

DRAFT MINUTES

**BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION**

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, starting in the BRA Board Room, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:20 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Michael Davis (Co-Vice-Chair); Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, Paul McDonough (Co-Vice-Chair), William Rawn, Daniel St. Clair, Kirk Sykes, and Lynn Wolff. Absent was David Hacin. Also present was David Carlson, Executive Director of the Commission. Representatives of the BSA were present. Lauren Middleton-Pratt was briefly 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 Saturday, May 17, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Meeting Minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

**VOTED: To approve the May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Boston Civic Design Commission Meeting Minutes.**

Votes were passed for signature. MD asked for a report from the Review Committee on the **Ropewalk Project**. David Carlson (DAC) reported that the Ropewalk Building in the Charlestown Navy Yard was one of the two most historically significant buildings in the Navy yard, itself a national landmark. As such, it had very stringent Guidelines and was subject to direct review by a number of historic agencies, including the NPS (three levels), the MHC, and the BLC. The guidelines not only spoke to this unique building, they also defined the landscape in principle (a re-creation of Flirtation Walk). Thus, although at about 120,000 SF the Ropewalk rehabilitation was over the BCDC threshold, review was NOT recommended, similar to other similar restoration. The Proponent had been asked to, and was prepared to give, a courtesy presentation of the proposal tonight. A motion was made, seconded, and it was

**VOTED: That the Commission NOT review the schematic design for the proposed Ropewalk Project, in the Historic Monument Area within the Charlestown Navy Yard, in the Charlestown neighborhood.**

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Seaport Square Parcel J Project**. DAC noted the BCDC had recently seen Parcel H. Here, a Yotel was proposed, and like other Seaport Square parcels, review of each was a condition of approval of the overall PDA. The square footage on this is also near the threshold of 100,000 SF. An affirmative vote to

review was recommended. It was duly moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design of the proposed Seaport Square Parcel J Project, a Yotel, in the Seaport Square PDA in the South Boston Waterfront District.**

Lynn Wolff (LW) was recused from the next item. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **New Street NPC II Project**. DAC reported that the Commission had seen the Project twice before, and it now had a new owner who had modified the program/design to a form where they felt it could move forward. The changes, although generally tending toward simpler, are sufficient to warrant a new BCDC review and a new vote to review was recommended. It was duly moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the newly revised schematic design for the proposed New Street Development Project in the East Boston neighborhood.**

MD noted that there would be a discussion at the end of the meeting, or after, regarding Deneen's ideas for tours of past projects reviewed by the BCDC. The next item was an informational presentation of the **Ropewalk Project**. Joseph Timilty (JT) introduced himself and his team, noting he had worked previously with Bob Keane on The Joinery Shop at the Navy Yard, and with Jack French on the Bunker Hill School in Charlestown. JT: David gave you the information about the historic agency participation earlier. We are working with David and others on the BRA staff as well. The building is unique; it is one of only two such buildings surviving. Jack French (JF) then presented their design, noting first the locus - and next the sheer length of the building. He showed plans, and then the site plan, and old photos. JF: This is listed as the second most endangered of historic buildings in the country. We have tried to be innovative, but there are strict guidelines. We had thought of cutting down windows for doors, but the guidelines preclude all except only two new ones *needed* for code purposes. There are some other quirks in the guidelines...including things such as no cleaning the granite. (Notes the strategy for saving the building material in the altered openings where the two doors are cut down from windows. Shows sections through the units, and describes how they work.) I also want to point out the corridor; this also functions as a positive aspect of historic interpretation, turning a negative (single-loaded corridor) into a positive. My daughter's firm will design the photo experience. (Shows typical unit plans. Shows existing conditions photos, and notes proposed Museum location.) JT then added that there would be about 90 units and that of these they would have, working with the City, 30% affordable units. JT: Questions?

LW (recused) and Paul McDonough (PM) arrived. Deneen Crosby (DC): I have a question about the mural. Is the whole face going to be done? JF: Yes. MD: Flirtation Walk? JF showed an old photo: The actual design will have to be reinterpreted, due to the emergency vehicles requirement. MD: What is the derivation of the name? JF: Things were different times back then.... Kirk Sykes (KS) asked about the light in the units. JF showed the section again, pointing out windows and skylights. Daniel St. Clair (DS) and Andrea Leers (AL) also

asked questions. AL: Students have looked at this problem. I have a question about your choice of the corridor location. JF: It's where people will walk. There will be a very nice yard on the other side. DC: So, the floor elevation is below grade (at 4<sup>th</sup> Street). DS: What about the area around the Museum? That seems the most public. JF: There are fewer trees there, in part because there is also a handicapped ramp. DC asked about the sidewalk relationship. JF: It's level (with the walk on the south). DS: And along Chelsea? JF: That will be better. There, the Tobin (Bridge) dominates. AL: I had expected the corridor there, if one had to chose. JF: At the second floor, it makes no difference. It's better to have it on the south, where the people are. DS: Is there any community space? JT: Not in this project. We use space, and there is space, in the YMCA here.

