking up the mass of Building 3.

J.P.Shadley (JPS), the landscape architect, showed the site plan, noting the grade, the path, an abrupt change in grade at some edges, and the stairs in the site path looping back to the street. He noted the existing trees 'in an eclectic landscape.' He noted the Shrine. JPS: We are replicating the Shrine, and keeping other aspects of the landscape, such as terraces. We are retaining the wall, including a portion that's chain link. There's very little remaining of the Olmsted Brothers' design. But one aspect is a series of engaged landscape levels. We've kept the spirit, and now have an ADA-compliant path going up into the complex. It opens up for a view of the building at the turnaround. (Shows a modeling of moments, such as the plaza and stairs.) The passages and walkways in the area around the Monastery are more garden-esque.

DH: You *really* need a model in Committee. There are a lot of massing decisions - we need a model to understand them. BC: We have that in the works. LE: This is a *lot* of information. A unique Project for the BCDC. Most projects have a public face. This is different - it's a campus, with green and topographic separation. What strikes me is how vehicular it is. When you come back, the model will help, but we will also want to know how the public will interact with this. The Path - who uses it, who are the user groups (i.e. high school students) - that kind of question will help. It doesn't feel inviting now. Help us understand the pedestrian movements. You need to treat it *as a campus*. What is its heart? And Monastery Road - we need to understand that intersection, which brings the City in. DC: When I saw the yellow arrow, I thought it was a much bigger connection - it's hard to see in the perspectives. The front area where the Shrine is, is an opportunity to engage the public in a different way. This is an unusual landscape, almost an arboretum. BC: There are definitely a lot of notions to consider to bring the public in. It's hard to figure out who uses the path, it's always different. JPS: It's forbidding in parts. BC: We want to find a way to improve it.

DM: I'm glad Linda said 'campus'. You guys are really good at that. There's a lot of good here. But I want to understand it as a campus, and its spaces...the Monastery sets itself up, but I'm not sure that the buildings are making *spaces*. I understand you have to have a ground floor leading to square footage, and units. AL: The basic decisions are sound - the planted edge, Monastery Road going through. What strikes me after that, is that the buildings don't shape the space. Building 1 begins to, but it doesn't have parking. 3 isn't very good at all. 2A and 2B, on the broad garage - you should think of these as four buildings, and the parking differently. DH: I agree with the buffer and many of the comments. The amount of development is - breathtaking. The buildings are *very* visually active. It feels like you're trying to compete. Especially in proximity to the Monastery, it feels more like the strategy should be a stronger 'jewel in the setting'. The Project is *very* heterogenous.

WR: I want to compliment the presentation and the pace. Both Davids' comments are good. I'm thinking about campuses, and worry about this. The model...this also deserves a site-specific model to help decisions. KS: I also compliment the presentation. There are so many flat, institutional buildings in this area. Think about the whole. Castle Estates in Brookline - there's an opportunity, at least in the center, to conceptualize this as part of the campus. DC: It would be good to know where the views are, here. MD: I'd caution us about thinking

about this too much as a campus. This is public realm now. We're all interested in those spaces - we have to pay close attention. DS: Did you look at a more urban approach? BC: We did. DS: Did you look at retaining the church? BC: We did; it sits on the site. Michael Cannizzo: The Commission should be aware that there is another Project proposed *immediately* adjacent to this one. With that, the 159-201 Washington Street Project was sent to Design Committee.

DH was recused from the next item. The next item was a presentation of the **Packard Crossing Project**. Steve Weinig (SW) of The Hamilton Company introduced the Project: We are excited about the Project, which will animate underutilized parcels next to our headquarters. Jeffrey Brown (JB) of Hacin + Associates introduced the design team, which includes Shauna Gillies-Smith (SGS) of ground. JB: This block, like many others in Boston, has suffered through episodic development. This is an opportunity to stitch it together. (Shows site plan; notes the sites and the differences between Brighton and Gardner, Chester and Malvern.) We are mediating different typologies. (A model was set into a context model. JB showed context photos - along Brighton, then Gardner, with a mix of buildings including a courtyard building.) We are retaining the Victorian house (shows on site plan); there is a lot of credit with the community in our doing that. There's a through-block connection we propose. (Notes strategy, shows the two masses.) It's 68' high on Brighton. We are retaining the existing parking spaces so that it's not displaced out to the community. We're at 45 Brighton.... (Shows the ground floor, then upper floors and terraces, then views.) The bay design has different aspects when seen from different directions. (Shows a series of black & white views and vignettes.) There's a wider sidewalk at the garage, along the building. (Shows a color view, then a site section.) We have a masonry base, red brick, and then masonry panels. (Goes through elevations.) 83 Gardner is 46' high and has 38 units, 39 parking spaces. (Notes circulation.) The parking is below the entire building site, with one way drives for both in and out. JB then showed: a neighborhood elevation, describing how the scheme fits in; a site section; more vignettes (he noted the slatted wood interpretation of a mansard); a color perspective from the west along Gardner. JB: The materials are masonry, cement panel, and a wood rainscreen. Public outreach has all been positive.

