

AMENDED MINUTES

BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, April 2, 2019, starting in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:19 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Deneen Crosby, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Mikyoung Kim, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, Paul McDonough, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were Linda Eastley, and Anne-Marie Lubenau. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. David Carlson, Tad Reed, Corey Zehngebot, Rosa, Joe, and Natalie Punzak were present for the BPDA.

The Chair, Andrea Leers (AL), 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 Sunday, March 17, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item on the agenda was the approval of the March 5, 2019 Monthly Meeting Minutes and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on March 12, 19, and 26. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the March 5, 12, 19, and 26, 2019 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Commonwealth Pier** project. Also known as the World Trade Center building, the project is located at 200 Seaport Blvd. The project removes the existing exhibition space and uses that area to make public realm improvements, expanded retail, additional and upgraded office space. This includes additions to the existing apron and Harborwalk and cutting niches out of the building to create open spaces. There is one large open space proposed at the southwest corner of the building and a series of smaller one wrapping around the Harborwalk. A vote to review was recommended, and as such, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Commonwealth Pier Revitalization project in the South Boston Waterfront district.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Seaport Square Block P** project. (William Rawn was recused.) WS Development proposes the redevelopment of Parcel P on the block between Congress and Summer Streets next to the Turnpike off-ramp. This will be an office/lab tower with two stories of retail at the base and below grade parking. This phase will also include build out of the Summer Steps, a large public realm connector. At approximately 626,000 SF the project well exceeds the BCDC 100,000 SF review. Review was recommended. It was duly moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Seaport Square Parcel P and Summer Steps project in the Seaport Square PDA and in the South Boston Waterfront district.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Allston Yards Draft Impact Report Update** project. The Commission need not vote, as the project is under review, but the project has been significantly revised from the first presentation on July 10, 2018. Several project elements including the grocery store and office block have been relocated on the project site. The changes are significant enough that it seemed advisable to bring the revisions to the full Commission so that as many Commissioners as possible can see them before it comes to Design Committee.

The Review Committee presented a report on the **15 Arlington Street (Taj Hotel)** project. Taj Hotel Boston proposes renovations that include updating the existing hotel guest rooms, creating 16 additional guest rooms, and permanently enclosing the existing seasonal rooftop restaurant. The Project also proposes to relocate the main entrance of the hotel from Arlington Street to Newbury Street. Although the Proposed Project technically exceeds the BCDC review threshold of 100,000 SF, impacts are primarily interior. Additionally, all exterior work is under the binding review of the Back Bay Architectural Commission (Landmark Commission for the area), and therefore review was not recommended. However, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 15 Arlington Street renovation project in the Back Bay neighborhood.

Mikyoung Kim arrived. The next item on the agenda was a report from the Design Committee on the **115 Winthrop Square Great Hall and Winthrop Square Park** project.

Blake Middleton, Handel Architects, presented the design scheme of the interior Great Hall with floor plans and rendered perspective views: The space is intended to be inclusive for the entire city, and will be open to traverse 18-hours each day. Versatility of use is baked into the design with capacity and dimension. We envision the Great Hall used for performances, rallies, screenings, exhibits, and more. It will be managed by Millennium Partners with an agreement with the BPDA, committed in our permits. Shauna Gillies-Smith, Ground, Inc.: The landscape design strategy centers on ripples that grow outward from a central water feature. The area connects the Great Hall to the Square and Winthrop Lane with a tabled crosswalk. Curbs will be removed and bollards added, with unique paving patterns to distinguish the crosswalks. Additional seating has been added at the recommendation of the BCDC.

Deneen Crosby (DC): Consider the use and highlighting of the water feature year-round.

Kirk Sykes (KS): There is a series of rooms starting with Shopper's Park that brings you to these public spaces and to Post Office Square. This will be an exciting progression of public space. You've done a nice job. Regarding the interior space, what is the strategy for the furnishing of the space and maintaining capacity during peak events and times (like the lunch hour)?

Blake Middleton: The density of furniture will likely vary based on need, but the central stair/ramp through the space functions as stadium-style seating.

Andrea Leers (AL): The pavement leveling out to the park is a big improvement. It connects the interior and exterior and feels like a place for people to move freely without fear of cars.

