

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, 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 Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, Linda Eastley, Kathy Kottaridis, David Manfredi, Kirk Sykes, David Hacin, Mikyoung Kim and Anne-Marie Lubeanu . Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, along with Urban Designer Kenya Thompson 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 15, 2022, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Old Colony Phase 6** project. Review is recommended. This project is the final building in the many year process, and the building is over 120,000SF. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed the Old Colony Phase 6 project in the South Boston neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the **80-100 Smith Street** project. Review is recommended. This is a notice of project change, last approved in 2005. The building consists of 200,000 SF of residential use. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 80-100 Smith Street project in the Mission Hill neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the **35-75 Morrissey Boulevard Master Plan** project. Review is recommended. The project is a large block consisting of 1.5 million SF. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 35-75 Morrissey Boulevard Master Plan project in the Dorchester neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee.
The first presentation was for **52 Everett Street**

Mark Jackson, Chris Galvao and Chris Jones Presented

ML: The design has become much more elegant and sophisticated since the first version. The balconies may have protruded a little bit more, and the articulation has become strong, the horizontal banding has really clarified the reading of the balcony at the end condition. The team has done a good job at removing band at the second floor and continuing the skin to match the program behind. As the project develops, thinking about the lighting of the building would be a nice opportunity at the balcony moments.

AML: I do like the direction that the design is taking, thinking about the lighting design would be important and the expressing of the movement and fluidness of the architecture will go a long way as the design develops.

DH: This building stands in nice contrast with other buildings in the district and it acts as a gateway building pulling you in. With all buildings that have curves and sinuous lines it's all in the details. The issues with the curved glass and the balconies shown in the renderings, and the curved bricks don't get evaluated out of the project at the end. This design really hinges on the moments being eloquently executed.

KS: Nice job activating the skin with all the curvature, and it accentuates that the ground floor is quite simple. How will you create opportunities to a little more variety in projections and awnings and different things that happen on the first floor? We have a broad view of the expansive skin of the building, what have you looked at relative to the first floor and the way it will be articulated with signage, flags, and such.

AL: The design has grown stronger and simpler. The articulation of the "false second floor", and changing it has made the building more fluid as it goes around the corners.

LE: This corner (Guest St. and Everett St.) Has so much more potential, it definitely can be more playful than it is here, both in terms of the curvature, awning feature you're introducing and pocket park. I encourage you to think about how the awning can be perhaps more dominant and the first floor at this corner as having more playful attributes. I believe that will really help draw pedestrians to that corner, particularly from across this busy intersection and animate that corner at the same time.

There were no public comments made.
It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 52 Everett Street.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **Old Colony Phase 6** in the South Boston Neighborhood.

Mimi Love is recused.
Darcy Jameson and Jay Szymanski Presented

KS: This is quite a handsome building, and knowing the context I think it fits in quite well. The one thing I would ask a bit about it site lighting and building lighting. You've got great landscaping here and plantings along the sidewalk, and we want cutoffs that don't disturb neighbors, but also provide passive surveillance for people who are seating on those seawalls or walking along that courtyard, I would love to hear your thoughts on that.

Given the elevation of the floor levels and given the height of the seat wall, there is clearly a potential zone where stuff isn't in anybody's per-view, not at the entrees or covered by streetlights. I would encourage you to look at a second tier of lighting, such as scouts or soffit lighting that might address the zone between the street lighting, tree zone and the wall of the building.

DH: I don't know if it's the rendering or the design intent, but the glazing to faced looks very sheer. Is that the intent or is that a shadow line that recessed at all these windows and will that provide a little more liveliness in the façade in real life?

Anything you can do to make the contrast seem intentional, by having clear recesses and more flush conditions will help the overall composition. It is a new challenge with some of these newer materials to give it texture and detailing that may not be obvious.

AML: I have a detail question about the building entrances. If the second entrance is to be used by the public, I am concerned about the legibility of that space from the street. I appreciate your efforts to have it connected to the

courtyard and to activate that area. Looking at the space you probably need an egress and realizing that it is adjacent to a bedroom in that residential unit that is right next to it. If the public will be using this entrance regularly, please give the same attention here that you brought to highlighting the other Spoke entrance. Bring some of that language to the other entrance and look into where it sits on the building.

DM: The Old Harbor St and East 8th St entrance is very inviting, very welcoming, and very residential. I would ask that you look at the Columbia Rd entrance in a similar manner. I understand the entrance is harder to approach and less welcoming. There are a lot of materials, and do you really need all of them? Or maybe there is more consistency in the materials between texture and color, there doesn't have to be so wide of a range.

LE: My comments are about the urban design qualities of Building 6. Attention to the corner of East and 8th and the pedestrian spine. As pedestrian are coming into that corridor between buildings 5 and 6, you have all these great corners of the building until this area. The place is understated. This is the gateway into this pedestrian percent, from the street into the courtyard. Looks like there is a server door or transformer... what's happening there? Maybe use landscape as your companion here to celebrate this corner more. Use it to invite pedestrian into this part of the development. The courtyard itself, I would love if the space here could reflect the arts aspect of Spoke. It doesn't look like there are spaces in the landscape that could be used an impromptu stage. There is also no landmark connection between the two Spoke spaces, please help create a visual like.

