

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, June 8, 2021, and was held virtually via Zoom to ensure the safety of the public, staff members, and the BPDA Board Members during the COVID-19 pandemic, and beginning at 5:00 p.m. Members in attendance were Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, Mikyoung Kim, , Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, Mimi Love, , William Rawn, Kirk Sykes. Absent were David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Kathy Kottaridis, and David Manfredi. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Meera Deean, Dana Whiteside, Matt Martin, Meghan Richard, Raul Duverge, Alexa Pinard, and Natalie Punzak were present for the BPDA, among others.

The Chair, Andrea Leers, 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 May 29, 2021, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was a report from the Review Committee on the 109 Brookline Avenue project. This project proposes a 250,000 SF office, laboratory, research and development building with a small amount of retail space and 250 parking spaces below grade. This developer recently permitted the Fenway Center Phase 2 project, which the Commission recommended approval. The project exceeds the 100,000 SF threshold for review, so review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 109 Brookline Avenue project in the Fenway neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 1 Mystic Avenue project. This project proposes a 695-unit, 552,000 SF residential building at 29 stories and 334 feet. PLAN: Charlestown is an ongoing neighborhood-wise community planning effort that includes this site. Given the scale of the project, review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 1 Mystic Avenue project in the Charlestown neighborhood.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **109 Brookline Avenue** in the Fenway neighborhood. Mikyoung Kim was recused.

Matt Martin, BPDA Urban Design, offered a brief introduction: Staff review has considered the long-term future for Brookline Avenue and the importance of setbacks and open space along this corridor. Focused on sculpting the tower and mechanical penthouse to reduce environmental impacts and increase distance between the towers.

John Rosenthal: Existing 109 Brookline Ave & 20 Overland. This is an as-of-right redevelopment of 109 Brookline Ave building that is currently empty to reconnect with 20 Overland.

Chris Haynes, Gensler: Building base aligns with contextual scale along Brookline Ave. Set back at 75' is guided by zoning. Public plaza will be an active space along Brookline Ave. Active ground floor use. Bike lane along Overland St.

Deneen Crosby: I'd like more on the context and coordination along Overland St at design committee, as well as the area/public space between multiuse path and building. Open space on this side will be a plus as the corridor today is so narrow.

Kirk Sykes: I appreciate the generous plaza space and the new public realm along Brookline Ave. Want to see studies and precedents of transparency along lab use at the ground floor.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Appreciate the move you've made to pull the building in along Brookline Ave. I'm interested to see if you can bring some of this approach to Overland Street as well. I want to know more about the upper portion of the building and its blockiness. How will that fit into the public realm of the skyline? Bring view corridor and further views to design committee.

William Rawn: What is the idea of this building in terms of setting a standard that we can hold other buildings to? There has not been a lot of conformance to zoning standards in this neighborhood, so I appreciate that this is an as-of-right project.

Jonathan Evans: The podium has a lot of potential to engage the public realm. I would like to know how the angles were derived and if they connect to the multiuse path or surrounding retail. Bring more views along Brookline Ave to design committee.

Linda Eastley: More in subcommittee about the of the podium angles. I'm intrigued by the wall between the project and the adjacent Residence Inn, because this setback alignment feels unresolved right now and I would like to know more about the character. I would like to see something more generous with the public realm at the corner of Brookline and Overland.

Andrea Leers: Thank you for bringing us an as-of-right project. Would like to see more about the decisions that informed height and setbacks of podium and upper mass. Is setback along Overland quite flush?

Deneen Crosby: Bring information about previous master plans (if any) for Brookline Ave to design committee.

Dolores Boogdanian, member of the public: It would be helpful to see how this project fits in with others in context.

The project will continue in design committee.

Mikyoung Kim returned. The next project presentation was for **1 Mystic Avenue** in the Charlestown neighborhood. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Aeron Hodges, Stantec: Compact units with mix of on-site affordable. 36% of parcel at grade will be public space, which includes an exterior paseo that passes under the building and which will be programmed with public uses. L-shaped building with different grades. Plan to use metal panel, precast concrete, and curtain wall system. The site today is an industrial junkyard and an edge

context. Close to Assembly Row, Encore Hotel, and Hood Park. Sullivan Square T Station is within a 3-minute walk.

Mimi Love: I'm troubled by the height of this project. There are a lot of massing moves and it feels overly complicated. Concerned about the quality of space (sun, air) under the paseo and if this will be used or feel public.

Linda Eastley: Part of me loves that you are creating something new in a less developed part of the city. But the other part feels that it would require suspending disbelief for this to be a magnet project. How did you make the decisions about ground floor and massing? Concerned that the paseo will be empty because it doesn't connect to anything. Would also like to learn more about change in topography. Also concerned about height.

