

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, February 2, 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, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Kathy Kottaridis, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent was Mikyoung Kim. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Matt Martin, Chris Busch, Scott Slarsky, 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 January 17, 2021, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the presentation of the 2020 BCDC Annual Report, which can be found on the Boston Civic Design Commission webpage.

The next item on the agenda was the approval of the January 5, 2021 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on January 12, 19, and 26, 2021. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the January 5, 12, 19, and 26, 2021 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the Old Colony Final Phase project.

The Phase One Project was reviewed and approved by the BCDC in April 2010; the refined Master Plan, in October 2010. The second phase was reviewed by the BCDC in 2012. Those two phases are complete. For Phases Three and Four, greater density was sought and was recommended for approval by the BCDC in 2018. That phase is under construction. The Final Phase (~124,000 SF) is now appearing for review along with a Notice of Project change to adjust the approved master plan, and review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Boston Civic Design Commission review the schematic design for the final phase of the Old Colony project bounded by Bordered by Mercer, Old Harbor and E. 8th Streets, and Columbia Road in the South Boston neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the Hook Wharf Hotel project. The project proposes a ~224,000 hotel with restaurant and retail space as well as an addition to the Harborwalk along Fort Point Channel. The site is in a dense, urban area of downtown and directly across from the Rose Kennedy Greenway. It has recently been rezoned through the 2018 Downtown Waterfront Municipal

Harbor Plan, a six-year planning process carried out by the BPDA and approved by the State. Given the size and public realm implications, review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Hook Wharf Hotel/Harborwalk Expansion project in the Downtown neighborhood.

The next report from Review Committee was for the Seaport Square Block L5 project. This is the fourth project filed under the revised PDA following the projects at Blocks L4, N, and P. The program is office with a retail podium and the SeaPAC (Seaport Performing Arts Center). The PDA entitlement was approved by the BCDC in 2017 as part of the Notice of Project Change filed when WS acquired the property, and review of each building by the BCDC was condition of approval. Therefore, it was it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Seaport Square Block L5 project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.

The last Review Committee report was for the revised 125 Lincoln Street project. 125 Lincoln Street was initially presented to the BCDC in August, 2019. At that time there were concerns from the BCDC, BPDA, and community about the proposed project scale and public realm. Since that time the developer, Oxford Properties Group, has considerably revised the project. Changes include reduction in height and square footage, change in program to research and development, and a new architect. The project has been voted to design committee in August 2019, so no vote it required to continue the design committee process.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first and only project presentation was for **135 Dudley Street** in Roxbury. Mimi Love was recused.

Michael Liu, TAT: After the initial presentation of the project in December 2019, we made major changes to the massing of the buildings and location/size of open space. The amount of parking on site has also been reduced. At the December 1, 2020 Monthly Meeting, outstanding concerns about the area behind the project between the courthouse and the library. The project was sent back to design committee for additional work on the open space. New approach treats this space as a circulation route with a fully accessible ramp, which will now connect the Warren Street Courthouse and the Nubian Square transit station. Views in the presentation visualize the future condition and public realm. What was previously a berm condition at the rear of the site will be a green relief and pedestrian connection.

Deneen Crosby: The project has positively transformed through the review process. The plaza spaces might be improved with a warmer ground plane, which you can achieve with materials and coloring.

Linda Eastley: Second that. The maturity of the plaza is quite nice and this will be a great addition to this part of Boston.

David Manfredi: I would like to see a bit more depth and diversity to the facade on the residential building facing Dudley St, because it looks kind of commercial in the views you've shown.

Hearing no public comment, a motion was made, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for the schematic design for the proposed 135 Dudley Street project in the Roxbury Neighborhood.

Mimi Love returned. The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **Old Colony Final Phase** in the South Boston neighborhood.

Matt Martin, BPDA Urban Designer, gave an overview: The design review conversations to date have focused on the need to maintain the extension of community streets and pedestrian connections as called for in approved masterplan, on the incorporation of new strategies to raise the site as required for resiliency yet still allow for through connections to remain at grade, and on massing and materials strategies to help distinguish the current phase from previous phases, avoiding the sense of a “housing complex.”

Darcy Jameson, Beacon Communities: This is the final phase of a 10 year project that has come before the Commission a number of times in recent years. When this master plan was initially planned, there was not an emphasis on 1:1 replacement of units, but this is now a priority for the city and the state which results in a bit more density in this phase of the project.

Jay Szymanski and Michael Doherty, TAT: Through a series of exterior views of the project, you can see earlier phases in background. The immediate context is surrounded by diverse facade grain of the scales of the buildings. The taller parts of the project are pushed toward Columbia Road to reduce the impact of height and density on the public realm. This phase proposes both a townhouse and five-story multi-family typologies, which are distinguished by the number of floors in these parts of the project.

