

MINUTES BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, February 4, 2020, starting in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:15 p.m. Members in attendance were Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Mikyoung Kim, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, Paul McDonough, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, and William Rawn. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Eva Jermyn from the Department of Neighborhood Development attended. Alexa Pinard and Natalie Punzak 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 Friday, January 24, 2020, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the January 14, 2020 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on January 21, 2020. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the January 14 and 21, 2020 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was the presentation of the 2019 BCDC Annual Report, which can be found on the BPDA website. In 2019, the BCDC recommended approval for 28 projects across 15 Boston neighborhoods. Through more than 118 hours in Monthly and Design Committee meetings, the Commission reviewed and approved more than \$6.8 billion of development and 24+ acres of net new open space. Last year, the Commission also adopted Principles and Priorities, which include:

- Accessible Open Space: 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.
 - Height, Scale, and Massing: The Commission will encourage growth that responds to the scale and massing of surrounding properties, sustains the quality of life and distinctive physical character of the city, and supports neighborhoods in ways that citizens value.
 - Parking and Mobility: Above-grade parking is a challenge to the vitality of the public realm and should be convertible to future non-parking use and shielded from public view by active uses. Public transit and new mobility scenarios should be considered in all development projects.
 - Design Creativity: The Commission strongly encourages creative problem solving that reflects the unique qualities of Boston's fabric and public realm as well as the city's identity as a global center of leading edge innovation.
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Next was the report from the Review Committee on the **175 Federal Street** project. The project proposes a 12,000 SF addition at the base of the Fiduciary Trust Building comprising two stories of retail, a new lobby, relocated loading, and publically accessible outdoor space. There is additionally a proposal for a lighting effect crown at the top of the building. There are some significant improvements to the very busy pedestrian corridor that have urban design implications for the surrounding area, so review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 175 Federal Street project in the Downtown neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from the Design Committee. The first presentation was for **J.J. Carroll Redevelopment**. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Jonathan Evans, MASS Design Group: The focus of review included clarifying the arrival sequence and accessibility, the building's relationship to neighboring buildings, and façade coloring. Views from around the project including the initial and series of revised designs were presented. Right now, a 4' retaining wall cuts across the site entry blocking pedestrian access. Sections of the future design highlight the sloped and open open spaces along Chestnut Hill Ave. There will be active recreation for children and seniors. All of the buildings on the 2Life campus will be connected. Enhanced planted buffered edge and set back with respect to the residential neighborhood on Wallingford Road.

Linda Eastley: I think bringing the grade down has made such a difference. This project feels better accessed from the street by the community. I would encourage you to continue thinking about how the make the approach to the commercial space more open and without stairs.

Deneed Crosby: The grade change has made a dramatic difference. At the initial presentation you spoke of bringing the neighborhood into the site and I think the grade helps that. It's difficult to make open spaces like the one on this site feel public (rather than a part of a private development). The street edge feels much more open and welcoming to me.

Andrea Leers: There are so many good things about this project: the scale of the elements, the ground floor treatment, the landscape. The changes in massing and grade have had a tremendous impact. The front door of this project is clear.

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

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for the proposed J.J. Carroll Redevelopment project in the Brighton neighborhood.

The next item on the agenda was the presentation of the **175 Federal Street** expansion.

Alexa Pinard, BPDA Urban Design: This project site is within the PLAN: Downtown boundary and adjacent to the Greenway, and therefore informed by the Greenway District Planning Study Use and Development Guidelines. Staff have been focused on the activation of the Dewey Square facade which today has a loading dock facing the Greenway. Much of the public realm will be located to a second story and we need to ensure this will be physically accessible and public.

