



Back Bay / South End Gateway Project
CAC Working Meeting #10
Wednesday, March 29, 2017, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Boston Common Hotel & Conference Center

CAC Attendees:

Kenzie Bok, Bay Village Neighborhood Association
Damian Chaviano, Urban Land Institute (ULI)
Jacquelyn Cox-Crite, Tent City Resident
Jack Fitzgerald, Ellis South End Neighborhood Association
Susan Gilmore, Resident of Back Bay
Elliott Laffer, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Scott Mustard, Saint Botolph Neighborhood Association
Ted Pietras, South End Business Association (SEBA)
Russ Preston, Congress for the New Urbanism
Jacquelin Yessian, NABB

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Kate Bell, Office of Boston City Councilor Josh Zakim
Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing

City of Boston Attendees:

Evan Bradley, BPDA
David Carlson, BPDA
Sam Chambers, ONS
Michael Rooney, BPDA
Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA
Josh Weiland, BTDA

Project Team Members:

Simon Beer, OBJ Landscape Architecture
David Black, VHB
George Needs, Boston Properties
Dave Newman, The Strategy Group
Rafael Pelli, Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects
Melissa Schrock, Boston Properties

State of Massachusetts Attendees:

Mark Boyle, MassDOT

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Peter Paravalos, MBTA

Members of the Public:

Carolyn Arrington, New Old South Church
Brendan Herridge, Northeastern University
Randi Lathrop, RG Lathrop Consulting
William McCarthy, Resident
Griffin Prescott, Northeastern University

Project Website: <http://bit.ly/BBSEGP>

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, March 29, 2017, the tenth meeting of the Back Bay/South End Gateway Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) commenced at approximately 6:10 p.m. with an introduction by Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA Senior Planner, at the Boston Common Hotel & Conference Center at 40 Trinity Place.

Lauren introduced herself and Michael Rooney, the project's BPDA Project Manager. She explained that the meeting would provide an opportunity for the development team to respond to questions raised by the CAC in previous meetings, as well as provide a pedestrian & streetscape analysis of the project requested by the CAC.

Lauren then presented an overview of the Stuart Street Planning Study and the accompanying Stuart Street District Zoning, which includes the Back Bay/South End Gateway Project site, and is available on the project website (listed above). The presentation was requested by CAC members in order to better understand how the project conforms to the new zoning, which was the product of a multi-year community planning process and was approved by the Boston Zoning Commission in March of 2016. Lauren explained that the planning study's goals included bringing more transparency and predictability to development in the Stuart Street corridor, as well as improving & preserving environmental conditions, open space, transportation, pedestrian access, and neighborhoods in and around the corridor. She noted that as the project will pursue its zoning through an amendment to the existing Planned Development Area (PDA), the amended PDA will be informed by the planning study's Development Review Guidelines.

CAC questions and comments made in response to Lauren's presentation included:

- A CAC member noted that the Stuart Street District Zoning provided a proactive context for evaluating the project, but expressed their opinion that too much of the CAC discussion had only been in reaction to the project, without an understanding of the framework the study had provided. Another CAC member disagreed, stating that some aspects of the zoning were selectively being discussed more than others.

Lauren responded that the next CAC meeting would provide an opportunity for CAC members to discuss these details.

Next, Melissa Schrock, Boston Properties, gave a presentation focused on answering questions raised by the CAC previously (which is also available as part of the presentation posted online). Melissa outlined the project's limited shadow impacts on nearby historic resources, including the stained glass windows of the New Old South Church and Trinity Church. In response to questions about the size of the project's proposed public plaza on Clarendon Street, Melissa clarified that the overall plaza measures 11,000 square feet, and that that figure does not include the area of the proposed adjacent loading dock. Excluding the drop-off area, the remaining portions accessibly by only pedestrians totals approximately 9,000 square feet. She added that Boston Properties is considering possibilities for creating event space and programming opportunities on the plaza. She then discussed indoor air quality measures that will be taken by the project, as well as interim wind conditions, and wind conditions in the absence of the Simon Property Group's Copley Place Residential Tower, analyzed at the request of the CAC. Lastly, Melissa gave an overview of the project's public benefits by phase.