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

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the proposed Connector and Winthrop Square portions of the 115 Winthrop Square in the Downtown neighborhood.

Before the presentation of the Allston Yards Project, Tad Read and Rosa Herrero de Andres of the BPDA presented updates regarding the Allston-Brighton Mobility Study, an ongoing planning initiative.

Tad Read, Senior Deputy Director of Transportation & Infrastructure Planning: The purpose of this planning study is make Allston-Brighton's multi-modal mobility system safer and more inclusive for all while promoting the goals of Go Boston 2030 which prioritize sustainable modes of transit like walking, biking, and public transportation. There have been nearly 8 million SF of development in the pipeline in this area. We are wrapping up background research and modeling of the neighborhood are beginning scenario and idea testing. Over the course of the next year, we will be testing ideas, vetting them with the public, and finalizing a Transportation Action Plan.

Rosa Herrero de Andre, Senior Planner I: Guest Street Area Planning Study was completed in March 2012 and includes this area. The area is envisioned as a connected urban area with Guest Street as a Main Street.

The Allston Yards team proceeded to present the project. (David Hacin was recused.)

John Twohig, New England Development: The PDA design has been developed in consistency with the Guest Street Planning Study. Mix of uses: residential, retail, remaining Stop-n-Shop, and ground floor

activation. When this project was initially brought to the Commission, the commission critiqued the consistency of height across the site and the scale in relation to the neighborhood across Guest Street. We have since revised the masterplan in the following ways: relocated Stop-and-Shop to the center of the site, doubled the size of the green space, dropped 150 units (200,000 SF), opened views through the site, and diversified heights and scale.

Christian Galvao of Elkus Manfredi presented conceptual renderings of the project.

Eric Wyatt, Stantec, presented building on Block A: Building A will be developed first and will contain the Stop and Shop, a retail space, and residential units.

William Rawn (WR): The New Balance portion of the site has so much variety that it provides a sense of openness. How can you develop an analogous sense of openness in your project?

KS: I would request that you take a look at the assemblage of the campus at a scale we can understand. You've shown quite a variety. I'd like to understand the character of the existing neighborhood, the set up of Guest Street, and views from a far to see this project in its totality.

AL: Moving the commercial building to the end and trading a lower building have been great improvements. In further development, I'll be interested to see why the curve along Guest Street takes shape. I wonder about the T-shaped building where podiums are fairly substantial as it transitions to a one-story street frontage.

Eric Höweler (EH): This is a masterplan; what is common and what is particular? Architecturally, there is a lot of difference here. What makes this more of a campus?

The project will continue in Design Committee.

Seaport Square Parcel P was the next presentation. (William Rawn was recused.) David Manfredi arrived. Yanni Tsipis, WS Development, introduced the project: This parcel is part of the revised Seaport Square PDA Masterplan and a cohesive public realm.

Morris Adjmi from Morris Adjmi Architects presented examples of work in other cities, highlighting projects that use similar steel and brick details to the proposed project: The Fort Point neighborhood is full of industrial infrastructure like old bridges and brick detailed buildings. This building will take design cues from this language with use of steel and brick.

Yanni Tsipis: Each block of Seaport Square carries with it a set of public realm improvements. Most notably on this parcel, we will be building the Summer Steps which connect Summer Street to Congress Street along the primary access of Seaport Square. This will be an air rights project that builds over the highway ramps. We are adding a 24/7 interior connection in this building that will function in parallel to the Summer Steps. The Summer Steps are at the southern portion of Harbor Way. We see this as the civic gateway to the southern portion of the Seaport. Cascading set of wooden seating steps, punctuated with canopy beds and trees on generous landings. Design changes include increased planting and seating, creating a stronger identity and sense of place.

KS: I would request at Design Committee that we have a chance to see this massing in the larger context of the evolving district. The detailing and proposed materiality will be very elegant, but I am concerned about the reputation of boxy buildings in the Seaport. In maximizing the footprint or overly regularize an atypical site, we may end up with something that is not as sculptural as it could be in relation to its context.

