

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, September 1, 2020, and was held virtually to ensure the safety of the public, staff members, and the BPDA Board Members during the COVID-19 situation, 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, Kirk Sykes, and William Rawn. Absent was Anne-Marie Lubeanu. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present, as were several BPDA staff including Natalie Punzak and Matt Martin.

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. Following a roll call of the present Commissioners, 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, August 21, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the August 4, 2020 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from August 18, 2020. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the August 4 and 18, 2020 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **1500 Soldiers Field Road**. Located in the Brighton neighborhood, this project will be visually prominent from a significant public right of way and so review is recommended. Eric Höweler was recused. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 1500 Soldiers Field Road project in the Brighton neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **780 Morrissey Boulevard**. This is a residential project over 100,000 SF threshold and review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 780 Morrissey Boulevard project in the Dorchester neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **244-284 A Street**. The project is well over 100,000 SF and is located adjacent to the Fort Point Channel Landmark District. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 244-284 A Street project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.

The first presentation to the Commission was for 1500 Soldiers Field Road project in the Brighton neighborhood. Eric Höweler was recused.

Matt Martin, Urban Designer at the BPDA, introduced the project to the Commission: This project is creating a new urban design framework for an area that was previously scaled to automobile uses. The building has two fronts: one on Soldiers Field Road and one on Soldiers Field Place. Internal review has been focused on welcoming pedestrian and bike network. 1550 Soldiers Field Road was recently reviewed by the Commission.

Caroline Shannon, Höweler and Yoon Architecture: This project is among the first to bright residential and 24/7 use to this part of Brighton. The building is designed to maximize views to the Charles River across Soldiers Field Road with a series of step backs along the façade. This project will be located mid-block, and a shared path will connect pedestrians from Soldiers Field Road to Soldiers Field Place. Regarding materiality, the building uses textured metal panel and contrasting material color to create a sense of depth on the facade. The balconies and façade taper to add dimension and shadow.

Amanda Foran, OJB Landscape Architecture: Soldiers Field Place on the south side of the building has an urban edge with minimized curb cut areas to be more of a neighborhood street, welcoming and softened with plantings. This allows for a more open green space along Soldiers Field Road. There are two resident amenity terraces, split on both sides of the building.

Linda Eastley: I appreciate the clear presentation. I have a few comments that I would like to better understand at design committee, including how the amenity terraces could be better located to increase activity on site. The building context is evolving, and I'd like to understand how this project might anticipate integrating with a future unknown development to the West. Along Soldiers Field Place, the sidewalk feels tight to the entry and I'd like to understand the rationale behind this.

David Hacin: The overall strategy for the building is interesting. I like the sculptural facade and attention to detail through material. I would echo some of Linda's comments about how this building relates to a surrounding district. The ground floor residences along Soldiers Field Road don't have much of a buffer or an edge, and those few units on the first

and second floors feel tough. Could these edges be buffered by resident amenities or something other than landscape?

Deneen Crosby: I like the passageway from Soldiers Field Place to Soldiers Field Road. It would be great if this could be wider. I don't know where someone would cross Soldiers Field Road, and I'd like to know how this works with your site.

David Manfredi: The clarity of the massing diagram, thoughtful development of the building envelope are really nice. At design committee, I'd like for you to talk about the surrounding sites and property lines.

Kirk Sykes: For such a prominent project, I think we need to see some longer views down Soldiers Field Road.

Andrea Leers: Huge appreciation for the subtly and inventiveness of this proposal. To summarize, we have questions around setting and relationship to adjacent properties and future development. I wonder what the through path will be like to adjacent properties, and it might be night to see this hypothetically in massing at sub committee. How do units at the ground meet the building end?

The project will continue in Design Committee.

Next was the presentation for **780 Morrissey Boulevard** in Dorchester.

Matt Martin, BPDA: This project is similar to the last one you saw in that it is located between a highway and neighborhood street, and therefore needs to set up a pedestrian and urban design network for the future. We've been thinking about how this project connects to broader ped/bike and transit networks as well as the climate resiliency issues because this is located on a low-lying site near a flood pathway. This project is adjacent to the Herb Chambers Honda project that is currently under review by the Commission.

