

## MINUTES BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, starting and began at 5:15 p.m. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom to ensure the safety and health of the Commission and members of the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members in attendance were Deneen Crosby, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, Paul McDonough, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were Linda Eastley, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, and Mikyoung Kim. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Meghan Richard, Alexa Pinard, and Natalie Punzak were present for the BPDA, among others.

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 Friday, November in the BOSTON HERALD.

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The first item on the agenda was a report from the Review Committee on the **41 Berkeley Street** project. The proposal is for three buildings totally approximately 311,000 SF, which includes renovation and expansion of the Franklin Union Building, renovation and expansion of a rowhouse building on Appleton Street, and a new 206,800 SF senior care building (241 beds) on Tremont Street. The project well-exceeds the 100,000 SF threshold for review, and review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 41 Berkeley Street project in the South End neighborhood.**

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The Commission moved to project presentations and reports from Design Committee, the first being for the **Bartlett Station F2 and F4**. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Cliff Boehmer, Davis Square Architects: Through work with the BCDC, we focused on strengthening clarity of pedestrian entries and pedestrian routes from Nubian Square. Building F2 is located at the southwest corner of the site. The corner entry along Guild Street is more prominent in form now while the rest of the building along Guild speaks to the brownstone townhome patterning across the street.

Nick Brooks, DREAM Collaborative: Building F2 is located at the northwest corner of the site. Views from around the building show the approach to scaling the building with multiple volumes that are distinguished through material application. We've made the resident entries more prominent.

Deneen Crosby: The wall separating F2 and lawn is tall, look at shortening the wall. Seating height can make a big change to how that space is perceived and viewed.

Andrea Leers: The efforts to mark pronounced entries up and down the hill are a great improvement. These projects are coming along and both teams have worked well to have the design of each building relate to the other.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Boston Civic Design Commission recommend for approval the schematic design for the F2 and F4 lots at the corners of Lambert Street and Guild and Bartlett Streets in the Roxbury Neighborhood.**

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Kirk Sykes returned. The next report from Design Committee was for **Whittier Choice Phase III**. Michael Liu, The Architectural Team: The Commission reviewed this project in design committee on October 13, where comments were focused on the development of the facade design. Through the Commission process, we have strengthened the expression of amenity space along the ground floor and added more detail on the façade and storefront areas, particularly on the first two floors, to bring a human scale to the design. The landscape and planting scheme is more natural now allowing for more ambling pedestrian circulation, especially with the pedestrian terminus on West Street and the corner of Tremont and Ruggles.

Deneen Crosby: The streetscape is improved by eliminating the planters and increasing the permeability and flexibility. I think the planters on the building edge are nice. Can these be open bottom planters to provide a better growing environment?

Kirk Sykes: Consider doing more to animate the first and second floors, especially where there is active retail and resident uses.

David Manfredi: Signage will be important to way-finding and drawing users to the ground floor retail. The renderings seem too structured and I encourage you find creative ways to bring the ground plane to life.

Andrea Leers: Make sure that the material choices that are finalized do not result in too-flat a facade. Look at more depth, texture, and variety of material on the facade so that this is not a graphic exercise.

Alison Pultinas, public comment: Boston Art Commission is commissioning a public art piece. Is that your corner? How will it work with your planters?

Hearing no other comments, it was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the proposed Phase III of the Whittier Choice Project on Tremont Street in the Roxbury neighborhood.**

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The **Simmons University Living and Learning Center and IMP** was the next report from Design Committee. David Manfredi and William Rawn were recused.

Laura Pisinski, Simmons University: The One Simmons Plan allows the consolidation of two campuses into one to promote integrated learning, student life, and community while providing

modern athletic, dining, science, and residence facilities. This proposal includes the new Living and Learning Center and renovation of the Science Building.

Emily Paparella, Elkus Manfredi: Primary areas of focus since our most recent design committee meeting were the study of the south elevation (coloring and scale), the Living and Learning Center entry off the quad, and studying the building in its broader context. We've looked at simplifying the paving and landscaping elements on the quad to allow for more generous green space. A series of views around the quad show before and after conditions.

Kirk Sykes: Your building is starting to bridge the old and new, between the glassier newer buildings along Boylston and the Longwood Medical Area to the finer grain brick Fenway neighborhood.

Deneen Crosby: Agree that the ground plane feels more generous to me. With the increased traffic that will be important. Also important is the connections to the streets, Avenue Louis Pasteur and to the service road need to be treated as places with a lot of circulation and appropriate paving.

David Hacin: You've addressed my concerns about the views and space through the quad.

Andrea Leers: For a long time, we were focused on completing the figural space of the quad, which you've successfully addressed. I appreciate the attention you've given to the outer facing streets, too, and the facade along Avenue Louis-Pastor is quite welcoming. The project has nicely evolved and I thank you for your efforts.

