

DRAFT MINUTES

BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, June 2nd, 2015, starting in the BRA Board Room, 9th Floor, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:17 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, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were David Hacin and Lynn Wolff. Also present was David Carlson, Executive Director of the Commission. Representatives of the BSA were present. Michael Cannizzo was 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, May 19, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the May 5th, 2015 Meeting Minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the May 5th, 2015 Boston Civic Design Commission Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. MD first asked for a report from the Review Committee on the **Dot Block Project**. David Carlson (DAC) first noted that the next agenda item was a design update presentation for the **345 Harrison Project**. The design had evolved and included a response to issues as noted in the vote. The vote to approve specifically called for an informational update, so NO action or vote to review or send to Committee was required. Discussion and comment would be welcome. On the **Dot Block**, this was a transformative project for the Glover's Corner section of Dorchester; SF at 430,000 was well over the BCDC threshold and review was recommended. A motion was made, seconded, and it was

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Dot Block Project on the block bounded by Dorchester Avenue, and Hancock, Pleasant, and Greenmount streets, in Dorchester's Glover's Corner neighborhood.

The next item was the update required by a condition of the vote on the **345 Harrison Avenue Project**. MD asked the team to remind the Commission why they were here. Elizabeth Lukovich (EL), the head of UGR, noted that their acquisition and subsequent desire for some design modifications was the reason for the delay in returning to the Commission. Chris Hill

(CH) of CBT presented the changes first by using a model. CH: Instead of breaking the building(s) up into multiple expressions, the user/marketing shifts were assigned to two building masses, with one building tilted more toward Millennials. There is a contemporary approach, with a shifting mass, fronting the Ink Block. Washington Street is more reserved. (Compares old and new models. Notes changes in the 'connecting tissues' over the walkway.) One link is more a connector; the other is more the building itself, resting on the retail. We've used the scaling and expressions of windows and bays to break the scale down. And the contemporary building scales itself with its own surfaces. (Goes through a series of boards, doing comparisons of the old and newer designs with a series of comparative views. Notes the materials as a part of the difference between the buildings. Notes they are creating datums, expressions, texture. Describes related aspects in detail, at length. Notes they have removed some of the projecting retail, and opened up the plaza.) John Copley (JC) of the Copley Wolff Design Group showed the approved site plan, then the idea for a new plan, with green in a more dynamic, less orthogonal space. JC: We are still thinking of a focal point, and a combination of stick and other lights. There's a 'floating' grass plane. The lobby (and retail) spill out into the space.

Linda Eastley (LE): What is the paving? JC: Precast pavers. LE: Is it different than what's in the area? JC: There is some across the street, which may be warmer in tone. LE: The buildings are cooler; maybe warmth there is good. JC: We can do that. Daniel St. Clair (DS) and David Manfredi (DM) arrived. Deneen Crosby (DC): This is better than before. Bill Rawn (WR): Is it bigger? JC: Yes. (Shows side by side.) CH noted the scale of the edge, and its informality. CH: There was a compression and release before; it's more a place of respite now. EL: We introduced an angle; the slight bend creates more of a sense of place. Public art will create the focal point. DS asked about parking. EL: We have added one tray below grade; it's otherwise the same. WR asked about the garage treatment. CH showed that. WR: Was that there before? CH: Yes, and to the same extent. WR: There are a lot of changes to the elevations. What is our role here? DAC noted that the intent of the final review and condition in the vote was addressing the flatness along Harrison. DS: I think the changes are positive. Kirk Sykes (KS): There are a lot of changes in the District. MD: To Bill's question, this is informational; the BRA Board has already taken their vote. Andrea Leers (AL): There are some issues, if this may be the last time we discuss this. I'm not sure about the 'half a block' approach, if all was more similar before. To split the difference as abruptly as you have, and arbitrarily - it's discontinuous now. I do miss a kind of common language. And the open space is very good. Mullins Way is very successful. If Washington could be more contemporary... Paul McDonough (PM) asked whether it would disrupt the Project schedule to have more conversation on this. KS: In situations like this, when it comes back as informational and it changes radically, what is our purview?

A good deal of discussion on these points ensued. The Proponent had been expecting that they would do one informational presentation with comments only, and had thought they were in keeping with the overall program and massing, making only improvements, like that on the open space. DAC: There is no further Board action (BCDC is advisory to the Board) anticipated, and it would be imprudent to embark upon a path which doubles a review process. But the Commission could do so informally now, so that the discussion with the BRA reviewing staff is more robust, if the conversation continued and ended in a strong Design Committee session.

Michael Cannizzo (MC): I agree that I would not want to re-open the review the review process, but am happy to participate in a review session in Committee. EL: We would agree to this. MD: Should we vote to send to Committee? PM: Just request it of them; they've already agreed to do it. And such a request was then extended.

[NOTE: The Design Committee review session took place on June 9, 2015; LE, David Hacin (DH), AL, and WR were in attendance. BRA reviewer MC was, too. It was noted that the language of a vote matters....the scheme was re-presented briefly, but also in a less hurried fashion. DH appreciated the changes, which addressed the original reason for the condition. It was noted and agreed that the corner of Washington and Mullins was too complicated - it should be simplified. Certain aspects of the older model massing were also simpler - two parts, connected by the 'bridge.' It was clarified that the building will actually have just a single entry, and that the wings would have slightly different layouts and offerings. WR noted that the retail should be several, or many, not just one. DH: A neighborhood feel on the inside. AL, prompted in part by a comment from WR suggesting deepening the dividing recess, suggested bringing the treatment along Harrison further along Mullins from the corner, to have a stronger relationship with the setback of 1001 Washington. All agreed this would be better. All parties seemed satisfied with the discussion.]

