

## DRAFT MINUTES

### BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, starting in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:20 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Paul McDonough (Co-Vice-Chair); Deneen Crosby, David Hacin, Andrea Leers, and Kirk Sykes. Absent was Michael Davis (Co-Vice-Chair), Linda Eastley, David Manfredi, William Rawn, and Daniel St. Clair. Also present was David Carlson, Executive Director of the Commission. Representatives of the BSA were present. Michael Cannizzo, and Elizabeth Stifel were present for the BPDA.

The Co-Vice-Chair, Paul McDonough (PM), 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. PM noted that the meeting would start without a quorum; all possible votes would be taken and ratified/affirmed later in the meeting or, if need be due to recusals, at next month's meeting. He 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 Monday, February 20, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Meeting Minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

**VOTED: To approve the February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 BCDC Meeting Minutes.**

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **105 West First Street Project**. David Carlson (DAC) noted that this proposal was a commercial office building adjacent to the previously reviewed Artists for Humanity and Channel Center Garage buildings in South Boston, and fronted in part the A Street Park seen as part of the Channel Center project. At 260,000 SF, the Project was over the BCDC threshold, and review was recommended. It was duly moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 105 West First Street Project on the parcel bounded by West Second and West First streets, and the Haul Road, and abutting the Artists for Humanities Building, in the South Boston neighborhood.**

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Walk Hill Residences Project**. DAC noted that this Project had originally been planned to present in December, but was delayed for modifications pursuant to community input. At ~106,000 SF, the Proposed Project remained over the BCDC threshold; review was recommended. It was consequently moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Walk Hill Residences Project, at 289 Walk Hill Street between the intersections of American Legion Highway and Canterbury Street, in the West Roxbury (Roslindale)**

## **neighborhood.**

PM was recused from the next item. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Seaport Square Notice of Project Change**. DAC noted that the proposal was a revision of the overall plan for Seaport Square; the change itself added over 1,000,000 SF, and review would in any case result from the condition imposed on the original Seaport Square approval for review of all future phases. A vote affirming review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the proposed PDA plan and conceptual designs for the Seaport Square NPC within the South Boston Waterfront District.**

PM returned. The next item was a report from Design Committee on the **Whittier Choice Neighborhood Phase One Project**. Michael Liu (ML) of The Architectural Team showed the prior scheme, and noted the issues of open space disconnection and the town house 'island'. They had consolidated the space in the center of the block, connected the smaller spaces, and aligned the townhouses on both sides with the below-grade constraints. After the Design Committee meeting, and in consultation with HUD review, they had moved the tot lot, opened up a passage between Building 1 and the townhouses, and created a row of townhouses reflecting that geometry. David Hacin (DH) asked about the nature of the open space: It could have a very nice bus stop, and more. I like the 'bow-tie' plan. I think it looks very nice now, a big improvement. Andrea Leers (AL): The changes are great. You are ingeniously using the diagonal to imply space, and the more continuous buildings hold their own a lot better. And they hold the space better - this will be a real addition to the area. DH: One of the nice things about the bow-tie is that it connects, and also includes a relationship to the townhouses at Tremont Crossing. Deneen Crosby (DC): This seems like a real city street, not just a housing development that you go through, but a *place*. It's much better. With that, and hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the revised overall plan and schematic design for Phase One of the Whittier Choice Neighborhood Project on the block bounded by Tremont, Ruggles, Cabot, and Whittier streets in the Roxbury neighborhood, with the condition that the future phase(s) return for review and approval.**

The next item was a report from the Design Committee on the **Brooke Charter High School Project**. Jonathan Garland (JG) of Arrowstreet reprised the design, noting the locus and its adjacency to the existing K-8 Brooke Charter School. JG: We tried very hard to make the entrance visible and accessible from American Legion Highway (ALH)(shows diagram). The bus drop-off is between the schools, and we have a secondary entry there. We now have a single courtyard along East Main. We have modified the site plan to emphasize the entry plaza, now tree-lined, focused on the entry but leading from the bus stops at the intersection. The entry itself has gone to the corner, so it's less an entry on a parking lot. The gym and lecture hall are now both more toward East Main, and the Dining Commons is along ALH. The lecture hall shift allows the extension of the sense of a Great Lawn that's in front of the existing school. (Notes the entry sequence for the lecture hall.)

