

MINUTES BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, June 6, 2023, 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 Commissioners Mimi Love, Linda Eastley, David Hacin, Anne-Marie Lubenau, David Manfredi, William Rawn, Catherine Morris, Shauna Gillies-Smith, Laura Solano and Kirk Sykes. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, Deputy Chief of Urban Design Diana Fernandez, and Urban Designer Kenya Thompson were present for the BPDA.

The Chair, Mimi Love, 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 in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the May 2, Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on May 14, 23, and 30. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the May 2, 14, 23 and 30 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 25-39 Harvard Avenue project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 25 -39 Harvard Avenue project in the Allston neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 1033-1055 Washington Street project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 1033-1055 Washington Street project in the South End neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 475-511 Dorchester Avenue project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 475-511 Dorchester Avenue (On the Dot) project in the South Boston neighborhood.

Chief Deputy Director, Diana Fernandez, gives a presentation about two main points. The first being the BPDA Board updates on Article 28, and the second sharing procedural protocols and best practices for future meetings.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **1141 Bennington Street** in the East Boston neighborhood.

Kirk Sykes is recused.

LE: So many clever things done along the wetlands side and Austin Street side. This is a difficult site to work with, the Palermo side not being a lot and its intersection with Bennington Street. Then having this building sit in makes sense. How the team has looked at the landscape on all the edges, knowing that you don't have a lot of depth to work with. But even the small moves along the rail line help to have an address on the marsh and on the rail line. I appreciate that effect along with thinking about the pedestrian bridge and making sure that connection is shorter and more meaningful. The interior connection on both sides of the bridge ends in a lounge space instead of a wall, these are all positive moves.

AML: I appreciate your attention to scale; it feels contextual. Your sensitivity to the marsh along with the scale and texture of the building are good. I appreciate your integration of public art and even the detailing in the pavement, it's all a lovely way to bring the marsh to the building. When coming to the buildings for the first time, how do I find the entrances?

DM: I appreciate the changes to the bridge, the area feels lighter, the guests will feel like they are under a structure for a much shorter duration and will help in all views from above and below the bridge. I think you have sorted an intuitive way for first time visitors to navigate when they have reached the end of the public way through the turnaround. There are a lot of nice details here which I like.

LS: Narrowing the bridge helped with framing the turnaround. There is a better focus on the front door in that location. In general, I like the loosening up of the vegetation on all the sides of the building because it will make the building feel as if it is more embedded within the marsh landscape.

RW: With a difficult site, we try to simplify everything to bare minimums and instead you have taken a lively shaping to this building!

ML: I am pleased with the building.

There were no public comments.

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

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 1141 Bennington Street.

The next project was **76 Ashford Street**, in the Allston neighborhood.

DH: This project is giving much back to the public realm, which helped me rationalize the height of the building relevant to the adjacent neighborhood. This area is going through a planning process right now, and it has been helpful to see this project in larger context and with new development not just across the highway but also as a bookend to the larger scale of development that is part of the BU complex and the field house directly adjacent to it. There is good progress on the face details. The building illustrates an important maker as a new node in the city.

SGS: This is a handsome building. What will be the interim condition? Will it be lawn, or gravel, a temporary landscape? Being so close to the field house, this can be an interesting space before the station comes.

KS: I agree this is a handsome building and one of the features I do like is the raised landscape component that you've integrated into it. As I think about this as a marker from the highway and giving cues as to what one might expect venturing into this neighborhood, that there are similar plantings at the ground plane. I hope this does not get value engineered out. This feature might even be further developed as you proceed.

LS: What is the timeline between the temporary landscape and the completion of the station?

ML: The project has improved quite a bit, we tussled with designing enough flexibility to tie into the station. This team has left a great framework for this development and the public realm. There is a retail component on the ground level that I worry about in the near term. I think some interim use might need to be considered. I am less convinced about the East facade, and as you further work with the BPDA please focus on this side. All the other sides of the building have gotten attention. There is a change in scale of the windows that I am referring to. It feels like too many moves. The other elevations are so rigorous and do not have this scale change.

