

MINUTES BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, April 4, 2021 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 Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Kathy Kottaridis, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, Mimi Love, David Manfredi, William Rawn, Kirk Sykes. Absent was Mikyoung Kim. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Several BPDA staff were present.

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 April , in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the April 4, 2021 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on April 13 and 27, 2021. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the April 4, 13, and 27, 2021 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 201 Rutherford Avenue project. The site is part of the Bunker Hill Mall and currently the site is a combination of lawn and surface parking. The proposed residential project is approximately 206,000 SF and review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 201 Rutherford Avenue project in the Charlestown neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 323-365 Dorchester Avenue project. The project consists of the redevelopment of approximately 5 acres of land into a mixed-use development that will include 4 buildings totaling 1,147,000 square feet. The proposal is anticipated to include approximately 674,500 square feet of commercial space in two buildings, approximately 345 residential units in the other two buildings, approximately 55,150 square feet of retail space, off-street vehicle parking, and approximately 36,500 square feet of open space. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 323-365 Dorchester Avenue project in the South Boston neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee.

The first presentation was for **88 Black Falcon Avenue**.

Jeff Tompkins, SGA: This is an existing building with two additions. We're highlighting the facades of the previous addition as a way to highlight the site history. There are new opportunities for public access. The massing, fenestration, materiality, and color of this addition have all evolved through the design committee process.

Drew Stangel, OJB Landscape Architects: Use of color and paving in the public realm for a strong sense of arrival. Harborwalk and fishing pier reorient the waterfront for pedestrian use.

Kirk Sykes: I want to commend you for working through a difficult challenge with the amount of FAR being added to this site. Each iteration has gotten increasingly better.

Deneen Crosby: Our comments about the public realm and vertical addition have been addressed. Happy to see the shared uses along the Harborwalk.

Linda Eastley: I encourage you to keep thinking about bi-level pedestrian circulation at the east end of the pier. Thank you for the revision to the entry point and elevator. Wanted it to be more bold and apparent to the public that this is accessible. New plaza is a great space.

William Rawn: I would like to add a provision to our approval that the east end of site is a focus of BPDA staff review.

Eric Höweler: I appreciate the clarity of the new massing. It's compact and distinct. Much improved.

Kirk Sykes: We talked about an additional experience of the public realm on this site, which is the view from the air. The gantry elements have become more defined which is great. But it would be nice to see some of the air handling equipment organized around the gantry system.

Hearing no public comment, a motion was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for the schematic design of the 88 Black Falcon Avenue project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood with the provision that the proponent continue to work with BPDA on the potential for a connection from the deck to the promenade.

Fenway Center Phase 2 was presented next.

John Rosenthal, Meredith Management: Buildings 1 and 2 in Phase 1 are about 60% leased. We're really excited about moving forward with this second phase of the project. You've really pushed us to make this project and its public realm a special place. This is a huge project and you've made it better. We'll be back before the Commission for an update in the future.

Todd Dundon, Gensler: Life Science Park will be a key addition and opportunity for public open space in Fenway. The last committee focused on the depth of facade materiality. We've pushed back the ground floor curtain wall to add depth and create space for planting boxes to add some green to Brookline Avenue. Another focus was the experience of the East Portal entry into Life Science Park from Brookline Ave. We've engaged further with our lighting designer to create a more dynamic experience with lighting at the paving level, simpler lighting in the ceiling, and a backlit exhibit wall.

David Manfredi: There's a lot of pressure on Life Science Park to be a great public space, and it's gotten better and bolder as it's evolved. Even the changes in small details from last week will have a significant impact on drawing people to this space. I really encourage you to look even harder at the

depth and color of the fins along the facade on Brookline Ave. I appreciate all of your responsiveness.

Eric Höweler: Given the investment in this significant public realm, have you considered working with artists to incorporate public art?

John Rosenthal: We'll be working with an artist and a production company to curate the exhibits throughout the space in association with the BU School of Public Health. This is the center of life science and public health in America and we intend to celebrate it with the elements of public space.

Mimi Love: I'm appreciative of the green wall in this space. Our time between meetings was short and so much has improved during that time. Keep thinking about lighting and the curation of the green wall.

David Hacin: I know that there are years to go on this project before it is realized, and it would be good to see this project return to the Commission for informational updates in the future.

Linda Eastley: The beauty of this development is the ability it has to change over time. As you're thinking about lighting, think about how it will change with seasons. I was curious to see another view of the reflective fins along the turnpike.

Kirk Sykes: Interested in building lighting as a whole, as it will be prominent and have a relationship with the Citgo Sign.