Marcus Cantu Parker, Copley Wolff: Through streets serve as pedestrian circulation, with ramps and stairs between buildings. There is a lot of grade change across the site, more than 10' in both directions. Raised courtyards adjacent to buildings and paths establish private and public open spaces.

Deneen Crosby: It looks like you're navigating the grade change largely between the residential courtyards, which I think is a good thing. I have a question about building access to the courtyards and the elevation relationships between the buildings, courtyards, and Columbia Road. Do you have other passthroughs in this project that are public, and how do they relate to these proposed pedestrian connections?

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I'd like to understand more about your approach to the building design. What are your facade strategies for addressing different contexts (wide Columbia Road verse the smaller courtyard scale).

Kirk Sykes: Sharing more about the context of existing typologies and facade textures will be helpful at design committee. What is the nature of these streets and the character of the courtyard?

Linda Eastley: Do you plan to use paving strategies to highlight pedestrian throughways through the project? Want to ensure this phase of the project has a personality that is distinct from the others, and I want to understand what is happening at the gateway moments to the plaza and pedestrian promenades.

Eric Höweler: The buildings are large so I understand the intent to change the appearance to address context. Need to see more context and fine grain fabric as it informs your proposal at

design committee. Seems to be transitional space--where are people coming from, where are they going, how does that relate to doors? Where are the areas of entry?

Andrea Leers: Diagram the entries to help us understand the design strategy for these different buildings. I'm not convinced that there needs to be two different kinds of approaches to the apartment and townhouse buildings if height is the distinguishing element between them. (Some other comments)

William Rawn: There was an earlier facade rendering that had some inconsistencies with the cornice line and bump outs on the facade. These seem deliberately inventive, but I'm not sure to what end.

Mimi Love: I was having the same thoughts about facade elements, and more digging into how these interact with the consistent bays on other parts of the project will be important. There's a conflict between public and private in the proposed pedestrian throughway—what would draw a member of the public through this route?

David Manfredi: This project is worthy of congratulations after many years of development. I also want to understand the neighborhood context at design committee.

Public comment- Phyllis Corbitt: These streets today are highly trafficked and used as cut through streets. Seeing as this is a residential development with community center, what is the plan for mitigating traffic and speed impacts on pedestrians?

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for the **Hook Wharf Hotel** project in the Downtown neighborhood. David Manfredi was recused.

Chris Busch, Assistant Deputy Director for Climate and Environmental Planning, BPDA: This project is located within the Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Plan (MHP), and in 2018 a community based planning process for state-level Chapter 91 regulations was completed. Chapter 91 supports public access and water oriented uses through dimensional and use regulations, and can be modified by local communities with additional public benefits. The planning process started in 2013 based on earlier planning and to take advantage of the removal of the central artery and harbor clean up. Developed a watershed and public realm activation plan that aims to connect and strengthen legibility of the waterfront between Downtown and South Boston. This site is an gateway to South Boston waterfront, and will add additional Harborwalk. There will be active uses on all sides and Hook Lobster will remain on site. The two primary development sites in the most recent MHP process were Harbor Garage and this Hook Wharf site. Evaluated the sites and possible negative impacts. Modified height (300') by looking at shadow. Mitigation is around public realm improvements and new open space, lot coverage (70%). Approved benefit package of open space, financial support for Long Wharf park, Fort Point Operations, Aquarium Blueway. Working on design and use guidelines for Downtown Waterfront and climate resiliency and watershed management.

William Rawn: Between this and the Pinnacle Wharf site, there are two very tall buildings that are contextual outliers. I assume we will discuss those qualities as we look at the rest of the project. Commissioners asked about the Northern Avenue Bridge and how it fits into these plans; the bridge is outside of the MHP planning area and is planned for by Public Works.

Scott Slarsky, BPDA Urban Design, introduced the Hook Wharf Hotel project: The project will be encountered at a variety of scales—from the pedestrians circulating the podium to views of this building as a waterfront edge and views of the building from downtown. There is challenging service/pedestrian/vehicle access because the site is active on all sides. From a design perspective, we'd like to see a more legible material approach for the building skin.

Brian Roessler, Elkus Manfredi: The site is constructed land at a unique site next to two bridges. Water borders on the east and then Greenway on the other side. Unique opportunity for signature buildings--inflection point on the greenway and high visibility as a gateway from the South Boston waterfront. We want to make connections between neighborhoods and water and the Greenway. The project is compliant with zoning and the Municipal Harbor Plan. The 20,000 sf site requires 6,000 sf of mandated open space, which includes 900 feet of Harborwalk. The podium massing is determined by zoning. Total building height cannot exceed 304 feet. Views of the project from the greenway show facade patterning of fins that capture light and create a textured facade.

