

MEMORANDUM

BCDC Principles and Priorities
Adopted September 3, 2019

With the recent change of Executive Director, three new Commissioners, and a new Chair, the Boston Civic Design Commission is entering the next phase of its participation in building Boston's future. Cognizant of this moment of renewed energy, the Commission met on April 23, 2019 to discuss its priorities going forward and to define a few principles that will guide its review of upcoming projects. The following is a draft of those principles and priorities to share with the BPDA, proponents, and designers.

Height, Scale, and Massing

Boston is enjoying a robust and exciting period of growth both in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Consequently, a growing number of proposals that are substantially larger in scale and massing than surrounding buildings and the immediate context are being presented for review. The Commission is concerned about the risks entailed in evaluating these proposals in the absence of overall development plans and strategies for growth. The Commissioners will look to city-wide initiatives such as Imagine Boston 2030, and planning and precinct studies developed by the BPDA, as well as drawing on their own experiences in an effort to offer the best guidance possible. The Commission will encourage growth which responds to the scale and massing of surrounding properties, sustains the quality of life and distinctive physical character of the city, and supports the neighborhoods in ways that citizens value.

Accessible Open Space

The BCDC is committed to supporting functional, beautiful and connected open space throughout the City of Boston. To achieve this vision, the Commission encourages each project to provide thoughtful, public open space that addresses human and ecological resiliency, prioritizes street-level improvements, and responds to the site and neighborhood context. Civic open spaces are to be accessible to all from public walkways, and provide a clear public presence while incorporating best design and environmental practices. Public open space shall include multi-generational amenities where appropriate, visual interest, vitality and/or respite, a diversity of activities, lighting, and safety.

Parking and Mobility

The movement and parking of cars in the city are having an enormous impact on the development proposals currently being reviewed. The Commission believes that the provision of abundant and inexpensive public parking in the city should be questioned in light of a larger movement to recover space from cars, provide a better pedestrian experience, and demonstrate best environmental practices. Above grade parking is a challenge to the vitality of the urban realm and should be convertible to non-parking use and shielded from public view by active uses. Public transit and new mobility scenarios including car sharing and ride hailing

should impact development projects so that today's solutions don't preclude futures with far fewer cars and better and more active public spaces.

Design Creativity

Boston is a city rich in tradition with a legacy of historic preservation and continuous reinvention as the city's needs and character have changed over centuries. Today, in approaching new development opportunities, the Commission strongly encourages creative problem solving that reflect the unique qualities of the city's fabric and public realm as well as the city's identity as a global center of leading edge innovation. With a mind to quality, sustainability, and contemporary 21st century expression, the Commission asks proponents and designers to propose thoughtful projects that advance Boston's identity as an internationally recognized hub of design creativity and education while simultaneously respecting its unique character as the capital of the New England region and a touchstone of American history.