Hearing no public comments, it was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the proposed Simmons University Institutional Master Plan and the Living and Learning Center in the Fenway neighborhood.**

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David Manfredi and William Rawn returned. The last report from Design Committee was for the **1515 Commonwealth Avenue** project. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Eric Robinson, RODE Architects: The corner tower building has been reduced to 85'. The site has ~30,000 SF of publicly accessible open space. Through revising the massing, we've been able to create one single vehicular access point to allow the park space and pedestrian circulation to wrap the site. Material revisions in response to Commission comments are shown in before and after views around the site. Much discussion was focused on circulation and accessibility on site.

David Manfredi: There is a clarity of form that helps break down the scale/mass on this site. The logic seems consistent except in the middle of the rental building where it becomes a bit blurred and distracting. The clarity of the bundles of verticality gets confused in that middle section. But this is a good project on a difficult site.

Deneen Crosby: The walkway to Overlook Park is a great public amenity and neighbors will use this because they've been part of the public process, but I think it's important that this walkway has its own identity and a strong presence on the street edge. The pavement changes at the entrance of the condo building are great and this now feels like an entry plaza. This project has greatly improved since the last time I saw it.

Andrea Leers: This project has steadily evolved. It still has a sense of differentiation between the condo and rental building, but has a cohesive sense of place. Separating the car and pedestrian circulation is great.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

**VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the proposed 1515 Commonwealth Ave project in the Brighton neighborhood.**

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The Commission moved into new project presentations from review committee, the final agenda item being the presentation of the **41 Berkeley Street** project in the South End neighborhood. Kirk Sykes returned. David Hacin and Paul McDonough were recused.

Alexa Pinard, BPDA Urban Design, offered a brief introduction to highlight review processes to date: The project will be a PDA, which in the South End is required to reserve 20% open space. This will be a through block connection that we've been focusing on keeping open and accessible. This project is located in the South End Landmark District area, and we've discussed how this new building on Tremont will speak to its neighbors and activate the site.

Rob Clocker, Hacin + Associates: Related Beal and BFIT have partnered on this project, which today houses the Franklin Union building and a large amount of inaccessible open space. We will preserve the historic buildings on the site, add a senior care facility, and a community space that will expand on relocated community uses from the Franklin Union building. The through block open space will serve as a courtyard that terminates in a small plaza along Tremont. The architecture picks up on cues from the surrounding historic district. The building base, middle, and top are distinct from each other but draw form through bays and materials through brick and a dark building top from the neighborhood. We've pulled key datum lines from across the neighborhood.

Edward Marshall, Stimson Studio Landscape Architecture: We have to be mindful of the users in the design of the public realm and want to make the space is inviting, safe, and easy to navigate. We're bringing some of the sense of garden space along Berkeley Street into the walkway and arcade, and there are nice opportunities for planting in the center of the courtyard. We'll be providing fixed and moveable seating, and activating a space that is now blocked off along Appleton and Tremont with a small plaza. Street trees and public realm design will comply with Complete Streets standards.

Deneen Crosby: I'm wondering about the solar orientation and grading through the courtyard and pedestrian arcade.

William Rawn: The Franklin Union building contains a small symphony hall that is important to the South End community, and we should look more deeply into this at Design Committee. The urban design plan is very clear, strong, and prescient. This will be a wonderful asset to the South End.

Kirk Sykes: Talk to the facade on the Tremont Street building. This side is more restrained and a bit repetitive. It would be nice to see more details of this facade at design committee. The ground plane approach will be very exciting.

Rob Clocker: This has to do with the repetitive program along this facade, but we can further discuss this at design committee.

Eric Höweler: Hacin and Associates has a sensitive hand and consistently design thoughtful buildings in their context. I have no doubt this will be another one. There are two conditions happening here: a new building and addition to an existing building. The contrast to existing in the building addition makes sense. But I wonder about the contrast set up in the new construction building—the bronze hovering over the new building suggests that the red brick part was always there. I understand what you are doing, but wonder if the corner building could feel more unified.

Andrea Leers: This is an extraordinary idea and wonderful program. The through block connection is an integral part of the South End fabric and I'm glad to see that in this proposal. For the many things to be appreciated, I think the ways both buildings terminate at the top wants more study. There wants to be a difference between the way you terminate the new and old buildings at the top. Celebrate the differences between a new and old.

Deneen Crosby: The zoning, where the turnaround is and the covered space and seating zones, is right. I would like to know more about the materials of the sidewalks and trees.

David Shepperd, South End Landmark District Commissioner: The SELD Commission has many questions about the design, details yet to be worked out. Most important to mention is that our standards for this site allow a maximum of 70' and our primary concern is with sticking with that massing. This proposals more than double that height. This proposes removing the back corner of Franklin-Union, which contains an auditorium. As stated, we don't comment on the internal use of buildings, but the removal of material from a historic building like this with no plan to repair is a major concern.

Mike Reinders, South End resident: Also concerned about the height. This only has a 12' set back from Mass Ave to the building and it could be more generous to be consistent with other new buildings that have more generous setbacks. Please consider the setback in context of Tremont St and the height, which is unprecedented in the neighborhood. 60 parking spots will not be sufficient for 500 employees and hundreds of new residents.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

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There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:20 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for December 2, 2020. The recording of the November 10 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.