RW: I have a broad urban design question. Does everyone expect the facade of the field house to face the future station? In creating an urban space where all the buses travers and lots of pedestrian movement, the facade is a very plain space for a civic building. Please consider this edge.

There were no public comments.

The motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of 76 Ashford Street.

The next project was **22 Drydock Avenue**, in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.

David Manfredi and Shauna Gillies-Smith are recused.

LS: There is a richness in the landscape that is wonderful, and I appreciate you giving every space and each edge a different path to take. I wish there were more understory trees on the north side, it could add a thicker layer and more robustness.

LE: We were feeling strong about the massing concept and realized that I missed the new corner detail. It's going to be wonderful and add diammonium to that edge of the building. We asked that the team make that midblock crossing feel more like a space and not a tight edge up against the loading dock. This feels so much better now. We looked at a lot of images from a bird's eye perspective, but today in sharing them from a pedestrian perspective made a great difference. I could pick up on more details.

I see that the entries and arcades, the outside dining and even ceiling palette are framed with warm materials. This will go a long way, especially on the north side of the building. It feels like the building is reaching out to the sidewalk with the resiliency requirements and is engaging the public realm in a new way.

ML: The spaces from the north side to the south side are dramatic. Between what is happening across the street on Drydock and your project, it is going to be transformational for the area. I am glad you are investing in all this new planting materials and stone walls. It will absolutely make a difference.

There was one public comment. Tom Ready, a resident of the neighborhood, is concerned about safety with the increase of pedestrians and cyclists and trucks.

The motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of 22 Drydock Avenue.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for 25-39 Harvard Avenue in the Allston neighborhood.

Elizabeth Stifel, Senior Architect with the BPDA, presented an overview of the Agency's vision for the project's fit in the commercial sub district, which has a fairly restrictive FAR and height.

Katya Podsilado, Rob Del Savio and Noah Maslan presented the project.

Matthew Martin, Senior Urban Designer with the BPDA, presented a slide on urban design review topics to the commissioners. Topics focused on additional onsite open space; meeting citywide environmental goals; reinforcing pedestrian connections; and lastly, minimizing curb cuts along Harvard Avenue.

WR: I am confused about the "In & out" of the driveway off of Harvard Street, as an urban design and safety issue; how does traffic circulate? Please return to share your thoughts and analysis in the subcommittee.

AML: I like the massing and articulation in this project. It adds a nice fit to the neighborhood. I would better like to understand the circulation and how you plan to take advantage of the garden space at the entrance. It is hard for me to understand what that space is like, please provide more details.

DM: Please describe the variances' (Height, FAR and rear yard setback) in the subcommittee. I would like more details on the north, west and south of the site.

LE: I am imagining more of Thor Terrace in the future becoming more legitimate. How will the building mass and façade be viewed from Cambridge Street down to Thor Terrace? Along the northern side and west side, what that gap looks like when you enter the bike room and abutting property. I would benefit from a section on the southern boundary, to help us understand as you go under the building, the garden and the height of a retaining wall. Along with a section cutting through the triple deckers housing. The garden is in a tricky location, between the retaining wall and the parking. I think this area could be wonderful with a relationship with the residential lounge/lobby. In subcommittee I would love to see more investigation of what this might be as you are sitting, experiencing and viewing the space from the lobby itself.

DH: I presume that the relocation of the post office is a long term thing. The building seems to be declining from its grand civic building, to now just being a storefront on the street. I am wondering if there is something about that corner that could be a little more civic. Something that represents the post office but in a different way to celebrate that public function.

LS: Please evaluate the traffic que for the proposed location of the garage entrance and exit, along with the sliding security gate along Harvard Avenue. Please think about giving the garden more space.

SGS: The garden has an orphan quality, and I would encourage you to look at the whole open airspace. Seeing shadow studies would also be helpful in subcommittee.

ML: Clarification on how loading happens. I saw a loading truck in the parking area. What is the access to the site, this information would be very helpful. Please bring more details to the storefronts, do they have canopies, do they have awnings? I appreciate the setback and the bays upfront, but I think more attention is needed.