MYC: This would be a great community neighborhood spill out space. It is currently more designed as a thoroughfare, like it is connecting you to the front doors and it appears to be only planters with mounds. I encourage you to program out the space and have a better sense of how this might be used instead of paths from the street. This will be a great space to host events and smaller space gathering opportunities for this community. This makes sure this courtyard can accommodate activities, because right now this doesn't. It would be a missed opportunity if people would have to go to the other central courtyard for these kinds of events.

KK: Can you explain what is spilling out into the courtyard, from the doors that transition into this area. Definitely have more creative opportunity built into the courtyard, especially with the artist at Spoke in mind, and their participation can generate something unique.

DM: The directness of the massing in the illustrations leads me to think the brick is the costliest of materials here and you want to keep that to a floor and that is completely understandable. Maybe the entry corners are special, and I just wonder if the rest of the building could be one material that you might use in different ways by textures and colors.

DH: If you can source from one manufacturer to uses different colors and finishes, which will be less complicated than uses what you are currently using. That section what is in the masonry, I wish you would take more advantage by giving it more depth and detailing because that is really where you see the building.

AL: With the consistent and simple use of material, what is working well for me here is that base. It is masonry and it makes sense; the middle zone, which is a slightly different color and then a top/attic floor. I personally don't find the need for the cornus at all helping anything. As we move around the building, there are a few places where the simplicity of composition doesn't hold up, particularly on the 8th Street side. Instead of holding on the lower three floors and the top being different, suddenly we've got three panels of alternating materials. I think it would be a nice continuity to keep that reading and not suddenly turn to alternating panels; and the same goes for the courtyard side. I think it will be simpler and better to carry the mid-zone grey material right across each time, come around the corner on the left and fully around on the right so that there aren't exceptions. This will make a really strong and give wholeness to the building. It has variety, but it has a couple of extra compositional things that are not necessary. Keep in mind that your idea is this masonry base, the middle zone of grey material and this top zone of a lighter material.

There were no public comments.

The project was approved with continued work with staff.

The next project was **80-100 Smith Street**

Ben Wan, Phil Colleran and David Mackay Presented

AML: Has this project been through a full BCDC review process? There is a lot of information to absorb. I would like more information about the surround context. It looks like a distinctly different approach to the architecture of these buildings that I have questions about. Also, within the scope of the presentation tonight, I am not sure I grasped all the details about the site and design as well.

KS: This is more of the ecliptic places in the city; the geometry, how the road systems, the contrast of how Huntington Ave. and then you add in the slabs very basic residential buildings along with this rather significant enthusiastic structure. I think you should pull back a couple of blocks just to give us a good understanding of the context and the typologies that you're drawing on, that would help a lot to understand the kit of parts.

KK: Is this a designated Boston Landmark? Did this project go through article 85?

DH: I appreciate the stepping down of the one building in relations to the church. We should be thinking about different views of the project we would like to see...what looks like from Tremont St and Mission Church in the foreground, what it looks like from different perspectives. In addition to taking a broader brush of the contextual view of the surrounding area. I would better like to understand the issues of integrating the new construction with the old, and a really a clear sense of what that strategy is. I am less concerned about the brick detailing and so forth at the base as I am trying to understand the relationship of the base building to the tower. The images you have presented, there is a very clear base relationship to a tower, even like a reveal and the building is either floating above it or sliding over it. But in all the examples, the skins of the building you are showing as precedence are very neutral, very simple, relative to the masonry bay that you have gone through pains to analyze and want to bring character to. What is confusing to me is that the massing of the upper portions of the buildings seem to have a lot of ins and outs, seem to have a lot of different skins, seem to have a lot of different colors, and I wonder if that is presenting as clear of a relationship of base to tower as some of the precedents that you just showed in the previous images. It would be a shame if the carefully detailed base brick element that you have read as wallpaper. Your idea about the relationship between the base and the tower as a concept would be important to express.

ML: This is a very hard problem, the two buildings that exist here are quite charming, maybe we can reconsider their condition and they will be demolished, and we have to think about that. But what I think 'm seeing here is maybe too referential to what's there and it is creating a false history with the base. In subcommittee, please bring examples of other massing study you used to convince us of this approach.

LE: Can we go through the massing options for 80 and 100 and other ideas you have tested. My second comment is at the district level. What is the connection of this project to the rest of the campus? It is important for understanding your improvements. I would further like to understand what connections you have made from Smith Street and the Mission church gardens, or the connection between 80 and the playground/baseball fields. Working with campuses, one of the most important things you do is to create these physical connections. I wish there was a landscape framework which allows you to move from Smith to the gardens, that didn't require you to go across surface parking and to intercept loading zones. I am looking at these open space courtyards that you are presenting tonight, and they feel a lot more related to 90 than they do to either 80 or 100. I understand this space is shared, and they look very similar to one another. Both in terms of the expression, and in terms of the landscape features within them. I would have loved to see these stand alone and having connections to the other

open spaces within the greater neighborhood. Please explore other alternatives for 80 and 100 and more urban connections to spaces in the district.

