



MINUTES  
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, starting in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:15 p.m. Members in attendance were David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, Paul McDonough, Kirk Sykes, William Rawn. Absent were Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, and Mikyoung Kim. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Michael Cannizzo, Rich McGuinness, Ebony, Eddie Carmody, Nupoor Monani, Joe Christo, and Natalie Punzak 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 February 23, 2020, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the February 4 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on February 11, 18, and 25. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

**VOTED: To approve the February 4, 11, 18, and 25 BCDC Meeting Minutes.**

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the Pinnacle at Central Wharf project. The site, located between the historic Central and India Wharfs, is an existing 9-story parking garage (2-stories below grade) bounded by Atlantic Avenue, East India Row, Milk Street, and the Harborwalk. The proposed project combines office, residential, and retail uses in a 585' tower. Half of the 1.3 acre site will be open space. At ~865,000 SF, review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Harbor Garage redevelopment/The Pinnacle at Central Wharf project in Downtown Boston.**

The next Review Committee report was for the Northeastern University 840 Columbus Ave project. Northeastern University proposes amending the current Institutional Master Plan to add a new 299' classroom and residential building. The project proposes relocating around 800 student beds from existing housing stock in the Fenway neighborhood to this new building with an additional new 175 beds. Once the building is complete, the existing housing stock in the Fenway neighborhood will be sold and return to the general housing market. The building is located at the intersection of several development areas in the Roxbury neighborhood. At 525,000 SF, review is recommended. As such, it was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 840 Columbus Avenue project in the Roxbury neighborhood.**

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The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **Fenway Center Phase 2** project in the Fenway Neighborhood. Andrea Leers: This project was the focus of review at the four design committee discussions in the last month. The proponent has worked with us to reduce and reconfigure the massing to create more space between the two building volumes, which scale better to both Boylston and Beacon Streets. There is a clear base of building that relates to context. We've had long discussions about the ground plane, some discussion about the building envelope that we hope to defer for review in future discussion after approval of the building massing.

Todd Dundon, Gensler: Walking through what we've heard the last few weeks, the focus of Commission feedback was reducing the visual impact of the building massing and integrating and activating the building at the pedestrian scale. We've extended the contextual building language across the whole building podium. We discussed how to break up the scale of the façade along Brookline Avenue. The pedestrian connector from Brookline has been expanded and made more prominent. We've studied a number of volumetric iterations through sketches and physical models, and strengthened the vertical expression of the building with materials and chamfers. Horizontal breaks have been added to the building massing that tie programmatic changes in the building between levels 6-7 and 16-17. At the top of the building podium (6 levels) the mass is set back 10-20' from the podium to reduce the impression of height and scale from the public realm. We slimmed the top of the tower and improved the proportions between the two building tops.

David Hacin: I really appreciate how much work has taken place over the last month. The scale of the portal feels grand and more comfortable as a gateway to the public realm. I think the decision to move some mass between the two buildings helps diminish the scale problems that were initially presented. The public space feels useful and gives breathing room to the project.

Kirk Sykes: Vast improvement over what we initially saw. I'd love to see you continue to work on the walkway and adjacent podium, and the vertical dimension of that walkway. Keep working on the façade skin to improve the view from the west.

William Rawn: I echo my colleagues' comments and compliment the progress made. This project plays an important role in bridging Fenway and Kenmore Square over the Turnpike. Various neighborhood groups have been involved even in our review process and I feel the changes satisfy the concerns of many different stakeholders and constituents.

David Manfredi: I would remind you as you look at the public realm that you are not limited just to the walkway between Brookline and Beacon. You can make something spectacular here in three-dimensions.

Eric Howeler: This is a piece of the city and you've incorporated our comments nicely. This project is bold and doing good things at the scale of the city and the scale of the architecture.

Pam Beele, Chair of CAC: Thank you for all of your effort in the review and development of this project. I attended all of the design committee sessions and the project evolved. The community is looking forward to the next phases of the project's design.

John Rosenthal: You have made this project better. You are an amazing group of architects and planners who have been so helpful and gracious in this process and added a lot of value not just to this project but to the city. You helped unlock the potential of air-rights development because of the sensitivity you've shown us.

Approve the massing, contingent on future design committee session focused on the public realm and building envelope.

**VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for the proposed Fenway Center Phase 2 project with the condition that the façade and public realm return to the Commission for further review and approval.**

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The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for the **Pinnacle at Central Wharf** project in the Downtown neighborhood. Eric Howeler was recused.

Rich McGuinness, Deputy Director for Climate Change and Environmental Planning at the BPDA: I want to offer you some planning context for this project. This is a standalone garage use that provides parking for residences, the aquarium, and commercial uses on the waterfront. This garage is a remnant of the elevated highway system. We now have a beautiful Greenway, but the existing Harbor Garage occupies 100% of its site and creates a wall against the Greenway. The Greenway District Planning Study was completed almost 10 years ago to improve connections to and across the Greenway in future development, particularly focused on redevelopment of garages. The Guidelines studied options for height and massing on this site, and we settled on 250' feet. This area is subject to the State's Ch 91 regulations for waterways and was included in the later Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Plan. We also did an economic analysis of the site to ensure the existing garage could be removed and that the building could comply; we settled on a 600' tower in order to unlock these public benefits. Through this planning process, we developed shadow prohibition on the Long Wharf. We studied the building footprint and arrived at 50% lot coverage, which is the Ch 91 standard. Thinking about a 600' height, there will be height and wind impacts. The Harbor Plan includes a public realm and waterfront activation plan. There will be an increase in about 58,600 SF of open space and \$14.4 million towards the Long Wharf/Chart House open space and Aquarium Blue Way project. There continues to be ongoing waterfront planning focused on sea level rise.

Rob Caradet, Chiofaro Company: Rich covered a number of the constraints and requirements of this project. I want to restate that 50% of this project will be open space that will be located on the Northside of the site to achieve the Aquarium's vision for a resilient Blue Way. On the current proposal, additional program includes 535,000 SF of office, 200 residential units, 2 levels of retail, and 1100 parking spaces.

Trent Tesh, KPF: This building has been designed by both the MHP process and the physical environment. The design process involved shaping programmatic features in ways that minimize wind and shadow impacts. The ground level shows the active public uses and parking entry/exits. The office and residential entries off East India road allow for maximum public use along the public spaces.

John Copley: The design of the public realm has been influenced by 20 years of planning and development. We've always thought of this site as a square. We think we can expand the Wharf to the East. The harborside of the Greenway is more organic. More than 30 million people visit this area annually. The site is big enough for us to raise it for flood resilience, and there's an opportunity for a living shoreline where the existing seawall meets the waterfront.

Trent Tesh: The public space will have four season programming, which is still being developed. From a resilience perspective, key measures are the soft edge, 4' raised elevation, storm water

retention onsite, electric-ready technology. In terms of the tower design, setbacks on the building each correspond to a neighboring cornice line. We're imparting a vertical façade system of faceted glass and solid material. Faceting helps with wind comfort at the building base as well as diffusing sunlight. Grand gestures of façade openings at entries that animate the building base. After studying building tops across Boston, we've compressed mechanical systems into a building crown that allow for light and shadow play.

David Hacin: I'm thinking when we have subcommittee, it will be useful to see this project's model in context of the city model. The Aquarium clearly draws many users around this site. I'd like to understand more about the Blue Way plans and how the Aquarium is engaged in this project, since the ground floor will have major impacts. You mentioned you're still developing programming at the public realm. For a project of this scale, we need a really clear understanding of the building. I'd like to understand more about the form of the building, which seems interesting. Since this will be an iconic building on the skyline, what will this project mean?

Anne-Marie Lubenau: From the city's point of view, what other major developments of this scale are anticipated? This will be a major addition to the skyline and immediately behind the site is a smaller, more textured building scale. I want to understand how this context relates to the building materials and the way the project meets the ground. We want to understand how this connects to the adjacent sites at a larger scale.

David Manfredi: There is a desire on your part to deliver a landmark building on the waterfront. I'm sure a lot of the sculpting of this form has a lot to do with the environmental conditions. I'd like to understand more about the process of getting to this point. I applaud the landmark approach to the design, and it should be a landmark because of its location. Without context, I'm wondering how the building feels around its tall neighbors. It doesn't feel slender to me.

Kirk Sykes: This is a dynamic location at the bend of the Greenway. Think about the trip both directions down the greenway so we see the building as it emerges. I want to understand the vehicular entry off Atlantic Avenue and how it interacts with pedestrians.

David Hacin: Be prepared to answer questions from our colleagues that are landscape architects who are not here tonight. And I'd like to understand wind impact around the site.

