

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, August 3, 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, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Mikyoung Kim, Anne-Marie Lubenau, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, and William Rawn. Absent were Kathy Kottaridis, Kirk Sykes, and Jonathan Evans. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Scott Slarsky, Meghan Richard, Matthew Martin, Alexa Pinard, Whitney Hansley, Nick Carter, and Patricia Cafferky were present for the BPDA.

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 July 23, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the July 6, 2021 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on July 13, 20, and 27. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the July 6, 13, 20, and 27, 2021 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Bartlett Station, Parcel F5** project. The project will be a central building in the Bartlett Place PDA, and is a 44-unit residential building in Roxbury. At approximately 49,000 SF, it comes to the BCDC because of review of the PDA, and review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Bartlett Station, Parcel F5 project in the Roxbury neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the **Fenway Development PDA** project. The project proposes 1,665,000 SF of office/research, 213,000 SF of residential, and 212,300 SF of retail spread across four non-contiguous sites around Fenway Park. At approximately 2.1 million SF, review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Fenway Development project in the Fenway neighborhood.

The third item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Government Center Garage East Parcel Redevelopment** project. The project was previously approved by the BCDC as the 3 building Bulfinch Crossing PDA. The current proposal is for a single research building. At approximately 410,000 SF, review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Government Center Garage East Parcel Redevelopment project in the Downtown neighborhood.

The final Review Committee report was on the **380 Stuart Street** project. The project was originally approved by the BCDC in 2015 as an office building, and comes back to the BCDC as a spec office building with the same entitlements (height, density). At approximately 625,000 SF, it comes to the BCDC because of review of the PDA, and review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 380 Stuart Street project in the Back Bay neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation from Design Committee was for **220 Huntington Avenue**. David Manfredi and David Hacin are recused.

Ted Tye, National Development: The project has improved over the course of four Design Committee meetings with the Commission.

David Nagahiro, CBT: Specifically the façade design has been simplified and hierarchy has been added, and the site plan has seen improvements with a pocket park and public alley design alterations.

Linda Eastley: The importance of street trees and the connection across Huntington is clear. The parklet's design could use refinement. If there is a relic or folly in the parklet it could be more pronounced than what is shown, or be vertical, like the gate shown in previous iterations.

Eric Höweler: There can be a balance between being exposed and private in the parklet. Could make it more tucked away, consider sight lines, and emphasize refuge through the use of larger caliper trees. What will be the program fronting on the park?

Ted Tye: It could be retail or a use with frosted glass. The intention is that the parklet feels public and not owned by the building.

Linda Eastley: Why is it gated?

Ted Tye: There are concerns from neighbors over security.

Mikyoung Kim: Is a water feature a possibility? And the parklet feels more diagrammatic than the building, but it is details that make small spaces like this.

Deneen Crosby: Echoes Mikyoung's comment about the potential of water in the parklet. Are you doing work on the median barrier on Huntington?

Ted Tye: We are working with the appropriate groups to try to make some improvements to the median: removing the barrier and adding some planting.

Mikyoung Kim: Would like to see the parklet's design again once it is more developed.

Public comment:

Lee Steel: Member of SBNA and the IAG. Likes the design and would like to move forward. Hopes the neighborhood will be able to have input on the design of the parklet. The park should be secured overnight to prevent it from becoming a nuisance.

Hearing nothing else, a motion was made, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval of the schematic design for the 220 Huntington Design, in the Back Bay neighborhood. The Commission requests that the construction documents for the parklet be submitted to the Commission once complete, as an informational submittal only.

Parcels O & P was presented for a vote next. David Manfredi is recused.

John Sullivan, SGA: Project has been improved to address three key concerns from the Commission: 1) Fitting into the context, 2) Relationship to the public realm, and 3) Penthouse design. Review of the project's massing logic, widened entrance, pavement art, renderings, sidewalk plantings, and updates on the mechanical penthouse design. Continuing to work on the parking edge.

Linda Eastley: This is a terrific project. It has the 4 P's (Parcel P, Plaza Park, and Parking). Glad to see some of the Commission's comments have been adopted like the wall. Would like the plaza on Parcel P to not feel so private, and encourage the team to continue to think about programming, and to make the "porch" more interesting.

Andrew Mackin, Marcus Partners: Agree about programming in the plaza - the team is continuing to evolve that.

William Rawn: Second what Linda said. Almost counter intuitive scheme with a small building and large building. Elegant new building with a reinvention of the existing building on Parcel P with a plaza is very inventive.

Andrea Leers: It is smart to think of the three areas with different personalities that are linked.

A motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for the Parcels O & P project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **Bartlett Station, Parcel F5** in the Roxbury neighborhood.

Meghan Richard, BPDA: F5 is the latest building for review in the Bartlett Station PDA. 3 other buildings on site have previously been approved. The team has been working through the design with BPDA staff to refine context within the site, overall proportions, and materiality. Landscape design is not complete, and will be presented to the Commission at a later date.

Clifford Boehmer, Davis Square Architects: F5 is an affordable residential rental building, completely internal to the site. It has 2,300 SF of community space on the ground floor for the neighborhood at large. The public realm around the building is integrating local art. However, the design of much of the public realm will be included in the future landscape design which will be presented to the BCDC in the near future.

David Hacin: Nice work on the project. Can we approve with direction to BPDA staff?

Andrea Leers: Agree. The basic design is solid - the location of the entries and plaza are good. I do wonder about the proportions of the facade - could it be 3 stories of brown and one white rather than the even 2 and 2?

Mimi Love: Agree that planning strategy is appropriate to the site and a 3-1 read. Like the glimpses of the murals.

Linda Eastley: I like the UD principles in the project. Community room at the inflection of the building makes sense. Could some of the mural spread to that seat wall? That is going to be an important space. And is there a way that the energy of the community space could spill out into the public realm? Could make the corner more visually interesting.

Deneen Crosby: Will we talk about the plaza in the open space discussion? Stair is open, public, and two-sided, whereas other parts are more building associated. Can we still comment on that?

Cliff Boehmer: We are very open to that in the landscape conversation in the future discussion.

Mikyoung Kim: What is the schedule for that presentation? Will it be too far along? Agree with kicking the can down the road on landscape.

David Manfredi: Has been great watching this over the years. Agree with the 1-3-1 facade proportions comment. Don't know why part is metal and part is cementitious. It could be more simple.

William Rawn: Urban design issues are the important ones. The way it fits into the street and relationship to the stair are what is important. Agree with leaving the building refinement discussions to BPDA staff.

David Hacin: Agree that there should be further review by BPDA staff based on comments today and the open space conversation should be expedited.

A motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for the Bartlett Station, Building F5 project in the Roxbury neighborhood with BPDA staff attention to the issues raised in the meeting

The next project presentation was for **Fenway Development** in the Fenway neighborhood. David Hacin was recused.

Matt Martin, BPDA: PLAN: This proposed PDA has issues concerning context and scale. Heights and FAR are not within zoning.

Yanni Tshipis, WS Development: Intention to improve the public realm and stitch together the neighborhood fabric in the area. Transformation of Jersey Street. Embracing natural materials and historic preservation. Multiple building heights, from 3 stories up. Opportunities for different public programs. Arthur's alley would also be transformed into an industrial commercial strip. Area will not have a sports focus. Emphasis of people over cars and the public realm.

Andrea Leers: There needs to be a greater focus on the PDA and how the 7 parcel come together in a volumetric way.

Anne-Marie Lubeanu: Parcel 8's air rights are mentioned – can you highlight that and how it will relate to the development?

Yanni Tshipis: Yes, we will in Design Committee. There is no project there, but the adjacent project is designed to accommodate that.

Linda Eastley: Like these complex projects you bring us. Most of us do experience Jersey on game day and it is forgettable. Appreciate the varied scales of ped experience--alleys, gathering, pockets. Like connection of Ross to Overland to make more connections through the district. Like thinking about other projects underway in the area. Appreciate the new latter street framework, and the thought towards the other future developments in the area. Concerned about the scale of the proposal. Would like more of a sense of the scale in context. Seems like a lot of development in a small area. Needs a better sense of the massing and context. And there seems to be a lot of hardscape, but wonder if there could be more softscape aside from just street trees. Would like to cover these in subcommittee.

David Manfredi: Agrees with Linda. Appreciates the sense of hierarchy and the personalities of the streets. For subcommittee we need a model for this project. Hard to do remotely, but really need to see in the larger context of Fenway, gateway districts. Understanding what the buildings have in common and what makes them different.

Eric Höweler: Caddy's Ally in Georgetown outside of DC is a precedent. Enthusiastic about the buildings and facades. We do need a model. Even a rhino model that can be moved through in real time.

Deneen Crosby: Would like a better understanding and assurance that the circulation will actually work. An overview of circulation and how it is going to change with the introduction of the cross street. Could break the subcommittee meetings down into topics to make them more digestible.

Anne-Marie Lubeanu: Agree with Deneen about steps of topics for the subcommittee. Also, the importance of the strip along I-90 is important and we need to understand how the composition comes together.

William Rawn: Need a plan or axon showing uses and heights. Where are the front doors? Where are the parking garages?

Yanni Tsipis: Van Ness Building 190' front on Van Ness. Jersey buildings south chunk is 230, 55', 200' resi, Brookline building is 300 feet.

Mikyoung Kim: Desire for more 3-dimensional visuals and more information. Looking forward to seeing more. Maybe a Rhino model you can walk us through in subcommittee.

Linda Eastley: How do we think of the PDA since it is unusual that they jump blocks.

Matt Martin: Have been non-contiguous PDAs but not this much. Have been discussing different permitting paths but the development team will decide how to approach. Have agreed to not include the area of Parcel 8.

Andrea Leers : We only approve volumes, heights, setbacks, and intent of the ground plain. And sometimes uses. Suggests devoting a session to massing, a session to circulation and ground level development, and a session on the intended envelope – short of architecture, but shows intent. Not every site and not every building is a gateway, but there are parts of the city that are.

Public Comment:

Dolores Boogdanian: exciting for a number of reasons, appreciate the commissioners comments. Jersey is alluring but a very small part of the project. What is happening elsewhere and how these buildings fit into the neighborhood is very important. FAR is potentially overwhelming. Hope you will be tough looking at this and the impact on the skyline, streets, light, etc.

Erika Tarlin: Were told we weren't to discuss the park. Scale is too large, no regard for the ballpark. Would like to see views from inside the ballpark. Haven't seen anything specific that is a benefit to the neighborhood.

Greg Gailer: Appreciate the holistic approach. But concerns about the park and erasing a very special part of Boston.

Alison Pultinas: Need a lot more information about the historic buildings and the additions and how they relate to other developments in the area. There are historic elm trees on Jersey that are special. Hardly any green space yet. So there are opportunities for that. Walking routes through the project.

Pam Beale: Had a tour. Think project will be great to knit together the area.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

Mikyoung Kim left the meeting at this time.

The next project presentation was for **Government Center Garage East Parcel** in the Downtown neighborhood. Andrea Leers and David Manfredi were recused. Deneen Crosby acted as chair in Leers's stead.

Elizabeth Stifel presents the BPDA project intro slide. Issues mentioned included the relationship to zoning, the public space design, and the height of the proposed project.

Thomas O'Brien: Very complicated project. Working to demolish a garage with many partners. MBTA does not want construction above the tunnel, and so the plan for the parcel had to change. All the FAR was pulled off the area above the tunnel and moved to one side of the project.

Phil Casey: The exciting parts of the project are daylighting Merrimack, the site strategy, the through lobby connection, the materiality, and the context of Bulfinch Crossing.

David Hacin: Appreciate understanding the background that led to the change. One of the nice things about the former plan was the connection from Bulfinch to older parts of the neighborhood. There was weaving and a path that connected the two. Understand that it doesn't work. Moving pedestrian connections is good in this scheme and there is a clear bus situation. Lament the lower scale and fine grain facing the greenway--skirt to high rises behind. Struggling with the height of the building. Greenway guidelines and maintaining the lower scale along the Greenway are really lost in this proposal. The guidelines are good. The combination of displacement of lower scale and the shift to Lab is creating a dilemma. In subcommittee singular views are not helpful. Need to contextualize the heights and maybe include a 3-d fly around. And would like to see before and after. This project is from a PDA that was previously approved, and the height proposed here is a pretty significant change from what was approved.

Linda Eastley: The height feels too tall. This commission is adamant about height as it relates to the greenway study and I'm not convinced that this site needs an exception. What works well are the new passageways. Interested in hearing more about the "nose" of the building and how the corner on Congress Street will be celebrated. The nose on Sudbury Street is all about public space and park entry. Would like to understand more about that. Would like a view from the service way. Overarching concern is height and the relationship to the other buildings and the greenway. Would also like to see some of the earlier explorations for the site. Currently 250', but 150' is as of right.

Deneen Crosby: Interested in the busway and the surface roads coming by the project. There was a face on both sides of the building.

William Rawn: Complement on what has happened already. First two buildings are fascinating and a good addition to the city. The interesting part of this project is opening up connections across the city. The Canal connection is convincing, but what about the Merrimack street side connection?

Would like, in subcommittee, to carefully go through the connections made on the site to the rest of the city – looking at sidewalk widths and walkways and general experience.

Eric Höweler: Experiences this site coming out of the T as a wayfinding moment. It's a transit node and the experience of the form of the building's massing should be further considered. Want to understand it from the point of view of a bus passenger. Not sure why everything is curved. Would like to see the previous studies as well, and have a conversation about appropriate form. The form doesn't signal to the thru-lobby, or the place.

Public Comment:

Greg Gailer: Needs to be transparent to all of the adjacent neighborhoods--does this do that? Is the lobby really public? Long wall on Congress Street, how is that welcome to a ped. Default retail at ground floor? What else could happen there? Museum? pop up local retail? not national retail.

Louise Thomas: Live in the West End and this building narrows the view corridor and makes a wall on the edge of our neighborhood. Loved the old design--we were most excited about this parcel with that design. Would like to look at this from the West End.

Martha McNamara: IAG member. Stress the East Parcel was the give me to the surrounding neighborhoods, was the piece that was giving activity back. Concern that Congress is being shut down again with a wall. Liked the porosity of the previous design.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

The **380 Stuart Street project** in the Back Bay neighborhood was the final presentation. This project was last reviewed by the Commission in 2017, and given its significant revisions through public process and integration with the Climate Ready Boston initiative, it was reintroduced to the full Commission.

Scott Slarsky, BPDA, presents the project's BPDA slide. Issues included the vehicular access, public realm connections, and materiality.

Carolyn Desmond introduces the project.

Mitchell Bush, CBT: Project was previously approved with a different design and owner. The square footage, parking, etc are all staying the same. The biggest change is the introduction of the outdoor balcony spaces through a form change and improvements to the ground floor lobby and retail.

Mimi Love: Challenging because the design is dynamic, but didn't show what's across the street, and the parcel is not a corner site. While it is dynamic and interesting, questions if it is appropriate. Questions the location of the pocket park and how it feels when experienced. Would like to see the whole street, and perspective views with the neighboring buildings, like Hancock, in it.

David Hacin: Agree with Mimi. The previous design was already challenging with the change in character. Surprised that this building is the same FAR because it looks much larger – swollen. Questions if the character of the outdoor spaces on the upper floors are really the kinds of outdoor spaces that post-covid office tenants really want, and how hospitable they will be given wind. The context of heavy masonry in the neighborhood means we should have conversations about form and materiality. Additional height could possibly help it, but need more thought to context.

Eric Höweler: Likes the form and massing. Connects to the new Hancock tower more than the old one, and to One Dalton. A design like this will rely on great details like curved glass and a careful spandrel. Doesn't necessarily need a sloped top. The long-range views are more successful than the short ones.

Linda Eastley: Looks too bulky for its context. Exciting and dynamic massing, but feels alien in the context. In subcommittee would love to understand the underbelly of the horizontal slices, in addition to talking about form and massing. Would love to understand how the plaza hits the alley. The linear plaza is important because on the other side it seems like it gets enclosed by a visual terminus.

William Rawn: Is the pedestrian plaza actually partially indoors? Seems challenging. The shaping of the roof is also supposedly to block the sunlight onto the Commons and Copley square. Would like to see the shadow studies in subcommittee.

Mitchell Bush: We're within the previously approved shadow envelope from the previous scheme, but happy to show those studies.

Andrea Leers: Not struggling with height, as much as the horizontal slices. If of the new towers are continuously vertical, and that's the new context. There's a vertical grain through all these new buildings. So the robust sculptural design does not seem to be of the same family as the context, while the preceding design seemed to fit. Could the design be inverted, with balconies in subtractions? And share concerns about the alley on the ground level to nowhere.

David Hacin: The commission should consider where it was when the last project was approved, and what has changed. We need to see the before and after of what was last approved and this.

Mitchell Bush: Happy to share some of the before and after.

Public Comments:

Greg Gailer: thank for thoughtful comments. Out of context--proportion and materiality. Sensitive part of the city. needs to relate to new and old context.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:45 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for September 7, 2021. The recording of the August 3, 2021 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.