

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, May 3, 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, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, Eric Höweler, Mikyoung Kim, Kathy Kottaridis, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were David Hacin and Anne-Marie Lubenau. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Adam Johnson, Scott Slarsky, and Ted Schwartzberg 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 [DATE], in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the April 5, 2022 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on April 12, April 19, and April 26, 2022. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the April 5, April 12, April 19, and April 26, 2022 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 310 Northern Avenue project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 310 Northern Avenue project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 425 Medford Street project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 425 Medford Street project in the Charlestown neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **2085 Washington Street**. Fernando Domenech of DHK presented the progress of the project through the Design Committee process, including changes to urban design, landscape, and architectural issues.

Kirk Sykes: This has come a long way toward making Dudley a *place*.

Eric Howeler: I appreciate that the two buildings are now relating to each other. I wonder if toning down the materials works. The red is very graphic and appears thinner than it actually is.

Fernando Domenech: We haven't yet decided the final colors, and won't until we have a final mockup.

Eric Howeler: I'm reading this as your intent, so I'm responding to what I'm seeing.

Linda Eastley: We were asking if there can be as much activity on Melnea Cass as on Washington- I'm glad to see that gallery space along the street edge.

Bill Rawn: I reiterate what Kirk said. Compared to many other projects of this size and type, the team has done a nice job of giving this some life in terms of the plaza and the elevations.

Kathy Kottaridis: I saw this at the first and last meetings, and it's come a long way. I think it has evolved into a very nice project. There are a few things about the landscape that continue to evolve, and it will be important to keep an eye on those and tighten up where possible.

Two members of the public spoke to ask questions about existing trees and the existing bus shelter.

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

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 2085 Washington Street.

The next project was **the Guest Street Hotel, Boston Landing**. Harry Wheelers of Group One presented the project.

Deneen Crosby: Do you have any views from the berm?

Harry Wheeler: Not in this slide deck.

Deneen Crosby: In previous meetings it seemed like the upper level was much more resolved.

William Rawn: I want to reiterate Deneen's request, it seems quite different from the original presentation.

Andrea Leers: Do you have a full site plan?

Jonathan Evans: Overall, I appreciate the effort that's been made to make this a much better design. It's come a long way.

Kirk Sykes: I agree with Jonathan's comments. We spent a couple of meetings talking about the nature of this space. We encouraged the proponent to propose additional wayfinding that would help the public understand that the slope and deck are publicly accessible.

Deneen Crosby: The wall by the slope needs some attention.

Kirk Sykes: It's definitely more accessible from this side than the other.

Andrea Leers: If the end wall of this terrace were more transparent, it would help give you a sense of turning the corner and finding that green space. Having a sense of the storefront coming around that corner would invite and help that sense of access.

Harry Wheeler: We don't own that wall. It's existing.

Andrea Leers: Can you plant in front of it?

Keith Craig: There's also a perpendicular sign that's the same height as the podium, that presents people to the park.

Eric Howeler: If the landscape is an invitation, do you want some kind of hardscape path that invites you up there?

Keith Craig: The entire area is planted.

Eric Howeler: People might be more likely to use it if there were a hardscape path. What is the messaging? Is it a green barrier?

Mikyoung Kim: Those existing mounds are pretty steep.

Keith Craig: They're pretty comfortable to get up there.

Mikyoung Kim: There's no rail, so what's the slope? Is it accessible?

Eric Howeler: It seems like a weird gesture. It's sending mixed signals and feels like a fake public space.

Kirk Sykes: We spent a fair amount of time encouraging the proponent to create some way to make it possible to get up to the patio.

Elizabeth Stifel: Can we add a proviso?

Mikyoung Kim: I like that solution. We should get an update and assurance that it will be addressed.

Kirk Sykes: I agree. I'd love them to study a way to get up from Guest Street. If there's an access point there, the issue is over.

Andrea Leers: There is clearly a residual space that is just residual and needs to be addressed. I would encourage you to look at a better resolution between the existing landscape and the back wall of the retail.

The motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the Guest Street Hotel, provided that further study occur into the integration with the existing New Balance Building, with consideration toward enhancing public access from Guest Street.

St. Elizabeth's Medical Center Parking Garage and IMP was presented next. Steve VanNess, John Harding, and Deb Myers presented the project.

Kirk Sykes: Are there pedestrian, bike, and vehicle conflicts?

John Harding: The intention is that people will walk up through the site from the bus stop.

Kirk Sykes: Please continue to work on that.

