

**MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION**

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, November 9, 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, Mikyoung Kim, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, William Rawn, Kirk Sykes. Absent were Kathy Kottaridis and Eric Höweler. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Adam Johnson, Patricia Cafferky, Meera Deean, and Scott Slarsky 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 October 28, 2021, in the BOSTON HERALD.

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

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

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 1141 Bennington Street project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 1141 Bennington Street project in the East Boston neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 775 Huntington Avenue project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 775 Huntington Avenue project in the Mission Hill neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 60 Guest Street project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 60 Guest Street project in the Brighton neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **Nubian Square Ascends**.

Tamara Roy: Presented comments received from the commission, including comments about the use and activation of Eustis Street and the design and sizing of the parking garage.

Shawna: Currently, Eustis Street is dramatically underused.

Tamara Roy: We adjusted the grading and elevations to transform the Eustis Street side of the project into an entrance, in order to encourage use from BFIT across the street. For the parking garage, we adjusted the design to become wider, which reduced the height from six to four stories. This reduction in height significantly reduced the visual impact of the garage from around the site. Finally, we added a crosswalk across Harrison Avenue, to the south of project.

David Manfredi: I appreciate the work you've done. On Eustis Street, you've made the space feel more full. The parking garage didn't get smaller, but it looks smaller. Visitors will appreciate using the more efficient garage.

Mimi Love: I agree with David. I appreciate your responsiveness as well.

Linda Eastley: What a difference on Eustis Street! I also appreciate the use of art, and "playing with the eye."

Andrea Leers: I am really excited about how the whole block is going to transform. Eustis St will be a different place.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for Nubian Square Ascends in the Roxbury neighborhood. Kirk Sykes was recused.

The next project was 323-365 Dorchester Avenue.

Matt Davis: For 333 Dorchester Ave, we used material changes to help the building have a singular identity, and to complement the material design at 345 Dorchester Ave. The updated massing for 345 Dorchester Ave helps create open space to connect the project with the surrounding neighborhood. The west Residential and Commercial buildings use curved forms to soften their architectural expression. In plan, we've expanded open space and public space, so that green space appears to reach out and take over the site.

Mimi Love: We've challenged the team, and they've been responsive. The mixed-use, massing, and scale of the site make sense. The design of the landscape has continued to improve through many meetings.

Andrea Leers: I appreciate the clarity. These buildings are much more effective now. The introduction of green space will be very important for Dorchester Avenue, and this space will be very welcome.

Kirk Sykes: I agree, the green space will be very important for the neighborhood.

Two members of the Andrew Square Civic Association spoke to voice their support for the project.

A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of 323-365 Dorchester Avenue in the South Boston neighborhood. David Manfredi and David Hacin were recused.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for 1141 Bennington St in the East Boston neighborhood.

Meera Deean of the BPDA introduced the project, and the design team presented.

Amy Korte: We've been working to integrate the project with the road changes proposed by PLAN: East Boston. The site is also being prepared with concern toward the neighboring Marsh, and our plan restores existing grading that creates an accessible path around the project. We're looking at how to make Austin Ave feel more like a street, rather than a gravel path.

Sean Sanger: PLAN: East Boston gives us tremendous potential for green space. On Bennington, we've pulled the sidewalk back to create a planted buffer. The green space wraps around the corner of the building using a series of stepped terraces, taking advantage of marsh views and the vocabulary of the marsh vegetation.

Linda Eastley: Where does the path actually go? Isn't the railyard in the way?

Sean Sanger: It could be an amazing future element, but we're preparing for the future.

Amy Korte: Along Austin avenue, we've lined the building with bike rooms, secondary amenity spaces, and coworking spaces. These uses create a two-story sectional connection. To break up the building, we've designed a series of subtle folds that begin to change how the façade is perceived over the course of day and the year. The Bennington St retail edge helps negotiate the grade change. A series of louvers shaped like birds on the edge of the windows create shadows that morph throughout the day and the year, playing with a series of terraces and green roofs along the building edge.

Kirk Sykes: Is there access to the back of the façade from the back?

Amy Korte: No, only on Bennington.

Sean Sanger: Even though there are significant grade changes, they are as subtle and accessible as possible.

David Manfredi: For Design Committee, bring a whole series of site sections that cut through the building at fine intervals.

Jonathan Evans: This would be great to see as a model. How are the parts all coming together? There are a lot of really exciting moves, but how do they fit together?

David Hacin: I agree. A really thoughtful project, and I appreciate thinking about the facades and the introduction of graphic arts into the composition. I'm struggling to understand some of the connections of the courtyards and the steps to the lower street. The prow of the building might need to be even more celebrated to bring attention to it.

Linda Eastley: There are so many clever things happening in this scheme. This is a very isolated site, and at subcommittee it'll be helpful to see how we are physically connecting to the neighborhood and this sits in relation to the marsh. As people are coming down Bennington, work with your wetland scientist to determine how to make the view of the marsh part of the community. The drop-off doesn't feel organic – how can it be as compelling as the rest of your landscape?

Bill Rawn: The architectonics of the project are wonderful. Is it faster to get to to Orient Heights T, or to Suffolk Downs?

Amy Korte: They're the same distance, but it depends on how they're perceived.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: David Hacin mentioned celebrating the corner. It looks like if I exit the Suffolk Downs station, I could see the corner – so maybe that's an opportunity.