SGS: The streetscape adopts the character of each street. This is an opportunity to create an aggregated landscape for four buildings. (Points out all the entries, which face either streets or new spaces.) The through-block connection will be open to the public. The timing of completing that is unknown as yet. (Shows a section.) Sidewalks will meet Complete Street guidelines. The character images here (shows) are more for scale. There are plantings against the garage wall, and a passive, planted sitting space. (Shows sections through the site, a detail of the courtyard area, and then more precedent images.)

DC: Can you go to the neighborhood plan? The scale of the open space is very nice. And the passageway through. Malvern Street might have a connection to West Station. You've designed the passage as a quiet cut-through, but there could be a lot more people. I like seeing the interior of the block benefit from your project. SW: A surprising amount of people cut through our lots. DS: This Project is fantastic, and presented with an amount of detail that helps one understand it. Why the parking number? And are you building in back-to-back

phases, or in one? SW: A number of things factor into the schedule. Our intent is to do them immediately back-to-back. The walkway realistically will be in the second phase. What drove the parking, was a series of tenant parking spaces in the area, and our headquarters parking, so it's that in addition to the parking required for this. WR: Congratulations on your restraint along Brighton - 5 stories. There is a restraint to the height, and elegance. It's interesting without being flamboyant. My only question - I don't understand the notion of the building [wing] on the right on Gardner. JB explained the triple-decker reference. AL: I echo Bill's compliment about the strategy, and your use of materials; it's really thoughtful. I like Brighton, and would have liked to see more of that on Gardner. But this is very good, and I'd be happy to approve.... KS: On Gardner, the complexity I see on your other buildings I don't yet see here. Railings, balustrades, etc. - evolve the Gardner elevation. JB: We will have balconies on the front. The level of detail is not developed yet in this documentation.

With that, and hearing no neighborhood comments, a motion was made, seconded, and it was

VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the schematic design for the Packard Crossing Project, at 45 Brighton Avenue and 79 Gardner Street in the Allston Village neighborhood.

DH returned. DM was recused for the next item. The next item was a presentation of the **General Electric Headquarters Project**. Peter Cavanaugh (PC) introduced himself as the General Electric Ecosystem Project Manager. PC: This is more than a campus, being in the flow of the City and its people. We are moving into Farnsworth this month, and that puts pressure on us to work through all those things - our own ecosystem - to move into the new campus in 2018. PC then introduced Doug Gensler (DG) of Gensler. DG: GE had an extraordinary aspiration for this location, an amazing brief. It reflects their transformation from an industrial to a digital company. Ann Klee (of GE) has worked with Peter and us. As we worked with the brief and GE, what do the ideas boil down to?

1. A Community Convener. A campus that gathers, and brings people together.
2. Enabling people at/who visit GE to change the thinking of our time.
3. A Sustainability Leader.

The design reflects these strategic pillars. The building is a tapestry of the program, and respect for its context, for that character. And inviting to the public. We want to stitch into the fabric of the City. (Shows diagrams - heritage meets innovation, new and old - and context photos.) This is a catalyst for a new area, the beginning of the 100-Acre Plan. And an extension of Harborwalk, one of the treasures of the City. (Shows the site plan, noting the connecting space, and the atrium connecting the older buildings.) We did not do the building shown to the west in the Plan along Necco Court - we chose open space instead. We have limited parking to 30 spaces. GE is moving from the country into the City, and wants to encourage public transportation.

DG: I'll explain the thinking. (Shows a view from the southwest. Shows diagrams, noting circulation, the convener spaces, layers.) The cantilever is from a convening space. There are green space connections throughout. And user connections. (Shows a section, then a site plan with program adjacencies indicating public uses.) The

building won't need a LEED Platinum plaque; it will speak to its sustainability. The language of the neighborhood is used in the building's materiality. An expression of structure, and materials including zinc, wood, stone, and glass. (Shows a view from the Summer Street bridge, noting the route from South Station, and the visible 6th floor Convener Space and 'vertical village'. Shows views from the NW, then SE. Notes the 'Solar Veil'.) There's some reference to the maritime, but also more (notes elements in the view down Necco Street, shows vignettes suggesting the proposed community experience).