There were no public comments.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for 1033-1055 Washington Street in the South End neighborhood.

Elizabeth Stifel, Senior Architect with the BPDA, presented an overview of the Agency's vision for the project's network design and the project's relation to the South End Neighborhood District and Harrison Albany Strategic Corridor Plan.

David Manfredi is recused.

Chris Galvao, Ian Downing, Barbara Boylan and Ron Druker presented the project.

Ju Jeong-Jun, Senior Urban Designer with the BPDA, presented a slide on urban design review topics to the commissioners. Topics focused on building massing in context of the neighborhood; enhancing the quality of through-block connection; reinforcing pedestrian connections; and minimizing curb cuts along Washington Street.

DH:I am excited this is happening, it is a critical component in the redevelopment of the South End area. There is a lot about the basic planning that makes sense to me. I think it is worth noting that when Harrison Albany had a 150' limit, the notion was that the building use would be residential. The arrival of the lab building to these neighborhoods is a recent phenomenon. While the proposed building does conform to the guidelines. The building form and scale are not. I agree with the comments Ju Jeong-Jun has shared. Please provide a model so that we can fly around the building and to better understand the sectional relationship to Castle Square. I am also curious about the view coming through this pedestrian connection that was established between the Ink Block and 355 Harrison Avenue, up to Washington Street. When I come through between the pizza parlor and Chase Bank, is the aperture that leads you through the block evident enough to pull you through? Not just from the street side, but through this pedestrian connection which is very important and currently very active. I am also very curious about the open space in front of Luca's. I think this can be an exceptional space if these two buildings were to act as a kind of plaza frontage piece to the renovated Luca's place. This could be a public space if all were integrated. Lastly, the issue of character. This is not in the landmark district, but it is adjacent to it and a part of the protection area. The architectural expression will be elegantly detailed, but still feels foreign to the historic neighborhood and to the more recent buildings on the Harrison Avenue corridor. It feels like a hospital complex, as if Tufts jumped the turnpike. I would like to see more about materiality and techie skins of the building, and why the design team has made these choices.

AML: My comments are in reference to the importance of finer grain and cultural spaces. Similar to DH, I would like more explanation of the architectural expression and for it to be a building of the South End and how it responds to its immediate context. Images to show me what currently surrounds the building, the materials and scale. I see that there is a bridge connecting two buildings, I would like to better understand that. Also, I see a lot of spaces on the ground floor identified and nonprofit/cultural. Seems like there is a real opportunity to make these amenities. I would like to understand the choices in placement and scale.

LS:I appreciate the space being given to the walking public, what's tough is making sure there is an understanding of scale and activity level. People want to know what they should do when they get somewhere. As the project furthers in development, consider making varied programmed spaces within the path. This space invites the public and I would like to understand the scale of the place. Please show shadow studies and park studies of similar scale. The aperture on Washington Street, frankly, is it too big? People like the tightness of the city, they relate to the rhythm they get used to. I would like to learn more about the connections along the northern part and west side of the building. It's marked as green, but does it connect to other spaces, or not?

LE: I would see more of the relationship to Castle Square, in terms of massing and connections. There is a broad face along Shawmut Ave, and it will have a different texture and scale from Castle Square. Again, more on the bridge which will connect the two buildings. How will this be imaged and felt? What's the use between the two buildings that require this bridge? How does this project connect to Harold Street? What does it look like coming down from Harold to Washington, what do you experience on that corner? How may we use the promenade to create another north/south pedestrian link.

RW: We feel concerned about the meaning of these two buildings, and could the site be more gentle to the surrounding context, along with the pathway through the site.

ML: I agree with Bill. Also, this is a passageway with no destination. The parcel adjacent to it could become an open space used by surrounding buildings, that would make sense. Would love to talk more about that in design committee. I really want to hear more about the pedestrian connection between Lucas and the north building, and that you are being thoughtful neighbors. Providing some views in connection to Lucas and Waterford Place would be helpful. It might require slimming down the building. Lastly, the north elevation of the north building; it's a lot of loading docks. Does it need that much, or could this be a site plan rendering issue? What does this area look like from the ground floor?

