

MINUTES

BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, July 10, 2018, in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:28 p.m.

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

The Co-Vice-Chair, Michael Davis (MD), 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. 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 Sunday, June 17, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the June 5, 2018 Meeting Minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the June 5, 2018 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **150 Kneeland Street Project**. David Carlson (DAC) noted that the project totals about 96,500 GSF, just below the BCDC review threshold of 100,000 SF. But the high-rise hotel, with proposed height (218') and density in excess of zoning, will be highly visible and impactful on Kneeland Street and the Leather District, therefore, a vote to review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 150 Kneeland Street Project on the corner of Utica Street in the Leather District neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Allston Square Development**. DAC introduced the proposal for a residential project with some ground floor retail across five sites near the intersection of Harvard Avenue and Cambridge Street. The project will transform the area's uses and public realm. At 361,800 SF, the proposal is well over the BCDC threshold, and review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Allston Square Development Project in the Allston/Brighton neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Allston Yards Project**. DAC provided a brief history and context for the proposed PDA, consisting of the redevelopment of a 10.6-acre site bound by Everett Street and I-90, adjacent to the New Balance headquarters. The Proposed Project calls for nearly 1.5 million SF of multi-phased, mixed-use development, and a vote to review was recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the Schematic design for, and the first Proposed Project in, the proposed Allston Yards PDA Plan Area.

The next item was a report from the Design Committee on **40 Mount Hood Road**. BK Boley (BB), Design Principal of Stantec, highlighted changes from the initial project filing, which include 100% home ownership, reduced building height, and refined quality and detail of building design. BB: The sub-committee commentary focused on creating contemporary architecture, contributing to a scaled and diverse public realm, and detailed entries. The neighborhood was studied to inform the master plan of the project. The materiality and repetition of the massing was revised with the contribution of both BCDC and Aberdeen Architectural District Commission feedback. Details like iron railings, brick details, will be continually modified in working with the AADC and BPDA staff.

William Rawn (WR): We've reviewed this project several times in sub-committee, and support these improvements. Kirk Sykes (KS): I compliment you on your responses.

Alan Cohen, property owner on Egremont Road: What is the height of this building?

BB: The building will be 4-stories all along Egremont. A comment about the height and definition of 'townhouses' was made by another member of the public.

With no further comments, it was moved, seconded and:

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the proposed 40 Mount Hood Road Project at the corner of Egremont Road in the Allston/Brighton neighborhood.

WR was recused from the next item. The next item was a report from the Design Committee on the **Exchange South End Project**. DAC noted that the votes will need to be ratified next month, but that a provisional vote will be taken with those present.

Larry Grossman (LG), Senior Principal at Stantec, and Chris Matthews (CM), Associate Principal at Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, presented site context, existing conditions, and project goals.

LG: Central to the project is a public green with art, culture, and opportunities for programming. In sub-committee, the commissioners generally approved of the site master plan. The building along Albany Street was refined through the BCDC process. We studied daylighting in the public green and adjusted the buildings accordingly. The buildings were stepped up in height as they approach the highway to provide a visual and auditory barrier, while the heights of buildings along Albany Street came down.

CM: Site vegetation has increased while maintaining the original organization. The lawn is the natural center open space on the site, and the central plaza is sized for medium-sized events.

Andrea Leers (AL): The massing changes are good for Albany Street. I appreciate the simplicity of the arts and culture terminal. I think this is a great project. This will create a whole new piece of the city.

KS: What is the average height of the buildings in BioSquare adjacent to the site? I want to understand how the buildings step up or down in relation to the urban context around it.

LG: The NEIDL Building adjacent to the site is comparable to the scale of our 'front' buildings, around 120'.

MD: I would like to commend you on placemaking. A project of this scale has a high bar to contribute to the public realm. I think this will be a real resource for the community.

With that, and no public comment, it was moved, seconded and (subject to ratification August 7):

VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the schematic design for the Exchange South End Project (and proposed PDA) at 540 Albany Street, bounded by Jacobson Floral Supply, I-93, and the NEIDL lab, in the South End neighborhood.

WR returned. The next item was a report from the Design Committee on **Fan Pier Parcel E**. Richard Martini (RM) of the Fallon Company introduced the project team, including Christian Galvao (CG) of Elkus Manfredi Architects and Sam Valentine (SV) from Richard Burck Associates.