The next item was a presentation of the **Dot Block Project**. Dimitri (the Proponent) introduced the Project and Eric Robinson (ER) of RODE, architect for the Project. ER: We are residents of this area, as well as the architects. We've been working on this for 8 months; we've worked with many community groups, and there is a lot of excitement. As residents *and* architects, we are trying to bring the right Project to the neighborhood. ER noted the Project stats, and noted that one corner was not yet under control - and so removable on the model. He noted the locus, and went through a series of area photos, also including the edges of the site. Then a series of diagrams showing uses, massings, and the notion of connection(s) through. ER: As we started to place buildings, we responded to the buildings on the street, and kept ours more in scale and character, minding residential, shifting at the corner, and then moving toward Dot Ave with a more traditional mixed-use plan, up to 6 stories. Then redeveloping the rest of Dot Ave. KS: Are there any plans for the area? DAC and ER: No. ER then noted their edge diagram, and the focus point at the corner. He showed a series of views.

DS: What about the parking? ER: It's all in the garage. DS: No surface parking? ER: One small area, which I'll show, serving the retail. ER then showed more views, and noted the roundabout at Pleasant and Hancock. ER: The street through the block turned instead into a pedestrian path, with garage access. (Shows views of the interior space.) The space on top of the retail is a common amenity space. DS: Where is the entry to the parking garage? And where do people exit? ER used the site plan to point out the entry. He noted the elevator and stair cores - possibly three, allowing multiple pedestrian exits. MD asked about the unit views. ER: Most front on to the street; but some units have rear views only. LE: How do people approach? The roundabout seems to create a car/people pinch point. How do people come - or how *will* they come, since no one comes now? ER explained the commuter flows in the area. ER: From Meeting House Hill, they might cross at the Hancock corner. From Jones Hill, across

Pleasant...to the Savin Hill Station. I think that might merit a discussion in Committee. But these are very good diagrams; I commend your presentation. DC: Coming through on Hancock, there is the driveway issue; the slot shaped off of Hancock further along could collect people going through. DM: This is very ambitious, an extraordinary attempt. An issue for Committee - this feels very successful on Greenmount and Pleasant. The bigger buildings don't feel as comfortable. The smaller buildings seem happy at the size they are; the bigger, not yet. I liked the fine grain of the project we saw from you before. Here, the space feels really, really tight between the garage and the buildings. There are nice moves at the street edges, and more - but then the corner of Hancock doesn't hold that at all. It's a nice opportunity to hold the public realm and the street edge. Put your oddities in the middle. I would like to see street elevations on all four sides. It's incredibly complicated - how much diversity, how many building types? - so elevations are needed, all around. ER: We've got 'em. PM: Has there been any environmental work done? Dimitri: We've tested. We don't have any areas needing clean-up. Some have already been done - i.e., fuel tanks were removed. DC: Is BTD comfortable with how you're planning to bring people in? ER: We have discussed it (the roundabout) with them. It seems like it may be okay; it's tighter, and so easier to navigate.

KS: In Committee, there needs to be some balance between the larger and the neighborhood scale, which is gritty and urban. If you could talk about the nature of the street (ER noted the secondary garage entry) - talk about that. And how you're wrapping the garage. The elevations - how you activate the edges. MD: I'm not convinced about the garage; I want to know more about the metrics. There will be a lot of projects like this - in neighborhoods like this. The parking has 120 spaces serving 60,000 SF of retail - both that and the residential amount need more explanation [ratio seems high]. ER: The retail amount was the result of neighborhood input, and helps the neighborhood. This becomes a place to go for things. Also, the grocery is a component. Dimitri noted that the Whole Foods at Ink Block has 100 spaces alone. We do not want to over- or under-park. If there is no grocery, the garage will come one tray down. MD: the impact of the parking on the Project - there are a lot of people living right next to the least desirable use. I'm not sure this is the best way to manage that. LE: There are other ways of managing the parking. ER: We've studied it a lot, there was one prior thought.... Dimitri: There's no other way. AL: You have done a careful study. This is a very successful, convincing strategy for placing the buildings. Beautiful. And passing through the block. Which is why you have to look at the garage more. Questions arise from the filling of the middle; you have a beautiful perimeter. Dimitri (referencing the rear of the Greenmount buildings): It's 32', and the units all have corners. AL: The space doesn't work. The houses across the street have back yards. I feel that what's hard, is filling up the middle. DS: The size of the buildings look really big. Maybe they're there, but it would help to understand other buildings and neighborhoods maybe like that. Like the Carruth. KS: The scale doesn't bother me; it creates a place. The Carruth does that, with the MBTA space. You have openings. Create some space. Enough room, enough character to get people in. Especially from Dot Ave. LE: One question is, does the path work, if pedestrians want to go diagonally.

WR: I wonder if maybe you are doing yourself a disservice by not showing different colors. The mid-block parking has a lot of good. I don't want you to move it. I'm not sure about the entry to the garage from the circle, or getting to the grocery. DS: Is a 30,000-SF grocery key? And

why? I ask because other sites might be better for it, and the Project might be better with less retail, and more units. KS: The Whole Foods in JP is better. And the Stop'n'Shop at Brigham Circle. Kevin Deabler: You hope that something happens, but it may not. We try to approach this as though we know who tenants are. With that, the Dot Block Project was sent to Committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:00 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for July 7, 2015. The recording of the June 2, 2015 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.