Melissa then turned the presentation over to Rafael Pelli, Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects. Rafael presented renderings depicting different phasing scenarios for the project. He noted that the project was designed to be phased, with no definitive construction sequence yet planned, and emphasized that the project will not look unfinished if any one of the buildings is incomplete. Next, Rafael presented renderings of the ground levels for the Garage West, Station East and Garage East buildings, noting that the intent is to make these spaces transparent, open, and visually dynamic. Rafael added that because the surface footprint of Garage West is limited, the lobby design includes many columns as a result.

Rafael then turned the meeting over to Simon Beer, OJB Landscape Architecture, and David Black, VHB, to discuss the project's streetscape and pedestrian analysis. Simon described existing conditions and current circulation patterns through Back Bay Station and the project site. He explained that the main intent of the project's streetscape design is to rationalize and organize circulation paths and to increase the quantity and quality of interior connections, particularly with respect to Stuart Street.

Simon added that the project's proposed streetscape plan exceeds the recommendations found within Boston's Complete Streets Guidelines for a Downtown Commercial area, which has the largest recommendations for sidewalk widths and zones in the City. The project meets or exceeds these Guidelines throughout the entire site.

Current conditions and pedestrian circulation patterns on Dartmouth Street are influenced by the existence of two separate entries to Back Bay Station. Of the two, only one is

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connected to a narrow crosswalk across Dartmouth Street, which encourages jaywalking. Additionally, while a furnishing zone is present on the sidewalk in front of the Station, it is poorly organized and very cluttered. As part of the project, new pedestrian conditions on Dartmouth Street will include the consolidation of the Back Bay Station entries under the structure's central arch and the realignment and widening to 60' of the Dartmouth Street crosswalk to align with that central entry. The new streetscape includes a 15' pedestrian zone and a newly-organized 6.5' furnishing zone on Dartmouth Street. Improvements will continue northward on Dartmouth Street to the corner of Stuart Street, a known pinch point. Along Stuart Street, the sidewalk will be more than double its current width and the streetscape will include an 11' pedestrian zone and a 6.5' furnishing zone.

Existing pedestrian conditions on Clarendon Street are defined by the edge of the existing Garage. The project's proposed public realm improvements along Clarendon Street focus on improving sidewalk grades and crosswalks, overall streetscape organization, and easing pedestrian conflicts with the Garage entrance and exit. Streetscape widths will either be maintained or widened. Along the Garage, a new 6.5' furnishing zone will buffer a 15' wide pedestrian zone, with a 6' planted frontage zone. Finally, the crosswalk across Clarendon Street to Stanhope Street will be moved to the southern side of the intersection, and bump-outs will reduce the crossing width from 45' currently to 24'.

Clarendon Street is also defined by the large plaza between the street and the entrance to Back Bay Station. Currently, the station entrance lies 230' away from Clarendon Street and is only accessible to pedestrians by a 17' wide pathway. The new plaza envisioned with the proposed project moves the station entrance to 80' from Clarendon Street and provides pedestrians with a better entry experience to Back Bay Station.

David described the methodology and technical analysis of pedestrian access & level of service around the Station. A significant amount of pedestrian data, including video, was used to aid this analysis. David explained that existing and future sidewalk capacity was analyzed through "Pedestrian Level of Service", a graded scale of average pedestrian space on a sidewalk. The future analysis assumed a pedestrian growth rate of 20%, which is much more than is actually anticipated, making the analysis conservative in the sense that it overestimates the actual number of pedestrians. Sidewalk conditions on Dartmouth Street and on Clarendon Street maintain an "A" rating, the best possible, at peak hour and peak 15-minute intervals, falling to lower "B" or "C" grades, respectively, only at peak of the peak 5-minute intervals. Sidewalk improvements made as part of the proposed project will maintain these pedestrian levels of service, but also make moving around the site both easier, safer, and more pleasant.