Haril Pandya, CBT Architects: The project proposes a new front door for the building. As you exit South Station, this is one of the first pieces of architecture one encounters, and around 20,000 people pass this building via the Federal Street corridor every day. The building in its existing form suffers from a lack of meaningful public space and does not participate in the neighborhood. The form of the existing architecture is interesting and innovative for its era, but not without its challenges (dark/shadowed, inaccessible, one-sided). This building is experienced from every side because of its placement between Federal, Summer, Purchase, and High streets. Where we've landed with our design intervention is with a glass enclosure and sit-stairs that lead to a second story open space. We are focused on welcoming, public programming through retail, music, events.

Chris Jones, IBI: As we developed the design of this site, we considered the paving and material palette of Dewey Square, planning to provide continuity across Purchase Street. We are proposing a series of public improvements, including a continuous concrete sidewalk around the project

Eric Höweler: You're trying to fix an urbanistic problem with an architectural solution. I don't think you need as much geometry in this addition. There is a lot of oblique articulation in the enclosure that is creating more complexity that you will have to resolve technically.

Mikyong Kim: From a landscape point of view, this project is asking to take an unsuccessful open space and enclose it. I think I need more information to be convinced that any open space should be taken back by interior development. I'd like to hear more about the stairs; we've seen a lot of stairs in developments during my time with the Commission and it's a symptom of current development patterns in the city. It seems you're creating a challenging condition where one does not currently exist.

David Hacin: I wish you'd started with the building itself. I feel like there are maybe too many interesting things happening here given the footprint you have to work with. When you come to design committee I'd like to see an exploration that looks more like a pavilion. I think the solution may be to simplify.

David Manfredi: This is a dilemma: I feel we're trading publicly accessible open space for a new more active building edge. We're taking some of this incredibly busy pedestrian space away and I'm not sure I'm supportive of it because we may not be getting enough benefit back. On the other hand, the existing building does not work well at the ground plane. I do think there's a simpler solution. There is a discernible geometry to this building that I think should be reinforced rather than made more complex.

Deneen Crosby: The existing open space is dark and windy, but how will this be more successful by being raised?

Linda Eastley: I'd like to see some options without the elevated plaza and retail.
The project will continue in design committee.

Next was an informational project presentation for 1241 **Boylston Street**. As a proviso of the recommendation of approval on February 5, 2019, the project is returning to the Commission for an update.

Harry Wheeler, Group One: With our recommendation for approval on February 5, 2019, we received feedback about the building alignment along Boylston Street. We talked a lot about the hard corner/90 degree alignment of the building at the cant of Boylston Street. We've made space for a generous walking path along Boylston. The comments also touched on the contrast of the two

different facade styles and coloring. In the revised design, there is now a darker terracotta, we've eliminated some of the overly complex patterning, introduced a fastened bay expression at the angled corner that still references the residential bay windows adjacent to the project, and brought more metal material throughout the design to unify the ground plane and facades. We studied long views of the building. We've worked with the neighborhood, BPDA Staff, and Parks Department and the changes have been received favorably.

David Hacin: I was concerned at the way the building turned the corner and had a sharp departure from the more historic buildings in Fenway. I think this approach is more sophisticated and a nicer continuation of the facade that now feels better integrated with the rest of the block.

Linda Eastley: What's successful for me is the "splintering" bay where the building meets integrates the residential scale with the hotel's front façade.

Fenway Center Phase 2 was presented next. This presentation will be reviewed as an extended introduction with some updates in the interest of capturing as many Commissioners as possible.

John Rosenthal, Meredith Management: This has been a 20 year, multi-phased journey, taking its cues from the 2000 Civic Vision for Turnpike Air Rights in Boston plan. After several fits and starts in the mid 2000s and many steps prior to Phase 1 of this project, we took on the risk of building Yawkey Station, because we could not start this project until the new MBTA Station was built and several other roadway improvements were completed. We then had to build a deck over the Turnpike. Phase 1 of the project has been completed and there is now an accessible route from Brookline to Yawkey Station via the new David Ortiz Drive.