Cody of the Office of James Burnett: Having this much open space, is a real opportunity to connect. We plan a series of zones. A transitional landscape toward the Channel, a resilient landscape. The GE Plaza is flexible, but has practical spaces (notes connections). (Shows sections of the area toward the Channel, from the bistro on down.) We're using native plantings and habitat, a showcase for resilience. (Shows a mix of vignettes and sections, with precedents.) Stormwater retention areas are embedded into the plantings. We're also looking at ways to get closer to the edge, to use the public dock, for kayaks. There are seating opportunities for lectures, or an opportunity to pause. A lawn, for movies, gatherings, etc. The south side is also transitional, and can very much be part of the future 100 Acre Plan.

AL: What's going on under the roof? DG: It's basically mechanical. There is some roof terrace below, which connects with a Convener space to a porch. LE: The solar veil - I'm curious why you didn't wrap it to the west, where you will have perpetual sun. DG: the idea was not to dominate, and the vertical blades (shown) are not as efficient. WR: Explain more about the solar veil. How much is open, vs. how much is solar panel. DG: The structure is horizontal, with PV panels on top. The intent was to create an efficient building. At the bottom, we looked at continuing the veil, but we thought it should have its own expression. There will be some PV on top of the lower horizontals. DS: About the canopy and bridge - why not go to the top of the brick buildings, with the bridge connecting there? I'm sure you'll hear more about that. DG: We did look at that. The scale of the higher space seemed less human. KS: Will there be a seasonal enclosure of the space? DG: That's not planned. DH: I like the exuberance of the expression. The veil, and top - are exciting. Most of my comments are on the lower level. I'm surprised that maintaining the dock is all that's being done. I think there's a lot more that GE could do. That building, that site - has an opportunity to do something more engaging. I'd like to know if GE is planning to engage with the artists in the area...GE as an arts champion, expressed in a strong way. We have this exciting plaza, a connection, which terminates in the Necco Garage. It's a problem that should be solved...an obligation with *this* plan to deal with that in a meaningful way. I like the expression of the building that's simpler, from the south. From South Station, it's not as clear how the forms engage. DC: This is along the edge of a green space - maybe that's where the water is engaged in a meaningful way.

MD: You cite community engagement, and say you're a sustainability pioneer. But when you get to the public realm, you've run out of ideas. Necco Street is an important connector in the Plan, and I don't know that you're enlivening it. On the south, if it does face the [future] park, it should be more active. The setback is the right thing to do, but it's disconnected with the building and the sense of public space. It could be a really important space. I would like to see more ideas about how the plaza gets roofed. When the power goes out, what happens?

The BRA [City] Climate Change Guidelines ought to include how the building is passively survivable and promotes a public recourse/haven. *That* would be a sustainability pioneer.

AL: Old and new - is the right thing to do. Taller, next to lower - is the right thing to do. In the juncture between the two, in your whole explanation, I missed the part about how you get there. We understand how you get in from the Fort Point Channel; we don't know how you get in from Necco. The level at which you find yourself crossing is above the brick; I wonder if you might think of it as coming *into* something. DG: It does come into a space. AL: think of the whole floor, the brick buildings. On the vertical village, you have a building which is a pile of things. The vertical separation detracts too much; it could be simplified. I hope you can study all your connections, and give yourselves a real front door. DS: ...The spaces... WR: The City...We are really excited about this coming to Boston, and to see what your vision is for the City. WE are questioning good things - maybe it's the Red Sox mentality. When you step and see the image - one is intrigued by it. The verticality of the building is a good first step. The cantilever is an interesting thing. That's positive. Most important is the veil. As depicted, it's highly transparent. There's a lot of light, sky. To me, that's the challenge - if the veil got too solid. I urge you to protect that transparency.

KS: Thank you for coming to Boston. When many of us were thinking about the Innovation District, there was not enough thinking about how people come together. I challenge you to think about that - for the plaza, which is why I asked you about enclosure. Reverse engineering - it looks like the solar veil should be doing something. It would be good to hear how you're thinking about it. LE: Like the others, I'm interested in the pedestrian experience. An ode to the industrial - and opportunities to show that. The museum could extend beyond the walls, and intrigue. It could be remarkable. A second thought - the veil has directionality, it has a meaning. I would like - the supports might be playful - so what you see [at the top] is not the back of that. I wonder if you've done wind studies. You've worked to create public spaces; it would be amazing if they were usable in the winter months. An authentic outdoor room, that has some dynamic. DH: GE Plaza should be a place in Boston for the whole City, like the Pru or Rowes. The challenge is how to make this space. What happens in the summer, at Christmas? What makes it a postcard? The bones of something that could really capture the imagination. That's what's exciting about the veil. What's my memory of the space?

MD asked for public comment. One gentleman stood up and congratulated the team on choosing a great architect. Hearing no further public comment, the General Electric Headquarters 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 8:39 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for September 6, 2016. The recording of the August 2, 2016 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

