



**Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project**  
**CAC Working Meeting #11**  
**Thursday, November 12, 2009**  
**Location: Christian Science Publishing House Building**

**CAC Attendees:**

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association  
Mark Cataudella, Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)  
Sybil CooperKing, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)  
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association  
Donald Margotta, Church Park Apartments  
Joanne McKenna, Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC)  
Craig Nicholson, American Planning Association (APA) – Massachusetts Chapter  
Bill Richardson, Fenway Civic Association (FCA)  
Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association (SBNA)  
George Thrush, Boston Society of Architects (BSA)

**CAC Members Not in Attendance:**

Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance  
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)  
Christian Coffin, Hilton Hotel Boston Back Bay  
Eric Georgi, Resident of St. Germain Street  
Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End  
Robert Wright, Symphony United Neighbors (SUN)

**Ex-Officio Attendees:**

Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing

**City of Boston Attendees:**

Heather Campisano, BRA  
David Carlson, BRA  
Randi Lathrop, BRA  
Warren Lizio, BRA  
Kairos Shen, BRA  
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA

**Church Team Attendees:**

Ann Byer, Elkus-Manfredi Architects  
Barbara Burley, The First Church of Christ, Scientist  
Harley Gates, The First Church of Christ, Scientist  
Bob Herlinger, The First Church of Christ, Scientist  
Debbi Lawrence, The First Church of Christ, Scientist  
Mahmood Malihi, Leggat McCall Properties  
Bob Ryan, ML Strategies  
Jim Van Sickle, Elkus-Manfredi Architects

**Members of the Public:**

Susan Ashbrook, NABB/Berklee Task Force

Ryan Cloutier, Fenway News

Jerome CooperKing, NABB

Craig Elliott

Shirley Kressel, NABB

Marc Laderman

Stephanie Mason

Rafael Munoz, NABB

Barbara Simons, SUN/Berklee Task Force

Jonathan Smith, KV Associates

Bill Whitney, Berklee College of Music

**Meeting Summary**

On Thursday, November 12, 2009, the eleventh working session of the Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 6:05 p.m. in the Christian Science Publishing House Building by Lauren Shurtleff, BRA Planner.

Lauren began the meeting by introducing Bill Richardson, Marie Fukuda's replacement on the CAC from the Fenway Civic Association.

Next, CAC Co-Chairs Sybil CooperKing, NABB, and George Thrush, BSA, synthesized the comments received from the CAC at the last meeting. They have put together a draft document of actionable items that will be further modified and added to as the CAC's work progresses.

Additionally, Sybil announced that the Berklee College of Music Institutional Master Plan (IMP) Task Force has been invited to the CAC's December meeting for an information sharing session. The Church's traffic consultant, VHB, will also provide a presentation on the Symphony Street Strategic Plan at the next working session.

Moving on, Lauren introduced Kairos Shen, Chief Planner for the City of Boston and Director of Planning for the BRA. Kairos was present to answer questions by the CAC concerning the BRA's process of implementing the revitalization plan for the site, as well as to provide a basic outline of the approach by the BRA with respect to the CAC's recommendations. He reiterated the CAC's function to act as a forum and represent the community throughout the process of reviewing options for the site presented by the Church and ideally develop a consensus on a preferred plan. Kairos recognized that there are issues related to the long-term maintenance of the site, and noted that a long-term solution is needed, as a non-profit organization cannot be expected to bear the overall costs of such a large publicly-accessible site. The CAC will therefore review the options for the site with the goal of identifying long-term solutions, and this will result in a revitalization plan.

Kairos noted that it is premature to say with certainty that this process will result in a zoning change, though it is possible. He stressed that it is too early at this point in the process to determine the exact implementation or zoning mechanism; that each option has various benefits and trade-offs, but noted that the City of Boston wants to reserve right to negotiate public benefits.