CG: Since sub-committee, an additional massing setback was created to emphasize the dynamic form of the facade. We responded to the comment of how the building meets the ground by bringing every other pier down to meet the street. The presence of these folded piers at the street level adds dynamic views and experience. (Streetscape studies demonstrate the sub-committee changes, including robust signage/awning to express curve and scale of the building.)

SV presented views to the marina, fountain, and ICA from the building plaza.

WR: Many of us appreciated the progress you'd demonstrated in the elevation and massing changes. What are you doing to address sea-level rise?

RM: The site has been brought up 3 feet from the existing level. We've rebuilt the seawall and added sills for all buildings. The landscaping was designed in consideration for flooding (sloped hard edges, but accessible), so it helps to act as a barrier. Critical equipment is higher in the building. And we can deploy an aquafence across Fan Pier in emergency weather events.

KS: You've done a nice job resolving the base in response to sub-committee. This building serves the public realm well. The awning and signage projection may be interesting to look at more closely.

MD: Are you providing retail on the second floor?

RM: No, but we want to relate to the scale and experience of the podiums of the surrounding buildings.

With no public comment, it was moved, seconded and:

VOTED: That the Commission recommends approval of the proposed schematic design for Fan Pier Parcel E in the Boston Fan Pier PDA within the South Boston Waterfront District.

The next item was a presentation of **150 Kneeland Street**.

Noam Ron (NR) of the Hudson Group introduced the site, team (including Kevin Deabler, RODE Architects), and project overview for a 21-story, 230 room hotel: The site has a small, 4,800 SF footprint, which has been a challenge for development on this site in the past. We have garnered support from the Leather District community that hinges on infrastructure updates, an improved condition for Utica Street, and added other public realm improvements. The public process has indicated that there is support for height and density here. We are positioning this project to be bold, forward, and contemporary in a historic district with a strong existing character. As a hotel, the use presents an opportunity for design.

Kevin Deabler (KD): The Leather District is bound by the Greenway, Kneeland, and South Station. The most recent use was a nightclub, and the building is currently vacant.

Architecturally, the context of the Leather District is strong with a well-defined streetwall edge, and a consistently high level of facade texture, cast iron, and ornament. The building base aligns with district datum in height, and creates a slender reading of the mass as the transparency of the base meets the heavier body of the building. The two-story lobby caters to mobile travelers and short stays. Plans for Utica Street and the public realm include extended paving in the style of a woonerf street and a softened edge with planters. Facade grid fenestration and openings are informed by the interior hotel room layouts, with an interpretation of cast iron through mullions and columns. (Shows precedent examples and views.)

AL: I lived in the neighborhood for thirty years very close to this site. This is the right place for a building of height and visibility. I appreciate your thinking carefully about the fabric and materiality of the neighborhood. I think the play with the mullions may be too subtle to relate to the ornament in the District, though. Think about the kind of drop-off that will occur at the base-- frequent pick up and drop off for hotel guests will affect traffic on Kneeland

Daniel St. Clair (DS): I applaud you for another great project. I think this is ambitious, and I'm glad the neighborhood is in support. Could the top of the building become more noticeable or more memorable from all sides because of its public nature as a hotel? Have you considered a rooftop amenity?

NR: We can work to honor the top in formal expression like many buildings in the Leather District do. Mechanical requirements currently restrain the opportunity to make an accessible rooftop amenity.

KS: Vehicular conflict needs to be thought through more clearly.

KD: We've identified this as a key landscape design issue. We've worked with BTM to table the bike lane and suggesting that pick up/drop off be arranged on Utica.

WR: This is quite elegant, but the curtain wall feels somewhat corporate. This may be something to work through in sub-committee. The scale catches one's attention. How do you balance height with preservation requirements of the Leather District? Are there other sites that will want to become towers in the Leather District in the future?

KD: We hope that thoughtful architecture and expression will lead the way for future design and development in this area. There aren't other available parcels that could accommodate this kind of height or program, so we don't anticipate that this will set a precedent in the Leather District.

Leather district resident: I'm very much in support of this project. We have a lot of issues in this neighborhood as the edges are often undefined. This project could help mitigate a lot of problem uses for Utica Street's current condition.

With no further comments, the **150 Kneeland Street Project** was sent to Design Committee.