There were no public comments.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for 475-511 Dorchester Avenue (On the Dot) in the South Boston neighborhood.

Elizabeth Stifel, Senior Architect with the BPDA, presented an overview of the Agency's vision for the project's transition from commercial and industrial to a more mixed-use district; finer scale street network; open spaces of various sizes and active ground floor use with civic/cultural amenity spaces.

in relation to the South Boston Dorchester Avenue 2016 Plan.

Mimi Love is recused.

Mark Rosenshein, BK Boley, Michael LeBlanc and Rob Adam presented the project.

Matthew Martin, Senior Urban Designer with the BPDA, presented a slide on urban design review topics to the commissioners. Topics focused on increasing open space, advancing a through connection to Ellery Street; and establishing an active edge along Dorchester Avenue with a 4' grade change.

DH: The opportunity to create so much resiliency for such a critical part of the city is unbelievable. I would like to understand that grade change better. This will be a paradigm for things we will be

seeing in the future. There is a lot to like about the logic of the plan, I like how it suggests a step down into the neighborhood. I am disappointed with the new architecture arriving on the opposite side of Dorchester Avenue, some of it seems short sighted in terms of its construction quality and overall cohesiveness. SO I think this opportunity at 505 to 495 can set a new standard, and I would like you to focus your thoughts along that edge. When you show us this, perhaps you can mirror it with the current development on the other side to have full context. It's true, we approved the National development at the other end, it would help to weave that context. Also add in what is happening at the end of Andrew Square Station. Is that a forever condition, or what is the city's view of how that's being zoned or changed? This can be a transportation node, and I would just like to know what the book ends of your site are projecting in the future.

CM: These buildings have height, and I am concerned that they will stick out greatly in comparison to the rest of the neighborhood. One side will also feel very industrial; I raise this so that we will be mindful of the aesthetics of Dorchester Avenue.

AML: I agree that before us are extruded, large, industrial footprint buildings, and how can we meet the objects that have been laid out in the city planning? I appreciate the open space diagrams and the idea of networks, but what are these open spaces connecting? How were these decisions made and what is the vision with the programming and scaling?

DM: When you have big pieces of land like this, you can make a real difference in a whole part of a city, as opposed to block by block interventions. Which can be so much more difficult and with less satisfying results. So in this case, the bar is set high. Understanding this side from east to west in section, and all the details of your bold resilient plan will help. What do you think about Dorchester Avenue as a really important street in the city? In connection to transportation, this can be a new vibrant hub along the red line. From Kendal, Seaport, Downtown to here. There is a character from Dorchester Ave to Ellery around building types, character and scale that seem to build a wall. Make sure there is opportunity for light and air, and porosity.

WR: Part one is 80% office and lab, 20% is residential, is that correct? How does one read the residential parts of this? Will residential be along Dot Ave, or will it be integrated? At a broader level, consider functional uses for this mixed area.

LE: The framework makes sense! There is also a lot of public goods here. I appreciate the contributions to the open space desert and some connective tissues along the streets; lots of remediation and contribution to Andrew Square. There are six themes I think we will continue to evolve on. The first being the mechanics of resilience and how this will all work. Second, thinking more about context; some of the newer along Dot Ave and the book ends. Third, how these large scale development opportunities you are proposing meet the objectives of the Dot Ave Planning, and the scale changes within that. Fourth, would be connections to open space and to streets, what were the decisions to have certain road ways continue or location for space. Fifth, is to think about that western edge and what are the opportunities along the rail line there. Sixth, is what is the legibility of residential, it's only 20% of the first phase and it will be the first building. How will this do on its own?

AML: On the topic of resilient and the all the work with BSA and Boston Harbor partnership along with Living With Water; with the scale and ambition of this project it would be an important

opportunity to think about what happens in this space that can provide areas of refuge for adjoining areas, and where does the water go that is not going into this low point. That may be beyond the scope of your project but it can contribute to your sense of responsibility.

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 8:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for June 13, 2023. The recording of the June 6, 2023, Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.