DC: Is the Great Lawn sloped? JG: Yes, you'll see that. DC: And the tree circle? JG: That continues the idea of the same on the other side. DC: If it weren't there, it would be more open. JG then showed views of the building with the main entry at the corner, noting the materials strategy. He showed a

birds'-eye view of the same corner. JG: The entry is a 2-story expression. DC: On ALH, the trees in planters won't do very well. It would be better to provide seating, and place the trees in the ground. JG then showed a view of the lecture hall corner, noting the bermed lawn, and then a view of the rear courtyard. He stated they would be focused on facade materials and details.

DH: That was a good presentation. AL: The entry is much better. Do everything you can do to screen and separate the entry from the parking lot. The sign we see would move more toward the entrance, less on the parking lot side. This is a great Project; it gets better every time. DH: The way you've changed the entry is really good. Deneen's comments are good. DC: Keep the character of ALH in mind. With that, and hearing no public comments, it was seconded and

**VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the NPC and revised schematic design for a portion of the Olmsted Green Project - for the Brooke Charter High School - on the former Boston State Hospital site in the Mattapan neighborhood.**

The next item was a report from Design Committee on the **Boston College Field House Project**. PM noted that there had been significant changes - the team should focus on that. Philip Laird (PL) of ARC introduced the team, and first showed the site plan, with the constraining aqueduct and storm storage tank indicated. PL: The future dorms can still fit 500 rooms. (Shows the floor/site plan; shows context photos of the campus, shows circulation path diagrams. Shows the Beacon Street edge, noting setbacks; shows Beacon Street photos.) The setback is consistent with those. (Shows the view from within the campus, noting the garage ramp.) The roof is now 'floating,' with slot / clerestory windows. There's a view across the field, day and night. (Shows views along Beacon, with and without trees.) We're using red oaks to match existing street trees along Beacon. (Shows dorms ghosted in. Shows a closer view, with and without plantings, then a view from the opposite direction.) WE have deep windows, and have added vertical slits down as discussed; these will be either KalWall or glass. The building is brick and precast. There's metal at the clerestory and roof. AL: What is giving the pattern of light and dark in the brick? PL: the choice of brick. It's like some other campus buildings, but we do not want it to be flat (monotone) like those other buildings. (Shows a view down the passage between buildings, now framed by plantings, which reads better. Shows elevations.)

DH: I was extremely critical when this first came in; I appreciate the effort of the team. This has become much better. The floating roof is a breakthrough; the slit windows really help; and there's a clarity now. DC: I also think it's much improved, a much better fit. This has to work from the Campus, and along Beacon. AL: I'm just seeing it for the first time. I appreciate the simplicity and elegance. When you have this large a building, a lot depends on the materials and details. Your mix of bricks may not be enough...add some dimension. PL: I agree with you. We'll be working on materials mock-ups soon. AL: So, you do have some ability to manipulate it. This has some exciting potential. KalWall is not going to cut it. It should be glass. PL: Everyone agrees, but it's a matter of budget. There's a 7-figure difference. But Boston College agrees. AL: We just want to add our voice. DH: If there is anything we can do to advocate for glass - as much as you can get - let us know. I'd move to approve, noting the opportunity for texture and glass. Hearing no community comment, this was seconded, and it was

**VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of Boston College's Field House (Indoor Practice Facility) Project and the associated amendment to its Institutional Master Plan, in the Allston-Brighton neighborhood, noting the opportunities discussed to add texture and glass for a high quality result.**