AL: This is always difficult when you inherit two volumes. Maybe you need different strategies for the two buildings. There is a contrast in height between the buildings. Maybe you need a plinth with a big top on one side and a small top on the other. I would like to see the realization on a tall building that is in the realm of the urban fabric buildings. Each of the three buildings will have their own language and be related to one another. Look at other strategies other than base and top. Allow each building to be a good neighbor to the immediate surrounding buildings.

DH: Think of this as a campus with distinct elements. Is this a collection of buildings on a site, or is it two book ends flanking a jewel? The site plan is very symmetrical, and the buildings are not very symmetrical in color or detailing. We all find it confusing, so we ask that you step back to understand the large strategy. You might have to build two new buildings the community can be attached to in a new way. One strategy could be the base being taller.

ML: 100 Smith is pretty much land locked because of the parking area. They really have very limited access to green space. This whole block is limited to any green or public realm space. I know you are trying to get some surface parking in the back, but some other consideration for that area should be explored.

Public Comment – Allison Pultinas – I am a resident of Mission Hill and a member of the Impact Advisory Group. This project is 17 years old. New projects on the area are much lower in height, six stories and below. The concern for 100 Smith tower is the height. With 90 Smith, the courtyard and parking exist now and is used by the public to connect through, and the community would like to keep it. The site is a very crowded. What will happen with the health school? Please bring fresh eyes to this new review.

The project will be sent to subcommittee.

The next project was **35-75 Morrissey Boulevard Master Plan** in the Dorchester Neighborhood.

Kirk Skyes is recused.

Louis Kraft, Matthew Snyder, Jen Schultz and Chris Bridle Presented

DH: Is this about approving a master plan or are we looking at specific buildings for approval as a part of this process?

LE: You are creating good urban infrastructure for this party of the city. The organization of the site makes sense. When you come back, please provide more sections to give us a sense of the massing in view of the open space and the change in grade, and site resiliency I would also like to see more context, especially what is happening north of the site, past I-93, along with the massing to the west? What are your intentions for connections and pedestrian improvements beside Morrissey Boulevard? 93 will be a loud with the traffic and the acoustics. I know there a mitigation effort you can do with massing, but I am curious how comfortable the open space will feel given the proximity and it being a family park. I applaud the open space here, but I question the practicality.

DM: I would like to see your infrastructure on the same page with Dorchester Bay City and Santander to really understand the East/West connections and the block sizes. What is your long-term solution to make Morrissey Boulevard friendlier, because your project has a lot of frontage on it. Some long views from Savin Hill would be important to display in a rendering.

DH: I have a broader comment more to the city about district wide transportation planning. Should we change Morrissey Boulevard in some way. Maybe to make it into a greenway, or to create new potential sites? I appreciate the connection and thinking about the future of Main Street. I am not a fan of the grid and I don't think Boston is as a grided city the centrality of the plaza and the way The Beat deflects pedestrians into this new courtyard feels

like it has character that I think you have embraced in the current design. I am not sure that running Main Street parallel to Morrissey Boulevard would make the district have more character or be more woven into the city.

AML: It is a real opportunity to create a new district, so I encourage you to think about what gives it character. Think about streetscape, the hierarchy and quality of the public spaces; are there special moments. What will bring people here? You talk about the amenities you plan to provide for people who live beyond the district. We have one quirky area that is not quite a park and not quite a turnaround, please look into that more closely.

AL: This is an opportunity to create a whole new place and the current project is only 1/3 of all you are proposing, and this really needs to be understood as a whole place. There has been enough thinking about Dorchester Bay part to extrapolate across. Creating east/west connections is fundamental as Main Street. Main Street is more like an interior pedestrian street, lined with two difficult edges. The nature of it should not imitate Morrissey Boulevard. It should be more relaxed, more open space, it doesn't really need to be lined with buildings at the same distance of 80' apart at its entire length. The positive is that it is an island between two bigger arteries. More of a place of gathering than passing through. I encourage you to see the whole central spine as a ramble, more than a through main street. That suggests to me that the buildings on either side have very distinct faces. One to the busy street and a face to the quite more protected side.

DM: The ground floor uses on Morrissey Boulevard, I see loading dock and utilities and some residential. Those are the common spaces, and you plan to keep a grocery store. What should the uses be on Morrissey because it's not a friendly street. Please address it more.

ML: When you are thinking about the sections, include neighbors north and south as well. There looks to be a grade change from the street elevation to the buildings that look to be 6', which is higher than other buildings. What do those transitions look like, we don't want the area looking like it is on a big plinth.

AL: The basics are really right here and it's a great start.

There were no public comments.

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 7:40 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for March 7, 2023. The recording of the February 28, 2023 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.