Pam Beale, IAG: Excited about the future of this project

A motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for the Fenway Center Phase 2 project in the Fenway neighborhood.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **201 Rutherford Avenue** in the Charlestown neighborhood. David Manfredi was recused.

Meghan Richard: PLAN: Charlestown is ongoing and considers the future of Rutherford Avenue, which this project will contribute to. This parcel is part of an Urban Renewal plan. Staff review has focused on increasing setbacks, especially along Austin Street.

John Twohig: Long site history and always anticipated redevelopment as part of urban renewal.

John Martin: Current context is automobile-centric. Project proposes 7 stories with a brick podium and more transparent west edge. Cornice line of brick relates to cornice of apartments across the street. Stoops animate Austin Street to engage public realm. Rutherford Avenue is planned to be redesigned, making it more pedestrian and bike friendly. Thinking about the surrounding context and plan to make improvements to O'Reilly Park on the corner of Austin and Main Streets with trees and strengthened connections.

Deneen Crosby: Will the pedestrian bridge along Rutherford become an at-grade connection? It would be good to have details about this at design committee. This looks like a really tight condition.

Linda Eastley: This is such an important point along Rutherford Avenue and Austin Street. I share Deneen's concern about the width of Austin Street and Rutherford Ave. I'd like to see an enlargement of this project in the context of Rutherford.

Jonathan Evans: The scale of the roadway network makes this a challenging place so I appreciate the new maneuvers around this site that help enhance the pedestrian experience. Where is the front door to the site/project, and how are you establishing a hierarchy with façade materials?

William Rawn: I would expand on these comments. This has always seemed like an important entry to Charlestown and key connection to Sullivan Square. Project should respond to this sense of neighborhood scale and entry.

Andrea Leers: This is not an environment with a very prominent street wall. This feels like it wants more ground space, especially on Austin Street. I urge you to look at more set backs, green space, and space between roadway and building wall. This project needs to be pulled back more to give the street and sidewalk network some breathing room.

Kirk Sykes: This is a chance to make some sense out of many disparate building scales and typologies, and you have a responsibility to create a sense of place and define space. I would like to see more contextual images from ground level. Consider awnings and other scaling elements along Austin St.

Anne-Marie Lubeanu: Can't help but question the role of the pedestrian bridge with the future vision of Rutherford Ave. Need more planning context, and need to see investment and alignment of this project with long term public improvements.

Eric Höweler: Appreciate the landscape gestures but they seem small compared to the density that will be added to this side of the block.

Public comment

Samantha Gilman, Charlestown resident: Comment about the building roofline. Would love to see this fit into Charlestown better with more reference to the neighborhood's architecture. I saw in some of the views that you are considering planting trees along Rutherford, and I'm concerned that these trees will not survive the shallow depth of the soil in combination with the minimal building setback. This should be taken seriously. Also look at trees in plaza.

Joanne Massaro: Pleased to hear the Commissioner's comments because they reflect the concerns of the community. We've asked repeatedly to see the vision for the rest of the mall site and it's difficult to understand this project without the rest of its future context. Also important for us to see views of the project from the parking lot that include the 99C restaurant, which will be a prominent view. Setbacks are very important. This project is too tall and too dense.

Johanna Hynes: I'm not sure if the Commissioners are aware of the grassy knoll that exists on this site. I would suggest that this knoll is used to replant some of the trees that will be lost elsewhere in Charlestown.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for **323-365 Dorchester Avenue** in the South Boston neighborhood. David Manfredi was recused.

Matt Martin, BPDA Urban Design: PLAN: Dorchester Ave (Dot Ave) was recently completed, and this project falls within the plan area. Staff review has focused on the open space on site. Future Ellery Street will need to house important infrastructure as envisioned in PLAN: Dot Ave. Overall, project is consistent with the vision set forth in the plan, so we're excited about that.

Ed Marsteiner, National Development: Resilience. Future visioning. Outdoor space for tenants as well as light and air and building variety.

Rob Halter, Elkus Manfredi: The existing condition on site has a gritty architectural context which inspires the master plan framework. Resiliency is key to the proposed project, especially impacting height of the ground floor. The site is planned for more density than shown in these images. We've heard we need to better transition the scale from the neighboring context, which is at much lower height, so the project steps down toward Dot Ave and is higher along the tracks. Streetwall edge is 85' with stepbacks at perimeter of all buildings. All buildings are highly articulated building masses, and we envision the future buildings to be designed by other architects and variety of uses.

David Seiter, Future Green Studio: Kit of parts design to the landscape strategy. Smaller green spaces relate to the smaller fabric of the city and then lead to more grand open air pavilion. Over 98% impervious surface. Concept plan connects Dot Ave to Elery through a boardwalk-style public space. Slight grade change along Dot Ave ramps through the public space.

