

MINUTES FOR THE BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION JULY 23, 2024, SESSION A

*This meeting was held virtually. A recording of this meeting is available upon request.
Please reach out to bcdc@boston.gov for more information.*

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) Design Subcommittee was called to order by the Executive Director of BCDC, Kristina Ricco, at 5:00 PM on Tuesday, JULY 23, 2024.

ATTENDEES

The following Boston Civic Design Commission members were present: Commissioners Gillies-Smith, Hacin, Love, Lubenau, and Kim

PRESENTATIONS FOR REVIEW AND PUBLIC TESTIMONY

FANEUIL GARDENS, BRIGHTON

121A MASTER PLAN & ART 80B FOR 89 FANEUIL STREET, AKA "PHASE 1"

Representatives of the proponent team, including Frans de Witte (MVRDV), Jennifer Martel (Copley Wolff Design Group), Andreas Bernal (JGE Architecture + Design), and David Valecillos (TCB) presented the proposed project. Commissioners Gillies-Smith, Hacin, Love, Lubenau, and Kim participated in deliberations.

Discussion: Commissioners were appreciative of changes made to the proposed project in response to feedback received to date. "The information presented goes a long way in clarifying your thinking, and the strategy as a whole is more coherent and compelling with the changes you've made, including providing more green along the parking areas, enhancing the connections between parking areas and the interior, adjusting the legs of the buildings so that there's more of a sense of hierarchy between the smaller spaces in the center and clarifying the relationship to the boulevard." Commissioners, though enthusiastic about the use of color, asked for more information about its strategic use. "Do you need to go through the full range of the rainbow? Could a palette still be colorful but more cohesive and use brighter colors to signify more public elements?" "Bring it out of the conceptual." Commissioners encouraged the proponent to consider the longevity of color in material choices. Commissioners requested the proponent provide samples of color and tone palettes, and sample materials in those color ranges. "You wouldn't want to pick a material palette that works for the blue color and not for the red color, for example." Commissioners encouraged the proponent to consider color in the landscape whether through pavement choices and or planting palette, and regarding planting, that the palette consider seasonality. "The buildings have very unique color character, the landscape should pick up on that." Commissioners asked for more information about "the Heart," a proposed open space at the center of the site plan. "I'm not suggesting it's a rainbow, but I'm trying to understand the message. Does everything emanate from the heart? The heart could be a very exciting collage of these things." Commissioners asked that the proponent share further refinement of "Building 1" and "the Heart" at a subsequent BCDC meeting.

There was no public testimony.

FOLLOWING DISCUSSION AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TESTIMONY, THE COMMISSIONERS AGREED THAT THE PROPOSED PROJECT AT FANEUIL GARDENS, BRIGHTON, SHOULD BE RETURNED TO A FUTURE CONVENING OF THE BCDC DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE FOR ADDITIONAL REVIEW.

100-168 NEW RUTHERFORD AVENUE, CHARLESTOWN (AKA AUSTIN STREET LOTS)
ART 80C MASTER PLAN, ART 80C DEVELOPMENT PLAN, AND ART 80B FOR ALL DEVELOPMENT

Representatives of the proponent team, Kendra Halliwell (FIRM), Mark Klopfer (Klopfer Martin Design Group), and Abby Goldenfarb (FIRM), presented the proposed project. Commissioners Gillies-Smith, Hacin, Love, Lubenau, and Kim participated in deliberations.

Discussion: Commissioners, while acknowledging the challenging constraints the proposal responds to, characterized the resultant site plan as “cramped.” Commissioners suggested the proponent team explore opportunities to rebalance proposed building uses and square footage to potentially increase the size of “Building 3” to accommodate the housing program currently associated with “Building 4,” allowing “Building 4” to operate as a stand-alone community-use facility with a smaller building footprint. “Your site is honestly too small for all of the things you need to do on the site. I find that the site, or really the massing, is only responding to constraints.” Commissioners suggested this could be achieved by either making “Building 3” taller, or extending its length along the proposed playing fields and incorporating the area previously identified as a woonerf. The proponent shared funding constraints that would challenge this approach. Commissioners also suggested that the form of “Building 4” could respond in some way to the proposed Boston Sand & Gravel Access Road. “I wonder in the making of “Building 1” and “Building 4” if those conditions are fundamentally different than “Building 2” and “Building 3.” Could “Building 4” be more related to the form of the Access Road?” Commissioners interrogated the relationship between the proposed playing fields and the lower floors of all buildings, particularly “Building 3” and “Building 4.” “I’m really worried about the fields. This fence that I’m noticing in the section really contributes to the character of the project, and I’m really worried about it. I’m worried about how close the fields are to the buildings.” “In a way, the plan is dominated by the fields.” Commissioners suggested the proponent explore more diverse open space programming opportunities. “Is there a tot lot to service early childhood play? Is there retail spill-out space?” Commissioners asked that the proponent share more information about the proposed architecture for all four buildings at a subsequent BCDC meeting. Public testimony was given by Dan Jaffee and Kent Edwards.

FOLLOWING DISCUSSION AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TESTIMONY, THE COMMISSIONERS AGREED THAT THE PROPOSED PROJECT AT 100-168 NEW RUTHERFORD AVENUE, CHARLESTOWN (AKA AUSTIN STREET LOTS), SHOULD BE RETURNED TO A FUTURE CONVENING OF THE BCDC DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE FOR ADDITIONAL REVIEW.