DC: I would like to have a better understanding of the relationship between the Summer Steps and the building interior along its edge. Important character to this area is visibility to water and sky; plantings will be key in maintaining these views. What makes these stairs a destination in itself?

David Manfredi (DM): I have a high regard for Morris Adjmi's work, particularly because of the consistent clarity and simplicity across design projects. However, some of that clarity is lost in this project right now. Bring back the three envelope studies. Building on terra firma and air rights creates a dichotomy; there are no setbacks. Maybe the upper building should be further setback to strengthen datum lines.

EH: Some of the facades imply groundedness while some imply structural spanning. Tackling an air rights project is challenging. I think the industrial façade is right. I wonder about the masonry corner. These are details.

Mikyoung Kim (MK): I like the stair and landings. Can the design be more varied to imply a cascading landscape?

AL: Wasn't there to be a public performance space on this block? We'd appreciate seeing the studies of program across the Seaport. I appreciate the clarity in your approach. It's an odd shaped site which is leading to some confusion about building types and datum lines. Articulation could be more clear. Andrea Leers called for public comments, and a Fort Point resident spoke: Performing arts is an important component of the Seaport development. Our concern is that it seems the civic and cultural spaces in Seaport Square are continually punted to future phases of construction. We want to see a commitment to the plan.

The Project will continue in Design Committee.

William Rawn returned. The next item on the agenda was the presentation of Commonwealth Pier. Kristian Ahlmark, Schmidt Hammer Lassen Architects: There is a lack of strong urban public spaces to activate this portion of the waterfront. In the existing condition, the building is dark and short. We are introducing courtyards to provide more daylight to the offices and spaces to recreate for employees. Introducing a main lobby with café and restaurants, retail space, and common square at the building's front. On the top floor, a viaduct connects to the Seaport World Trade Center, and this pedestrian connection will be improved. We have added a new 25,000 SF public plaza adjacent to the waterfront and Seaport Blvd. The plaza is comparable to Kendall Square in size and is planned to house food trucks, festivals, skating, etc. The building façade will be clad in warm perforated metal as to not jeopardize architectural integrity.

Matt Langan, Sasaki: The driver of the public realm design is to maintain authenticity of place. This is a working waterfront. We want the public to access the water's edge all along the perimeter and accommodate series of programming that is complimentary to seaport area.

KS: This is one of the most exciting projects to come to the Seaport in one of the most unexpected locations. I want to applaud the design team for their inventiveness. The plaza contributes to the pedestrian experience from the Harborwalk to the ICA and beyond. This adds a special component.

EH: Very clear and productive publicness. I hope people walk to the end of this building to experience the waterfront; is there something special programmatically at the end of the pier?

DM: I'm interested in where old and new meet; I'm not sure I understand this yet. I agree with Eric; the end of the pier should be a destination.

MK: There's a freshness of the project that I don't want to be lost in the Committee process.

DH: Issues tonight were mostly about what, if anything, is at the end of the building.

AL: I echo an appreciation for the good thinking in this project. I was trying to picture the overpass and what it will be like in your vision.

The project will continue in committee.

The final project presentation of the evening was for 15 Arlington Street.

Vickie Alaini, CBT Architects: The scope is a full interior renovation of hotel guest rooms and interior space. We'll be cleaning up the lobby. Sidewalk outside is highly sloped and there is not a great accessible entrance. We are moving the entrance to the Newbury Street side, flattening the plaza and adding a ramp.

DH: I worry about the condition of the entrance here. I want it to be noted in relation to the primary entry to the bar area on Arlington street.

WR: You mentioned the Newbury Street side has a 9' sidewalk because of the patio addition.

Vickie Alaini: This is the result of work with BPDA and PIC.

DC: Eliminate the stair, make the whole thing a ramp.

AL: Shorten the terrace on the other end. It's too much terrace.

DH: If the entry were a restaurant with café table seating I would more willing to accept the size of the terrace as an active space. It sounds like this might be a retail space and the terrace would become strange.

A member of the public spoke to issue concerns about the alley connection. Lighting in alley could be an issue.

With that it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission approve the schematic design for the proposed 15 Arlington Street renovation project in the Back Bay neighborhood.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 9:22 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for May 7, 2019. The recording of the April 2, 2019 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.