Rob Halter: Materiality pulls from neighborhood context. Rich layering of materials and collection of buildings. Each will stand on their own.

Deneen Crosby: I think this is an improvement to the vision set forth in PLAN: Dot Ave. Having multiple public spaces on the west side is a good idea. There's an opportunity here—this site has a back and a front. Would like more information about the changing grades and the relationship to broader waterfront and open space planning.

Mimi Love: This is an ambitious plan and will set the tone for future development in this corridor. I encourage you to continue to leverage the vision of an architectural style that references the existing industrial context that rather than a typical office typology.

Andrea Leers: Potential for north-south movement through this site. Appreciate that this site is crossed with more generous public spaces but I want to remember the larger scale importance of Elery and its future role. This is a really good start. The building massings feel very complex. I know we'll work more on this in design committee. The basic decisions are sound ones to build on.

Eric Höweler: This proposal is for a master plan, and having different architects for each building in the future makes sense. I want to understand the logic of this as a master plan with elements that tie the buildings together. There is a lot of building articulation right now. I want to understand what is fixed and what is flexible to be designed by others in the future.

Kirk Sykes: As this evolves, how will this change the identity of the neighborhood? SOWA in the South End could be a precedent for public realm and programming opportunities that activate a previously industrial context. Would like to see long views and more context images so we better understand what is new and what is old.

Public comment

Johanna Hynes: How many trees are around this site today? Issues of environmental justice. Has there been an inventory and how many trees will be damaged or removed during redevelopment? The idea of replacing mature trees with saplings is not enough. The City of Boston needs to make this a priority.

David Seiter: There are about 10-12 trees on site of a variety of species. We are looking to do an impressive street tree application on the site that will benefit people and ecology.

Vincent Coyl, Local 7: This is a great looking project and it's exciting to see a project that will bring so much life to the community.

Linda Debwoke, President of Andrew Sq Civic Association: We have worked endlessly with National Development so far and are thrilled about the redevelopment of this site. The area is desolate right

now and this will be a huge improvement in the quality of the environment. The design has been well received by the community and there has been a lot of thought put into the green space, openings, and entries. Thank you and please help us move this project forward.

Pattie McCormick: I'm a lifelong resident. From Andrew Station to Broadway Station you do not see a single tree. We're excited about the future green space. We've been part of all the planning for this area and we are thrilled about the future vision.

The project will continue in design committee.

The **24 Ericsson Street, Neponset Wharf project** in the Dorchester neighborhood was the final presentation. This project was last reviewed by the Commission in 2017, and given its significant revisions through public process and integration with the Climate Ready Boston initiative, it was reintroduced to the full Commission.

Kevin Daebler, RODE Architects: First seen before the BCDC in 2017. At that point, the project had not found traction in the community. Now, 4 years later, we've had about 40 meetings and have developed the future vision with the residents. Recreating a sense of place here where there are currently parking lots. 120 residential units, 30,000 SF of office, boathouse and marina, and public piers. Chapter 91 and resiliency issues are key to the site program and massing. Proposed materials include brick, terra cotta, end caps with metal and glass, and pitched roofs.

Drew Stangel, OJB Landscape Architects: Activating the edges of the site with public paths to draw community in. There will be a public open space in the project. Softening edges of pier with green space and resilient edges.

Linda Eastley: Want to better understand the experience of walking through the open space. Would like to see more about signage, way finding, and the sequence from Commercial Wharf to the end of the pier. This will be seen from a lot of different vantage points.

Kirk Sykes: Given the great resiliency efforts put forth by this project, can you work with parking lot owners to reduce that paving onsite?

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I'd like a better understanding of what's existing on site and what the baseline assumptions are that informed this program and massing.

David Manfredi: You've done a good job creating a sense of place on a difficult site. I'd like to see long views from both I-93 and the water. Also want to understand relationship of buildings to the ground plane and parking. Site sections would be helpful for this purpose at design committee.

Jonathan Evans: Would like to learn more about form making. How did form and massing inform material decisions?

Andrea Leers: Would like to zoom out and see how this works with terra firma and Port Norfolk.

Public comment

Maria Lyons: Needs to be addressed in context with the whole neighborhood, so Climate Ready and Coastal Resilience is important context. Major infrastructure reinvestment here. Appreciate the design changes of the years. Problems at the end of this peninsula are too big to overcome with a project of this size, though. Traffic and in/out. Flooding. Height is still a concern.

The project will continue in committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:15 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for June 1, 2021. The recording of the May 4, 2021 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.