William Rawn: My concerns are at a city scale. There are questions about height in relation to its neighbors. You need to share with us convincing arguments about why a 600' tower is good for the city. Same goes for the breadth.

Andrea Leers: I've seen a number of proposals for this site over the years. On the whole, earlier studies felt less massive and more permeable than this proposal.

Lewis Elisa, public comment: Having spent time in this coastal area, I'm wondering how the stepped down public areas along the site will be impacted by sea level rise. Will a 4' raised elevation be enough, and how will ground floor uses like parking be impacted by rising sea levels? Citizens advisory group takes concern with continuous access to the waters' edge. Will there be a loss of access due to any of the programming of the public space?

The project will continue in design committee.

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The next project presentation was for 840 Columbus in the Roxbury neighborhood. Eric Höweler returned. David Manfredi was recused. Andrea Leers left.

Chris Galvao, Elkus Manfredi Architects: The project site is flanked by Columbus Ave, Melnea Cass Blvd, Tremont Street. We're focused on connectivity to campus, especially the new ISEC and EXP buildings, Ruggles Station, and park. [Diagrams of building massing and project in context with surrounding buildings were presented.] The building volume is broken into three vertical sections. Living rooms break the corners and project out of these volumetric bundles. Two story podium at the ground floor will house student spaces that include an extended shared living space and space for gathering to keep the ground plane active. There will be a wide sidewalk around the building with a planting zone. We are planning public programming to bring neighbors into the building.

Kirk Sykes: We need to understand context on Tremont and Columbus Ave. There needs to be a multi-sided approach to the building, especially if you want to welcome the community into the building. There are already several institutions on Tremont Street that are impermeable; how will this be different?

David Hacin: I think some of the landscape ideas are interesting in the larger context of Melnea Cass bike connections. We need to understand levels of security and permeability of ground plane. This seems to be becoming a new center of a neighborhood in conjunction with development around Nubian Square. But this project feels more dense than all of its surroundings, and I'm not sure if that's a result of the height, breadth, or both.

William Rawn: I compliment you on the drawing of the building in context with height and scale of neighborhood. I was initially concerned with the podium, but you've done a great job making this double-height transparent space.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I'd like to understand the decisions and strategy you're taking toward identity. There has been a magnitude of development on Northeastern's campus—how does this fit into the rest of the campus design.

Eric Höweler: Transition between public, academic, and residential space is critical. This is home of students attending this institution. How does this mix with a neighborhood and community? Making a porous building is a challenge.

David Hacin: This is an area with large institutional buildings that offer shortcuts and porosity for students but not for the public. Is there a shortcut through the site for people going to Ruggles Station? Can they pass through the ground plane of the building or is this only a destination for the community?

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Smith center and Bolling building are good examples of buildings that offer permeability, community gathering space, and institutional use.

Kirk Sykes: The context for the new science buildings feels more in line with the campus scale with an inviting character. I want some of that welcoming openness to make its way to this project. Rules of engagement lie on Tremont Street as much as Columbus.

Lewis Elisa, Resident of Roxbury & Roxbury United Neighbors: Community involvement in this design has been minimal. The advisory group has not been very involved from a design perspective. Residents, neighbors, find the proposed structure to be unwelcoming, threatening, intimidating. A 25-story building feels unnecessary. This type of mass in the community creates a wall to the community. The view from Tremont towards Ruggles Station is not inviting to the community on a campus that hasn't done much to integrate the community. I'm hoping Northeastern will come back and work with the community and share the information we've asked them about.

Alice Pultinas, Friends of Melnea Cass Blvd: We've been working with not always a good relationship with BT. Melnea Cass street design has a lot of controversy. This is an Urban Renewal parcel (Parcel

18). What happens at the edge of the campus is extremely important as it is next to 2 churches. The renderings shown do not acknowledge those churches. This is supposed to be a special planning district with PLAN: Nubian Square. My concern is the precedent this sets about walls, entries.

Julia Meija, Boston City Councilor at Large: I'd like to understand a full assessment of the community process up to this point. What opportunities exist to have for community members to be involved in the design review process collaboratively? If were serious about removing barriers to engagement, we should think about who we're inviting to these meetings, childcare, and food so that folks can participate.

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 7:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for April 7, 2020. The recording of the March 3, 2020 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.