The next item was a presentation of the **Allston Square Development**.

Jeffrey Drago of Drago + Toscano, LLP introduced the project. Their client has assembled 5 properties over time, totaling over 90,000 SF. 324 residential units are proposed across these parcels in 6 buildings.

Dartagnan Brown (DB), Principal at Embarc Studio, presented the project's design: The project consists of six distinct buildings on five sites, each with their own architectural vocabularies. All 6 buildings will be new construction, except for the preservation of Allston Hall at the corner of Franklin and Braintree. The building at 334 Cambridge will be replaced to accommodate more residential units and parking. We are reinterpreting the character of this area by introducing modern residential developments that integrate art and diverse design vocabularies. Murals and art are integrated throughout the development on building facades, and the development team is working with artists in the community to add to the public realm. Small green spaces are dispersed among the five sites.

DB walked through the program and floorplan of each building in detail.

KS: When you come to sub-committee, it will be important to show these images at a larger scale. It's hard to get a sense of the scale, both on the building interior and in context with the urban fabric. How are you choosing to pattern each of these buildings, and why?

DS: I like your approach to keeping these buildings different from one another, but I question whether or not it has gone too far. The area could use some cohesion. Allston Square is a very prominent corner, and what you've shown doesn't acknowledge the presence of the corner.

There are a lot of vernacular materials that could be considered.

WR: I agree with Daniel's comments. There should be a balance of variety and cohesion in form and material.

AL: I find it interesting that as a developer you've chosen to assemble these sites. You have the opportunity to create a whole fabric in this piece of the city. You've been thoughtful about the height, massing, and ground-level use. This is a sound planning strategy. What is the intention of diversity of design? This new community has a natural diversity that stands in contrast with the existing neighborhood. Think about the family of elements that you want to use to create a stronger formal language. Create rules, a palette, and a set of tools and apply them. Look at the corners of buildings more closely. Be more intentional with breaks of the streetwall where they happen.

KS: Continue continuity on large scale by using pedestrian elements and open space to create a district.

MD: I agree with Andrea's comments. Look at some local precedents for developments of this scale for materiality and formal character.

With no further comments, and no public comment, the **Allston Square Project** was sent to Design Committee.

The next item was a presentation of **Allston Yards Project**.

John Twohig (JT) of New England Development, gave an overview of the project site and team. The area has evolved this site's initial developed use as a suburban shopping plaza. But Stop and Shop is very important to the community, and is a Proponent, and will remain a tenant through phasing.

Christian Galvao (CG), of Elkus Manfredi: The massing height is concentrated along I-90 to mitigate highway noise and views. We have studied the massing through diagrams and views

from New Balance Headquarters, from Guest Street, and Everett Street. A variety of heights begin to step down toward Everett Street. We are considering two slightly varied approaches to relationship of the tower with commercial/retail base and the surrounding neighborhood (two concepts for this building were presented). The street edges on new cross-streets will be activated with artist lofts, townhouses, and retail. Across Guest Street, we are creating a one-acre green park for the community that we are still developing.

KS: I want to better understand how the podium is buffered from I-90, and how these new cross streets are oriented to mitigate noise and views of the turnpike.

AL: I appreciate that this picks up a lot of principles we brought up on other areas of development in Boston Landing. The permeability of the buildings is appreciated. I don't know that the square block proposed for Building 4 is working as well as the others, because it is broad and the only one in the area that seems outside a very thoughtful system of perpendicular relationships.

WR: Is the North-South relationship useful here, when the views engage the turnpike? Why don't you choose to make a more uniform massing relationship between the building heights?

CG: The diversity of heights responds to the change of residential scale with new use.

WR: We need a more rigorous set of master plan and a larger model to better understand the scale and architecture of this area. It is difficult to understand the relationship between the project and Guest Street.

DS: Will this project require a zoning variance?

JT: Yes, and we are using a PDA masterplan to accommodate those changes.

DS: Use the PDA to be more effective with the variances you request. The three sites feel a little too similar in massing, while the other sites in Boston Landing offer more variety.

AL: As compared with earlier development (at Boston Landing), this project proposes three scales: a plinth, a tower, and something in between. The inbetween space can open up the sky and introduce variety. Bring some different massing options.

With no public comment, the **Allston Yards Project** 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 8:23 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for August 7, 2018. The recording of the July 10, 2018 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.