CAC questions and comments made in response to the presentation included:

- In response to CAC questions about the pedestrian analysis, David clarified that data was collected while the pedestrian underpass under Dartmouth Street was closed, again meaning that the analysis over-assumes the number of people on the sidewalk. Additionally, the analysis takes items such as bags and suitcases into account when calculating pedestrian level of service. Finally, the analysis did not include the Back Bay Station arcade in its measurement of the pedestrian area.
- In response to a question from a CAC member about wind study verification, Melissa responded that wind study verification is essentially impossible, given the length of time needed to verify conditions (typically over two to three decades) and the impact of possible future development on wind conditions (no new development can transpire in the course of the verification study).
- A CAC member stressed the importance of getting the project's public realm aspects right. David agreed and noted that pedestrian analysis focused on determining if the sidewalk width was adequate. He added that many factors influence pedestrian experience, and that other public realm improvements made as part of the project, will also improve the pedestrian experience.
- Simon clarified streetscape improvements to the existing Garage entrance/exit on Clarendon Street at the request of a CAC member. He added that the Garage entrance/exit will be squared off and narrowed to reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.
- A CAC member, noting that a greater amount of pedestrians use Dartmouth Street during peak hours than vehicles, asked about the possibility of further study by the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) of Dartmouth Street, to encourage other modes of mobility. Josh Weiland, BTD, replied that while Dartmouth Street is an important regional vehicular connector, the recently released Go Boston 2030 plan does include incorporating bicycle facilities along Dartmouth Street. Josh added that this project, in conjunction with the 40 Trinity Place and Copley Tower projects, will result in the narrowing of Stuart Street to include other modes of travel.
- A CAC member expressed their support for the project's public plaza and asked what the development team had considered for programming the space. Melissa responded that the team is considering incorporating a stage or space for food trucks, but noted that they have yet to fully develop a programming concept. In response to a follow-up question, Melissa replied that Boston Properties would be responsible for programming the space.
- A CAC member expressed concern that the project would lead to a decrease in the Pedestrian Level of Service on Dartmouth Street because the analysis did not account for Back Bay Station's arcade. David disagreed, explaining that the arcade was not considered in either the existing or future condition, meaning that, even without the arcade, the Level of Service is and remains an "A". Simon also noted that hazards and other obstacles make traversing the arcade difficult. He emphasized

that the project's proposed streetscape will organize pedestrian circulation much better than current conditions.

- A CAC member expressed concern over the Clarendon Street façade of the Garage being left in its current state throughout the project and asked if screening the Garage along Clarendon Street was possible.
- A CAC member expressed their opinion that the redundant Orange Line elevator slated to be built with the Station East building should be built as soon as possible. They also asked that the development team consider adjusting which public benefits are included with which phase of the project.
- A CAC member asked if the Garage West tower's Dartmouth Street setback met the 25' requirement set in the Stuart Street District Zoning. Melissa replied that the building setback varies from 17' to 28'.

Public questions and comments made in response to the presentation included:

- A member of the public asked if the large vent stack along Clarendon Street would be taken down as part of the project. Melissa confirmed that the vent stack, which does not currently function, would be removed to enable the Station East building to be developed.
- A member of the public asked if the MBTA Route 39 Bus terminus at Back Bay Station would be relocated. Melissa confirmed that the route was evaluated by the MBTA, who, when the Station East parcel is built, intend to relocate the route to terminate on St. James Avenue on Copley Square. She added that the move could improve the route's level of service, and therefore ridership, through time savings.
- A member of the public asked if any above-grade pedestrian connections would be created through the project. Melissa answered that a bridge between the Garage West building and the future development at 40 Trinity Place was proposed, with a potential connection across Stuart Street from 40 Trinity Place to 200 Clarendon Street also being considered.
- A member of the public asked if any of the project's buildings included rooftop green space. Melissa replied that most of the buildings within the project include some form of accessible green roof space for building occupants.
- A member of the public asked if a sound or vibration study was conducted by the development team, and if so, if it showed any improvements over current conditions. Melissa confirmed that a noise analysis is required by the BPDA and can be found in the project's DPIR. She added that the analysis did not show a negative impact.
- A representative of the New Old South Church asked the development team to discuss shadow impacts on the church with church leadership. The representative also asked if the Massachusetts Historical Commission was required to comment on the project. Melissa replied that Boston Properties was happy to meet with the church and stated that the Historical Commission did comment on the Project

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Notification Form (PNF), and that their comments, as well as the development team's response, are included in the DPIR.

Lauren concluded the meeting by reminding attendees that the next CAC meeting would take place at 8 a.m. on Thursday, April 6th, at the Boston Common Hotel & Conference Center at 40 Trinity Place. She also reminded attendees to direct comments to Michael Rooney, BPDA Project Manager, at Michael.Rooney@boston.gov, by the end of the comment period on April 18th, 2017.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:25 p.m.