

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, March 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, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, Eric Höweler, Kathy Kottaridis, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were David Hacin, Mikyoung Kim, and Anne-Marie Lubenau. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Adam Johnson and Jeong Jun-Ju 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 February 13, 2021, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the February 1, 2022 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on February 8, 2021, February 15, 2022, and February 22, 2022. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the February 1, February 8, February 15, and February 22 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **289 Walk Hill Road in the Roslindale neighborhood**.

The project team, led by Rob Del Salvio and Kyle Zick, presented updates to the project and responses to Commission feedback.

Commissioner Eastley: This feels a lot more simple.

Commissioner Kottaridis: I want to compliment you on the attention to the park edge along the street. Is it correct that you'll be maintaining the creek?

Rob Del Savio: Ownership is reaching out to the Parks Department, but we're not sure who claims it yet.

Commissioner Rawn: How big is this chain link fence?

Kyle Zick: It's 4' high behind a street guardrail. It's there for windblown trash, and it will have gates to facilitate maintenance.

Commissioner Crosby: Can you do a detail at the base of the guardrail to deal with trash, rather than relying on the fence? Are you taking out the trees along the edge?

Kyle Zick: The public street trees will remain. We will manage the invasive species behind the guardrail.

Commissioner Crosby: There could be a nicer way of dealing with the trash.

Commissioner Howeler: Will the lawn area feel welcome? What will it feel like? In terms of the architecture, it feels a little thin to me. The datum-line of the brick is a question-mark for me. There's a lot of articulation on the Canterbury St corner which doesn't necessarily reflect programming.

Rob Del Savio: I agree, the brick needs to continue at two stories.

Commissioner Howeler: I would pick a datum and continue it across. A little clarity would make it feel more deliberate.

Commissioner Leers: You're heading in the right direction. I wish the bay windows were a little more projected and convincing. From the other corner, there is more clarity. If you could declare a portion of this courtyard to be public space, and keep the parking from wrapping around, it would be clearer.

Commissioner Manfredi: I'm torn. At the last Design Committee, I suggested there were too many materials and too much going on. It's gotten better, but there's still a lot going on. I wonder if it doesn't get better by getting simpler.

Two members of the public spoke to clarify comments and questions about the landscape plan and stewardship of surrounding public land.

Commissioner Leers: Who else is reviewing this?

Elizabeth Stifel: The Parks department will continue to review.

Commissioner Leers: The question is whether we are ready to approve it, or if we'd like to see this again in Committee. Do we feel that the remaining changes are best handled by Elizabeth and staff?

Commissioner Crosby: I'm comfortable having a list of site issues for the BPDA to follow up on.

Commissioner Manfredi: What would be most helpful for BPDA staff?

Elizabeth Stifel: If you want to do a vote with a proviso for staff review, with specific issues for us to address, it would help the proponent.

Commissioner Eastley: I think that's a good idea, because the change's we're suggesting might take a few meetings.

It was therefore moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 289 Walk Hill Road, with the proviso that BPDA staff work with the proponent to:

- a more permanent courtyard devoted to pedestrian activities and dedicated parking space;**
 - study what barrier is needed along American Legion Highway;**
 - study street trees along American Legion Highway; to study the topography and walkability along American Legion Highway;**
 - simplify the palette of materials;**
 - and to simplify the number of planar changes and datum lines in the façade**
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The Commission moved into project presentations, beginning with **800 Morrissey Boulevard** in the Dorchester neighborhood. Elizabeth Stifel of the BPDA introduced the project, and John Harding of Cube3 presented an overview.

Commissioner Howeler: I'm trying to imagine coming home to this building. It looks like there are a few front doors. Is there a view that shows the front door?

John Harding: There are few different doors that depend on how you enter.

Commissioner Howeler: Front doors create a sense of community. That's something I'd think about- how do I know I'm coming home, how do I meet my neighbors? If I'm visiting someone how do I know which door to use? There's a lot of volumetric exuberance in the architecture, but how does the architecture communicate what's happening here?

Commissioner Love: I appreciate the materials. I'd like to see a diagram showing what generates some of the sawtooth moments and how many different materials there are throughout. It'd be great to get a better understanding of the courtyard and what's happening there, and how it relates to the ground plane.

Commissioner Evans: We need a better understanding of the hierarchy. But what is the larger story behind this organization? A lot of interesting moves, I'm just trying to figure out a clean composition.

Commissioner Kim: I'd love to see the relationship between the building and the open space. Any drawings- sections, etc.-

Commissioner Eastley: I'd like to understand the urban design relationship of this building to Freeport. If I imagine myself as a pedestrian along Freeport and Morrissey, there is no buffer along the sidewalk. I like that you're introducing lawn panels and a terrace, but I wonder if having more of a buffer could make it a lot more comfortable, and open up new opportunities for you as you think about the building's façade. I'd also like to understand the multi-use paths.