Brian O'Connor, C3: The existing condition of the site is parking and a restaurant, bound by the DCR multi-use path and Route 93, Morrissey Boulevard, Freeport Street, and a Ramada Inn. One of the early massing moves was to create two separate buildings to break down the scale and views of the project. We hope to create an active and engaging public space near the building entry along Freeport Street, which will connect to the DCR multi-use path. Building contains 206 units, mix of studios, one- and two-bedroom apartments. This is podium building with parking at grade and we'll be screening this. Views from 93 show the two scales of buildings. We've been working on how

David Hacin: There are some nice moves on this site. It feels like there are nice moves on Freeport Street, but a worry that the courtyard will be compromised by the ground level parking. What is your thinking about the relationship between the Ramada Inn, which feels

tight right now? I think there might be a better way to distribute height and massing to enhance views from units to the water.

Mikyoung Kim: I'd like more information about the plaza and grade as it relates to vehicular circulation, and about civic programming plans. The V-shaped landscape feels a bit unconvincing to me.

William Rawn: I'm confused by the drop off issues as traffic can be fast moving here.

David Manfredi: You might take a step back and rethink the massing. I feel like there are left over spaces around the edges of the site that could be reconfigured to create interior court yards and a more urban street wall. I'd like to see some massing alternatives at Design Committee.

Andrea Leers: I echo that request; you are in a position to set up your own urban pattern. I'd be interested in massing alternatives that introduce a sub-scale. It feels odd to link two buildings when I think you could create a smaller series of buildings, especially that offer some space away from the Ramada Inn. The 93 side seems unexpressive and could better engage the long-view.

Kirk Sykes: Spend some time on the I-93 side of the building. Chronicle the experience from the perspective of a pedestrian and bicyclist to animate it. Could this have art, screening?

Maria Lyons, Port Norfolk + IAG: This area is all infill. Over the last several decades, DCR has worked to improve access to the waterfront with bikeways and beach improvements. The zoning here has a 40' height limit to protect views and access to the waterfront, and I'm disturbed by comments that suggest this building become taller. Don't seemed concerned with implications on area of critical environmental concern. This is area is critical for water capture during flood and stormwater events. I agree that the backside of the building along the greenway feels like a tunnel, and this should be opened up so it's pleasant to bike along.

Andrea Leers: Thank you, you raise some important points that we haven't discussed. This speaks to the configuration of the massing becoming more porous.

David Hacin: The issue of height is really an issue of massing and reducing the feel of this building becoming a wall. Raises questions of the site in relation to the Dorchester neighborhood beyond and critical views from the neighborhood.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

Next last item on the agenda was the presentation for **244-284 A** in the South Boston Waterfront Neighborhood.

Matt Martin, BPDA: This project is within the 100 Acres Masterplan and across from 15 Necco Street which you've been looking at recently. Internal review feedback has been focused on building G6, the proposed lab building, and its impact on the public realm as well as the precedent it sets for future blocks.

Elie Gamburg, KPF: The project design is guided by goals and principles from the 100 Acres Masterplan. This will contribute to active Harborwalk and Fort Point Park, and will be critical for flood resilient infrastructure for the neighborhood. The site will be subtly graded to prevent a levy or berm. We are matching the FAR called for in the PDA and increasing open space by shifting massing to be taller. There will be residential, office, and lab uses on site.

James von Klemperer, KPF: Materiality draws inspiration from the neighborhood with warm tones and brick. Through view from around the site, you can see material detail and curved corners that contribute to viewsheds and a sense of place in plazas.

Kirk Sykes: Master planning approach, ground plane treatment, view corridors, and connectivity to the harbor walk are quite elegant and well done. Have you considered freeing yourself more from the Fort Point Channel vernacular? I think of the Northeastern ISEC in the context of Columbus Ave and want to hear your thoughts about the commitment to this rhythm and form, especially the horizontal striations. It'd be helpful to understand some of the typologies you considered.

Linda Eastley: I want to talk about the pedestrian experience. I'd appreciate more urban design diagrams that convey the experience of the pedestrian through the site. Help us understand how these spaces are detailed and connected to each other.

William Rawn: Continuity of the Harborwalk seems broken by the pump house. Can you do anything to change this condition?

Linda Eastley: Talk about vehicular circulation at Design Committee.

Andrea Leers: The desire for internal pathways is great, but I'm missing how this parcel sits within the larger several block area around 15 Necco and Fort Point Channel that we've been reviewing in previous months. How are these parcels bounded by other buildings? Do the equivalent of a physical context model in a virtual format. There's a missing sense of continuous green space from A Street to the Harborwalk. Help us understand how you got here when you come to design committee and how the edges of buildings on the other side of the green work with your site. This will likely undergo a series of design committee meetings focused by topic. The first can focus on urban design strategy.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:15 p.m. The next full Commission meeting was scheduled for September 22, 2020. The recording of the September 1, 2020 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.