The next item was a presentation of the **105 West First Street Project**. BK Boley (BK) of Stantech introduced their team: Eli Long of CV (Commonwealth Ventures) Properties, and Rob Adams of Halvorson, who worked on the adjacent Channel Center project. He noted the locus, indicating the Artists for Humanities (AFH) building next door, and showed photos of One Channel and its pass-through lobby. BK: We're thinking of doing the same thing here - but there's also a grade change. The stats: this is 115' on West First, but appears lower from West Second. We wanted to do a nice, well-crafted backdrop building. It'll have a view overlooking the park. The lobby is along a party wall adjacent to AFH; there's a clerestory setback at the top. (Shows view from West Second.) The entry here will be like the AFH bridge. The actual floor is about 6' above grade, but there's a desire to have more activity fronting on the street. (Shows a view from the southeast, noting the vertical separation from the lower piece along the street; shows a view of the lobby and a map.) The property locus is at the edge of the original land, as seen on this old map. We want to incorporate that idea along the wall. The space may have some artwork, some 3-D art ability. (Shows view from the upper lobby. Shows ground floor plan view, noting the MDOT parcel on West First; shows an alternative more active plan utilizing that parcel. Shows second floor, the idea of widening the sidewalk along West Second, an existing condition photo. Upper floors, noting setbacks. Pictures of amenities precedents.) BK: Innovation space in the lower floor could be a featured view, or vitrines along West Second. We'll use oko or fiber cement cladding. (Notes height comparisons.) Our 7<sup>th</sup> floor is about the same height as the abutting garage. There is some concern in the rest of the community.

AL asked about the height of the Gillette building nearby; BK answered. DH: I understand the sensitivity to height in the neighborhood. AFH is in fund-raising mode...? They may not be as tall as they'd like. I like the idea of the pass-through. Even if the building is relatively quiet, the piece of the building that pushes through could be more architecturally significant, not just a frontispiece to the park. Not just decorated with art, but art itself. Like the mural shown, if that took over the pass-through. The building is otherwise neutral, maybe too neutral. The penthouse could be more figural at the greater distance; it will be very visible. The way to convince me is to have a stronger top to the building.

DC: Looking at the connector - the relationship to the park, the visual connections to and through the neighborhood. AL: The basic strategy is very sound. Walls, a few flourishes. I would rather see the lobby a figural piece, without a glass margin around it. I'm not persuaded by the Second Street setback - that's quite a compromise. I understand where it's coming from; it would be better if it were simpler. We're talking about buildings the size of the Ink Block...they are not too big. And I feel comfortable standing next to them. If height is an issue, get rid of it. Just take a floor off. I'm not afraid of height in this place. I'm interested in what the section is against [Second] street. The entry on Second, is really the same issue as on First. DH: I agree with Andrea. A series of protected connections... maybe the gesture is in the wrong place. It should be closer to the ground, with a relationship to space both in and out. With that, and hearing no community comment, the 105 West First Street Project was sent to Design Committee.

Kirk Sykes (KS) arrived. After a brief discussion, he was able to ratify the votes to review the Walk Hill Residences, and to approve Whittier and the Boston College Field House. He added his voice to the vote to review Seaport Square. He is recused from 105 West First and the Brooke Charter HS. These last three votes will require ratification next month.

The next item was a presentation of the **Walk Hill Residences Project**. Robert del Salvio (RDS) of Embarc Studio presented the design, noting that it was much larger (went from 139 to 106 units), and a different design in the

October PNF. He noted the locus via a series of aerial views, noting the site is entirely surrounded by cemeteries. RDS: Canterbury Street feels like it could be anywhere in the country. The Project is adding width to the sidewalks along Walk Hill and Canterbury streets. (Shows site plan.) There will be a public green area, a landscaped amenity. Parking spaces are mostly below grade. The building is pushed back on the green edge - 6' more than in the PNF, and 19' back from Walk Hill. (Notes entry, notes surface parking.) The amenity space is at the corner, overlooking the wetlands [green] area. The building was 5 and 4 stories; now it's 4 and 3.5. (Shows new elevations, a view along Walk Hill.) We have brick at the base. There's clapboard and board & batten above, all fiber cement. A terrace outside the amenity space. The courtyard is four stories all around (shows sections).

DH: Where are those residents who are objecting to the height? RDS showed an aerial, pointing out the closest residential structures {~2 blocks away}.

DH: There's a lot of logical choices you've made to get to this point. In Committee, I'd like to understand around the building better. I'd like to understand the height more, from the BPDA's perspective; a partial 4<sup>th</sup> floor doesn't make sense. I'd like a simpler height diagram. DC asked about the slope of the site [RDS showed a section]. KS: This could be an important building on ALH. There's a lot of cats and dogs as you go up ALH - no character - so this is important to add character to the street. Some context would be useful. There's so much greenery...it's hard to understand how you're imposing on *anybody*. The context here is more trees. And more cemeteries, to the right.