Andrea Leers: What is the driving edge along the marsh like? Is there a turnaround opportunity? The site circulation is tough. The point of your building is nudging against the urban environment. You can't ignore that driving along the marsh shouldn't be a dead end condition.

Mimi Love: What happens in section, across the pedestrian bridge?

David Hacin: Is there a possibility of a viewing platform, or a birdwatching moment, etc.?

Amy Korte: We would love more connections. We're still in discussions with the Friends of the Belle Isle Marsh and our wetlands scientists.

David Hacin: It's so compelling to see the marsh poke its nose in the city.

Kirk Sykes: What's the opportunity on Bennington to get views through the cut-through?

Amy Korte: The issue is the fence.

Kirk Sykes: Somebody across the street had a view, lost a view, and gained a view – how can you connect Bennington more to the marsh? The sections could help.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for **775 Huntington Avenue** in the Mission Hill neighborhood. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Scott Slarsky of the BPDA introduced the project, and the project team presented.

Peter Munkenbeck: This site has a lot of challenges. We are proposing a lot of affordable housing.

Aeron Hodges: 84 of the 112 units will be affordable condo and rental. We're using brick and a strong cornice line to continue what's surrounding the site. The massing scheme was approved by the Roxbury Tenants Housing. The height will be visible, but not overwhelming from any one direction. At the ground floor, setbacks carry the tower portion to the ground and signify welcoming presence to the residential lobby.

Terry Kinsler: We're proposing a few bumpouts along the sidewalk, to accommodate existing street trees and create a new parklet. Between new and existing buildings, there is a "woodland connection" to get from the block to the back of the block. This will be a safe and welcoming place to be.

Aeron Hodges: Red and beige brick along the façade. The corners of the building are more transparent.

David Hacin: It's wonderful that you're accommodating this level of affordability. I'd like to understand the streetscape and the drop-off. This is one of the most difficult stretches of road in the entire city. I'd like to get a better understanding of how your streetscape design will mitigate traffic or anticipate future street design.

Terry Kinsler: We're introducing 8 or 9 parking spaces, including temporary parking.

David Hacin: Let's also talk about move-ins.

Mikyong Kim: I'd love to see a little more information about the landscape. I love the nooks you're embedding into the streetscape, and I'd like to understand through sections or views how the spaces interact in context.

Bill Rawn: When you first look at the project it looks very big, but it's only 12 stories high. I think the height of the building is accentuated by the composition of the building. I'd love to have a conversation about the architectonic decisions.

Andrea Leers: I'm interested in seeing a series of views from the street, near some of the other big buildings. This will help us see whether or not the architecture supports its verticality.

Bill Rawn: A really effective thing would be taking photos marching up Huntington Ave.

Linda Eastley: You mentioned a couple times that's the "back" of the building, but it will be viewed from all areas. The other piece I'm curious about is where the "woodland connection" goes. It's quite tight, and could be dark, so I'd love to talk about how these open spaces could have a greater visibility.

David Manfredi: I was surprised that it was only 12 stories, because it feels like a much taller building. I'm also very interested in seeing diagrammatic alternatives. The slivers of glass make the brick feel very planar and without real depth. On the ground floor plan, I agree with Mikyoung that I'm fascinated by the nooks, but I don't understand them.

Jonathan Evans: What is governing the dimension of the different pieces of the building?

David Hacin: It's important to note that Mission Hill is across the street, which is a major piece of topography.

The project will continue in design committee.

60 Guest Street was the next presentation.

Elizabeth Stifel of the BPDA introduced the project. Members of the design team presented.

John Sullivan: We started with an approved massing, and broke it down into a much more comfortable final massing. We softened the corners and allowed the stories to step up to the top. We spent a lot of time thinking about how to activate the project edges, to draw the public inside and create an open space that is vibrant.

Mikyoung Kim: At Design Committee, it'll be nice to see more pushing on the streetscape so that it's a little more eclectic.

Mimi Love: The massing fits very well into the site, but I think when the corners are faceted and not curved, it loses something. Have you really studied the geometry? I wonder if the striping of these elements works at every round corner. There's no real top to the building. Regarding the second floor, there's a real intentionality above the café, but what's the space?

David Hacin: Agree about curved vs. faceted corners. If the goal is to really invite people into this space, are there ways to treat the curtain wall differently to humanize this building in an authentic way, in this location? I wonder if in some of the places where there is terracing, is that terracing accessible? Are there opportunities to disrupt the rigor of the system in a few locations?

Andrea Leers: I agree about ground level engagement needing more than a corporate lobby with a café in it. This building is closest to the original intention of the PDA. Yours most nearly fulfills the original vision. The building is engaged on one side and free on the other. Given what's been built around it, this building wants a simple edge adjacent to the other building, but a more sculptural

edge along Life Street. The strategies you use are good, and bring all that to this side of the building – do not bury them.

Bill Rawn: The vocabulary of this building is too refined, corporate, and anonymous. Is that appropriate for this setting?

David Hacin: It feels very downtown, financial district. Is this building creating a consistency that doesn't exist along the streetscape?

Mimi Love: What makes this building stand out?

Linda Eastley: This building is too well-behaved. Where are the “moments?” You have the advantage of location, how can you be bold?

Andrea Leers: Be free and generous with your thoughts about other ways to do it.

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 [TIME] p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for [DATE]. The recording of the [TODAY'S DATE] Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.