Commissioner Rawn: I'm trying to imagine myself driving on Morrissey Boulevard seeing the cars coming at me on the right, and making a right turn- that's a disaster waiting to happen. How can one mitigate this?

John Harding: There isn't going to be an opening from Morrissey onto Freeport.

Commissioner Rawn: Still, I echo that the median needs some work.

Commissioner Crosby: There were plans to change lanes, road-widths, etc. It would be good to know updates on the bigger vision for Morrissey Boulevard. If you're a pedestrian on a sidewalk, how do you know what's public space? We need more information on how information is expressed to passersby.

Commissioner Leers: In the overall context, you can see the importance of both sides of the building. It seems to me the space between the two buildings is too narrow. If you have a U-shaped building, why not turn it toward the water or toward Morrissey? By facing south, you put two walls to the most attractive edges.

Commissioner Manfredi: A physical model would be helpful.

No public comments being heard, it was moved, seconded and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend the project continue in Design Committee.

The next project was Parcel 8 – NUBA Residences. Jeong Jun-Ju of the BPDA introduced the project, and Stephen Chung of Urbanica presented an overview of the project status.

Commissioner Howeler: This is an exciting project. Your description of the massing is thoughtful. I like the depth of the cuts. There's a lot of pleasure and enthusiasm in every detail.

Commissioner Love: I agree with Eric. It's exciting because we've seen a whole series of projects in this area, and it's satisfying to see the attention to materiality and the whimsical nature of materiality. I wonder if that much transparency on the ground floor is workable for a live-work situation. I'm intrigued by the drop-off on Melnea Cass- why doesn't it happen at the pedestrian passageway? Finally, the approach to the "Art Walk" is great and should be shared with other projects.

Commissioner Eastley: You do have a different conservation overlay area, is that why the Art Walk doesn't continue to Washington St? You've done a good job with the Gateway Park, so the Art Walk should be the next piece that makes it even richer. Can that connection be more forceful? I agree with Mimi about the live-work space- can some of them be retail, potentially at the corners? How do the scallops coordinate with the rest of the architecture?

Commissioner Manfredi: This is a terrific project. I appreciate that you are using only two materials.

Commissioner Kottaridis: I would like to see more about the corner park. How are the historic foundations of the old buildings presented? What are they? Why are they protected? Can the back area accommodate an access point to the historic cemetery?

Commissioner Crosby: I was happy to hear about connecting the Art Walk to BFIT, which connects to Nubian Ascends. Potentially a nice sequence of open spaces.

Commissioner Rawn: We should just vote for this and not move it to Design Committee. I wonder whether we should use projects like this as good examples.

Commissioner Howeler: I agree. I hope people are watching and paying attention. How can we highlight this project and broadcast its success?

Commissioner Manfredi: It's completely within our mission statement to do that.

Commissioner Leers: This is a wonderful project. I endorse making it available.

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

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for Parcel 8 – NUBA Residences.

The next project was 30 Leo M Birmingham Parkway. Scott Slarsky of the BPDA introduced the project, and Mark Eclipse of PCA presented an overview of the project status.

Commissioner Rawn: What's going on with the parking?

Mark Eclipse: There will be a fence with apertures.

Commissioner Leers: The strategy for parking needs to be reconsidered. Parking slipping out doesn't work. You can either get it all under the building, or properly screen surface parking.

Commissioner Crosby: When I look at the view of the park's face, why is it connected to the community? It looks like it's separated by the fenced parking area. Also, there are a number of street trees along Lothrop- what's happening to the utility lines there?

Marc: Going underground.

Commissioner Kim: I'd like more information about the public realm. I'd like to see how the undulating walls relate to the streetscape and the architecture.

Commissioner Evans: What can you do to make the center of the building less of a figure, and cleaned up with a little more hierarchy?

Commissioner Manfredi: There's some unnecessary agitation here. Somehow the blue piece isn't connected to what's happening inside the building. It's not too much, it's not "not enough"- I don't understand it. Why does it move? I agree with Andrea that the parking solution is not appropriate.

Commissioner Love: This material palette doesn't fit into the context. When appropriate it'd be worth thinking about it further.

Commissioner Evans: We're not saying make the architecture more boring- but how can all of these elements tell the same story?

Commissioner Eastley: The chamfered edge along Lothrop will be important. There could be an interesting moment there.

Commissioner Leers: You've got an element in the middle of a long façade, and two chamfered corners. I wonder if that element you're looking for could move to one of the two corners. Look at the rear elevations for inspiration- the volumes are well-defined.

A motion was made, seconded, and duly

VOTED: That the project will move to Design Committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:51 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for April 5, 2022. The recording of the March 1, 2022 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.