Alex Fernandez, Gensler: Taking cues from "A Civic Vision for Turnpike Air Rights in Boston," this project is a major investment in Boston and chance to capturing new public realm. This parcel continues on the vision for the High Spine called out in Imagine Boston 2030. The current urban context is surrounded by mixed-use context and a range of small to large scale developments. Scale comparisons with recent projects in Back Bay and Fenway. Size of the building footprint is comparable to Hynes Convention Center. Unlike Parcel 12 (recently approved air rights project on Massachusetts Ave), which was built on terra firma and is much smaller, this project requires a new structural deck over the Turnpike. That means this project has challenges with structural, transit, and logistic implications that were not present in Parcel 12.

The design context around the site is eclectic. We're proposing a contextually scaled edge on Brookline and a tall celebratory gateway into city viewed from Turnpike. Since the initial presentation, the massing has changed. The tower has three serrated faces. Porosity with increased pedestrian connections.

Jen Shultz from Goodwin Law presented detailed chart of area comparisons from previous proposal to current, which have been reallocated among various buildings. Massing changes shape as a result of change in use (commercial/lab requires higher floor-to-floor heights that create larger volume than previously proposed residential).

Gensler: We are maintaining the pedestrian realm by locating all service/parking/loading below grade in building. The presence on the skyline is captured in presented views from around the city. Scale comparisons with public space were presented.

David Manfredi: If I followed all the numbers, the project is the same size because you've brought 250,000 SF of area from below grade to above grade, which is why the mass has become so much more bulky. In addition to the added volume in floor-to-floor height.

Kirk Sykes: Is this massing acceptable is the first question? Are we equally concerned with the public realm at the ground plane and the skyline? We discussed the nature of public realm extending to the skyline at the last meeting. How can you slenderize a very bulky building while protecting the ground plane?

David Hacin: This massing has been entitled, if I'm understanding this proposal correctly. So I would like to understand how it can be configured in a variety of ways. What *is* legally entitled here? (ES: The original entitlement was about 1.3 million; the square footage remains about the same but the allocation is much different now. We will follow up on this). Are there precedents for taller, more slender lab buildings? (David Manfredi: This is already a slender lab building by industry standard)

Andrea Leers: I'm appreciative of the complexity; there's no question that this is an intensely difficult project on every level. The addition of Lansdowne Station and reconfigured streets are very valuable. I can't help but say that the difference in apparent massing is difficult to accept. This feels like a massive insertion in this piece of the city. This is a long wall building, different from the tall, slender buildings that came before it. I'm concerned with the walled mass. These air rights projects were meant to knit together the city; this strengthens the break of the highway by elevating the perimeter of the highway straight up. I would like to see alternate massings to achieve what you need to achieve. It's not about adjusting the facades because the problem is the massive wall, however well articulated.

David Hacin: Part of the problem in my mind here is the third mass in profile at the highest levels. This doesn't address the concerns of a wall, but it does affect the visual impact.

Kirk Sykes: Bring some precedents for the best wall-buildings of this height, globally. That despite the mass, the building is so compelling as to be an art. Let's understand the best version of this typology.

Kirk Sykes: The separation between the little and big building seems like the space to negotiate the massing. The first subcommittee should be on massing organizations. Focus on the massing envelope. Build in conditions for facade, ground plane in the future.

Andrea Leers: What's important is that the team hear that we are looking for substantial massing changes and options.

David Hacin: Make this a real piece of urban sculpture. That may be the way to make this project successful.

David Manfredi: The model is really important. Come back with alternatives that you can be as open and flexible with as possible.

Pam Beele, IAG: I participated in the 2000 Civic Vision. I'm very encouraged by this project. We would like it to be something spectacular. Thank you for your time tonight and in the future. Your comments are appreciated.

Alison Poltinas, Mission Hill/Fenway Neighborhood Trust: I was always shocked by the previous parking capacity, which I think could be further reduced.

Resident: If this is going to be built, it must be beautiful and spectacular, especially for the people who will have to look at it all the time. Do the economics of this project and the program requirements justify this building?

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:10 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for March 3, 2020. The recording of the February 4, 2020 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.