Questions and comments are summarized below:

- In response to a question from Sybil CooperKing regarding the scope of the project, Kairos replied that this process is a planning exercise and not the formal Article 80 project review process. In terms of determining the boundaries for this process, it is important to make the distinction between property that is owned by the Church but under long-term lease, and property that they have full control over. It is appropriate to ask the Church to consider those properties under long-term lease in the context of the revitalization plan, but also to understand that they cannot be included for practical reasons.
- In response to a follow-up question from Sybil CooperKing regarding potential modifications to Huntington Avenue, Kairos indicated that it is the City's desire to improve the public realm and see all streets and sidewalks brought up to current standards, but that it is important for this process that the discussion not get locked into one particular design element that may hinder the rest of the planning process.
- In response to a question from Joanne McKenna, Fenway CDC, Kairos responded that one of the CAC's roles is to respond to the scale, design, and programming (use) elements of the site. Scale is important because of its impact. In terms of land use, the Church Team has been pursuing a range of uses, which allows for flexibility, and this is due in part to the present economic conditions. The BRA is particularly concerned about ground level uses, and a key concern is activating the area, which is typically achieved through a mix of uses. The CAC may decide to develop specific thresholds for the site for each use.
- In response to follow-up questions from Joanne McKenna regarding the performance of various studies, Kairos indicated that during the Article 80 development review process, more specific data will become available. Currently, because the CAC is still in the planning process, some basic analyses can be performed. He stressed that the accuracy of this data will depend on where we are in the process. Only the scale of parameters is given at a planning level.
- Lee Steele, SBNA, stated that he had been a member of the Impact Advisory Group (IAG) for the GrandMarc project, and asked how that differs from a CAC. Kairos responded that IAGs are formed as part of the Article 80 Large Project Review process, and focus on the mitigation and community benefits of specific projects with a specific program. This CAC is involved in a master planning process, and as such is reviewing a variety of different options for several parcels. This process will therefore determine what type of development should occur and where. In addition, it may result in certain parts of the plaza being restricted from future development. Moreover, it is likely that the members of the CAC (or other representatives from their groups) will serve on the IAGs associated with the buildout of the site during the Article 80 process. An IAG is required after a specific project is filed, whereas a CAC is part of the planning process.
- Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association asked if an independent traffic/pedestrian study will be performed by the BRA. Kairos replied that the BRA provides assumptions and analytical methodologies. The analysis is the Proponent's responsibility; the BRA does not hire separate consultants to do the same analysis. Accordingly, the BRA carefully reviews each analysis.
- Sybil CooperKing asked for clarification on protection areas. Kairos indicated that what he was referring to earlier could come in the form of deed restrictions, which are more powerful than zoning. On the other hand, through the public process, the City and the community can recommend new zoning. When zoning is put into place, it does not take ownership into account. The fact that there is one landowner here allows for greater leverage by the City.

- In response to a follow-up question from Sybil CooperKing, Kairos stated that planning documents are not legal documents; they are companion documents that can accompany legal documents. For example, a deed restriction could be used as a tool in addition to a Planned Development Area (PDA) Master Plan, which would specify the square footage and heights allowed in specific locations – and this would require a Proponent to give up their underlying zoning rights. Under a PDA Master Plan, public benefits are also codified prior to the dispensation of entitlements.
- Joanne McKenna asked if it is usual for a CAC to start with the presumption of 950,000-SF of new development. Kairos explained that it depends on the site, and provided Fan Pier as an example, which began with a 4 million-SF assumption (over a 15 acre site) that was later revised to 3 million-SF. He emphasized that the number is not important, and in this case, it comes from the Church attempting to reach a number that will enable them to offset the cost of maintaining the site to the highest possible level. The other option would be for them to restrict the use of the site by the public, which is something that they do not wish to do. One of the key goals of this planning process is to ensure that the site is kept accessible to the public and maintained in perpetuity.

Next, the Church Team began their presentation with brief comments from Barbara Burley, Senior Manager of Real Estate Planning & Operations. CAC members requested that Barbara provide a written statement of her comments, which is included at the end of these summary notes.