DH: It would be good to understand if there's any vision for ALH. Or other projects nearby. It's hard to understand the cut-back on the fourth floor. AL: What's the zoning restriction? RDS: 35', 3 stories, and no residential on the ground floor. KS: What happens here in some sense becomes precedent. I would like to hear more about the wall of the garage fronting the ALH green space. You'll see it from the corner. DC: It's not a very usable space; it won't have a lot of pedestrians. I agree - it'll be important as precedent. AL: The one place you do control, is a parking lot. That's a shame, because that's all that the people on the inside will look at. Try harder. It's a shame not to have the natural landscape come in. DC: It would be good to get closer to ALH. RDS: We have to stay 50' back. AL: 4 stories seems ever so modest, with what you're doing. KS: The ALH elevation, could you place some of those units with balconies, patios...? DH: This is U-shaped. An L-shape, higher, would form the street better, maybe help you get to a better place. Work on ALH and Walk Hill...firm up the design when coming to Committee. KS: Take it further - more advocacy. With that, the Walk Hill Residences Project was sent to Design Committee.

PM was recused from the next item and left, appointing DH to serve as temporary Chair. The next item was a presentation of the **Seaport Square Notice of Project Change**. Yanni Tsipis (YT) of WS Development introduced his associates Dick Marks, Sally Butler, and Amy Prang, as well as James Corner (JC) of JCFO and Nader Tehrani (NT) of NADAAA. YT: We should say a word about WS. We've been the retail partner, working on creating retail spaces where people want to be. The previous master plan was approved in 2010 - we've been a partner since 2007 - and has just begun to bear fruit. We purchased the interest from our partner just about a year ago (shows a diagram), and with that purchased control and care of the public realm. The Shake Shack was the first retail opening, last summer. The best experience, the best time, is when open spaces are activated (shows examples). This is how you create a great space that people love to come to; it's in our DNA as a company. A lot of great spaces have been created, like Q Park. (Notes and lists some of the critiques. Shows a diagram of the remaining parcels.) We're about halfway there - we've taken a pause. Rather than a master planning firm, we've hired a team of consultants. We feel that synergistic collaboration would have a richer result. We're working on buildings and the public realm; there's no architecture here.

JC: It's a great pleasure to meet you, and to work with WS. We're doing placemaking, rather than diagrams. A storytelling exercise. We're working with Nader on Urban Design and Architecture, and Sasaki on larger urban planning issues. (Shows connections, east to west, and then to the Harbor. Shows historic photos, and connection diagrams.) The emphasis is on how to get to the Harbor, to leverage the assets of the district. (Shows a series of diagrams.) Other parks and connections allow Harbor Way to be different. (Shows the site plan overall, noting Harbor Way, and the edges of the upper L block.) New England history, the coast - pebbles on many beaches come from very different locations. There are many, throughout Boston, on beaches. Wood, and trees, in New England. A boardwalk, with pebbles and erratics, in an alley. This is a master plan intent, not yet a design. I'm showing a story of intent. The buildings too will be shaped, form a rhythm, opening up, closing. We start with a stone floor, add a boardwalk component, scatter on the boardwalk the pebbles - some boulders, some artifacts, some art. The alley of trees is an overlay, not species specific, but gold north/south, and red east/west. A simple, powerful vocabulary. It's a 24-foot drop from Summer to Congress, with an event plaza at the bottom of the seating/stairs. (Shows a view looking toward the stairs; shows stair precedents, noting how they can be seasonally programmed. A view north, into the square, narrow, then opening.) The space inside would be dynamic. The view is very preliminary, with a range of programming ideas (shows seasonal series, shows a view in that space). A boulder, driftwood, maybe ice skating, more. Parcels L1 and L2 already have paving; we want to continue the vocabulary. (Shows a view of that - different than L1 L2 have - and continuing to parcels F/G.) Harbor Way will not be a retail mall, but an authentic part of the neighborhood. Rather than one big cultural facility, we are splintering that into a series...we will explore that. The larger connections...(shows diagrams again). A playful, informal character. (Shows a sidewalk diagram, a cross section, views. Shows a mid-block crosswalk, and a view down Seaport Boulevard. Then a birds'-eye view of the whole, down Harbor Way.)