Bill Rawn (WR): Is there anyone in the audience with a question? Greg Galer (GG) of the Boston Preservation Alliance: We are very supportive of the Project. Some question the location of the museum; they thought it a better location where the equipment is now. But we support this Project. MD thanked the Proponents for their presentation.

The next item was a presentation of the **Seaport Square Parcel J Project**. John Hynes (JH) of BGI introduced himself and the team. JH: We are partners with Morgan Stanley on this, the second parcel on the eastbound side of Seaport Boulevard. We were before you a couple of months ago with a Chapel on (Parcel) H. (Notes other projects visible in a view looking along Seaport Boulevard.) Work on Parcel K's foundation is underway. We were struggling with the dimensions of this site - it's 45' wide - residential would be single-loaded. We ran into Yotel, with their unique program. (Notes aspects of the Yotel program.) Their concept includes a state-of-the-art image. BGI will act as the developer, with Wheelock financing. Tamara Roy (TR) of ADD Inc. presented the design, noting that it now incorporates preliminary comments from the BRA and FPCLDC. 317 rooms is tight for Yotel, but minimally okay - they wanted 350. There are limitations on the parcel; the 105' height doesn't include mechanical space, where we have now located a rooftop amenity. The actual height is about 125'. (Notes locus, site, ground floor plan.) The plaza design facing H hasn't changed, but Adrian (from Reed Hilderbrand) is here just in case. (Notes program, loading strategy; shows plaza view. Shows elevation.) We are using very white materials, which are lit with color at night. The ground floor has a lounge area, which allows anyone to just visit.

Linda Eastley (LE) and David Manfredi (DM) arrived. DS: So, you're not incorporating the T. TR: No, the building goes around it. We have enough property for the structure. DS: I had thought the T headhouse would be temporary... TR: Not now! (Shows new model.) The BRA thought the design was relentless, but cited the *Unite d'Habitation* building by Corbusier. We looked at thought, and thought that was an interesting reference. And the FPCLDC wanted two towers, not one. So we have responded with this new model. We have introduced a vertical transparency by eliminating a room on either side, adding one at the ends. So there are windows at the ends, and the windows have been altered to show a zone of 'solids,' per the *Unite*. With more sculptured efforts at the top with the HVAC. DC: Can you walk through at the alley level? TR: No. You *could*.... (Shows what the FPCLDC required on the Parcel H Chapel, a translucent glass panel.) DC: Is the alley open? TR: No, it's bookended; it doesn't go through

to Congress. Discussion followed. Commissioners felt that the model design was *much* improved from what was shown in the initial material. And that the alley was not significant. DC: I think Farnsworth was a good case. There is no connection here. AL asked about the nature of the glass detail in the center on the newer model. TR explained its dimensionality and the modified half-room program behind. AL: I'm not quite sure about this aspect (points to one side of the glass) - this variation seems like difference for its own sake. The other changes are tighter, good.

KS asked about the nana wall detail. TR: You just walk out. KS: So, there's no differentiation? TR explained, then Adrian: There is some slope; it may require a step. KS: I'd like to understand more about that. LE: Where the T moves out (on the sidewalk), are those fixtures? Adrian: Yes. We can shift them; we have removed trees there. LE: You could respond to the T, in the landscape. KS: Is there space between the T and your structure? It looks like a few feet. TR: Yes. That is partly why it's now *piloti*. Some discussion ensued about modifying the T to provide a better fit. JH also noted the lighting in the station. TR, to DM: The station was yours, wasn't it? Very nice. DM: I want to say, I agree with Andrea, this is a very good project. She said it well; there is perhaps one pattern too many. WR: I wonder if we could approve this. Really, I feel fairly positive. A discussion of this ensued; DAC noted that the Project was brought in early so as to create the possibility of a joint session with the FPCLDC. But if the BCDC felt positively, that sense could be conveyed. LW suggested something sculptural and fun on the roof. LE noted the Project could return for a brief update. With that, it was duly moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the schematic design for the proposed Seaport Square Parcel J Project, a Yotel, in the Seaport Square PDA in the South Boston Waterfront District.**