Questions and comments in response to the Barbara's statement are summarized below:

- In response to a question from Bill Richardson, Barbara indicated that the Midtown Hotel's lease is up in 2016.
- Lee Steele commented that it seemed that Midtown Hotel should be left out of the discussion on the Plaza site, since its lease still had seven more years left on it. Barbara replied that it is a combination of existing market factors and lease timing that kept the Church from including the Midtown Hotel in the Plaza Revitalization Project. She added that the Church Team assumes that the Midtown Hotel site will be developed in the future and has factored this assumption into its long-term financial planning. The Midtown Hotel site is zoned at 115' for height, with an FAR of 8.0.

Bob Herlinger then gave a PowerPoint Presentation on the Dalton and Belvidere Street sites (available on the BRA's project website: <http://www.tinyurl.com/ChristianScienceCAC>). Bob stated that the Church Team has come up with a new alternative for this site. Mahmood Malihi added that the relocation of Dalton Street, which was part of the original alternative, had some traffic and pedestrian benefits but involved a number of other challenges, including the relocation of a sewer line, the difficulty of the office floor plates created by this scheme, and the fact that the single building concept was dependent on the recovery of both the office and residential markets. By creating two buildings on the site, the project can move forward in a more multi-faceted approach. The Huntington Avenue scheme remains the same.

Questions and comments in response to the Church Team's presentation are summarized below:

- George Thrush commented that the new proposal offers fewer opportunities for retail. Belvidere Street is currently a fragmented environment, and the previous proposal worked towards improving this. The previous iteration also had a clear front and back, whereas the

new proposal lacks this. Mahmood replied that because this presentation does not include a ground plan, it is difficult to distinguish the front and back of the building, but added that the building will possess a strong front entrance.

- Bill Richardson commented that the residents of Clearway and St. Germain Streets would likely welcome this modification to the proposal.
- Sybil CooperKing agreed with Bill, and noted that St. Germain Street will have open space in the new scheme.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, commented that the overall goal for the building will be for it to feel seamless in the public realm, and not just what works for the Church. It will come down to the architecture, and more detail is needed in order to determine if this will work better.
- Mark Cataudella, BSO, commented that he liked the new proposal.
- Joanne McKenna also stated that she liked the new proposal, but expressed concern about the concentration of hotels in the area. If this new proposal resulted in another hotel, this would only add to the bus traffic that already exists in moving hotel guests to and from the Boston Convention and Exposition Center. Randi Lathrop, BRA Deputy Director of Planning, noted that the Hines Convention Center is close to the site and would not require busing for guests. Bob Herlinger added that if this site were to be developed as a hotel, it would be an extended-stay hotel, which would serve a different type of guest than a typical hotel.
- Lee Steele stated that if there is anywhere on the site that can handle a great amount of density, it is on the Belvidere and Dalton Street site.
- Tom Aucella asked for clarification on what will exist in the space between the two buildings, and stated that it should not become an asphalt plaza. Bob Herlinger replied that they are still working out the details.
- Bill Richardson expressed his opinion that the City should push for an active pedestrian zone/connection at this site.
- In response to a follow-up question from Bill Richardson, Bob Herlinger responded that there are currently 550 spaces in the existing garage, and the Church Team is still in the process of determining how many additional parking spaces will be required. The new scheme, however, will require fewer parking spaces than the previous one.
- Don Margotta, Church Park Apartments, stated that the new proposal is fine.
- Craig Nicholson, APA – Massachusetts Chapter, expressed that the new proposal is adequate, and that it still allows for many streetscape improvements.
- In response to a question from George Thrush, Mahmood Malihi indicated that the sewer line bifurcates the Belvidere/Dalton Street site and makes it infeasible to connect parking under the two proposed buildings on Belvidere/Dalton Streets.

The meeting was then adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

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**November 12, 2009 CAC session  
Comments for The First Church of Christ, Scientist  
by Barbara Burley, Senior Manager, Real Estate Planning & Operations**

I would like to take a few minutes to comment – in response to recent questions – about the thinking that led to the Church’s proposal for about 950,000 square feet (SF) of new development on the Christian Science Plaza.

