

## **MINUTES OF THE BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE MARCH 19, 2024 - SESSION A**

*This meeting was held virtually. A recording of this meeting is available upon request. Please reach out to [bcdc@boston.gov](mailto:bcdc@boston.gov) for more information.*

### **CALL TO ORDER**

A meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) Design Subcommittee was called to order by BCDC Executive Director Kristina Ricco at 5:00 PM on Tuesday, March 19, 2024.

### **ATTENDEES**

The following members of the Boston Civic Design Commission were present: Chair Linda Eastley, Commissioner Jonathan Evans, Commissioner Anne-Marie Lubenau, Commissioner Catherine Morris, and Commissioner Laura Solano. The following BCDC staff were present: BCDC Executive Director Kristina Ricco and BPDA Urban Design Assistant Lizzie Turac.

### **PRESENTATIONS FOR REVIEW AND PUBLIC TESTIMONY**

#### 700 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE, BOSTON PROPER (ALSO KNOWN AS WARREN TOWERS RENOVATION), BOSTON PROPER

Representatives of the proponent team, including Sonia Richards (Boston University), Ken Ryan (Boston University), Steven Thomas (MDS / Miller Dyer Spears Architects), and James Heroux (Copley Wolff Design Group, Inc.), presented the proposed project. Commissioner Laura Solano recused themselves from the review. Commissioners Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, Anne-Marie Lubenau, and Catherine Morris participated in the review.

Discussion: Commissioners were generally supportive of proposed improvements to the public realm and proposed changes to the existing window assembly, in particular, the “warming” effect of proposed changes. Commissioners commented on the perceived “darkness” of the proposed glass material as demonstrated in renderings and encouraged the proponent to produce alternate renderings and diagrams that demonstrate the glass as intended (described by the proponent as “clear.”) Commissioners noted that window framing, currently rendered as grey, could be modified to complement the proposed window surround so that all elements of the window assembly read as a “family.” Commissioners expressed interest in a “comprehensive attitude” towards changes to the building and a “holistic approach” that ties together all building elements wherever possible, including mechanical screening, modifications to the parapet, and building canopies, with public realm elements, including paving and planter materials.

Public testimony was given by Pam Beale, Chair of the Boston University Community Task Force. Following discussion and opportunity for public testimony, there was consensus among the commissioners that the proposed project at 700 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE, BOSTON PROPER (ALSO KNOWN AS WARREN TOWERS RENOVATION) should return to a future convening of the BCDC for review and final recommendation. The proposed project is associated with the proposed

BOSTON UNIVERSITY CHARLES RIVER CAMPUS 2013 - 2023 IMP EXTENSION. Final recommendations for both proposed projects are expected to be issued in tandem.

#### 500 HUNTINGTON AVE, MISSION HILL

Representatives of the proponent team, including Donald Johnson (Fallon Company), Chris Stoddard (Ennead Architects), Peter Schubert (Ennead Architects), Ethan Shaw (Ennead Architects), and Christian Lemon (Lemon Brooke) presented the proposed project. Commissioners Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, Anne-Marie Lubenau, Catherine Morris, and Laura Solano participated in the review. Discussion: Commissioners were generally supportive of the proposed site plan, including the scales and locations of proposed open spaces and pedestrian connections to and through the site. Commissioners encouraged further resolution of the design of open spaces. Regarding the Parker Street “passageway,” Commissioners identified a potential “pinch point” near the center of the connection for further study and suggested that, depending on the height, some seating may be integrated into the structure of the planters. Regarding the larger open space at the corner of Huntington Avenue and Ruggles Street, Commissioners were appreciative of the additional rows of trees, particularly the third row along Huntington Avenue, and suggested that the lawn area would benefit from some gentle grading. Regarding the proposed buildings, Commissioners expressed concern for architectural language as designed, which primarily communicates the proposed program and less the surrounding context. “What makes this a building of its place, and not of Kendall Square, or the Seaport, or Dorchester Bay? What anchors this building as a building along the “Avenue of the Arts,” a building that’s part of Wentworth and Mission Hill?” “What is it about this building that is responding to its context above and beyond the details of the public realm on the ground floor?” While the proponent team suggested the language of structured landscape elements and building materials respond to the surrounding context, commissioners reiterated high-level concerns about the building form and materiality and asked that these issues be the subject of the following Design Subcommittee meeting. Commissioners requested additional information about the impacts of the proposed building massing, specifically potential shadow impacts on the Museum of Fine Arts.

Public testimony was given by Eric Woods, Chief Operating Officer of the Museum of Fine Arts, and Alison Pultinas.

Following discussion and opportunity for public testimony, there was consensus among the commissioners that the proposed projects at 500 HUNTINGTON AVE, MISSION HILL, should return to a future convening of the BCDC Design Subcommittee for additional review.

#### 475-511 DORCHESTER AVE PHASE 1B: 505 DORCHESTER AVENUE, 65 & 75 ELLERY STREET, DORCHESTER

Representatives of the proponent team, including Mark Rosenshein (Trademark Partners LLC), BK Boley (Stantec), Louis Kraft (Stantec), and Rob Adams (Halvorson | Tighe & Bond Studio), presented proposed projects associated with the 475-511 DORCHESTER AVE PHASE 1B DEVELOPMENT PLAN, including 505 DORCHESTER AVENUE, 65 and 75 ELLERY STREET, DORCHESTER. These proposed

projects are associated with the 475-511 DORCHESTER AVENUE (ON THE DOT) MASTER PLAN. Commissioners Linda Eastley, Catherine Morris, and Laura Solano participated in the review. Discussion: Commissioners appreciated changes made to the proposed project in response to feedback received at earlier meetings. The proponent team acknowledged additional progress on facade elements associated with 505 Dorchester Avenue would be forthcoming. Commissioners suggested modest changes to the proposed landscape elements. Regarding the proposed lawn area between 65 and 75 Ellery Street, commissioners suggested the proponent explore introducing trees to the center of the lawn and study the interaction between ground floor retail at 75 Ellery Street and the curved, curbed wall at the edge of the lawn. Regarding the proposed lawn area between 505 and 495 Dorchester Avenue, commissioners suggested the proponent explore alternatives to the proposed grading to emphasize the interior of the lawn without potentially disconnecting it from adjacent retail. Commissioners interrogated the architectural expression of the corner of the podium of 75 Ellery Street at the intersection of the lawn open space and Ellery Street. The corner as designed is expressed as an angled "prow," which may "feel abrupt," especially in contrast to the rounded corner of 65 Ellery Street. The proponent team committed to additional study of the condition.

Public testimony was given by John Piekutowski, Andrew Square Civic Association

Following discussion and opportunity for public testimony, there was consensus among the commissioners that the proposed projects associated with the 475-511 DORCHESTER AVE PHASE 1B DEVELOPMENT PLAN, including 505 DORCHESTER AVENUE, 65 and 75 ELLERY STREET, DORCHESTER, should return to a future convening of the BCDC for review and final recommendation.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At the conclusion of presentations for review and public testimony, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM.