

BCDC APPROVED

MINUTES BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, November 1, 2022, 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, Jonathan Evans, David Hacin, Mikyoung Kim, Kathy Kottaridis, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were Linda Eastley and Eric Howeler. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Adam Johnson, Diana Fernandez, Nupoor Monani, Jeong-Jun Ju, and others were present for the BPDA.

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 October 20, 2022, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the October 11, 2022 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on October 4, October 18, and October 25. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the October 4, October 11, October 18, and October 25 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the Olmsted Village project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Olmsted Village project in the Mattapan neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **125 Lincoln Street** in the Leather District neighborhood. Deputy Chief of Urban Design Diana Fernandez introduced the project. Mark McGowan of Oxford Properties and representatives of S9 architecture presented the project's trajectory through Commission review, focusing on architecture and improvements to the public realm. Commissioners Mimi Love and Kirk Sykes were recused.

Deneen Crosby: The last time I saw this project, there was a diagram of building heights. This morning I went to the site to look at how the height might be perceived. Working in a city, the most important decision is the building—the massing, the siting, etc. It affects the feeling of a place. This project brings some great benefits. But the places I'm most concerned about the impacts of this

project are in the Leather District—looking north, there’s a very consistent architectural edge. The Leather District is very compact, so every square foot has meaning. The project looks better than it did, but it’s not there yet. I was concerned about a number of views around the site. I’m also wondering if this is forming too much of a wall between Chinatown and the Leather District.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I agree with Deneen. I appreciate the need for affordable housing and the proposed public realm benefits. However, I believe the public realm is more than what we see at the street. In all of the views, we see the attention given to the building, but it almost looks as if there are two buildings stacked on top of each other.

David Hacin: I appreciate what Diana is talking about as far as “healing the edge.” Architecturally, everything is skillfully executed, but it still feels much too large and much different than the Greenway Guidelines. On top of that I am increasingly skeptical of these large floorplate lab buildings in all districts of the city.

Kathy Kottaridis: I’ll echo my fellow Commissioners, but I do applaud the project team’s responses and efforts to bring some benefits with the project, even while height and density have been massive constraints. As presented, the building still cleaves two historic districts and creates a barrier that only enhances the surface artery. There’s a reason the guidelines for the greenway were created as they were, and we should push for a design that is more respectful of adjacencies and of the future.

David Manfredi: This is one of the most difficult votes I’ve encountered. It’s complex: we’ve talked a lot about building a wall. When you drop this building in, it does feel like “cleaving” these two parts that so want to come together. I agree with David that the architects have done good work here, and the evolution of the architecture is very good. You might have made the base and top more different than they need to be. The ground plane and contributions to the public realm are important and well-thought. I wish there was *some* movement in the height—even just a few fewer stories.

Jonathan Evans: For me it’s not so much the height but the sheer mass of the building. I appreciate the skill of the architects, but for me the bulk is troublesome.

Bill Rawn: Last Tuesday, we had asked for a model. The architecture is well done but it’s very taut and singular.

A number of members of the public spoke both to support and oppose the project.

Andrea Leers: The Commission has, in the past, not given recommendation for projects that exceed previously established guidelines. Much appreciation to the development and design team. I lived on Lincoln Street for 25 years. In the long-term view of the city, the detriment of the division of the two neighborhoods is greater than the benefit that will accrue. It is a difficult decision, but I feel as though in the overall interest of the city, this is not a good proposal.

Mikyoung Kim: I haven’t seen the project before. There’s no room for additional process? What happens if we vote “Nay?”

Andrea Leers: Our vote is advisory to the BPDA.

David Hacin: Our concern has to do with height and density relative to the greenway guidelines, not all of the other work. Is there a way to fold that into the vote? I don't want to vote no, as if we don't like any of it—when really it is focused on the density.

Mikyoung Kim: My sense is if we vote no, then I'm hoping that the proponent would come forward with an alternate proposal.

Elizabeth Stifel: You could potentially vote to approve it at the greenway guideline height—saying that you like the project but not at its height. You could also approve the project contingent on future review. You would probably not see the project again if you vote “nay.”

Deneen Crosby: The projects where we've approved with a condition have not been as significant as this. The discussion of density and height has been going on for a long time.

David Manfredi: We are advisory. This project can proceed with a negative vote. I'll say: the public benefits are tied to the density. You don't get the package of public benefits without the density.

David Hacin: What “compromise” means is relative to what you come in with at the beginning. We're still looking at a project that is still more than twice the height.

A motion was made, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC does not recommend approval for 125 Lincoln Street in the Leather District, with seven votes against recommendation and two abstentions.

The next project was **800 Morrissey Boulevard** in Dorchester. Brian O'Connor of Cube3 presented the project.

Kirk Sykes: A lot of the activity that you focused on the space between the buildings is wonderful. I would have questions about some of the facades on the parking podiums.

Deneen Crosby: One of my primary concerns was the public feel of the connector between the two buildings. A more generous space there is a great improvement.

Jay Russo, Brian O'Connor, and Matt Mrva explained some of the grading challenges on the site.

Deneen Crosby: It feels like you haven't given enough space to the bicycle path. I would look at the widths of paths. Otherwise, great improvements since the last time I saw it.

David Manfredi: I appreciate the simplifying of the architecture here, and resisting the temptation of making all of the parts different. You've created simplicity and consistency that have added enormously to the project.

Bill Rawn: I've seen this several times and it keeps getting better. Kirk made a great point about the south edge of the building.

Brian O'Conner: Agreed.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Just one suggestion with regard to the public art: think about the texture of the building and even illumination. Also, there's a blank wall opposite the blue bikes. I'd suggest thinking of extending the public art onto that to reinforce that it's a public space. 0

Two members of the public spoke to oppose the height and density along the waterfront.

David Hacin: We are seeing a lot of development along the roadway. I don't fully understand the planning context, or how it will be addressed in the long term. I do think the question of how this is being planned in the long-term is a legitimate one.

The motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of 800 Morrissey Boulevard.

310 Northern Avenue in the South Boston Waterfront was presented next. Mike Scannell introduced the project, and John Sullivan of SGA presented the project's progress.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I appreciate the presentation of the evolution of the design. I like the simplicity and changes you've made to the first-floor canopy. I particularly appreciate how you've integrated the penthouse.

David Hacin: This looks like an elegant response on every level: architecture, landscape, and public realm. Compliments to the team on working so quickly and effectively.

Mimi Love: Very nicely resolved and very elegant. I am curious why the ground-floor is set back from the sidewalk.

John Sullivan: It's to create a wider feeling on the sidewalk along the unnamed access road.

Mikyong Kim: The project has really improved. There's a dearth of public places for people who live and work in this neighborhood. You've also provided the Commission a lot of sense of what the open space is going to feel like beyond just a plan view.

Kirk Sykes: I think Mikyong picked up on a nice idea regarding the center courtyard. Think about the value of that space, even with something small like a pushcart business or bringing the corner tenant into that space to activate that courtyard. Think also about the lighting for that space.

Andrea Leers: This has been an incredibly good process of suggestion and evolution. One thing that I like is pulling the right-hand facade, angling it, and recessing the ground floor. There's a real invitation to move along the building toward the courtyard.

Deneen Crosby: I echo what the other Commissioners have said. I reiterate the importance of having some activation in the courtyard.

David Hacin: Could there be some connection between the recess, the activation of the courtyard, and the name of the unnamed access road?

Kathy Kottaridis: This is an industrial district that's taking on a whole new character. I too commend you for all of the changes. It will be a really nice help in transitioning the area.

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

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for 310 Northern Avenue in the South Boston Waterfront.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **Olmsted Village** in the Mattapan neighborhood. Jeong-Jun Ju introduced the project on behalf of BDPA Urban Design. Lizbaeth Heyer, Ian Kenney, and Dave Andrews presented the project. Jonathan Evans was recused.

David Hacin: I appreciate the connections you're trying to make. In subcommittee, it will be useful to better understand the scale of each part in relation to the existing condition, moving down Warbler Way. It does feel like the Brooke House building has a higher, almost looming presence relative to the rest of the project. I wonder if there's a way to ease it into the landscape.

Bill Rawn: The programmatic variety is astounding. What I like is the architectural variety. I have a site planning/urban design question: I assumed the Main/Warbler intersection is the center of gravity. I expected that Warbler was the major roadway through to Harvard. The access seems strangely convoluted, it would be useful to understand that at subcommittee.

Kirk Sykes: I'd like to understand the multitude of ways to access the site. What are the components of activating the experience—paving, signage, etc.? It'll also be interesting to understand how all of the different scales of projects link together. What are the views, where do you see all of these buildings?

Deneen Crosby: I have the same question about Warbler and the cul de sacs. I'd also like more information on the natural resource—what is there, what is remaining, and the topography.

Mimi Love: I appreciate the program and I'm struck by how you knit it all together. The buildings labelled 1, 2, and 3 are much bigger than 4, 5, 6, and 7, but you've started to adjust the massing to make them relatable—but I think what's missing is change in height as well. The consistency in heights is working against the collection of volumes you have.

Andrea Leers: At one end of things, we're looking at a large landscape, and at the other, we're looking closely at just one building. Thinking about that one building has everything to do with thinking about the other two large buildings—they are related. There's a huge difference in the populations of these buildings. That suggests a kind of concentration of population. Why is the

density/mass not more evenly distributed between 1 and 2? It strikes me as a heavy weight on one site.

Kirk Sykes: I agree with Andrea—there are certain elements on the site that lend themselves toward 1 and 3. In a more elevated, dense building it's harder to get them to all work as a family.

Anne-Marie: Building 2 is very rectilinear, but the others respond more to the street.

Andrea Leers: It's an interesting project. We look forward to discussing in committee.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next BCDC workshop was discussed.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:01 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for . The recording of the December 6, 2022 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.