Chris Jones, IBI: Will be adjacent to the future Northern Avenue bridge. The design of the bridge did not assume a new development on this site, so future study to balance the coast guard and hotel site to come. We are adding a 25' wide Harborwalk.

Eric Höweler: I appreciate the challenge of this site. It's a service oriented building that has three public faces, when it really needs a back. This will be a great urban gateway. Integration with the Northern Ave bridge is essential. The way it meets the ground will be important. The brise-soleil is a good hint of what will come architecturally, it's both contemporary and grounded. Looking forward to seeing how the facades develop.

David Hacin: This site has become a critical entry to Downtown as the Seaport has evolved. It will be a gateway. Massing is clever and I appreciate the views you've shown. Having a dynamic 3D model will be important for us to understand impact on the public realm at design committee.

Questions/concerns about the character of the ground plane (texture). Feels like a tight Harborwalk condition and I want to understand this better.

Linda Eastley: My primary concern is also with the pedestrian circulation/wrapper around the site. I almost want the corners of the building to be chamfered, and I think you might want to carve out some space to better connect views around the site.

Deneen Crosby: Relation of the building to the Harborwalk could be strengthened. Why not bring the site higher than 21" for resiliency? And I'm concerned with shadow on greenway, so please plan to share information on this at design committee.

Kirk Sykes: Chronicle the different edge conditions along Northern Avenue. I want to understand this experience to better understand the impact of podium along the Northern Avenue bridge.

Andrea Leers: In some ways the constants of the sites have been beneficial as they result in a slender tower. Choosing a non-rectilinear part is intelligent and beautiful. I want to think more about the Atlantic Avenue side of this project, as it's the way most people passing through the city will see this project. 23' including a planting zone feels tight and I want to know how the podium meets it. I'm also wondering why the podium is 55'. Is this necessary functionally?

William Rawn: The orientation and building form are powerful. Could the podium have a shape that is not so boxy and predictably urban?

The project will continue in design committee.

David Manfredi returned. William Rawn was recused. The **Seaport Square Block L5** project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood was the next presentation.

Scott Slarsky, BPDA Urban Design: The Seaport Square PDA is unique in that the project requires only BCDC and BPDA staff design review prior to permitting. BPDA staff comments have focused on the podium being so different from the tower and about the public realm, particularly along Boston Wharf Road. We want to better understand the service versus public pathways through the site and building.

Yanni Tshipis, WS Development: Amazon will be bringing 3,000 new jobs to Boston at this building. This project will deliver on a long-standing promise to create a major performing arts center to the Seaport District. Commission previously reviewed the Seaport Square masterplan, and this quadrant. The massing and open space have been previously approved.

Michael Sorensen, Henning Larsen Architects: Building is experienced on foot along the new Harborway and square, and at the vehicular scale along Wharf Road. Looking at the massing, we've studied the micro climatic conditions, shaping the building to allow increased sunlight on the park space. Small tweaks at the podium relate to the human scale. Design inspired by maritime history. Stepping of the podium aims to support/engage public realm. Ground floor has been designed to be open and outward facing, activated along all sides and internally. At the scale of the podium façade, the rhythm, scale, degrees of openness, materiality drawn from Fort Point. Working with an artist to create a terra-cotta tile at the podium. Angled fins on the mass above the podium respond to sun and shading patterns. Have different faces that will give a different impressions of light and color as you move around the building. Building goals to support the urban room park, public realm, attention to human scale, dynamic facade, timeless materials.

Kirk Sykes: Intent of covering character of Fort Point in a contemporary way are excellent. I want to hear more about the massing of the building and the long views.

David Hacin: Beautiful presentation. I like the interpretation of history and design. Appreciate how the views show the sculpted building cradle the public space and sculpt a 3D volume. Skin is beautiful. Would like to understand views in larger complex around this area.

Linda Eastley: Appreciate the tenderness of incorporating the green ribbon/public space as the key context of the building. As design committee, would like to understand more about the function of the Paseo. I imagine this will be an activated interior alley that will draw people into the performance venue.

Deneen Crosby: Appreciate the attention to sunlight. I'm concerned about Boston Wharf Road as a major connector that terminates in open space. This is a boulevard connecting the neighborhood. Boston Wharf Road leads you to the green at District Hall and the waterfront so really think about that as a front, the dead space at loading, the width of the sidewalk. Can you add street trees at design committee?

Mimi Love: The chamfer at the corner of Congress and Boston Wharf Road makes sense at the entrance, but I'm not sure that makes sense at the podium scale. How can the paseo be really public and more announced? Plan to discuss paseo details and awnings/overhangs at committee.