LW was recused for the next item and left. The next item was a presentation of the **New Street NPC II Project**. James Gray (JG) of ADD Inc. introduced Kelly Saito of Gerding Edlen and other members of their team. He showed the locus and an aerial of the existing site, noted the prior Project designs, showed a view of the proposal with facts (250 units, 4900 SF FPA space, etc.) noted, showed the history of the site in maps and illustrations, and noted the consistent approach to the Project: demolition of the two lesser buildings and an addition on top of the main building. JG then went through plans, showing the ground floor, the second (with amenity spaces), and the upper levels. JG: We have revised the top, per conversation with the BRA. (Shows precedent photos for the waterfront piers, and the cladding. Shows a perspective view.) The idea was to express the frame on every two floors, but do it wholly to the building. The materials are a combination of metal and cement (oko) panels. The canopy is intended to be industrial, with a marine character. (Shows two views of the Sumner extension side; notes monitors. Shows a bird's-eye view. Places the new model, replacing a model of the existing site, in a small context model. Shows an interior through-lobby view, visible also on the model.) John Copley (JC) of the Copley Wolff Design Group: There's a lot going on, we have tried to organize it. The lobby is going through, connecting to Harborwalk. Harborwalk along the edge. The lawn is tilted, to promote views of the water. At the end of Sumner there is a

garden area and turnaround. (Shows porch/'loading dock' area.) Here we are using metal, stone, and planters. There are a lot of materials generally in different segments of the site, fun variations. (Shows sections.) There is a 5% slope in the tipped area.

DC: On the path along LoPresti, where is the property line? (JC indicates.) WR: That 4.5' sidewalk is the only connection to the water...that seems inadequate. The rest of the site is a built form blocking the passage. The sheer bulk of the new building - I can't imagine why we would approve that. I find that on all three grounds, the scheme is highly questionable. DS: I want to clarify - you HAVE approval of your PDA. JG: We have made some changes, but there have been variations before. (Clarifies.) This height and bulk, with some variations, have been approved. (Shows prior approved scheme.) WR: We approved that? We did? DAC and several Commissioners: YES. JG: Basically, the access was better. But the access was also a canyon, between heights of 6 and 17 stories. The massing - we have less on the south, and slightly more on the tall building, but overall there is less FAR. DS: I wonder if the walkway off a dead end street - is there any way that could feel more like a Harborwalk continuation? JG: We can study that. The building basically occupies what had been a garage ramp before. KS: I wondered if some of the geometry could carry from the land to the water, and take some of its character.... MD: I thought the comments were severe.

DS: The ground plane is better. AL: Some things *are* better. The simpler treatment, and the south block. Other parts are less improved. I'm not persuaded by the lobby space *in* the building, going through. I wonder why there couldn't be an open passage between. That would seem to be a good place, and you could have bridges/corridors across. JG: We would have to. The model is constructed to show the pass-through effect.... AL: To me, it should be on the side of the biggest building. One bay over seems more apropos. With some of us, questions are arising because it's not evident how you get there. I don't buy the path along the parking. LE: There are two desire lines. One is between LoPresti and you. I would work on the passage. I really think a seam between the buildings would make a world of difference. And, a wonderful walk along the building/LoPresti. AL: I'd suggest that you pull the entire building *back*, so that it aligns along Sumner (street wall continuity). JG: The height there was the response to Sumner. AL: In all respects, it is more open with the restaurant shift.

KS: You guys had the opportunity to go crazy; you didn't go there. Free yourself up, get iconic. DM: There are a lot of things here that are better than before. You said before that Chapter 91 clipping the site informed the volume. I wonder, if you might not pull the penthouse form down into the building more. Take its shape and pull it down. Maybe it gets to having more fun with the forms. KS: Access to the water; make it more a marker. One response is to make it more iconic. JG: I don't think we were being restrained; I think we were bringing it to life. KS: The Federal Courthouse is restrained on the land side; not so the Harbor. Maybe, bring more information on such corners in the Harbor. DS: Maybe bringing the top part down...what does Chapter 91 force?

AL: We haven't talked about your garage. It is what it is, but some functions might go there. DM: You should show more about what that looks like. DS: You guys have done great things at 315 A and Mass Art, dealing with cost-constrained walls. JG: We were thinking of panelized

wall construction. AL: Is there parking on the garage roof? JG: Yes. With that, the newest version of the New Street Development 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 7:34 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was rescheduled for July 8, 2014. The recording of the June 3, 2014 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

It was determined that a Design Committee meeting soon would focus on a walking tour of past approved and built projects, when such could be scheduled around required reviews.