Andrea Leers: I'm pleased to see how the street edge and building edge have come together. I do remember what a challenge this was. My only reservation is the applied nature of the terracotta materials. If the building were one color, it would be more successful. Look at it as a monochromatic building, not a concrete building that is partly concealed.

David Manfredi: I agree. The project has gotten much better. It doesn't feel nearly as squeezed as it used to. It's better for being more simple, and it could get more simple still.

William Rawn: I find the terracotta nice as a color. My question is, should the terracotta become grey?

Andrea Leers: Or the concrete should become colored.

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

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for St. Elizabeth's Medical Center Parking Garage and IMP.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **310 Northern Avenue** in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood. Scott Slarsky of the BPDA introduced the project. Danielle Blake, John Sullivan, and Christine Wilson presented the project on behalf of the project team.

Mikyoung Kim: Moving forward, I'd love to see more information about the landscape, and a better understanding of Northern Avenue and the plaza off of unnamed access road. Along Seafood Way, is there any way to bring some character to that streetscape?

Deneen Crosby: By encouraging this midblock connection, you are presenting this as a pedestrian space. A little more detail there and any way to make it safe. I like that this is a break from what is typically an undefined landscape in this area.

Linda Eastley: I'd like to understand the shadow study in the courtyard. How can you bring in sunlight and illumination? I think this front porch along Northern Avenue is interesting—how does it wrap the corner? Ideally the idea of a ribbon along Northern Avenue would continue.

Mikyoung Kim: I'd like to see a section at each of the streetscapes, and a cross section through the plaza from Northern Ave to Fid Kennedy.

Kirk Sykes: Long views and a model would help understand how the district is coming together.

Linda Eastley: I agree. Can we use the City's physical model?

Andrea Leers: I agree. We need to understand the gradual growth of this area. I think the strategy to create two buildings is a wise choice, but I feel like you're working overtime to articulate something that is already nicely expressed. Maybe think of the articulation of the panels themselves. Why do the facades need so much expression?

Eric Howeler: I wonder about the structure expression in the façade. Don't try to evoke industry.

Andrea Leers: You have a great opportunity to do something beautiful and simple.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for **425 Medford Street** in the Charlestown neighborhood. BPDA planner Ted Schwartzberg presented an overview of the ongoing Charlestown neighborhood planning effort, and BPDA urban designer Scott Slarsky introduced the project. Jamie von Klemperer presented on behalf of the project team.

Linda Eastley: All of these buildings will come back, correct?

Elizabeth Stifel: Correct.

Linda Eastley: Thank you for all of the sketches, they were useful. I want to focus on the relationship of the Olmsted Park to the water. Is the midpoint of the park significant? You can't cross the street at the midpoint of the park- you have to go left. Is there something in the park that suggests that axis? I'd also like to learn about the character of walking along the water. It's important to have a sense of the original peninsula, and the character of views. There also really isn't a grid on the other side of Medford- how did you determine the street grid?

Deneen Crosby: What are the views from distant places? There's a lot of topography here. What views are you trying to maintain? I also saw that you're raising the water's edge. Is the thought that you'll do that consistently, or is there some variation?

Kirk Sykes: It's interesting to understand how you activate all these pedestrian zones. We need to understand the hierarchy and uses that will make these spaces lively, safe, secure, and animated.

Mimi Love: I agree. There's a very equal size of open space, and no central "place." It doesn't feel like there's a moment yet. In terms of the overall grid, it seems a bit tight. I worry about views of the water. Is this too respectful of the grid?

Linda Eastley: Why is there a grid? It would also be helpful to have more massing diagrams.

Andrea Leers: I don't yet understand how it relates to the broader lens of street massing and landscape. What's the fabric of the hill and the industrial edge? The blocks up the hill are made up many smaller buildings, but you're proposing one big massing. How does the massing respect things around it? What does it mean to build a block with one massing?

Bill Rawn: We need models at the beginning of the process. Can you explain the nature of the building requirements in the DPA?

Jorge Mendoza: We will be trying to move part of the existing DPA.

Ted Schwartzberg: The Commonwealth needs to start any changes to the PDA. You can't have any built structures or active open space.

Jenn Schultz: If we can't relocate the existing portion of the DPA, it can be used for resiliency.

Andrea Leers: I'd also like to understand the original plan for Doherty Park and what its original intention was.

Kirk Sykes: I'd like to see your transportation numbers. This is a large number of vehicles with just two points of entry. This is going to need to be signalized and will have impacts on the surrounding public realm.

Three members of the public spoke to raise questions and issues about traffic, Doherty Park, and the project's proposed FAR.

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 [TIME] p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was

scheduled for June 7, 2022. The recording of the May 3, 2022 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.