David Manfredi: Refreshing that the lobby doesn't come to the edge of the building and instead engages public experience all the way around the perimeter. A lot of nice thought in this presentation. A model will help us understand overall mass of building in its context.

Eric Höweler: Presumably, a performing arts space is a figure and a volume. I don't see that reading on the facade in any way, and you've sort of masked this program. Wondering where people will enter/exit building depending on user (employee, retail, entertainment).

Andrea Leers: Taken the biggest and most challenging block and shaped it. I like the difference in expression between the podium and upper parts. Terracotta proposed is stunning. I'd like to know more about the fins at committee. The longest face is on the street, and presence of performing center and generosity of the paseo will be two important events that make a varied, rich facade and I want to see more on this.

The project will continue in committee.

William Rawn returned. Eric Howeler and Mimi Love were recused. The final project presentation was for the **125 Lincoln Street** project in the Leather District.

Scott Slarsky, BPDA Urban Design: From the perspective of the BPDA's review, we are concerned about the tight public realm along all edges of the building. Geometry at the corners and quoting of urban context on facade is of key discussion.

John Clifford, S9 Architecture: Leather district has a strong context with defined cornice lines.

Current garage program doesn't relate or activate the Leather District edges. The massing for the future building draws from datums in the neighborhood. Height reduced from initial proposal.

Wanted to bring together Lincoln Street and Beech Street/fill the gap. Bringing in storefront scale of neighborhood. Curved corners at the top of the building increase sense of set back.

Gena Wirth, Scape Landscape Architects: Public realm improvements are focused on responding to community needs. Open space wraps all edges of the building. Beech street is a connectivity corridor; corner of green space reaches out to engage the other side of the street. Lincoln plaza will be an active space to engage retail/restaurant on ground floor.

Kirk Sykes: This massing is more rectilinear now and it seems like it may be fighting the nature of the geometry of the city here. Previous curved design acknowledged the curved street nature of the city.

David Hacin: Elements on the facade that relate to historic context feel uncomfortable. I understand desire to reduce scale and create a textured scaled down storefront. But the materiality and dimension we'll discuss in design committee. We just saw an example of a building with a distinct base with a clear relationship to a contemporary skin above. I'm concerned that this proposed interpretation of the facade is a little too literal.

Jonathan Evans: Base feels like an obligation instead of an opportunity to contextualize new design. Podium and top seem like they are too contrasting and fighting with each other.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Commend you for your thoughtfulness in thinking about the public realm.

Colleagues articulated concern for the resolution of the design as the ground. Mine is more concerned with the resolution of the tower. This is a juncture in the city and I want it to give into that sense of movement. Feels like a wall instead of a chance to connect with the city.

William Rawn: This project calls for careful modeling. I think it's important to see how this facade of a box can mitigate the impact of this massive building. Most important question is how the massing relates to this 6-square block part of the neighborhood.

David Hacin: With the downturn of commercial space the last and coming years as a result of the pandemic, and knowing that lab buildings function best in clusters, why is lab and office use even a good idea at this site? You can address this at design committee.

Andrea Leers: We are talking about remedies to the scale of the building. This is on the boundary of the Greenway and the neighborhood, and it's my feeling that the 100' limit in the Greenway District Planning Study Guidelines is correct and appropriate. From Lincoln Street, the idea of a sheer wall at 200' is destructive. If it were at the scale of the Greenway Guidelines it wouldn't have to try so hard to appear like the buildings around it. It could be bold and modern because it would be compatible in volume, mass, and height. There are some fundamental questions about this proposal. Let the massing and use be worked on with the BPDA before showing us again.

Kathryn Friedman, IAG architect and resident: This project has been a study in materials and textures, but not of the neighborhood. The walkthrough video was very static, but this neighborhood is dynamic—speed of traffic, flow of pedestrians. Take a closer look at the circulation. Lincoln Street loading as proposed would seriously disrupt activity. Density and nature of site contribute to feeling as those this building is trying to be something it isn't.

David Seeley, resident: At the time of the Greenway Guidelines, we were promised that this site would comply before there was big money/pressure on development in the city. We started with a huge building and now have one that's a little smaller and are supposed to be happy with it, but it's still totally out of compliance with our expectation.

Lawrence Chan, architect and resident: A lot of concerns have been addressed by the Commission and public comments. I want to speak to the use of the site. To bring a large office from the financial district in the middle of Chinatown and Leather District, both residential and active urban neighborhoods, is out of place. And a lab use could prove to be unhealthy for the surrounding residents. This site acts as a wall between the scale of the Leather District and Chinatown, and would set a precedent for a future addition to 179 Lincoln St. The retail office workers would attract would disappear in the evenings and on weekends.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:15 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for March 2, 2021. The recording of the February 2, 2021 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.