For background, the 14.5-acre Christian Science Plaza has seven buildings and about 8.5 acres of open space, including the Reflecting Pool, the Children’s Fountain, and the large grass lawn on Massachusetts Avenue. To our knowledge, it includes the largest privately-owned urban open space available to the public.

### **Making real estate self-supporting**

For the last 40-some years, the Church has maintained the Plaza at its sole expense for its own activities and for the enjoyment of its neighbors.

As a church, we have a responsibility to keep our administrative expenses as low as possible and ensure that donations to the organization to the largest extent possible support its mission.

Currently the Church spends a disproportionately large amount of Church funds on the maintenance of the Plaza. The Plaza Revitalization Project provides a solution to adjust the imbalance, allows us to continue to be good stewards of the Plaza, and helps accomplish the goal of having our real estate become self-supporting.

### **Capital and Ongoing Operating Costs**

The Church is financially stable and debt-free, but we are looking for a financially sustainable revenue stream – other than from donations – to underwrite significant costs of the Plaza, including capital projects and ongoing site operating costs for decades to come. For example ~

- The Reflecting Pool, which is near the end of its “useful life” and needs to be rebuilt, is estimated to cost approximately \$10 to 12 million.
- The 4,800 wood piles under the two church edifices need higher and consistent water levels, and some piles need remedial work. No one knows for sure the extent of the work, but tens of millions of dollars are likely to be involved.
- The Plaza hardscape surface itself needs extensive repair. (Note the condition of some of the bricks and concrete.)
- The facades of the concrete buildings have spawling problems, a condition that is costly to repair if indeed the experts can agree on an effective and lasting methodology.
- Enhanced water management and other environmentally sustainable upgrades will require investment of funds – as will improvements to the open space, such as increasing the size of the lawn area, adding more trees for shade and beauty, and providing more seating to pause and enjoy the site.
- Ongoing operating costs for the open space exceed \$2 million per year, including maintenance, security, insurance, and utilities.

### **Ways to achieve Self-Supporting Real Estate Goal**

The Plaza Revitalization Project addresses ways to increase real estate revenues, including:

1. Leasing existing Plaza office space that we no longer need in the 101 Belvidere and 177 Huntington buildings, with initial leasing substantially complete.
2. Adding new development on the Plaza -- on selected edges so as to retain existing buildings and open space.

### **New Development includes 650,000 SF “as of right” plus additional 300,000 SF**

The Plaza has unused zoning capacity – approximately 650,000 square feet of unused “as of right” capacity. Our projections show that we need more than that to meet the Church objective

of its real estate being self-supporting. We initially considered more than one million square feet, but that much new development didn't seem to meet the objectives of maintaining the open space, respecting the historic elements, and addressing other important criteria.

A revised plan of about 950,000 square feet provided a more viable option for the site. This is about 300,000 square feet more than "as of right."

Proposing an additional 300,000 square feet more than "as of right" doesn't seem too much. It results in a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for the Plaza of less than 3 – while zoning around us allows for FAR in the range of 2 to 10.

From another perspective, if you look at the relationship between the open space costs and the square feet of the existing buildings, the current ratio is about \$3/square feet – far in excess of the cost burden for open space of other buildings in Boston. The proposed 950,000 square feet would reduce these costs to about \$1.30/square feet -- more in line but still higher than the norm.

### **Development: Concentrated versus Spread Out**

In order to preserve open space and the architectural ensemble, we propose concentrating the development on selected edges of the Plaza rather than having buildings over most of the site.

### **Perimeter Property**

The Midtown Hotel on Huntington Avenue is the only church-owned property outside of the Plaza Revitalization Project that our real estate advisors project has development potential within the next decade or so. Because the market does not support redevelopment now and it continues under a ground lease that doesn't terminate for a number of years, it is not part of the Plaza Revitalization Project. In our long-term financial planning, however, we have projected a redevelopment of the Midtown at some point in the future.

### **Conservative Projections**

In our projections, we have tried to make conservative financial estimates of future market values and future capital and operating costs based upon many assumptions and variables. Our goal is to implement a long-term plan that meets the Church's objectives and continues to provide a well-maintained open space that is available for the community to enjoy.