NT: It's important to note the relationship with the context. A simple line needs to be made up of episodes. A series of spatial volumes for occupation, as a way also to create building masses. Wedging open a space, and aiming to destinations. This is a figurative exercise, larger than the sum of its parts. Hugh Ferriss terraced for light and air. Here, we are not making objects, but shaping the space. The base, mid-blocks, top - are part of the formal way of thinking about the buildings. The base - and uses, with sizes. Strata: base, middle, top. At the base the space is intimate, defined by the relationship to shops. As you move up, the space becomes larger, and extends further. (Shows precedents of comparable spaces, overlaid, with familiar scales.) We are carving the space, giving you direct sun for long hours, 10:15 to 3:30. (View from an upper terrace.) The idea of the volume of the space that brings it all together. (Gives some stats - i.e. 8.8 acres of open space; 2.5 linear miles of active frontage.)

DH: Can we understand the differences? YT: It's very similar, a slight uptick, and +1 FAR. DC asked about the loss of vehicular connection. YT explained that it was not needed, and showed the prior plan, and some views. DH: We will have to understand the transportation, including loading, parking, etc. KS: I want to understand what you're proposing in the context of the other streets. You don't have waterfront. All that is boring. It seems to me, that this all leads to something you don't control. How do you make those last two blocks? You need to do something at parcels F/G. Open the crevasse, it's a canyon effect. A second thing - the pictures. You don't seem to have an alley; it seems disrupted. Which one is it? The square, the forest. The sight lines, I don't understand yet. It's great work, and great thinking - the question is, what do you do with it? DC: When we discussed L1 and L2, when you step off, what do you see? DH: What are we looking at? DAC: The Seaport Square Project is a Project and a PDA. We approved the overall plan, and have been looking at each Parcel as it moves forward. But this NPC is

opening back up the book of the whole, so to speak. Once again looking at the *larger* plan, and *not* individual parcels.

AL: I find the armature very compelling, and the story, but obviously it doesn't need to be exactly as shown. There's a clear idea for organizing things along the way. Opening to the sky, the steps, and other episodes. The biggest departure is on parcels L3-L6, where there were linear residential blocks. One of the problems of the earlier plan was the FAA limit; how to make buildings good, twisting and turning. I worry that the block shape and size driven by commercial floorplates will make it harder to encourage housing. Commercial - when it's done at night, it's done. The bases - can some be designated residential, others commercial? As presented now, it's an uphill challenge. I.e., what if one of those blocks were divided in two. You've talked about layering vertically. You've talked about challenges, and the ideas are beautiful. But take a step back.... KS: As I was coming over, I walked by the ellipse building.... How could this possibly benefit the adjacent streets? The Seaport has become so relentless, people have maxed out. You want additional light and air on those streets. AL: I went to King's Cross. It began around a public placemaking idea. Each site different, each contributing, all exciting, and I don't remember seeing *any* [building] with this big a footprint. The spaces were shaped, informal. So the [modularity] - what is the piece you're designing?

DH: I agree with the comments. There are a couple of distinct topics. The traffic and parking, we noted - ideas from BTD or your consultant. You have a fantastic team. Exciting, aspiring, very beautiful ideas about landscaping and placemaking. I would like to understand how this impacts parcels D and G. F is small...if there's a way of understanding that interface. The FAR increase and massing strategy - how that's enshrined. I share Andrea's concerns. Deneen's comments are more granular: how does this interface with what's been done? The Seaport Boulevard ideas could be interesting. A model would be helpful to see. The idea of a single cultural institution, vs. a variety - I want to understand that there's air there. That's a major public [contribution]. AL: I want to understand the difference between the square footage then and now. Sustain a mix of uses - that's what will make the groundscape go. DH: The residential district began with an office...that's not necessarily what was intended. YT: I like your themed idea. With that, and hearing no public comment, the Seaport Square NPC was sent to Design Committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:14 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for April 4, 2017. The recording of the March 7, 2017 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.