Jonathan Evans: Searching for an understanding of the rules that inform the massing articulation. This is a difficult site and this project needs to be designed with consideration of its connections, so a larger site plan would be helpful.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: What does it mean in terms of an architectural response for a site to be a gateway? How can architecture help people navigate—from pedestrians at the ground floor to faraway views. Also like to see mid-distant views of this project in district context. This is in the middle of a complicated nest of transit—how does it relate to public transit, T, and vehicle networks?

Andrea Leers: What you do here will be an inspiration for other blocks as the character evolves from industrial uses. To me, this site wants protection from the transportation along two sides and a lower density. With workforce and affordable housing, where are the spaces that make this site livable? I urge you to think about this as a living place and a model for other projects as other projects come in. Needs a strategy for green space, height, massing, interior program. It will become a gateway if it has a high quality of life, but the site in itself does not make it a gateway.

Dan Jaffe, resident: This site is an island. Too dense a proposal that doesn't consider the balance of other future development in Charlestown.

Joanne Massaro, resident: PLAN: Charlestown is looking at capacity of infrastructure. This project is proposing more than 12 FAR. Too massive and too much of an imposition on all future neighborhood planning, and it will dominate the neighborhood.

Johanna Hynes, resident: Project will impact light and sun on Medford Ave. And generally, I don't understand what logic would lead to a proposal for a skyscraper on a village.

Andrea Leers: Would like for major work with the public and the BPDA before this project comes to design committee.

William Rawn: This is about city building. Besides the questions about quality-of-life on site, there are questions about the scale and density of this project on the rest of the neighborhood.

The project will continue in design committee.

Kirk Sykes returned. The **45 Townsend Street** project in Roxbury was the next presentation.

Brian O'Connor, CUBE 3: Major work done over the last few years since this project was last seen at design committee, which is why we're reintroducing it tonight. Was 322 units, now 199. Was 6-8

stories, now 3-4. Current proposal is more open. Walkable pedestrian corridor ties the site together. Surface parking is existing and completely hidden from the neighborhood, so it will remain. The architecture of each building is informed by the views and adjacent context, and makes an effort to integrate with the neighborhood. Deeper into the site, the materials become warmer and more textured. As the project moves up the hill, more wood is used.

Shauna Gillies-Smith, Ground: Exposed pudding stone onsite is existing and will remain. This informed the language of the landscape design. Plantings as a buffer along the perimeter around the project and give a sense of residential scale. There is a 40' grade change across the site and a publicly accessible stair and connector will cross the site. Working hard to make the buildings accessible and to make as many connections through the buildings and site as possible.

Kirk Sykes: This overall scheme is an improvement over what we've seen in the past. The landscaping needs a lot of maintenance, which I am concerned about in the long term. Want to understand sightlines. Fly-through is really helpful. Topography means that rooftops will be visible, and you'll have to work to keep these pristine.

Mimi Love: Appreciate the change in scale in this revision. Much more appropriate and integrated with surrounding neighborhood. Townsend Street elevations have a more formal approach to interior architecture. Expression on building 4 is more positive than the bay windows and horizontal bands on Townsend. Inner courtyard feels like one expression which is fine. Don't know that this needs as much horizontal expression. How did you make the transitions in expression?

Deneen Crosby: I have questions about how public the interior of the site feels. Is there a way the public path can have its own identity to feel more public?

William Rawn: Compliment you on the ambition and aspiration of the scheme. Clear improvement. Beautiful landscape views. Concerned with how feasible this project is as depicted.

Andrea Leers: I appreciate the series of smaller buildings and the throughput. Top of the hill arrival needs more investigation. Doesn't feel clear how this connects back to the city streets. Parking wall along the walkway needs careful thought so it does not become a cliff edge. Buildings uphill are more successful than those downhill in terms of architecture. Simple and varied but not imitative.

Johanna Hynes, public comment: Concerned about trees. How many are being removed? Was there an inventory? Also concerned with affordable housing. In October 2020, a modification was issued to locate half of affordable housing offsite. I can't find any public comments.

Proponent response: majority of proposed buildings are within footprints of existing buildings. We don't have a tree inventory yet. Intend to keep majority of large trees, which are the ones you can see from google maps. Maintaining a vegetative buffer between our site and the neighborhood. Affordable housing strategy was not embraced by the city. Moved to have 20 on-site affordability with addition of 3-5 for sale affordable units next door.

Connie Forbes, IAG: IAG is still concerned with density of this project among other issues. Original proposal offered more than double what is allowed. Many multi-generational homes along Townsend street. Area is not commuter friendly. 166 units allowed by zoning.

The project will continue in committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:15 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for July 6, 2021. The recording of the June 8, 2021 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.